BOUNDARIES OF THE SOUL:
The Mythic Imagination, Place and Shamanic Consciousness in Literary Form.

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ABSTRACT

In the Western cultural tradition there is a particular aspect of consciousness discernable in certain fictive literature; mythopoeic literary consciousness (MLC), the evolution of which may be traced back to its earliest manifestation in the cave paintings of the Upper Palaeolithic period in Europe. Researchers agree that those cave paintings are indicative of shamanic activity, which suggests an interesting relationship between shamanic consciousness and MLC. This research investigates contemporary experiences of this relationship in the context of place and the Imaginal Realm using a combination of empirical and textual methods.

The evolution of the narrative psyche is described; beginning with recent interpretations of the aetiology and meaning of the European Upper Palaeolithic cave paintings. Shamanism is then examined and linkages are made with subsequent esoteric traditions such as Gnosticism, Hermeticism, the Imaginal Realm of the Sufi mystics, and the Romantic Movement in European literature. The Imaginal Realm, as a metaphysical construct, is posited in relationship to de Chardin's Noosphere, Sheldrake's Morphic Resonance, the Celtic Web of Wyrd and Jung's Collective Unconscious.

Empirical research is presented on contemporary expressions of this tradition. Three internationally recognised Australian authors, David Malouf, Thomas Keneally and Colleen McCullough, were either interviewed or completed a questionnaire on their backgrounds, the role of place relationships, states of consciousness when writing and reading, the role of literature and related questions. Five dedicated readers and two professionally credentialed practicing shamans completed similar questionnaires on their experiences and views on literature, the act of reading, and shamanic and creative consciousness. The responses are accompanied by textual analysis of the work of the three authors, drawing out themes of importance.

Further discussion of the empirical and textual material in the context of broader literature establishes the epistemological dimensions of both mythopoeic literary consciousness and shamanic consciousness. The nature and relationship of consciousness and soul are examined from a perspective that unites them with the *anima mundi* and posits them in relationship with place and elsewhere-place.

The concluding section revisits core themes to posit the mythopoeic writer and MLC within the heritage of a metaphysical tradition that delineates the existential boundaries of the psyche. It is argued that MLC is a manifestation of the narrative imperative of the psyche or soul to orientate itself along a place-elsewhere-

place continuum, a continuum that parallels states of consciousness from the *participation mystique* to the de-centred self.

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DECLARATION

This thesis contains no work which has not been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in the University or any other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material published or written by any other person, except where reference has been made in the text.

I give my consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University's Library, being available for loan or photocopying.

William Hartley
June 2008.

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I could not have completed this dissertation without the help and encouragement I received during these many years of research work from my supervisor Dr. John Cameron at the University of Western Sydney.

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It is to my foster son Riza, to whom special thanks is due, not only for putting up with a sometimes very tense and cranky father but for teaching me much about a place called home. Finally, to the memory of my parents who taught me how to listen for the magic in the words, " …once upon a time, in a place far, far away …".

PREFACE

I experience a recurring dream in which I am moving upwards, aware of a vast open landscape; a copse of trees stands to the right and stretching before me a grassy plain. In the distance a depression in the landscape marks the course of an ancient narrow river and beyond that a mountain range. The place is lush and green and primordial; it is still and quiet yet I sense intensity. In a succeeding episode of that dream sequence I have crossed over the crude wooden bridge that spans the river and leads to the foot of the mountains and in the most recent episode, I have begun my climb up the craggy but richly forested face of that mountainside.

Some tell me that my dream is Jungian and suggests the individuation process or perhaps represents, metaphorically, an ascension further up my own Mount Kaf, the movement of my life to its inevitable ending, to the summit to confront whatever it is that is there. I ponder over the connection and significance it may have to me now and in the many past stages of my life, from boyhood on, since when I experience that dream, I am aware also that it is not just for the immediate past and present but encompasses all stages of my life. I muse over where or what this place might be and why the idyllic setting?

The possibilities arising from these questions are, essentially, what have brought me to this thesis; the need to examine the way that the story or narrative of each individual soul or psyche is bounded, distinguished and formed, often with mythic dimensions, by place or the places, real or imagined, that it occupies. How does the soul or psyche generate narratives or stories that connect it with place and what do they tell us about our deepest selves? Do place and soul have a symbiotic relationship and might not that relationship then manufacture something narrative in form so that it may be known? Thus, I am interested in examining the way that story emerges from place. Some may wish to argue that story or narrative emerges or is created out of individual experiences, an experience that will be given different

nuances depending on each individual's cultural and psychological endowment. I do not dispute this but rather ponder the extent to which the individual's culture and psychology are themselves really only constructs that have primarily evolved out of and articulate the subtle influences on the human soul of what we call locale or place. Understanding that vague awareness we sometimes experience of a de-centred self may be critical in understanding our craving to tell each other and ourselves stories, including our deceptions, fabulations, exaggerations and fantasies, and in understanding we may well discover therein the implicit desire for otherness and elsewhere, to be uttered and perfected.

As a reader, I have visited exotic places, with J.M.Barrie, Captain Hook and Peter Pan, with Robert Louis Stevenson and Long John Silver, with Herman Melville and Ahab on the Pequod. And I was with Thomas Keneally and Oscar Schindler at the armaments factory. One of the most agreeable experiences has been with Mary Renault and Alexander at Macedon and Persia and Babylon by the Euphrates. I have stood on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and watched the figure of Yeshua and his followers and in Jerusalem I saw him stumble along the Via Dolorosa. I was at the barricades in Paris with Victor Hugo and Jean Val Jean and, although it is said to be non-existent, I have seen the wondrous world of Prester John. In like fashion David Malouf has taken me, in the company of Ovid, across a seemingly barren, timeless, yet spiritually puissant land, one that may well be a metaphor for Australia, albeit something far greater for me. These were, and still are, my imaginary companions and friends – who have taught me about courage and good and evil and truth and justice. And in some vicarious way I have seen the same far away realms and exotic places that they have seen, and I have lived in the places in which they lived their lives.

During these readings the boundaries between myself, the place in which I am reading and the places to which I find myself transported, waver and melt away. In some sense, some state of awareness, I am no longer sure whether what I see with my imagination springs from my interior world or, because of its substance and detail, its topography, texture and colour, all of which are beyond my life's experience, emanates from somewhere else, an elsewhere-place.

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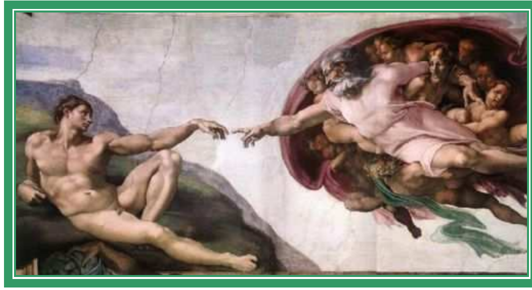

Michelangelo's Creation, from the Sistine Chapel.

PART I
IMAGINING THE REAL

> Between the world of pure spiritual Lights (*Luces victoriales,* the world of the "Mothers" in the terminology of *Ishraq*) and the sensory universe, at the boundary of the ninth Sphere (the Sphere of the Spheres) there opens a *mundus imaginalis* which is a concrete spiritual world of archetype-Figures, apparitional Forms, Angels of species and of individuals … vision of it in actuality is vouchedsafed to the visionary apperception of the Active Imagination (Corbin, 1978:42-43).

When the Australian author and Nobel Laureate Patrick White addressed a meeting of writers in 1986 he told them that a writer's purpose was to " … imagine the real" in their writings (Brennan, 1989:177). Lecturer and Anglican priest Michael Giffin has suggested that White meant by this that the writer is to embody in their fictional characters aspects of the meta-historical imagination of Western civilization and also to clearly reflect varieties of religious experience (Giffin, 1996:6).

There are three interesting corollaries to this. Firstly, that there is an imaginative tradition, a dimension of the psyche that is accessible but that transcends the meta-historical imagination of Western civilization that, indeed, extends beyond recorded history. I use the word 'psyche' in the sense in which Jung understood it, as an *a priori entelechy* and hence it is based on a teleological hypothesis which describes the psyche as consisting of essentially three aspects or dimensions. It is first of all everything that is conscious, that is, everything in us that is associated with the so-called ego complex. In addition, the psyche consists of the so-called unconscious, that is, that which in the psyche is unknown but which, when it crosses the threshold of consciousness, immediately assimilates itself to the conscious contents. It is worth noting here that consciousness primarily

refers to self-reflective awareness ... and yet we know virtually nothing about what consciousness is, or how it works (Radin, 1997:264-265), although Julian Jaynes defines consciousness as an analogue of the real world (Jaynes, 1977:55). Consequently, I have approached consciousness as a conceptual metaphor in which the boundaries between its ordinary and altered states are uncertain (see page 193). The third element in the makeup of the psyche is what Jung called the psychoid system. This is where the psyche loses itself in the organic material of the body ... the instinctual sphere (Papadopoulos, 2006:65), an important concept in my thesis and which may also aid in understanding another concept mentioned later in the dissertation, D. H. Lawrence's *blood consciousness*. Von Franz has a broader view of the psychoid and says that for Jung, " ... the psychoid system is that which in the psyche is completely unknown ... the really absolutely unconscious ... that part of the psychic realm where the psychic element appears to [also] mix with inorganic matter" (von Franz, 1988:4), a view that further explicates my thesis.

Secondly, White's injunction intimates that such a tradition embodies an extraordinary truth and also introduces notions of human potential and the imaginal that are transpersonal. Indeed, the word *imaginal*, coined by the philosopher Henry Corbin, refers to an act of creative imagination that transcends the subjectivity of ordinary imagination (Corbin, 1998:117-134). Thirdly, that a dedicated writer has a very definite role and an extraordinary responsibility, one that may be religious or spiritual.

These are, indeed, the very issues that I want to investigate; but there is more. If, as White suggests, these fictional characters can embody aspects of the metahistorical imagination, what then is the involvement of the fictive milieu or the place in which they enact their role? Do these characters reveal that there exist a dialogical relationship, literally, in the sense of Martin Buber's I-Thou theory, between the psyche or soul and the places it inhabits: an extraordinary relationship that enables deeper, more elemental or archetypal content of the psyche to be expressed in narrative form? Here I use the word soul in something closer to its original sense, somewhat different from the modern usage, in that it includes aspects of the mortal body, mind and emotions as well as something transcending them; it is an intermediary reality between the physical and the spiritual (Leloup, 2002:14). My thesis requires the progressive amplification of the concepts of soul, consciousness, place and the spiritual; concepts that constitute the core of my discourse but that are, nevertheless, difficult to define without the progressive

contextual underpinning provided by the various chapters. However, if the reader feels the need, in advance, for an explanation of these concepts they should consult chapters 8 and 9, particularly pages 183 and 198-199, for consciousness and page 221-222 for place.

In the quotation at the beginning of this introduction, Henry Corbin, the noted Islamic scholar who studied Islamic Sufi mystics and especially their visionary experiences, uses exactly the same notion to describe his concept of an Imaginal Realm, an alternative Earth, a world where, according to Ibn 'Arabi, " … theophanies and theophanic visions take place" (Corbin, 1969:xiii). In the Preface to Corbin's *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi* (1969), Professor Harold Bloom establishes connections between the Imaginal, Gnosticism and the Jewish Kabbalah while others even see the Imaginal as a way of representing *Anima Mundi* (Harpur, 1994:126-127).

What follows is an attempt to trace the history and contemporary manifestations of that epiphanic Imaginal Realm and to reveal one way that it is manifested in contemporary culture through a continuum of place and consciousness in a particular form of literary consciousness.

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CHAPTER 1
IMAGINING THE REAL

1.1 Introduction: The Topic

If, as Patrick White suggests, the writer's purpose is to 'imagine the real', we might begin by asking how they are able to do this and what states of consciousness are implicated. I believe that White is referring to what I term Mythopoeic Literary Consciousness, referred to throughout the dissertation as MLC, to describe a specific state of altered consciousness experienced by mythopoeic writers; those writers whose works have a particularly puissant effect on their readers, especially in regard to the sense of place or of an elsewhere-place, in their literature. The effect of mythopoeic literature might be seen as similar to that of poetry in that it is imaginatively and intellectually more immediate and intense; this is why I have termed its creators mythopoeic writers, in order to distinguish them from the writers of pulp-fiction and commercially or politically motivated prose. Likewise, mythopoeic-readers demand and experience more from their reading than mere relaxation or enjoyment.

I consider MLC to be analogous to Shamanic Consciousness (SC) in that each relates to the sacred or transcendent and transpersonal dimensions of human consciousness and each utilizes similar existentialist perspectives of place as a tiered or hierarchical dimension. I want to establish whether MLC is coterminous with SC and to determine the nature and characteristics of MLC: is it an isomorph of the outer world of places and the inner world, the intangible realm of the psyche? I want to determine if the mythopoeic writer shares a similar, perhaps co-evolutionary function with the shaman because until the emergence of psychology as an autonomous discipline, it was, in the Western cultural tradition, often the poet or writer who was expected to interpret and explain the human condition. Thus, I want to establish if MLC has its roots in shamanism and also the nature of that dimension of the psyche from which such extra-ordinary knowledge is acquired. I also want to establish if the mythopoeic writer uses place, like the shaman, as an especially puissant form of enchantment, in the truest sense of the word.

I want to establish if such a psychic state suggests not merely a phantasy dimension or an aspect of an aberrant psyche, but rather another level of consciousness that is a palimpsest of the individual and collective unconscious,

something that has been identified in many guises and which may be an aspect of the Imaginal Realm. What then are the correspondences between the resulting de-centred consciousness or de-centred self and what I have identified as the place-elsewhere-place continuum? When considered together, I suspect they reveal something about a fundamental mystery that underlies human existence, that of the boundaries of the soul.

Aldous Huxley wrote that most men and women lead lives at the worst so painful, at the best so monotonous, poor and limited that the urge to escape, the longing to transcend themselves, if only for a few moments, is and has always been one of the principal appetites of the soul (Huxley, 1956:42). Even Goethe said that in seventy-five years he had experienced barely four weeks of being truly at ease (Bettelheim, 1983:111), and Salman Rushdie has one of his fictional characters opine:

> Life is fury – sexual, Oedipal, political, magical, brutal – drives us to our finest heights and coarsest depths. Out of *furia* comes creation, inspiration, originality, passion, but also violence, pain, pure unafraid destruction, the giving and receiving of blows from which we never recover…. This is what we are, what we civilize ourselves to disguise – the terrifying human animal in us, the exulted, transcendent, self-destructive, untrammelled lord of creation. We raise each other to the heights of joy. We tear each other limb from bloody limb (Rushdie, 2001:30-31).

A major, almost Gnostic, theme in much contemporary literature is that of the de-centred self and an inescapable sadness that is part of the life of any reflective person; of the individual confronted with what they perceive as the failure of their life, its melancholy, its dark side and the knowledge that in true Shakespearean sense, a fatal flaw can undo each woman and man. It is, however, mythopoeic literature that serendipitously reveals a new redemptive paradigm of interconnectedness between the seemingly mundane finitude of the places we inhabit and the infinitude of the psyche, between the insubstantial and the substantial. It intimates the primary nature of place as archetypal, reaffirms Jung's theory of the primordial lineage of the human psyche, and also points to the intense and complex relationship of the self to the Imaginal Realm.

My research is designed to determine if imaginal writers, represented by the three writers who participated in my research, have an intention to bring about an altered state of consciousness in their readers and also to determine the characteristics of that state of consciousness. And of the participating readers: can

we find in their responses evidence that each of us longs to transcend our ego identity and assume another persona and that we often do this in imaginal reading when we then experience an imaginal place, an elsewhere-place, somehow known and familiar yet not actually visited? If so, is this elsewhere-place archetypal, revealing an archaic dimension of the human psyche, one that is as integral to individual psychological and spiritual survival as much as ego-identity; perhaps even the core identity? Finally, are these two elements, the de-centred-self and elsewhere-place, consanguineous and indeed analogous to a shamanic state of consciousness and how do they influence the narrative and boundaries of the soul?

Three events exacerbated my interest in what I see as a soul-life-narrative and not merely biography; not that which one creates to share with others, but rather the essential truth that one explains to oneself. The first occurred at a performance by the Jewish storyteller Corey Fischer; the theatre lights dimmed and I was soon transported to other times and places through the imaginal narratives. I was no longer passively seated in the theatre, instead I saw, felt, heard and lived in an extended reality, its time was of a different dimension and the 'I' that experienced the performance was different. The house lights came-up; two hours had elapsed but the mythopoeic story-time seemed to be brief and yet, at the same time, an eternity, immeasurable and related to something ineffable. The reading of stories has always had the same enchanting effect on me and I wondered if it was the same for others.

The second occurred when I heard Christine Kitch, the author of *Pavement for My Pillow* (1996), respond to an television programme interviewer's suggestion that she must have felt ashamed of herself when she was living as an alcoholic in the toilets at Piccadilly Station and to which Kitch replied, and I recall clearly, " … Oh no dear, in fact, it was like living in a cathedral".

Christine Kitch had previously written of this:

> There were ten ladies toilets in Subway 4 of Piccadilly, and most days, at least eight of these were filled with addicts in some state of intoxication; either completely stoned, attempting to get a hit or withdrawing from drugs…. We changed our clothes and washed ourselves in the toilets. We washed our hands and faces in the washroom and sometimes we washed the bottom half of our bodies from the toilets ….The toilets were a world within a world; people had sex, gave birth and died there (Kitch, 1996:87).

My third epiphany was in 1998 at a performance of Martin McDonagh's play, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane,* when I heard the protagonist, Pato Dooley, wistfully declare:

> When it's there I am, it's here I wish I was, of course. Who wouldn't? But when it's here I am ... it isn't there I want to be, of course not. But I know it isn't here I want to be either.

In these words I heard Pato Dooley enunciate the universal dilemma of human kind; how to resolve the unattainable quite impractical desire to dwell in that imaginal place from which we have somehow been exiled, where we feel we are home and where we belong and where we know that the essence and reality of our soul will find its safe harbour. This dilemma, this longing is reflected in our religious beliefs and dogmas, in historical narratives, in the art and literature of all cultures and also significantly informs and structures much of our physical and psychological survival since it is most readily and commonly perceived in our storytelling.

Professor Hugh Kenner, in his 1998 Massey lecture, *The Elsewhere Community*, based on the themes of exile, identity and fantasy, provides a compelling insight into the relationship between readers and the need to experience places and states of mind that are elsewhere. Nowhere is this aspect of place-elsewhere-place and its relationship to the psychological reality or soul of both the individual and of humankind demonstrated so clearly as in mythopoeic literature. The consequences of evil, human and natural destructiveness, love and friendship, indeed the human condition, have been the fundamental themes of poetry, novel and mythical text throughout history. Through such text writers and readers often transform the perceived meaningless chaos and suffering of life into meaningful mythic, salvific personal narratives. This literary transformation of the meaningless into meaningful produces a separation resulting in an awareness of an inner and an outer world where the ego acts as a threshold or gateway between these two realities: the psychic and the physical, the imaginal and the real. That separation is a motif in many legends, fairy tales and shamanic world-views, where specific places in the physical world are seen as entry points of the de-centred self into the spirit world, into another reality, into an elsewhere-place.

The mundane experience of place often seems to obscure, even renounce, its transcendent, quintessential and dynamic potential and its influence on the life of the individual and the group. Even the most seemingly uninteresting place is the potential vessel for an inimitable *anima locus,* the condition that suffuses and

animates a site or locale. That same vital animating principle, acting on the level of consciousness of the individual or group, might also constellate aspects of the place-elsewhere-place archetype to reveal not only its own primordial, archaic and *imaginal* dimensions but also the boundaries of the soul. Amongst those who seem most adroit at perceiving place as sentient and responsive, as capable of being intimately and intensely known, is the shaman, the progenitor of the mythopoeic writer; the psychopomp between ordinary reality and the transpersonal realms; between place and elsewhere-place.

Shamanism dates back to the emergence of Homo sapiens and is one of the oldest forms of mystical-religious life but it also reveals a time when the roles of the poet-storyteller and the shaman were indistinguishable (Tolstoy, 1985:229). The shaman-poet-priest was revered as the keeper of the soul of a people, and their stories and chants, literally spells, were perceived as divine revelations (Tolstoy, 1985:236). For that reason, I want to determine if MLC as an influence on the mythopoeic writer and the reader can facilitate access to the same dimension as that facilitated by SC; and whether archetypes, as identified by Carl Jung, are involved.

Myths, folk tales, poetry, and mythopoeic literature, contain patterns of human experience that provide insights into the dimensions of our everyday lives. The question of the relationship of the unconscious to the mythopoeic and to daily life has long been the subject of much conjecture. From the strange images of ancient cave paintings to the modernist predilection for the surreal in literature, the mythopoeic has provided a means by which humanity has been able to explore and represent that which is usually hidden from us yet which plays such a central role in who and what we are. A deeper understanding of the mythopoeic or spiritual aspect of such literature was provided when Carl Jung articulated a model of the psyche that revealed a transcendent dimension that linked human behaviour and motivation with mythic literature and the arts. Jung wrote:

> In myths and fairy tales, as in dreams, the psyche tells its own story, and the interplay of the archetypes is revealed in its natural setting as formation, transformation, the eternal Mind's eternal recreation (Jung, CW 9, par. 400),

and,

> The human psyche is the womb of all the arts and sciences (Jung, CW 15, par. 133).

One of the tasks of this thesis is to examine the nature of place and the significance of its relationship to the imagination, indeed, to the human psyche.

The primary existential question of the origin of the self and its ultimate destiny is implicitly and inextricably linked to place since existence occurs within a space or place. In analysing the influences that stimulate our timeless and universal craving to tell stories we may also discover the nature and potential of the desire for otherness and elsewhere-place and ultimately of the relationship between place and the soul; the ways by which the soul or psyche is bounded and altered by the places it occupies and perhaps too, by the ways soul changes place. That raises the question: does the psyche or soul habitually generate narratives or stories that connect it with place or does story emerge from place or is there some strange admixture of the two?

This thesis examines the notion of the epistemic nature of place, as the theatre or stage on which the human individual narrative is performed. The central idea is that place has an integral and primal relationship to the psyche's awareness or knowledge of itself and that there is a place of maximal epistemic possibilities, or scenarios. The thesis explores various ways that the individual psyche interacts with this epistemic place, one that sometimes involves the Imaginal Realm and at other times personal epiphanic narratives. The thesis also examines the way in which these dimensions of place intertwine, reveal themselves, unbidden, to the psyche and the interdependent and reciprocal relationship between place and the psyche. I approach place as proprioceptive, even extending this to suggest that the perception of place is a form of self-perception, that to become deeply aware of place is to become correspondingly more aware of oneself or at least an aspect of one's consciousness. Finally, and of immense relevance, I want to determine if the form of consciousness reflected in the Palaeolithic cave paintings has wasted away or merely changed its locus.

There are moments in every life when the places we inhabit become filled with a deeply personal narrative; when place and self assume a *participation mystique*. Usually, those narratives involve reminiscences of ephemeral things, for example, my childhood bed at 26 Tudor Street, covered with toys on that first remembered Christmas morning; but with it, somehow too, an awareness of the inner, secret workings (the electrical wiring, the plumbing, the mouse-hole and their accompanying olfactory stimuli, textures and dimensions) of the old terrace house that has now been renovated and gentrified. The loose floorboard, under which I hid my secret childhood bric-a-brac, in the upstairs back-room that was once my bedroom, then later in my life in a different place, the stables and resting paddocks

that somehow, for me, are still embedded within the constitution of the new housing estate, shopping centre and parking lot that replaced them. Where now is the unrestored house at 26 Tudor Street and also the place of the uneven muddy earth and the horse pads, the creek with the tadpoles? Will my eventual death not only be the extinction of my physical self but the extinction also of those very real places in my life, as I knew them, as they existed?

1.2 Personal Context

My research work for the Master of Letters and Master of Arts degrees was based on my interest in the theories of Carl Jung, Western mystical and religious thought (Meister Eckhart, Teilhard de Chardin, Martin Buber, Bede Griffiths), Eastern mystical thought (Sufism, Taoism), Buddhism (especially Tibetan Tantra and Bardo states) and Hebrew mysticism (Kabbalah) among other things.

I have always been intrigued by mystical and spiritual philosophies and my quest to understand them began at an early age with an intense awareness of the God of the Abrahamic tradition. Under the influence of my highly intuitive Jewish mother, my interest focused on the paranormal and alternative spiritual traditions. The journey along that path became more focused when one day in the City of Sydney Public Library, then located in what is now the renovated and upmarket, but then dilapidated, Queen Victoria Building, I found a copy of Carl Jung's *Aion: The Phenomenology of the Self.* The stimulating, sometimes difficult, contemplation of Jung's ideas, studied both formally and informally, together with a love of poetry and literature and a strong inclination to the religious and the spiritual, has influenced me and shaped my perspective on life in a decidedly particular way. It has certainly rent several of the many veils that had obscured my awareness of, for want of a better word, God. In the early 1990's I joined the Australian Transpersonal Association where I met serious metaphysical thinkers, often as visiting lecturers, such as Charles Birch, the late John Mack, then Professor of Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School, Stanlislaus Grof, and Stephen and Robin Larsen of the Joseph Campbell Foundation.

The most significant aspects of my life are those that have always been related to, or in some way comprehensible in terms of literature, the spiritual or transcendent, and place. Indeed, sometimes I tremble when I consider the complex effect these elements have exerted on my life; when I remember the

sometimes subtle but often ineffably potent influence they have played. Then I begin to understand them not through the traditional privileging of consciousness but in the elevation of the deeper imaginal and spiritual experiences. I remember many of my earliest books, particularly a red covered encyclopaedia that imaginatively transported me far away from 26 Tudor Street, where I lived from my birth to the age of fifteen, to be with ancient Greek warriors and the Indian braves of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). There were many places during my early years: my bedroom, the nearby derelict houses, the local funeral parlours, the wood shed at the end of the yard, the laneway; these became enchanted places where I discovered ghosts and demons, characters from the past, spies and enemy soldiers - places enfolded in the imaginal but not perceived in quite the same way by the veiled eyes of the adults around me.

It was at Tudor Street that I came to realise how biography and place are inextricably linked in a narrative. I sensed that the derelict houses still had embedded in their structure their stories. I imagined a past for these places because that is what houses have. I heard echoing in them the past chatter of voices, doors banging, children playing games. Embedded within them was the intimate history of families and individuals, of births and deaths, loves and regrets, of the tragedies and joys of the people who had lived in them; secrets surviving amidst fallen ceilings and decaying walls. These now derelict houses were occupied by men, less often women, who, themselves, had derelict lives and both individual and place seemed to be as one, waiting for a final strike that would demolish their existences forever.

The funeral parlours were places where the dead and everything associated with them coalesced; they were places that could never be anything other than marked by death and the secret things associated with the dead and those individuals who tended them. However, one parlour has been converted into a restaurant and the other is now a sex shop, breaking age-old taboos surrounding death and food and sex. In my reverie of these places, I am a child again but with an adult mind musing over the story of my childhood and its recollections that seem to be more of images of places or place-associations rather than of events.

The first fifteen years of my life were lived in an old terrace house in Tudor Street, Surry Hills, then a working class but now gentrified suburb of Sydney. My parents were reared in Surry Hills and Paddington and I knew the stories of their lives there: streets and laneways and many buildings became places composed of

strata of story, theirs and mine and of something else, sensed, yet undefined. I believe that the house in Tudor Street was extremely influential in making me the person that I have become, not the social me but the deeper me, the self that is deeper than the ego. That house created in my psyche templates and possibilities and now, it is as if every house I enter, particularly if it has the potential of being home, must somehow be aligned with that home, not physically in terms of layout, but more as a sensation or anticipation of something yet to be announced or discovered; the feel of the lounge room, the kitchen with the old round wooden table and the wooden ice-chest, the woodshed at the rear of the yard near the outside toilet, the mouse-hole in the kitchen, the upstairs backroom, where, much to my parents' horror they discovered, under the loose floorboards, not only my hidden treasures but exposed electrical wiring. Even now I remember the musty, earthy odours from beneath the floorboards and see, hidden there, the small toy train engine, the prized, richly coloured marbles and the small lead soldier, minus his feet, that I had placed in a miniature makeshift stretcher. In the hiding of these things and other objects beneath the floor I seemed to occupy the house more than the others who simply existed in it. I knew the house and became a part of it, its history, its secrets and its spirit, and the house had become a part of my secret interior life.

Then there were the bedrooms. Bedrooms as places have always seemed to be special rooms; more than just rooms of privacy, of sleep and of shared physical intimacy. A bedroom seems to be a place where the occupant of the room is vulnerable and discards not only the clothes of the day but the social roles and personas in preparing to face a greater reality, like a priest in a sacristy changing into the robes and adopting an attitude to perform a ritual where any disturbance of the secret rubrics will render the rite invalid or defiled.

I well remember my parents' bedroom in that house which on Sunday mornings became a place of laughter and excitement when, together with my two brothers and my sister, I would get into the big bed with my parents. Father would tell us stories that he invented about wolves and goblins and sometimes about more local and familiar things, even stories of his life and of mother's too. There are many memory-fragments of stories imagined in that bedroom where so many of the rituals of childhood were enacted and where, in a very real sense, my spirit, my identity seems to have announced and confirmed itself.

I possess many fragmented memories of particular places in that house. The kitchen, which was also dining room, laundry and parlour, where an aged woman, a spectre or visitor, I know not which, who dressed in black and brought a bag of oranges, always sat on the same green wooden chair besides the ice chest. Equally as enigmatic and baffling was the hallway, leading from the front door to the foot of the stairs, it was long and dark and my brothers and sister would often hide there to frighten my mother when she returned from some shopping at Skully's, the local corner grocer's shop. That was where my brothers and sister and I saw a presence one day; I remember feeling afraid, whether that is because I really was or because my elder brother persuaded us into believing that there was a spirit there and that it was evil. There was also a tree growing out of the footpath opposite our front door and even in those early years I was aware that that tree was alive, sentient.

That house has been the focal point of more than one dream for me; sometimes I am young, about the age and in the time in which I actually lived in it but sometimes I am in that house, or dream variations of it, at my present age but in either case I am never alone, for the spirit of the house somehow communicates with me. Perhaps the house was haunted or else I populated it with entities from my own imagination. In any case, for me, it has become like one of those homes in Jean Genet's *The Thief's Journal* (1949), or that of David Malouf in *12 Edmondstone Street* (1985); its atmosphere saturated with the scents, odours and personalities of its occupants. Clearly, that house was and is very special to me but so is the larger area, the neighbourhood in which it is located.

Now Surry Hills is gentrified and the pubs where my father gambled with SP (Starting Price) bookies have been renovated and now have bistros and rock bands in the areas once reserved as the women's parlours, and Kinsella's Funeral Home is now a trendy nightclub and restaurant. I haven't physically lived in Surry Hills for nearly forty years but mentally, spiritually, psychologically, emotionally, at some point deep within my existence, I seem to have never left the place, particularly the house, 26 Tudor Street. Influencing my movement through life, suggesting itself and all that it was or is, in the background of my life, the place where I became conscious; it was from that place that the child I was became the core identity of the me as I now exist.

Many years later when I read Ruth Park's *The Harp in the South* (1948), set in Surry Hills in the 1940s, I was amazed at this New Zealander's ability to capture

the authenticity, the characters, tragedy, beauty and atmosphere of the place just as I had experienced it. How could someone who had not lived in Surry Hills, who had not lived my life, affect me and other readers in such a way? A similar process occurred with Hal Porter's *Watcher on the Cast-Iron Balcony: An Australian Autiobiography* (1963), where Porter captured not so much the exterior milieu but the dynamics causing the inner development of the character in a particular place. Like Porter I too meditated on my conception - under which ceiling, in what kapok mattress, to locate that place, which exists not only as reconstruction of the past but also as reinterpretation, as something within me that seemed to have not only a separate or de-centred existence but also a primal creativity and energy.

At age fifteen I moved with my family to a new home on the outskirts of the city near acres of resting paddocks with a brick pit beyond. That area has now been developed into an up-market housing estate but its shopping mall for me is still the place where old Mr Bamford lived in his shack with his vegetable garden on two sides, and the artificial lake is still, ineradicably in my mind, the brick pits. In spite of the formative events that occurred in this new home, that de-centred part of me still feels, interminably, connected to 26 Tudor Street.

Place simply seems to be a strong signifier in my reminiscences and memory of events. The laneway where I played beside the house in Tudor Street, the old Premier Cinema, the derelict houses where I played on the way home from school; the seminary and my room there, the chapel with its excessively Baroque high altar. Particular places that emerge through the mists of memory, a room, a street, a building; last year, twenty or forty years ago; maybe here or in Athens, Delphi, Jerusalem or Wollongong and one specific room, the kitchen, which despite all logic, design and custom, is the very heart and centre of my present home.

Such recollections of place, for me, are often more than merely visual; I can still feel the rusted chipped paint wrought iron railings on the balcony at Tudor Street, the rough uneven stones on the path beneath my feet as I walked to the Acropolis for the first time. I can hear the sounds and smell the aromas coming from the kitchen on that first night, thirty-five years ago, as I lay in my bed on a kibbutz in Israel. Then there are the imaginary places: places existing in dreams and fantasies, sometimes composed of one place superimposed over another and which together form a sort of composite yet which, in itself, also seems real.

Strangely, I became intensely more responsive to places at the time when my mother was approaching her death. She was cognizant of who others and I

were and where she was and yet would ask, " ... where's Granddad, is he upstairs?" (My grandfather died before I was born and the hospital where my mother died was a single story building that she was very familiar with for many years). Somehow recollections of a place from her childhood had become enmeshed in the reality in which she was living, yet for her this did not present a problem; she was living simultaneously two phases of her life in two very different places.

Something similar happened to my father when he too was approaching his death. In an isolation ward, he regained consciousness and told the story of how he had been " ...back with the men in the Army", marching off somewhere and then being told by a superior officer to " ... go back, you can't come with us". There are other instances concerning friends who were nearing the time of their death and whose environments were transmogrified to other places. There was Michael for whom the Sacred Heart Hospice at Darlinghurst became, in its most literal sense, a new home somewhere in India where he dressed and behaved quite differently and took on a new identity along with his new residence.

There are other places (place conceived here as a continuum of possibilities linked to consciousness, as the existential measure of being, of existence and identity) that have influenced my life and soul and made me what, in essence, I am and will become. Both the religious and the spiritual influence my soul. Outwardly it craves the religious, that which reflects a structured belief system with formal worship practices and a cultural context. However, it is the spiritual, that which transcends language and culture, is more emotionally based, more mystical and is connected to subjective inner experiences, that prevails. In consequence, soon after leaving school I entered a Roman Catholic seminary, much to the displeasure of my Jewish mother and my equally displeased, lapsed-Catholic father. The seminary provided me with some semblance of spiritual life although I eventually rejected Roman Catholicism and escaped to a kibbutz in Israel where I gained a new spiritual perspective, albeit unorthodox and catholic.

My kibbutz life presented me with a conundrum for although I was, under the Israeli Law of Return, a Jew, having a Jewish mother, and although I had thoroughly rationalized my abandonment of Catholicism and its ways, I nevertheless felt counterfeit as a Jew because I couldn't really accept Jewish-Hebrew theology and practice either. I felt like an actor experimenting with different painted faces and curious narratives all of which prevented others from seeing the real me. I returned to Australia and became immersed in a career in social work and over the

next few years began delving into the transpersonal. This was not new to me since my mother, in spite of her Jewishness, had always been involved with clairvoyants and considered herself psychic, and she was, and had carefully explained to me the rubrics of spiritualism.

However, it was thirty-five years ago that this thesis started to take shape when I made my first visit to the Mediterranean, to Greece and to Israel. For reasons of mind, heart and soul I found myself wandering around Athens and the islands of the Aegean and later in Israel. In Greece some places seemed to be somehow familiar, to resonate with something deep inside me, something transcending time and place, and which, literally, induced, if not a spiritual experience, then an intensified awareness. Greece had already been brought alive for me in books about Alexander the Great, Plato and Menalaeus and the Trojan War; I had already seen Greece and lived there in my inner world of imagination. I detested modern Athens but liked the outlying villages and the islands. Nevertheless, it was Delphi and the areas where Alexander had travelled that especially affected me. I had read Mary Renault's Alexander trilogy and her other Greek-themed novels but something like the Surry Hills episode was happening in reverse: whereas Park had written about what I had experienced in Surry Hills, now, in various places in Greece, I was experiencing and being affected by what Renault had written about things that had happened over two thousand years ago.

However, I also had to give substance and enrichment to my Jewish soul-heritage by dwelling in Israel where I worked the soil of a kibbutz orchard not far from the old city of Tiberius. Connected with the fertility of the land, I gained a deep sense of the sacredness of the earth, the Shekhinah, that in the Kabbalah represents the presence or life force of God and in rabbinical literature suggests the feminine aspect of God and the soul; Yahweh's indwelling presence in the world (Bloom, 1996:51). In the old, holy city of Safed I studied the ancient and mystical language of Hebrew and became aware of the Kabbalah and Zohar and other mystical traditions that I supposed had their origins in the primordial human psyche and might even have some connection to archaic shamanism and the enigmatic upper-Palaeolithic cave paintings. In fact, it was in Israel and Greece that I first became convinced of the existence of a dimension that transcended time and place: an imaginal realm, as real and as energetic as any physical locale and so much more powerful than anything I had previously known.

The most potent factor in these experiences was an awareness of place, either in the subjective interpretation of the influences embedded in the place where I was born and lived or as in Israel and Greece; as a mythic, symbolic, historic almost archetypal dimension. However, that is not sufficient to explain the significance that these places and other places have had on my life or the sheer enchantment of place in literary works has exerted upon me and the readers and writers involved in my research and, I suspect, most people.

This influence might best be explained in the Hebrew word *makom*, or true dwelling place. I have dwelt in many places and yet there seems to be with all of them a hierarchical attribution of affective energy, an attachment of an indescribable and strangely inter-reliant nature. So it is that my soul increases when it sees the islands of the Aegean and loves the silence of a forest; places of reflective solitude that reveal the magisterium of the earth. Yet it is between my simple apartment and the rocky crags overlooking the Pacific Ocean on the South Coast of NSW that my soul has found its true dwelling place in a strange, timeless and measureless continuum.

This need for the soul to find *makom,* its dwelling place, was profoundly revealed to me by my foster son Riza. A Hazara, a descendant of the Indo-Aryans and the Moghols of Ghanghiz Khan who invaded Afghanistan in the first quarter of the thirteenth century (Mousavi, 1998:24), he, like other members of his tribe, was persecuted by the Taliban and twice tortured by them. At fourteen years of age, he fled the austere place of his birth where all his life and experiences had been entirely contained. Not possessing a sophisticated notion of flight or knowledge of the great seas and oceans and their archetypal power, he began his courageous journey, crossing mountains and valleys unknown to him, to be delivered, by some persistent providence, to their magisterium. His soul was then to experience places he had never before even imagined. He was taken into the 'place of air', which he had previously only experienced naively, and then weeks later, terrified, in a disabled boat, becalmed, across the 'place of ocean', not sleeping for fear of being thrown overboard but also in fear of the strange night noises coming from around and below the boat as it drifted. In Australia he was amazed by the 'place of the modern and free', where huge glass doors opened magically, without human effort and of tall, graceful buildings that expressed the mind and life of a different people. Yet, often, like David Malouf's Ovid, Riza, too, in hearing no word of his own language, was rendered dumb, literally communicating with grunts and signs:

> I point, I raise my eyebrows questioning, I burst into tears of joy if someone – even a child – understands what I am trying to say … wandering all day as if in a dream as if I belonged to another species (Malouf, 1978:17).

And, one might add, another place. Riza, too, was an exile, so much more in soul than in body but now though, through some secret inner working of the soul, he has found his *makom* and is once more in the 'place of home'.

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

My thesis is complex and is presented in three sections; Part I, *Imagining the Real*, provides a contextual description and history of the narrative mythopoeic psyche; Part II, *Prospero's Books*, describes the empirical research, the formulation of the issues and questions and methodology; and Part III, *The Narrow Gate,* presents an extended examination from a literary, psycho-spiritual perspective. The Conclusion, *The Sacred Heritage*, delineates a new paradigm of the relationship between consciousness, the Imaginal Realm and the role of the mythopoeic writer.

In *Imagining the Real*, I want to focus my readers' attention on the mythopoeic dimensions of life: that of the individual and also the collective, throughout history. My approach is to provide a narrative of the mythopoeic psyche, focusing particularly on the three fundamental cornerstones of my thesis: the significance and nature of the Palaeolithic cave pictographs, shamanism and manifestations of the Imaginal Realm.

Recent research in cognitive archaeology contends that the Palaeolithic cave pictographs and shamanism are inextricably linked (Pearson, 2002 and Lewis-Williams 2002); this claim is examined in Chapter 2, *The Evolution of the Narrative Psyche*. That chapter also describes a psyche, mythopoeic in essence, which has taken millions of years to evolve; a psyche ineluctably structured by a profound and dynamic affiliation between the places we inhabit, physically and imaginally, and the deepest levels of our individual and collective existences, an affiliation that reveals archetypal patterns.

Beginning with the Upper Palaeolithic cave pictographs of Lascaux, Altimira and Chauvet, I develop notions about the consciousness of our Aurignacian ancestors who produced those incredibly beautiful, complex and detailed images. In this section I utilize some of the major readings on the pictographs and of the

significance of the caves in their influence on the evolution of mythopoeic consciousness.

I discuss shamanism not in its anthropological context but more in terms of cognitive archaeology, ontology, and as a parapsychological phenomenon that, in turn, reveals a profound spiritual implication: that the human psyche has a narrative imperative that emerges out of a dynamic affiliation between the places we inhabit (physically and imaginally) and the Self, between the Mundane and the Imaginal.

Shamanism is believed to be the earliest form of spiritual practice (Tolstoy, 1985:124) and I suspect that because of the prehistoric shaman's use of paintings on the walls of caves, early shamanism illustrates, and may even have intensified, a unique relationship between the human psyche and place. Shamanism thus may then be understood as a dimension beyond ordinary conscious and sensory awareness and the purview of rational thought but one that is still embodied within human cognition. I also describe the links between Sufi mysticism and the Romantic Movement in literature and the involvement of the Imaginal Realm as conceived by Henry Corbin. Finally, I describe a form of mythic thinking or enchantment, MLC, which is detectable in certain instances of contemporary literature that I have categorized as mythopoeic literature.

In Part II, *Prospero's Books: Empirical and Textual Research*, I develop the issues and questions that arise out of the narrative presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 explains my research methodology and design, which consists of empirical and textual research, explains the necessity of textual research and presents the research questionnaire. My empirical research was based on an analysis and interpretation of the responses to the research questionnaire of two practicing shamans, both of whom hold professional positions, three writers, David Malouf, Thomas Keneally and Colleen McCullough and five readers; the readers were selected primarily on the basis of their known propensity to love reading poetry and serious fiction. An analysis of all responses is presented in Chapter 4.

The textual research, based on selected works of the three writers, complements the empirical research by elaborating on and exemplifying major points of the thesis and is presented in Chapter 5. The textual research proved to be so edifying that I have referred to it throughout the dissertation together with examples drawn from the work of other writers. By incorporating an approach that included both empirical and textual research regarding the writers, the outcome proved to be more illustrative and substantial than either by itself would have been.

The empirical research reveals very important data, while the textual research provides the depth, colour and subtlety needed to reveal and illustrate, indeed to prove, the mythopoeic quality that I needed to establish.

My research approach was to some small extent influenced by Bruno Bettelheim's idea of *Geisteswissenschaften*, a hermeneutic-spiritual knowing (Bettelheim, 1982:41), which attempts to understand the object of its study not as reflecting a universal law but as a singular event, highly pertinent in the case of shamanism. This process also seemed appropriate to understand the hermeneutical process, how particular writers gain their knowledge, how particular readers read the works of those writers, and whether they project themselves, not just into the action of the story but especially into the places of the story, as a way of vicariously living and knowing the life and situations of the protagonists.

In this chapter the profound implications of the term 'mythopoeic literature' are illustrated to reveal a literary genre that provides the writer and reader with an archetypal narrative, something that surpasses the great universal literary themes and great ideas of Western civilization. It is a literary genre that induces the reader to perceive of existence at a deeper than egoic level of consciousness; a genre that reveals the numinous background behind daily existence and also of the places and events where human lives are enacted; a genre that reveals a decentred-self that resides in the depths of the psyche, yet seems to manifest in the places of our existence and which insinuates an elsewhere place.

Part III, *The Narrow Gate: Bridging Two Worlds*, functions as a discussion section, elaborates on much of the research and introduces supplementary material. This begins with Chapter 6, *The Mythopoeic Writer as Shaman,* in which I present the case that mythopoeic writers habitually function in a shaman-like manner. I believe that there are correspondences between shamanism, events that potentially constitute or may be seen as a form of initiation into the shamanic vocation, and many aspects of MLC particularly when examined in the context of Jungian psychology, with concepts such as archetypes, the collective unconscious and synchronicity. These will be explicated in the empirical research and substantiated by reference to the work of scholars in this field.

Chapter 7, *The Imaginal Realm*, makes a clear distinction between any conceptions of the purely imaginative, which in some instances has a pejorative connotation, and the Imaginal Realm or dimension, the latter being a philosophical and religious concept that has received attention under various guises by Henry

Corbin, Rupert Sheldrake, Teilhard de Chardin, Jung and others. Such a dimension, posited as it is beyond the purview of the ordinary, demands consideration of the relationship between psychological processes, soul or psyche and *anima mundi* and this is provided in Chapter 8, *Consciousness and Soul*.

My approach to consciousness in that chapter is based on Julian Jaynes' impressive theory explained in his *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (1977), and although I disagree strongly with his dating of the emergence of egoic consciousness, his work provides a basis on which to develop my hypothesis of the imaginal dimension of reality as it is expressed in mythopoeic literary consciousness. Jaynes concedes that " … *the Greek subjective conscious mind … has been born out of song and poetry* …" but he sadly dismisses soul as a pseudostructure (1977:292). Thus, I have in that chapter also defined soul and explained its relationship to consciousness though the faculty of the psychoid dimension and also necessarily extended the discussion to implicate the *anima mundi*.

Chapter 9, *Mythopoeic Literary Consciousness*, explains and integrates the findings of my research to show the similarities between SC and MLC; the links between shamanism and creative-imaginal writing or mythopoeic literature and substantiates the existence and importance of the Imaginal Realm. Such an approach deliberately affiliates itself with the arts, culture and the history of ideas and moves beyond psychological and empirical models. It is also an approach that facilitates investigation of those same elements outside and beyond the Western cultural tradition; in my approach I found the theories of Carl Jung and James Hillman invaluable because they reflect universal psychological patterns and influences.

In Chapter 10 *The Mythopoeic Dimensions of Place-elsewhere-place*, I have examined conceptualisations of place, more in the sense of the enchantment of place, the extraordinary effect that place has on human consciousness and soul under certain conditions and the interaction or relationship that takes place between them. My argument here is that place, rather than being a particular entity, is a continuum possessing a structure somewhat akin to that of a Mobius strip. I have attempted to illustrate the subjective experience of place, and implicitly the literary experience of place, and the way people come to understand place and to identify the metaphysical aspects of a human geography filled with emotions and memories about places. Thus, the thesis returns to the original concept of boundaries of the

soul and the reader in the context of the self boundaries and place experienced in reading, and the relationship between the various characters and places that populate or figure in a literary text.

The concluding Chapter 11, *The Sacred Heritage,* points to the fact that MLC and SC each relate to the sacred and transcendental or transpersonal dimension of human consciousness, one that implicates place, because place is the most fundamental existential element that underpins human existence. I suspect that the universe, the places within it that we inhabit and human consciousness have a much more structured relationship than we suspect.

Quantum mechanics, as developed by Niels Bohr, has revised our understanding of the relationship of mind and matter and we know from Complexity Theory that a form of instantaneous communication does exist and has correspondences with Jung's ideas on synchronicity and archetypes. Thus, many forms of communication, including poesis and storytelling, become much more than simple processes or transactions. These theories help us to understand how the mythopoeic writer animates place in their writing, how they habitually, sometimes intentionally, operate as a spiritual functionary; one who in the Western cultural tradition is consanguineous to the shaman of preliterate, pre-industrialized societies. Such animation of place results in an especially puissant form of enchantment, something akin to the experience of the numinous or an epiphany. This is illustrated in the case of the literature of the three writers researched.

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CHAPTER 2
THE EVOLUTION OF THE NARRATIVE PSYCHE

(Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, Titian, *c.* 1550.)

2.1 Introduction

Throughout history and across many cultures shamans, writers and storytellers have recounted narratives about the origins of the gods, the birth of the universe, the creation of the world and of animals and the first human beings. All conclude with a common, yet essential structuring element: the motif of alienation from a primordial place, the theme of the Fall, the great disjunction or transition and the imperative to recover that lost state. These narratives are amongst the earliest manifestations of MLC and mythopoeic literature and are evident in Classical Greek literature and the texts of the Abrahamic tradition, which in turn, rest on more ancient sources, such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, which set the pattern for all ensuing Hebrew and Greek literature (Thompson, 1981:199). This structuring theme or motif of alienation from an original or elsewhere-place and the imperative to return is, indeed, inherent in all major religious beliefs and seems, in some guise, to underpin many doctrines, philosophies and even psychoanalytic theories.

The great religions and spiritual traditions recount a time when humankind was somehow closer to God and nature. It was a time, the bards declare, when human nature was somehow pure and incorrupt in a place that we familiarly call Eden or Paradise. It was, in effect, a state of *participation mystique*, a term used in the anthropological conclusions of Levy-Bruhl to describe a state of wholeness, in which there is no distinction in the human psyche between interior and exterior, between subject and object, between the psychical and physical. This historical context is vital to understanding the contemporary writer, reader and shaman because it reveals what amounts to an intense and continuing interrelationship

between them; for example, the modern writer and poet trace their lineage to the shaman and the reader to the archetypal participant in the shamanic reverie. That historical paradigm also serves the purpose of providing the intellectual context of the thesis, since perceived historically, is seems more convincing than does the more conventional literature review.

Carl Jung, Julian Jaynes and Eric Neumann assert that somewhere between 3,000 to 5,000 years ago, a momentous event occurred in which the human being attained, as Jung says, consciousness, or in terms of Jaynes' hypothesis, there occurred the breakdown of the bi-cameral mind and, in Neumann's terms, egoic or self-consciousness came into being. More recent research by Lewis-Williams (2002 and 2007) and others suggests that this may be as far back as 35,000 years. Albeit, the experience of day-to-day individual and collective existence prior to this was enmeshed with the external world, it was existence with a myth-like quality of *participation mystique* where the concept of self was coterminous with place (Jung, 1977, Jaynes, 1977, Neumann, 1970). However, it seems that a fracture occurred in this psychic state; this primordial consciousness and ego or self-conscious-consciousness emerged and with it the sense of alienation, of being cut away from something primordial, paradisaical; a feeling we now express through the archetypal paradigm of elsewhere-place and of our longing to be there. Julian Jaynes' theory of the break-up of the bicameral mind contributes to an understanding of this process, a process that must be seen as one of the most formative events in human evolution. This event, one may well surmise, structured human consciousness between the polarities of place and elsewhere-place, self and other.

Jung described the consequences of this fracture in modern humans and how in the past and even today pre-literate peoples regarded the earth as a sacred place where the narrative of the soul was indistinguishable from the narrative of the exterior world:

> Through scientific understanding, our world has become dehumanised. 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 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 harbours 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 generates has sunk into the unconscious (Jung, CW 18, par. 585).

More recently, Robert Sardello wrote that:

> We imagine that there was a time, long ago, when human beings lived reverently in relation to the earth and the cosmos. We felt, so the story says, whole, in our place, with God at the centre and the periphery. Then the Great Disjunction happened. Matter and Spirit were split into two isolated realms. God was removed from the world and placed in His Heaven and the earth, gradually at first, and then more and more rapidly, became the great supplier of commodities, mere material substance (Sardello in Cheetham, 2005:xi).

The great religions and spiritual traditions recount this time when humankind was closer to God and nature, innocent, incorrupt in a place that we call Eden or Paradise. The Christian creation parable ends in the Fall, when a new aspect of consciousness, expressed in the feminine (Eve) or anima, challenged the established order. Carl Jung writes of this:

> The coming of consciousness was probably the most tremendous experience of primeval times, for with it a world came into being whose existence no one had suspected before. "And God said, 'Let there be light'" is the projection of that immemorial experience of the separation of consciousness from the unconscious (Jung, CW 11, par. 284).

The parable of the Fall, might now be seen in its true light as the story of the breakthrough to hominization and the emergence of human responsibility, or perhaps more accurately, irresponsibility. The banishment from Eden is the metaphorical story of the gradual evolutionary development of consciousness and sense of alienation, of being cut away from something primordial, paradisaical; a feeling now expressed through the archetypal paradigm of elsewhere-place and of our longing to return there. This event probably gave rise to mythopoeic imagination, the longing for elsewhere-place, Paradise, in fact it made Humankind aware of place; aware also, as perhaps alluded to in Plato's great myth, of the elusive 'other' (or de-centred self) that we might one day be reconciled with. Such is the narrative function within the human psyche or soul, but what is its aetiology?

"The beginnings of the art of words are hidden in a dateless past … ", so avers Sir Maurice Bowra in the preface of his monumental study into the origins of literature (Bowra, 1962:xi). He also asks his reader to surmise that in the Late Palaeolithic Age, c. 30,000-15,000 BCE, the cave painters also " … delighted in the

melodious arrangement of words" (Bowra, 1962:13). Bowra concludes that such primitive song is the basis for poetry and that:

> ...the primitive song-man feels within himself an eruptive, domineering force which he must release upon others. He wishes to exert an influence, to impose a special vision, to create in others a state of mind which is more than understanding or sympathy and implies some subordination to his will ... he wishes to dominate his hearers mentally and emotionally and force them to identify themselves with him and his subject (Bowra, 1962:254-255).

The ideas expressed by Eliade in his seminal study *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (1964), agree with those of Bowra and, further, suggest that in all probability the pre-ecstatic experience of the shaman constituted one of the universal sources of lyric poetry and mythopoeic literature (Eliade, 1964:510-511).

Chapters 7, 8 and 9 in Bowra's work: *The Human Cycle, Primitive Imagination* and *Myth and Symbol*, respectively, essentially describe the human confrontation with birth, growth, maturity, decay and death against a sense of omnipresent gods and spirits that contextualizes human life to the unseen world (Bowra, 1962:166). Bowra moves on to describe the quest of the "poetical imagination" to seek transcendent realities (Bowra, 1962:191-192), and to the acceptance of certain elements as being time-limited [mundane] while others are outside of time [paradisaical] (Bowra, 1962:218-219). This is a reflection in archaic humans of what Lewis-Williams termed the Great Transition (2002:40), the transition from *participation mystique* to egoic knowing, of the polarization of the divine and the mundane, and that has been developed, metaphorically, through the major spiritual and religious narratives of humanity, the great archetypal theme of separation and of a longing to return to a more perfect state and abode. That archetypal structuring element of polarization, of schism can be found in the works of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung and is reflected in the great philosophical traditions such as Gnosticism and Kabbalah, in fact, it seems to influence most human thought. However, it also acts as a marker for the beginning of egoic or self-reflective fantasy and reverie as a component of the human mind, and the beginning of the storytelling imperative and mythopoeic consciousness.

The great mythopoeic writers can be seen to hold this theme or motif as central to their thinking, take as an example this meditation by the writer D. H. Lawrence:

> When time began, the first individual died, the poles of the sun and the moon were flung into space, and between the two, in a strange chaos and battle, the dead body was torn and melted and smelted, and rolled beneath the feet of the living. So the world was formed, always under the feet of the living ... But beneath our feet, in our own earth, lies the intense centre of our human, individual death, our grave. The earth has one centre, to which we are all polarized. The circuit of our life is balanced on the living soul within us, as the positive centre, and on the earth's dark centre, the centre of our abiding and eternal and substantial death, our great negative centre, away below. This is the circuit of our immediate individual existence (Lawrence, 1921:158-9).

Lawrence's words " ...when time began", might well be an allusion to that period described by archaeologists, as the Middle to Upper Palaeolithic Transition (between 45,000 and 35,000 years ago) in western Europe when the Neanderthals gave way to fully modern people, the Aurignacians, our ancestors (Lewis-Williams, 2004:71). This period, Lewis-Williams' Great Transition, archaeologically termed the Magdalenian, saw the creation of cave art, the most notable examples of which can be found at Chauvet, Lascaux, Niaux and Altimira, all are strikingly similar and equally, as a whole, enigmatic. Enigmatic because we encounter one of the most profound problems of Upper Palaeolithic art research: what was the reason the Aurignacians chose the obscurity of the deep caves and what was it that their symbolic and iconographic pictographs were intended to achieve: religious expression, sympathetic magic, a tribal-social record or the cipher of some mystical, transpersonal experience? What is certain is that when the Upper Palaeolithic people descended into the obscurity of the caves they created a temenos, a sacred place. The mode of life, hunting techniques, and even the conception of the universe of the Aurignacians would have been vastly different to those held today and yet may present certain correspondences. Carl Jung described an 'archaic man', meaning not ancient but original, that lives in all of us, below the persona of modern man, and emphasised how important it is for us to remember what it is in the history of humankind we have lost (in Sabini, 2002:ix).

We cannot dismiss the cave pictographs and their creators as being of little relevance in the 21st century, for as Jung cautioned:

> It is not only primitive man whose psychology is archaic. It is the psychology also of modern, civilized man, and not merely of individual throwbacks in society. On the contrary, every civilized human being, however high his conscious development, is still an archaic man at the deeper levels of his psyche. Just as the human body connects us with the mammals and displays numerous

> vestiges of earlier evolutionary stages going back even to the reptilian age, so the human psyche is a product of evolution which, when followed back to its origins, shows countless archaic traits (Jung, CW 9(i), par. 105).

To further reinforce this important relationship with our Palaeolithic ancestor cave painters one must consider Jung's insistence that:

> It would be a ridiculous and unwarranted presumption on our part if we imagined that we were more energetic or more intelligent than the men of the past – our material knowledge has increased, but not our intelligence (Jung, CW 5, par. 23).

He later elaborated upon this and wrote that the more critical reason dominates, the more impoverished life becomes; but the more we are able to make unconscious content and mythic content conscious, the more our lives become integrated (Jung, (MDR), 1961:302).

The Great Transition also revealed another dimension, another evolving aspect of the human psyche beyond the mundane plane of existence, and that is the plane of the Imaginal Realm, the Mundis Imaginalis. An understanding of such an archaic element should allow a more sensitive interpretation of many aspects of modern history and themes present in our myths, traditions and institutions. A close examination of particular motifs in literature and certain modes of thinking allows us to see the manifestation of this archaic element throughout history at work in our everyday psychic lives. Let us begin with the cave pictographs.

2.2 The Cave Paintings and their Painters: The Dawn of Mythopoeic Sensibility.

Figure 1. The Yellow Mare pictograph at Lascaux (http://members.shaw.ca/save-wild-horses/lascaux.gif).

All those sketches left behind –
endless series of repetitions: bunches of muscles, sinews,
knuckles, joints, the entire machinery
of driving-belts and levels with which
a horse moves,

and out of thousands of hair-thin little lines, the skin
almost invisibly gently disappearing into the paper
of ears and eyelids, nostrils,
skin of the soul –

he must have wanted to find out how a horse
is made and have realised
it can't be done,

how the secret of a horse grew and grew
beneath his pencil.

Made the most splendid designs, studied them,
discarded them.
(I Cavalli di Leonardo, Rutger Kopland)

This poetic reflection on drawings by Leonardo Da Vinci written by the Dutch psychiatrist Rutger Kopland, introduces an idea that is immediately relevant to this thesis: that of artistic intent and the nature of mythopoeic consciousness, across time and culture. In all the inhabited continents of the world there are prehistoric paintings and incisions [pictographs] on sheltered rock surfaces that mark the evolution some 50,000 years ago, of a peculiarly creative mind (Mithen, 2003:3). Some are in the open air on vertical rock surfaces, like the Bradshaws in Australia, some, particularly in France, are in the entrances to caves. In some cases the pictographs may be found in subterranean caves created by people who penetrated more than a kilometre underground to make deep, seemingly secreted, images [parietal art] on the walls and ceilings of caves (Lewis-Williams, 2002:28). The images in the caves of Lascaux, Chauvet and Altimira include cave bears, cave lions, rhinoceros, bison, owls, elk and horses; many are finely rendered. The images sometimes show a use of intentional shading; an array of long rhinoceros horns suggests either a multitude of rhinos in perspective, or one, in rapid motion. A horse appears to emerge from the recesses of the cave wall, an intentional play of image and cave wall shape. In places there are panels of red dots which were made using the palm of a hand and here we can imagine the hand and its pigment pressing up against and around the cave wall, not merely making red dots, but also, perhaps,

somehow connecting the hand and the pigment with the cave wall surface (Lewis-Williams, 2002:217-8).

In some instances, there are faint finger marks; in most cases the fingers were held back so that only the palm touched the surface. All the prints are of a right hand and a bent little finger (Lewis-Williams, 2002:218), however, is now clear that these handprints are more complex and intentional than previously thought. For many years, researchers tended to regard the placement of images of different species of animals as the most important defining gesture of the patterned use of a cave. In doing so, they were following workers such as Abbé Breuil and, more especially, André Leroi-Gourhan who believed that he had found an intentional structure in the locations in which Upper Palaeolithic people placed images of, on the one hand, horses and aurochs, and, on the other, bison. Yet the placing of paint, a highly charged substance, on the membrane of the cave, was a highly significant act, dotted handprints and their colouring (red) had to suggest something more meaningful and universal in the images (Lewis-Williams, 2002:218). There are other puzzling motifs; on one small rock shelf there are finger punctuations in the soft surface and a small sliver of bone was also thrust into the clay. These are clearly meaningful 'gestures to the cave', the need to touch the rock surface, "...the membrane between people and a subterranean spirit world" (Lewis-Williams, 2002:217).

Figure 2. Hand dots in Chauvet Cave. (www.bradshawfoundation.com/ hands/chauvet.html)

Figure 3. Handprint in the cave at Pech Merle (com/ vismath1/avital/hand1.jpg)

Figure 4. Australian aboriginal handprints (www.angelfire.com/id/croon/australia/handprints.jpg)

Many of these ‘gestures to the cave’ are collective palimpsests maintained over millennia and suggest that painting was taught by one painter to another, perhaps as a ritual activity. Such superimposing or recontouring in Palaeolithic art also suggests not only that the act of making or remaking in the same place was as important as the images themselves, but also that the formula of drawing in a certain way persisted because it was part of broader patterns of behaviour, perhaps shamanism. If the painters were shamans, as many suspect (Lewis-Williams, 2002; Hancock, 2005; Pearson, 2002; and Summers, 2003) then continuity of the style must have had a meaning very different from that of art depicting immediate experiences of nature.

The Palaeolithic cave pictographs, specifically those in south-western France and Spain, have to be examined also in terms of their arrangement and distinctive content and it is really from them that the question arises of the objective of the artists and the intended effect on those who would view them. The sophistication of the images refutes the notion of a linear evolution of art from simple to complex forms; the Chauvet Cave art was produced at the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic (32,000 BCE), that is, during the Aurignacian period, the time when anatomically modern people first began to replace Neanderthals in western Europe. The pictographs at Chauvet are compositionally more intricate than in any of the other caves, consisting of intentionally complex overlapping and interspersing of animals, as well as groups of animals represented, pictorially, as receding in space. The visual sophistication of Chauvet is especially stunning when one considered that it is more than twice as old as Lascaux. With more than ten thousand years elapsing between Chauvet and Lascaux, one may well ask how could an artistic style maintain such uniformity over such a period of time? At Lascaux we have to infer a narrative from the iconography: in one section a wounded bison, its entrails spilling out, lowers its head to gore a male hunter who is rendered as a crude stick

figure and who appears to be wearing a bird-like mask or beak. A broken spear and a staff, topped by a bird, appear at the bottom of the painting. It is uncertain whether these elements are symbols or represent a name or designate something else.

At another cave site, Altimira, there is clearly some sort of interdependency between the images and the rock formations (Lewis-Williams, 2002:37), and Picasso was to say of these cave pictographs; "None of us could paint like that …" (in Lewis-Williams, 2002:31). At other caves such as Niaux, there are marks on the images that look like crudely drawn arrows. Almost all cave art contains therianthropes; part human, part animal figures along with handprints and a multiplicity of signs or geometric forms such as grids, dots and chevrons. These images and markings raise the question of why they were made, and, thus, of what they tell us about the minds of the people who made them and those who were to view them.

Leroi-Gourhan believed that such art was an expression of ideas about the natural and supernatural organisation of the living world and suggested that it might have been perceived that the two might have been one and the art to be a mythogram that carried a wide range of meanings (Lewis-Williams, 2002:63). The words "…the two might have been one," resound with the idea of the Edenic state of *participation mystique* where the human psyche was embedded in nature and thus, the cave pictographs might well be considered to reflect the quintessential expression of mythopoeic imagination emanating from a primordial period of history depicting realities distilled in the imagination of the artists.

Lewis-Williams has brought to the controversy over the meaning of the enigmatic cave pictographs a scholarly methodology and up-to-date research to hypothesize that some of the paintings were produced by shamans who aimed to fix on the underworld membrane of the cave walls what they experienced in states of altered consciousness and also suggests the adaptation of the topography of caves for arcane purposes (Lewis-Williams, 2004:80). He analyses the universal myth of the underworld, which he explains is attributable to purely neurological processes hard-wired into human consciousness, the functioning of the human nervous system in altered states of consciousness (2004:193). His detailed descriptions and rigorous interpretations do enable readers to imagine the cave walls as our ancestors might have, that is, as the membrane between themselves and the subterranean spirit world; but his insistence that any sense of the spiritual is strictly the product of

brain chemistry, and therefore utterly irrational, may strike some researchers, like me, as being too reductive.

The Aurignacians who produced and viewed the cave images were essentially modern humans, anatomically exactly like us. Until about 30,000 years ago, however, they shared their habitat with another species of human, the Neanderthals but had a more advanced neurological make-up than them (Lewis-Williams, 2004:85, 91, 205). As far as we know the Neanderthals, though their brains were as large, or even larger than ours, did not make any complex form of art. Lewis-Williams believes that this indicates that they possessed a different form of consciousness and probably a less complex language (2004:88-89). He seems to think that, at least to start with, the Aurignacians developed their art, including body painting as well as cave art, in order to emphasize their distinctness from their less advanced neighbours (2004:95, 196). Up to this point I agree with Lewis-Williams but find that his thesis is unable to address an important implication. Lewis-Williams suggests that entry into the caves constituted entry into part of the spirit world (2004:282), and that this was also a form of social control by the Aurignacians over the Neanderthals, but he fails to explain why the cave pictographs are located in such inaccessible places "… deep, often small, underground contexts to which no light penetrates and which people seem to have seldom visited" (2004:208).

In a postscript to his study Lewis-Williams offers his thoughts on what this means for us and suggests that the capacity for transcendental experience seems to be wired into our brains, but was not so in the Neanderthals. Indeed, although Lewis-Williams uses the term 'transcendental' he does so without any metaphysical or parapsychological connotation and reaches his conclusions purely on the basis of his neuropsychological model (Lewis-Williams, 2004:126-135). Even so, that 'capacity', must reflect some metaphysical constituent, a transcendence that may be seen replicated throughout history in mythopoeic literature and visual art, and in eras when public art and literature were absent, in myth and storytelling. At this point it is crucial to pause and consider certain useful examples of how these shamanic and mythopoeic transcendent capacities weave their way through the fabric of human history since they first appeared in the Palaeolithic caves thirty-five thousand years ago.

2.3 A Universal Mythopoeic Consciousness

Firstly, the therianthropic and hybrid figures in the cave pictographs seem to be a universal feature not only of rock art but also appear in mythologies around the world and throughout history and appear in the imaginal creations of people from vastly different cultures, suggesting the existence of a collective unconscious of iconic form and thematic constants. These therianthropes are, in the modality of myth, absolutely real with some kind of objective existence. Therianthropes occupy a dimension of consciousness that is special and can be seen, for example, in the religious iconography and mythology of ancient Egypt in the form of hawk-headed Horus, dog-headed Anubis, lion-headed Sekmet, crocodile-headed Sobek and ibis-headed Thoth. A similar situation may be seen in the therianthropic gods of the Central American Mayas and Aztecs. Later variations of these therianthropes and other strange creatures populated Greek myth and legend in a wide variety of monstrous forms ranging from dragons, giants, demons and ghosts, to multiformed centaurs, sphinxes and griffins.

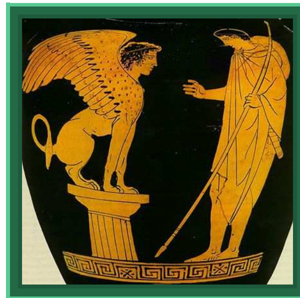

Figure 5. An ancient Greek griffin or therianthrope (http://www.theoi.com/Gallery/M18.3.html).

For example, Demeter transformed the Sirens, who became companions of the maiden goddess Persephone, into therianthropes with the heads, arms and breasts of women but with the bodies, legs and tails of birds. Sometimes they were depicted as birds with only the heads of women.

Figure 6. A siren (http://www.theoi.com/Gallery/O21.2C.html).

There were also fabulous wild beasts – such as the Nemean Lion, the golden-fleeced ram and the winged horse Pegasus. In Hindu mythology Garuda, the creature upon which Vishnu rides, is depicted as a bird of prey having a golden male body, a white face with three eyes, red wings and an eagle's beak (Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 1994:421). There were as well human manifestations of the extraordinary with fabulous tribes like the Libyan Umbrella-Foots, the one-eyed Arimaspians, and the African Dog-Heads.

The creatures described in Ezekiel I, 4-19, in the Christian Bible, have four faces, one of a human being, another a lion, then a bull and finally an eagle, and although having the likeness of a man, they were winged and the soles of their feet were those of a calf.

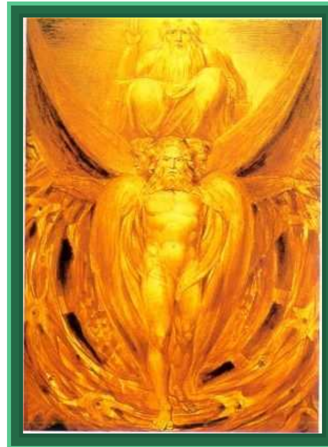

Figure 7. W. Blake. Ezekiel's vision. 1805 (www.moshereiss.org/12_ezekiel103.jpg).

A second point of interest is the way in which the idea of the cave has developed into an archetypal image, becoming a motif, across time and cultures, in the collective consciousness in literature, myth and religion. For example, Zeus was born in a cave on Mount Dikte on the Island of Crete, Apollo was born where no rays of sunlight could penetrate and the original sanctuary at Delos was a cave and, indeed, sacred caves existed throughout ancient Greece. In Palestine/Israel many sacred sites are located in grottoes; at Bethlehem the place of the manger is really a cavern, the cave of Elijah is located on Mount Carmel, the body of the crucified Jesus was taken to a cave-like sepulchre hewn out of rock. The most celebrated cave in the Holy Land is the cave of Machpelah containing the sepulchres of the three patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and according to the early Christian writers, Jesus lived with his mother in a grotto. Even in Indian mythology, Krishna

was born in a dungeon, a metaphorical cave. It is interesting to note that the Grotto (cave) of Lourdes, where so many miracle cures are reported to take place, is the site of much Upper Palaeolithic art (Bahn, 1997:58).

At this point we should be able to comprehend the Fall or Great Transition as an archetypal diametric pattern of the developed and the archaic or primitive, one that continues to repeat itself in myth and literature with each major historical-cultural movement. We can see also in the narratives of Gilgamesh and Enkidu and in other pairs like Jacob and Esau, Robinson Crusoe and Friday, Natty Bumpo and Chinachgook, Ishmael and Queequeeg, the coexistence of Homo erectus and Homo Sapiens in Central Europe during the interglacial period and later, in the coexistence of Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon. As Thompson points out, in our religious myths we announce that we have fallen from heaven to earth, and in our scientific myths we say that we have evolved from animals (Thompson, 1981:188). We have a need, an imperative of stories or mythic narratives that express the two races, the brothers of two different mothers or the loving friendship of the wild man and the civilized man, the modern and the archaic, that each one of us is.

The cave paintings confirm that the cave artists discovered another reality, one that transcended ordinary existence; that beyond the three dimensional world of daily life there was another mode of living, another dimension, the Imaginal Realm. The cave pictographs are hieroglyphics of a mode of life that embraces the inner, the outer and the imaginal. Thus, what seemed to be surface art or decoration gains an inner depth; objects and events, which were only outwardly discernable, become a vehicle of meaning and an idea, an allusion to a secret, which can be found by inner contemplation. However, the cave pictographs within the archetypal cave realm are transpersonal, esoteric and layered with not only individual but also collective meaning. They are the beginning of a visual mythology, indeed, probably the beginning of mythology, a visual syntax of the narrative between the human psyche and locale that expresses a metaphysical reality. As in the setting of much Australian aboriginal rock art, locale becomes mythic in a conceptualised sacred topography, criss-crossed by invisible entrances, dreaming tracks or song lines; a sacred geography referred to as cognised landscape by some anthropologists (Devereux, 2000:29).

David Lewis-Williams is not the only researcher to find shamanistic explanations in the cave pictographs and to explore the relationship of shamanism to other ecstatic states of consciousness, particularly those involving poesis or

mythic narratives. Eliade persued such thinking in his seminal work in 1964 and was followed by Rugley, (1993); Ryan, (1999); Pearson, (2002) and Hancock (2005). These researchers define shamanism not so much as a geographically and historically particular cultural expression, but rather as a widespread cultural genre concerning religious leaders, teachers and healers that mediate with the supernatural under altered states of consciousness. Shamanism now has to be examined to determine its relationship to mythic consciousness.

2.4 Shamanism and Shamanic Consciousness

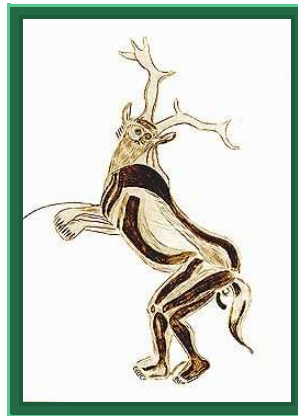

Figure 8. The famous pictograph of the therianthrope shaman from the cave of Lascaux (www.nodulu.org/ec/2005/img/n037).

A universal theme in most mythologies is that of a time when the Earth and Sky were linked by a rope, tree or mountain. Humankind and God(s) were joined [read *participation mystique*] and then came the separation, the Great Transition. Hence future contact was severed, the sky god distanced himself from immediate concern with humankind and only in death did humans return to a divine milieu. However, certain gifted individuals retained the power to ascend to heaven at will; they included kings and holy men, but above all, the shamans who by means of ecstatic trance detached themselves from the world of conscious mortality and made the now perilous ascent to heaven (Tolstoy, 1985:230).

Count Nikolai Tolstoy, son of the writer Leo Tolstoy, and himself a writer and historian, suggests that shamanism is a practice of extraordinary antiquity and may go back to the emergence of Homo sapiens (Tolstoy, 1985:229). This is a view supported by Clottes and Lewis-Williams (1998:12) from their studies of the pictograph of the so-called 'Sorcerer' or shaman (Figure 8) in the Upper-Palaeolithic

caves of Les Trois Freres in Southern France, thought to date from around 12,000 BCE. This pictograph represents a therianthropic-being dancing and re-establishes the link between god and humankind after the passing of the pre-conscious Dreaming (Tolstoy, 1985:299-230). (The concept of a Dreaming or Dreamtime is common to most preliterate peoples and is briefly examined in Chapter 7.)

Indeed, shamanism (and neo-shamanism) is not a geographically and historically limited cultural expression but rather a universal cultural genre pertaining to religious leaders and teachers, healers and those who profess to mediate with a supernatural dimension under altered states of consciousness. In shamanism a universal grammar of symbols and archetypal themes emerges that must be regarded as being more basic and essential than any locally conditioned cultural styles and can be explained only as reaching back to humankind's deepest psychological and even biological foundations. Shamanism is locally conditioned only in a secondary sense (Ryan, 1999:4).

The psyche contains many archetypal patterns that are essentially unrecognised in contemporary society but which shamans have employed for over 30,000 years to gain access to the spiritual-imaginal world. Thus, the shaman is the mediator between the individual human mind and the archetypal, transpersonal realm beyond it and which I suspect is coterminous with Corbin's Imaginal Realm of dream, vision and trance, Jung's Collective Unconscious, the Celtic Web of Wyrd, de Chardin's noosphere and even Bachelard's states of reverie. In short, there is nothing arbitrary about the evolution of shamanism; everything in it obeys the rubrics of a system, an ontological prior reality that seems to manifest out of a single point, the cave pictographs, and expands into more complex forms which later become embedded within the imaginal context of primitive song, language, religion and narrative, all of which help explain and define the tradition.

What may be identified now is a continuation of SC as a subtle tradition, one that manifests, perhaps with more intensity, in particular religions, cultures and languages, yet it also transcends them. There are also many individuals who experience its manifestation as a sudden expansion, intensity or delimitation of consciousness, or as a sudden awareness of the primal source of all being when all existence is experienced simultaneously. C. S. Lewis provides an example of this awareness; experienced as he was reading Beatrix Potter's *Squirrel Nutkin*:

> … in what I can only describe as the idea of Autumn. It sounds fantastic that one can be enamoured of a season, but that is something like what happened; and, as before, the experience

> was one of intense desire … it was something quite different from ordinary life … something as they would say now, 'in another dimension' (in Wilson, 2006:591).

Indeed, the shaman perceives a world of total aliveness, in all parts personal, in all parts sentient and aware and responsive, in all parts capable of being known and being used and so the shaman's knowledge enables her or him to serve as a bridge between ordinary reality and transpersonal realms. The shaman experiences ecstatic altered states of consciousness and travels to non-ordinary realities in order to divine and heal, to communicate with the spirits of the dead and to perform other supernatural feats but primarily to bring about a heightened awareness in their audience whether that is an individual or group. The perception of such phenomena has also been the basis of an argument that suggests it is a form of schizophrenia (Kalweit, 1987:210-211, 218). The obligatory shamanic initiation, involving suffering and revelation and which may involve bilocation and audiovoyance, would be seen as a clinical manifestation of disease rather than an altered or heightened state of consciousness; albeit, that it is a state experienced by all of the participants cited in this research.

The word 'shaman' has very specific origins being derived from the Tungus-Mongul noun *saman,* which means 'one who knows' (Hancock, 2005:173). The term 'shamanism' entered Western languages as a result of early anthropological reports and was applied to indigenous spiritual and religious systems in many countries. Mircea Eliade in his 1964 seminal work, previously cited, synthesizes the approaches of psychology, sociology and ethnology, and writes about various shamanisms; Siberian, North American, South American, Indonesian, Oceanian, and African (Eliade, 1951:xi), and elsewhere documents shamanism among the aboriginal tribes of Australia (Eliade, 1964:31,45,85,108), and identifies shamanic symbolisms and techniques in India, Tibet, China and the Far East (Eliade, 1964:424-465). Although shamanism is universal and primal and can be traced to many ancient cultures, in some cases it has assumed the more sophisticated form of an organized religion. Shamans flourished in both ancient Egypt and Israel and it has been argued by some scholars that among the early Semites, that in their rites of initiation, ecstatic frenzy and poetic mode of utterance, the Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament were true shamans (Guillaume, 1938:243-259, and Rowley, 1963:4-5,14-15).

We are told in the Midrash, a collection of biblical exegesis, the story of Joseph, interpreter of dreams and of his coat of many colours. Various scholars, including Beatrice Brooks, W.F. Albright, Joseph Henderson and Maud Oakes, have suggested that Joseph's coat may have marked him as a gender variant priest of the Goddess, Athirat, the garment perhaps not even being a coat but a wedding dress belonging to his mother, Rachel, who may well have been a priestess of the Goddess (Henderson and Oakes, 1990:20). Henderson and Oakes, following the idea of psychologist Eric Neumann, point out that both Joseph's experience in the pit at the hands of his brothers and his interpretation of the dream of the seven lean cattle and seven fat cattle (Genesis, 37:18–27 and 41:1-34) may be linked to the shamanic underworld journey undertaken by the Goddess, Athirat and her consort, El (Neumann, 1970:70-72, 134).

We read also that Abraham built an altar and waited to hear the voice of God, Moses heard God speak from a burning bush, Jacob practiced sympathetic magic and wrestled with an archangel, Samuel foretold the future and Solomon is said to have used magic incantations (Pritchard, 1969:52-57,97-99,107-109, and Aune, 1983:86-87). In the Talmud, Solomon is reckoned to have been the mightiest magician [shaman] of his age, a sorcerer-king whose wisdom is attributed to his possession of an enchanted ring with which he summoned the demons of the Earth (Gardner, 2000:12). Indeed, ecstatic revelations and visions are an integral part of the Judeo-Christian tradition that stretches back to Old Testament times and rhythmical music and other typically shamanistic aids to ecstasy recur as the technique of Old Testament prophets; the dance that David performed before the ark was particularly vigorous, perhaps frenzied (2 Samuel, 6: 5, 16-21). Indeed, 1 Chronicles, 16:4-42 credits David with the invention of the entire musical system of the Temple in Jerusalem but which might be read also as a description of rhythmic shamanic ecstasy. Tim Wallace-Murphy and Marilyn Hopkins add to this list of shamans Melchizedek, Elijah and in ancient Greece Pythagoras, Plato, Socrates and Aristotle and even Confucius for the Chinese (Wallace-Murphy, et al, 1999:42-43).

Andrew Collins argues that shamanism lies behind the foundation of the Hebsed-jubilee festival conducted by the Horus kings of Ancient Egypt, a ritual that was said to have taken place since the 'Time of the Ancestors' (Collins, 1998:188). If his observations are correct, then we are left with the distinct possibility that some of the divine inhabitants of Wetjeset-Neter, a sacred, mythical realm and its environs, were bird shamans who associated themselves with the falcon and

adorned themselves in garments of feathers. If true, then it would also mean that some semblance of this shamanic tradition was later inherited by the Horus kings of Heliopolis, who felt it important to continue incorporating garments of imitation feathers into their jubilee festivals right through to Pharaonic times. Furthermore, it is probable that the Shemsu-hor, the Followers of Horus, the hawk-headed god, were direct descendants of the Elder antediluvian shaman gods, therianthropic deities such as the falcon figure named 'Lord of the Perch', who resided in a place enigmatically named " ... the place in which things of the earth are filled with power" (Collins, 1998:176-177, 186). Collins also points out, more significantly, that the earliest evidence of writing has come to light in the form of a series of pictogram carvings, unearthed in the Upper Euphrates of northern Syria which consist of lines, arrows and animals, the same symbols described by Lewis-Williams in his neuro-psychological model of shamanism, cited earlier, and are believed to date back 10,000 years which would make them an intermediary between Palaeolithic cave art and more modern forms of writing (Collins, 1998:222).

In an earlier work, Collins argues that the Dead Sea Scrolls provided new material on the nature of these Elder Gods suggesting that the angels, serpents and 'Watchers' of the Old Testament were, in fact, these early shamans (Collins, 1996:46-49). It is not difficult to see the shamanic connections with later Greek traditions and myths such as that of Icarus and his fatal flight too near the sun; indeed, Harold Bloom suggests that Pythagoras, Empedocles and Orpheus were Greek shamans (Bloom, 1996:137).

Other researchers have traced a sacred shamanic tradition back into the depths of history. The Rosi-crucis emblem is recorded as far back as 3500 BCE in Mesopotamia and is said to be the original and longest standing mark of sovereignty, identifying a sacred culture retained in the Messianic line of David (Gardner, 2000:3-7), and whose members' sacred temperament was symbolised by the wearing of shamanic swan-feather cloaks, this wing-like garb leading to the artistic portrayal of angels and their ability to transcend the human condition (Gardner, 2000:28-9).

Dr. Brian Bates' research into shamanism and sorcery in England's Dark Ages has revealed a world in which the Anglo Saxon sorcerer [shaman] lived and worked and where " ... there thrived a powerful tradition of sorcery and mysticism", where individual sorcerers practiced healing and divination, presided over worship rituals and festivals and sometimes served as advisers to the kings (Bates, 1983:11).

Bates explains that the Middle-Earth sorcerer lived out a view of life termed *wyrd*: a way of being which transcends our present conventional notions of free will and determinism, and which like all expressions of shamanism has resonance in the most important ideas of Jung, de Chardin, Corbin and Sheldrake but also the principle of interdependence espoused in quantum mechanics, all of which perhaps have their aetiology in the Imaginal Realm.

Indeed, the beliefs, rituals and practices of the Druids have a great deal in common with those of the early Hebrew prophets and other esoteric groups in ancient Israel and some scholars imply not only common practices but also common racial, religious and esoteric roots. Tim Wallace-Murphy and Marilyn Hopkins cite two instances in support of this theory: the first, a comment by Sir Norman Lockyer who was amazed at the similarities and the second, an Assyrian inscription declaring that the correct pronunciation of the most sacred name of God among the Semitic people was Ya'u or Yahu and which is the same pronunciation in Welsh (Wallace-Murphy and Hopkins, 1999:43). Posidonius, the Classical Greek philosopher, said that Abaris, a Druid, was one of the principal teachers of Pythagoras, the Greek philosopher and mathematician, who in turn influenced not only Socrates, Plato and Aristotle but, according to the poet and mythologist Robert Graves, the Essenes (in Wallace-Murphy and Hopkins, 1999:44). The Essenes are a particularly interesting group within Palestinian Judaism because of the similarity of some of their rites with those of the ancient Egyptian priesthood (Bloom, 1996:177).

Harold Bloom observes that ritual androgynization is one of the roots of shamanism and that male shamans turn female and female, male, in what may be a variant upon the shamanistic art of bilocation and, interestingly, that in Gnosticism, the primal Abyss is called both Foremother and Forefather, and the Gnostic original Adam, Anthropos, is actually an androgyn (Bloom, 1996:143). Bailey also asserts that shamans were often transvestites or had undergone a gender change and that shamanic androgenization may have been the result of a powerful Mother Goddess cult, extant among northern Eurasian peoples, presided over by a triad of goddesses; Mother Earth, Mother Water and Mother Fire. In such a case, the shaman identifies with the feminine solar principle, concentrating all aspects of the elements and the environment into one being; the harsher the environment, the more intense and mystical the representation from the shaman who was then more able to conduct spiritual intercourse between the members of his tribe and the

spirits who controlled their fates. So-called medicine men serve a similar function and are comparable to the Apollonine oracles of Ancient Greece (Bailey, 1998:170).

On the issue of gender variation, Eliade notes that:

> ... among the Araucanians, shamanism is practiced by women; in earlier times, it was the prerogative of sexual inverts [homosexuals]. A like situation is found among the Chukchee: the majority of shamans are inverts and sometimes even take husbands; but even when they are sexually normal their spirit guides oblige them to dress as women (Eliade, 1951:125).

Eliade goes on to explain:

> There is a class of Chukchee shamans who undergo a change of sex. They are the 'soft men' or men 'similar to women', who receiving a command from the ke let [spirit], have exchanged their male clothing and behaviour for those of women and have even finally married other men. Usually, the ke let's bidding is obeyed only in part: the shaman dresses as a woman, but he continues to cohabit with his wife and to have children.... Ritual transformation into a woman also occurs among the Kamchadal, the Asiatic Eskimo, and the Koryak ... the phenomenon is not confined to north-eastern Asia; transvestitism and ritual change of sex are found, for example, in Indonesia (the manang bali of the Sea Dyak), in South American (Patagonians and Araucanians) and, among certain North American tribes (Arapaho, Cheyenne, Ute, etc.) (Eliade, 1951:257-258).

An interesting cross-cultural and historical examination by Conner on gender-variant shamans, priests, magicians and artists, describes an engraved drawing which appears on a wall of the Addayra cave near Palermo, Sicily and which was executed around 10,000 B.C.E., the drawing:

> ... is undoubtedly one of the most provocative works of Upper Palaeolithic art ... depicts a group of superbly drawn bird-masked male figures engaged in a ritual drama and who were probably ... participants in rituals [dedicated to the] Goddess. From the bird masks, it appears that the men may have been honouring that aspect of the Great Goddess now referred to as the Bird Goddess. The bird-masked men are dancing in a circle. They are nude except for the masks, thick with plumage, which they wear. Their genitals are visible. At least two of the men have erections (Conner, 1993:23). [Tumescence is frequently seen as an indication of an altered state of consciousness.]

Harold Bloom explains that shamanism is not a religion but a series of modes of ecstasy, some of which may be starting points for the experience of Gnosis, for a knowing in which the knower herself is deeply known, a reciprocity of deep self and tutelary spirit (Bloom, 1996:143). Here Bloom also avers that another

thread, the ancient, charismatic praxis of shamanism is essentially, in the ancient Gnostic sense, that one's deepest self is not part of the Creation, but is as old as God, being a spark or particle of God (Bloom, 1996:165). ... we are fragments of what once was a fullness [*participation mystique*], the Pleroma, as the ancient Gnostics called it (Bloom, 1996:226).

2.5 Gnosticism

Gnosticism is definable in various ways; it is both Christian and pre-Christian. One definition recognizes it as the heresy that arose out of Christianity in the second century and then died out. The other can be seen in the work of the Jungian, Robert Segal, who points out that the political philosopher and Gnostic scholar Eric Voegelin believed that modern Gnosticism informed such movements as progressive positivism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, communism, fascism and national socialism; all of which are founded on the Gnostic attitude that essentially reflects the postmodern preoccupation with immediate consciousness of reality and " ... its opposition to the world," in brief, a radical alienation of human beings from the world (Segal, 1992:4). Those movements cited share with Gnosticism six characteristics: dissatisfaction with the world, confidence that the ills of the world stem from the way it is organized, certainty that amelioration is possible, the assumption that improvement must evolve historically, the belief that humanity can change the world and, the conviction that knowledge, gnosis, is the key to change (Segal, 1992:4-5).

The discovery of the Nag Hammadi (scrolls) established that Gnosticism was pre-Christian in its belief in the antithetical dualism of immateriality, which is good, and matter, which is evil. Gnosticism espouses the same dualism reflected in human beings, the cosmos and divinity: the primordial unity of all immateriality; the yearning to restore that unity; the present entrapment of a portion of immateriality in human beings; the need for knowledge to reveal to humans that entrapment. In its modern expression Gnosticism constitutes the belief in the alienation of human beings from their true selves. (Segal, 1992:4)

Harold Bloom, a devoted student of Gnosis both ancient and modern, ponders over the " ... recurrent images of human spirituality" that have their own persistence and testify to " ... a transcendent frontier that marks either a limit to the human, or a limitlessness that may be beyond the human" (Bloom, 1996:11). Here

he insinuates the suprasensible world that is neither the empirical world of the senses nor the abstract world of the intellect: the Imaginal Realm. Indeed, throughout history both Western and Eastern literary traditions have exhibited elements of gnostic, hermetic and mystical or talismanic magic, the latter being a belief that words arranged in a particular way are capable of invoking and concentrating occult or cosmic energies. More generally, the writers of such literature espouse a certain attitude toward life. This attitude may be said to consist of the conviction that direct, personal and absolute knowledge of the authentic truths of existence is accessible to human beings, and, moreover, that the attainment of such knowledge must always constitute the supreme achievement of human life.

This knowledge, or gnosis, is not thought of as rational knowledge of a scientific kind, or even as philosophical knowledge of truth, but rather a knowing that arises in the heart in an intuitive and mysterious manner and therefore is called in at least one Gnostic writing, 'the knowledge of the heart' (Hoeller, 1982:11). This is a mystical-religious concept that emphasizes interior insight and transformation and is really a process of depth psychology. Its early practitioners, identified by Harold Bloom throughout the pages of his *Omens of Millennium* (1996), include Michelangelo Buonarroti, Shakespeare, Spenser, Dante Alighieri, William Blake, Goethe and Balzac and, more recently, Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, Thomas Mann, Herman Hesse, Robert Musil, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence and W.B. Yeats. Segal recognizes as Gnostic Emerson, Melville, Byron, Conrad, Weil, Stevens, Singer, Kerouac, and Pynchon (Segal, 1992:4). Bloom, in fact, suggests that from Valentinus, and his influence upon the Christian Gnostic literature, through the German Romantic poet Novalis, the French Romantic Nerval, and the English William Blake, Gnosticism has been indistinguishable from imaginative genius and that it is pragmatically, " ... the religion of literature" (Bloom, 2002:xviii). Indeed, one may well be persuaded of the Gnostic inference of Bruno Bettleheim's suggestion that Sigmund Freud, throughout his psychoanalytic writings, discussed literature in an attempt to appeal to his readers' intuition, to engage them in both an unconscious and conscious understanding, often quoting Goethe, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche maintaining that they knew everything that needs to be known about the unconscious (Bettelheim, 1983:38).

2.6 From Hermeticism through Sufism to Romanticism

It would be remiss not to include some observations regarding Hermeticism in relation to shamanism since it continues the premise of interconnectedness, applying not only to 'above and below' but to macrocosm and microcosm. Hermeticism appears to have been a pagan religious movement in Hellenistic Alexandria in the first century and it embodies the original Greco-Egyptian doctrine of Hermes (Bloom, 1996:176).

The Hermetica (texts) and the writings of Egyptian priests such as Chaeremon and Iamblichus articulate in Greek terms the efficacy of ritual utterance and gesture, and most significantly, the power of images and places, the relationship between an incomprehensible Divinity and the gods of traditional devotion, ultimately merging with Christian and Gnostic texts (Assmann and Frankfurter, 2004:161). It is here that Hermeticism's aetiology in much earlier traditions, but clearly the shamanic-Judaic tradition of ancient Israel, may be discerned. In Hermeticism, as in Hebrew and in the later Judaic Kabbalah, sounds, words, even individual letters, can be the equivalent of storage cells, repositories charged with a form of divine or magical power. In general, the Hermetical approach is that of a mystical mode of thought, one that repudiates codified dogma, the interpretative necessity and mediating authority of priests and, even the rational intellect as the supreme means of cognition of reality and thus has correspondences to shamanism.

Remnants of the shamanic tradition can also be found in the religion of Islam that began in Arabia in the 7th century CE. In areas where Islam overlapped with shamanism, the Sufis, practitioners of the mystical tradition of Islam, adopted certain shamanic techniques, among which trance and mystical experiences were of key importance and in some instances shamans entered, or identified with, Sufi monasteries (Price, 2001:72). Prior to this, in the second and third centuries CE, Christians, some with gnostic and mystical inclinations, fled the persecution of the Romans and took refuge in high mountain caves in Lebanon and Iraq; Oueijan asserts that they are mentioned in Sufi stories, poetry and pre-Islamic literature and, indeed, that the word Sufi derives from the woollen garments which these mystics wore (Oueijan, 1999:4).

In turn, Romanticism was strongly influenced by Sufism, augmented by its fascination with Orientalism (Oueijan, 1999:67-113) and in this influence we can

perceive analogies with the post-*participation mystique* mindset following the breakdown of the bicameral mind, of a more original, individual nature that was an integral part of the primeval whole. The Romantics attempted to transcend the apparent or sensate to reveal the mystery of a hidden reality; something that transcended ordinary perception and led to an apprehension of the Universal. The Romantics, like the Sufis, sought the experience of real existence and identity in the all consuming power of the Universe and its Creator; love, knowledge, illumination, ecstasy and reconciliation are keywords in Romantic poetry and philosophy. They were undoubtedly impelled by the devastating events of the Napoleonic wars and the dehumanizing effects of the Industrial Revolution; indeed, Wordsworth, Keats and particularly Blake, the acknowledged mystic of the Romantics, feared enslavement by the prevailing doctrines unless new philosophies were created (Abrams, 1973:65-70).

The new philosophy espoused by the Romantics to counter the perceived impending calamity was essentially one of transcendent mysticism undoubtedly influenced by their knowledge and appreciation of Sufi mysticism and its similarities with their own transcendent perspective. Indeed, almost all of the Sufi mystics were poets (Oueijan, 1999:6). John Carman's criteria are useful in appreciating this common view and comprise: a particular ontology, in accord with the mystic's insight, usually either monotheistic or theistic; an immediacy or intensity of experience not present in other forms of religion; and a separation from the physical, from ordinary social life, from ordinary forms of consciousness (Carman. 1983:192).

The Sufis believed in the Unity of Being, a concept which both appealed to the Romantics and was reflected in their work; for example, Blake's idea of The Universal Man, Wordsworth's 'holy marriage', Coleridge's reconciliation theory, Byron's celebration of the Universe and its elements, Shelley's view of the infinite, and Keats' perception of universal harmony are all, to some degree, analogous to the Sufi Unity of Being (Oueijan, 1999:6). Of course, Romanticism still exerts a significant influence on literary consciousness to this day, which causes one to consider whether Romanticism is a moderate form of Sufism or whether Sufism an early form of Romanticism. Whatever the case, it does show, even indirectly, that MLC, even in spite of demographic, geographic and historic factors, reveals common concerns in a unified nexus.

2.7 The Imaginal Realm and Mythopoeic Thought

In the ninth century, the Islamic historian Tabari described a strange region, a country of the imagination, the *Earth of the Emerald Cities* (Bloom, 1996:148). Following on in the twelfth century, Al-Suhrawardi, Shihab al-Din Yahya (1154-91 C.E.), became a pivotal figure in the link between Gnosticism and Islamic mysticism, founder of a new school of philosophy in the Muslim world, the school of Illuminationist philosophy (hikmat al-ishraq). The most original feature of Al Suhrawardi's thought is his interpretation of Platonic Ideas in terms of Zoroastrian angels but more importantly he also elaborated the idea of an independent, intermediary world, the imaginal world, alam al-mithal (Avens, 2003:131).

Next is the medieval Sufi master Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240 C.E.) whose influence on the general development of Sufism can hardly be overrated and whose writings for Sufis after the thirteenth century constitute the apex of mystical theories. Ibn 'Arabi's thinking encompasses God, the cosmos and humankind and in his work we meet an immensity requiring a spiralling upward and outward, downward and inward until there is deepening understanding of all three interconnected realities (Lewis, 2000:25). Ibn 'Arabi presents a world that is fluid and ever changing, one that may be seen literally but also imaginally. The world of Ibn 'Arabi is one of mystery and miracles, shamanic-like phenomena and shape shifting. In the image from one of Rumi's poems, Ibn 'Arabi moves " … back and forth across the doorsill where the two worlds touch" and, indeed, the two poets would seem to share a belief in the existence of an imaginal world (Lewis, 2000:285).

At around the same time the Italian, Dante Aligheri (1265-1321 C.E.), wrote his great shamanic-cosmic vision as a poetic trilogy: *Hell, Purgatory and Paradise.* Taken on a shaman-like journey to Paradise, Dante is enlightened by divine revelation, taken through the hierarchy of nine heavens and then guided by the great contemplative mystic, Bernard of Clairvaux, towards the beatific vision, to discern the whole universe in God; a literal description of a state of shamanic *participation mystique*.

Perhaps the most visible example of the emergence of a mythopoeic text occurred in the year 1499 C.E. with the anonymous publication of the most extraordinary book of the Italian Renaissance, the enigmatic, polyglot

Hypnerotomachia Poliphili (roughly translated as *Strife of Love in a Dream*). Part fictional narrative and part scientific treatise, attributed to both Leon Battista Alberti and to the monk Francesco Colonna, the book is an extreme case of erotic furore, aimed at everything that the protagonist, Poliphilo, encounters in his quest for his beloved, Polia. It has been called the first stream-of-consciousness novel, and is one of the most important documents of Renaissance imagination and fantasy because it is a picture of the Middle Ages just beginning to evolve into modern times by way of the Renaissance, a transition between two eras, and therefore deeply interesting. It is also interesting because this is one of the early *incunabula*, a book printed in the first fifty years after the printing press and still surviving today. From the uncertainty of its author and its difficult title to its baffling prose, it is one of the most fascinating books ever created. The original text includes a pandemonium of unruly sentences in Tuscan, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Chaldean, and also hieroglyphs. On some pages, the text makes use of technopaegnia, the artistic shaping of the text into images, in this case in the form of goblets and drinking vessels. Jung said of it:

> The book [Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia*] was rightly regarded as a mystery text. With this anima, [the Lady Polia?] then, we plunge straight into the ancient world ... Hence, any allusion to alchemy wafts one back to the ancient world and makes one suspect regression to pagan levels (Jung, CW 12, par. 112).

The Renaissance in Europe also was a significant mark in the evolution of mythopoeic consciousness. It was not only the age of the voyages of the great Portuguese-Spanish navigators; Columbus, da Gama and Magellan, whereby humankind became aware of the limited purview of the world it had hitherto entertained prior to the fifteenth century, for there followed an imaginatively fired desire to explore both the outer and inner worlds; a new desire had awoken in human consciousness, or rather, an old one had re-awoken.

2.8 The Disenchantment and the New Enchantment

From the time of Bacon and Descartes, Hobbes and Locke and with great intensity following the Enlightenment, the modern world became, literally, disenchanted, what once pervaded the world as *anima mundi* was now attributed to human consciousness, and the relationship between the inner and the outer became

even more polarised. Nevertheless, some remnants of the mythic meta-narrative survived. Romanticism was seen as the bridge from the twelfth century to the nineteenth and during most of the nineteenth century, psychology to the extent that it was deemed a legitimate sphere of study at all, existed as a mere peripheral adjunct of neurology and psychological problems were generally attributed to a disorder of the nerves. However, Harold Bloom suggests that Freud was the most powerfully suggestive mythmaker of the twentieth century in imagining a new map of the human mind; a mythologising dramatist of the inner life who, in a proposed lineage, is fourth in line after Plato, Montaigne, and Shakespeare (Bloom, 1999:162-163).

Until the emergence of psychology as an autonomous discipline, the writer and the psychologist were, in effect, synonymous. When it did emerge, its founders invariably invoked as their precursors such figures as Sophocles, Shakespeare, Goethe, Balzac, Stendhal and Dostoyevsky. James Hillman suggests that in all countries into which psychoanalysis has penetrated it has been better understood and applied by writers and artists than by doctors and, further, that according to Freud, psychoanalysis fuses together, though changed into scientific jargon, the three greatest literary schools of the nineteenth century: Heine, Zola and Mallarme (Hillman, 1983:3). He avers that modern day depth psychology is a psychology that " ... assumes a poetic basis of mind" which he defines as " ... the persuasive power of imagining in words" (Hillman, 1983:4).

The nineteenth century also witnessed the emergence of certain individuals whose ideas re-establish within the meta-narrative a mythopoeic approach to the human psyche and spirituality. Two in particular, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) and Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) make an especial contribution. Teilhard de Chardin's formative years were spent as a stretcher-bearer on the western front throughout the Great War (1914-1919) and what must be seen as his epiphany or initiation came on the battlefield, as it did for the American poet Walt Whitman. Jung's moment of truth came in 1913 when he broke with Sigmund Freud, after which he was able to develop his ideas about the collective unconscious and archetypes. Also the work of William James, along with Jung and de Chardin and others, revealed a vaster and more mysterious inner universe. Jung's revelation of the collective unconscious and synchronicity, de Chardin's Noosphere and James' religious phenomenon reflected a rapprochement between the Romantic quasi-mystical tradition and the Enlightenment's mechanistic and impersonal universe.

Finally, during the twentieth century contemporary literary proponents of mythopoeic thought emerged; literary greats such as Carlos Fuentes, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Thomas Pynchon and Michael Tournier (Baigent and Leigh, 1997:xx). Their writing exhibits the unique and distinguishing features of the Gnostic genre, the most important of which is a recognition of something hidden, something non-physical, a psychic elsewhere but which constitutes an isomorphism with the material world. These women and men, whose work reflects this meta-narrative, I call mythopoeic writers. It is their work and this meta-narrative that we must now examine, empirically and textually in Part II and by way of extended discussion and elaboration in Part III.

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Prospero and his enchanted wand.

PART II

PROSPERO'S BOOKS: EMPIRICAL AND TEXTUAL RESEARCH

> Now I arise.
> Sit still, and hear the last of our sea-sorrow.
> Here in this island we arrived, and here
> Have I thy schoolmaster made thee more profit
> Than other princes can, that have more time
> For vainer hours and tutors not so careful.
> (Prospero to Mirander as he puts on his magic cloak. *The Tempest,* I,ii,170).

The figure of Prospero in *The Tempest* sits well as a motif in this thesis because within the whole Shakespearean corpus it is Prospero who comes closest to being a shaman. A physician of souls, from the beginning of the tale, Prospero reveals his purpose: "This swift business I must uneasy make, lest too light winning make the prize light ..." (I, ii, 453), and, like the writer, he exercises his power to reveal eternal truths.

The Tempest is a paradigmic, albeit Gnostic, portrayal of all women and men under the influence of instinctive and divine knowledge. It is about modes of ecstasy and also moral judgements emanating from above and below the levels of ordinary consciousness, discovered through figures of the air (imagination) and earth (place). It is about exile (Prospero's exile is metaphorically also to an interior place) and elemental forces, where the spirit, Ariel, represents the imagination and Caliban represents the archetypal primitive archaic man. Indeed, the play and its characters serve as metaphors for my research, both empirical and textual. Like Prospero, the mythopoeic writer is an enchanter and like him their fantasy images and places are constructions, models for a possible realm which can only come into existence with the contrivance of an Ariel, in this case, the reader, for Ariel is

Imitation itself, he is whatever Prospero wills; an instrument of the creative imagination.

Prospero's books describe a universe composed of four spheres through which the soul passes in its progress to God: the realm of earth (mortal life), water (the dead), air, and ether. These elements together form the *spiritus mundi,* the soul of the earth and the self (Jung, CW 9(ii), par. 393-400). We might well find in *Prospero's Books* a cosmos analogous to Corbin's Imaginal Realm of the Sufis and also discern the soul's advance from its projected manifestation in the cave wall pictographs to the realm of mythopoeic literature.

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CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1 Methodology

In the previous chapter, I pointed to the possibility that mythopoeic consciousness evolved out of the original psychic state of *participation mystique* initially shamanic, and that remnants or expressions of that consciousness could be seen in various manifestations throughout history and up to the present time. That archaic form of mythic or mythopoeic consciousness with a narrative modality is allied to the Imaginal Realm identified by the Sufi mystics and carried through by the Romantics, who acted as a bridge to the present time. This narrative psyche produces an undercurrent that feeds the human psyche.

The evidence presented in Chapter 2 suggests that if shamanism is given a less restricted cultural, historical and geographic definition then it could explain particular altered states of consciousness such as MLC and its aetiology could be linked to concepts such as the Imaginal Realm of the Sufi mystics, the collective unconscious of Jung and the noosphere of de Chardin.

This chapter will consider the combination of empirical and textual research undertaken to bring to light contemporary expressions of this archaic consciousness. The research is directed at questions such as:

1. To what degree is mythopoeic deep writing and deep reading reflective of an altered state of consciousness, specifically the shamanic state of consciousness?
2. Do certain mythopoeic writers, and their readers habitually enter an altered state of consciousness?
3. Is such a state accessible only to what I identify as mythopoeic writers and their readers?
4. If so, what is it in their nature or background that makes them susceptible and responsive to such an altered state of consciousness?
5. How do these individuals access such a state of consciousness?
6. What is the relationship of these factors to place and what then is revealed about the real nature and dimension of place; is it constant or dynamic?

7. In what way does the immediacy of place affect our psychological and spiritual existence?

3.2 Research Design

The overall approach to the research was to use a combination of empirical and textual research; the empirical research involved in the administration and analysis of a questionnaire to a group of selected readers, writers and shamans, whilst the textual research was formed through interrogation and thematic analysis of various works of the selected authors and other published writers.

Structurally, I believed that I needed a qualitative survey involving specific types of individuals and that the most effective approach would be to compose and administer a common questionnaire to all of them. Such a questionnaire would have to be unambiguous and yet reveal not only highly personal but somewhat esoteric values on the part of the respondent. It also had to be couched in such a way to allow the respondents to choose not to answer certain questions but yet not feel discomfited. It had to facilitate an elaboration on responses yet at the same time accommodate an approach that was inclusive and acceptable to the three distinct groups of individuals on which the research was focused: specific types of readers; published writers (mythopoeic writers) of fictive literature and, creditable, practicing, acknowledged shamans. Indeed, the term 'creditable' needed to apply to all respondents in the sense that they could be presumed to have well founded reason for any contentious metaphysical theories they might hold and not risk being dismissed as foolish.

3.3 The Research Group

The first stage involved identifying respondents to the readers' questionnaire and I was fortunate in being able to recruit five readers as subjects who seemed to provide an appropriate balance in terms of gender, age (it ranged from thirty years to mid-sixties), educational background (completion of secondary education only to post-graduate qualifications), and socio-economic background (outer-urban, daughter of an Anglican bishop to cosmopolitan single male). The group comprised two female teachers of English literature, a male teacher of English literature and

French language, a male community arts and diversional-therapy youth worker, and a male flight attendant.

I had previously worked with the two female teachers, both very senior teachers, for many years and was often amazed by the depth and extent of their reading and the intense delight it gave them. The male English teacher became a friend after we met at a meeting of the Australian Transpersonal Association in Sydney and, he too, revealed himself to be an avid reader; one with a distinct inclination to classical European literature but I was also fascinated by his avowed and somewhat ironic scepticism of the paranormal. I had also worked with the community-arts youth-worker who fascinated me with his intense creative drive and energy besides his enormous knowledge of a wide range of literature. The flight attendant was a member of a reading group who wrote me and completed a research questionnaire following a suggestion by the convenor of the group who knew of my research work. This seemed to be an excellent group with which to investigate the extent to which concentrated reading, of what I defined as mythopoeic literature, facilitates an altered state of imaginal consciousness that has archaic or archetypal elements.

The second phase of the research involved administering a slightly modified version of the questionnaire to three published authors and two shamans. The authors were David Malouf, Thomas Keneally and Colleen McCullough and I also interrogated selected writings of these writers to clarify specific aspects of their responses that may have needed elaboration through reference to their work.

With regard to the empirical research and the identity and number of writers selected; they were chosen because the three authors exemplified best the type of mythopoetic author that I was studying. All three are prominent in the Australian literary scene and have spoken publicly about the significance of the role of the author. I selected only three writers because of the methodological importance of depth rather than a shallow coverage of many authors. As will be seen, the combination of textual analysis of their very substantial oeuvre and analysis of their responses to the questionnaire generated a very considerable amount of qualitative data. With regard to the shamans and readers the same determinant, worth rather than number, was paramount.

It must also be noted that Thomas Keneally preferred to be interviewed over the telephone rather than complete the questionnaire that was sent to him. I readily agreed to his suggestion, considering that it could enable more of his

reflection on the mythopoetic authorial process. And indeed, as we each anticipated, it provided deeper and richer responses overall.

The shamans were Maureen Roberts, a practicing psychotherapist, university lecturer and PhD from South Australia and Rebbe Yonassan Gershom, Director of the Jewish Fellowship in Minneapolis, USA, both of whom have publicly declared themselves as shamans.

I believed that the research also needed to incorporate a less structured aspect to act not only as a verification tool and comparative measure but to facilitate the serendipitous. This was achieved by selecting specific questions or themes from the research questionnaire and informally discussing them with qualified individuals such as Dr. Leonard Schlain, a published American physician whose interests and research compliment those pursued in this thesis. Some responses were also received from individuals who were found from within the membership of Jung Circle, an internet chat site that facilitates online discussion of Jungian and related topics. In posting the questions to that forum the fundamental criterion stipulated was that any respondent had to be enthusiastic readers of serious fiction, familiar with various literary genres, styles and authors. The meagre numbers of responses received were, although general and submitted under pseudonyms, later found to reinforce or confirm the more specific responses of the research group. Finally, I interrogated a wide range of mythopoeic literature. I have integrated the invaluable findings from this unstructured research into the subsequent sections of the thesis.

3.4 The Questionnaire

I designed a questionnaire covering four broad but relevant areas, randomly ordered and sometimes repeated in disguised form throughout twenty-two questions, somewhat in the manner of the Kiersey Temperament Test where repetition acts to confirm specific tendencies. There are focus questions (question numbers 1, 2, and 5) that were intended to elicit a direct response whilst at the same time focusing the respondent's attention on the questionnaire task. The next are personality type questions (question numbers 3, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11) intended to identify a phantasy-receptive-type personality because I wanted to investigate whether phantasy proneness, particularly in childhood, increases the likelihood of MLC experiences and potential in both the adult reader and mythopoeic writer,

respectively. Next were place questions (questions 4, 6, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 22), which allowed the respondents to express ideas about how place in literature, and place generally has affected them. Questions 12 and 13 were designed to permit the respondents to make more self-determined, reflective responses, thereby ensuring the validity of the interpretation of their responses. Question 15 is an open question intended to elicit any additional information that the respondent may have cared to offer, encouraging a spontaneous validity of the exercise. Questions 14,16, and 21 also served to confirm the fantasy-receptive-type personality but allowed for depth-psychological answers or responses that might identify transpersonal elements. The questions were altered only to accommodate the self-identified status as shamans and for the writers but in every other respect paralleled the Readers' Questionnaire. The writers were asked two additional questions, 22 and 23, to determine their perceptions of a reader's experience and about their own intentions in writing.

The questionnaire cover sheet explained to the respondents that I wanted to investigate whether mythopoeic writers sometimes enter, in their creative reverie, an altered state of consciousness similar to that experienced by shamans. I was also interested in whether there is a particular type of reader who is more receptive to such literature that results from a state of altered consciousness; MLC. It was further explained that the reason why the questionnaire included questions concerning childhood illnesses and reading habits was to determine the potential of the respondent to phantasy-receptiveness; phantasy not in the derogatory sense of fanciful or capricious but rather in the sense of the power of the psyche to imagine. Respondents were also advised that they did not have to answer every question on the questionnaire and that they could make additional comments.

3.5 The Questions

The following questions are those directed at the shamans and I have shown the modifications to these questions for the readers and mythopoeic writers, in parenthesis.

Question 1.

Do you believe that serious creative writing involves an altered state of consciousness similar to that involved in Shamanic States of Consciousness?

[The readers were asked: Why do you read? In your answer please state your preferences in terms of genre, i.e., general fiction, autobiography, science fiction, etc, and why you prefer this genre, your favourite author(s) and the reasons why you favour them. The writers were asked: Why do you write? In your answer please state your preferences in terms of genre, i.e., general fiction, autobiography, science fiction, etc, and why you prefer this genre, what are your favourite subjects and the reasons why you favour them.]

Question 2.

Do you enjoy reading novels and/or poetry and are you influenced by the characters or places in a work of literature after you have finished reading it?

[Readers were asked: Does your reading influence your behaviour or attitudes? Writers were asked: Are you influenced by the characters or places in your work after you have completed a poem or novel?]

Question 3.

Is there any factor(s) in your past life to which you would attribute your shamanic abilities?

[Readers were asked: Is there any factor(s) in your past life, excluding school or family, to which you would attribute your attitude(s) to reading? The writers were asked: Are there any factors in your past life, aside from school or family, to which you would attribute your ability and propensity to write?]

Question 4.

Is setting, locale or place important to you in your work, and if it is, in what ways is it important to you?

[Readers and writers were asked if setting, locale or place was important to them in their favoured literary genre, and if so, in what ways was it important?]

Question 5.

Do you feel that your state of consciousness changes when you become absorbed in reading a poem or novel, and if so, can you describe how you feel or the effect it has on you?

[Readers were asked the same question, writers were asked: Do you feel that your state of consciousness changes when you become absorbed in writing a poem or novel, and if so, can you describe how you feel or the effect that is produced?]

Question 6.

Has any book or poem you have read ever changed your life or your views on particular issues or places and if so, can you identify that book or poem and also describe exactly what happened?

[Readers were asked the same question, writers were asked, Has any book or poem you have written ever changed your life or your views on particular issues or places and if so, can you identify that book or poem and also describe exactly what happened?]

Question 7.

Has reading ever precipitated in you a 'déjà vu' experience (the experience that one has witnessed some entirely new situation or episode on a previous occasion) or any other altered state of consciousness?

[Readers were asked, When absorbed in reading a literary work have you ever experienced 'déjà vu' (the experience that one has witnessed some new situation or episode on a previous occasion) or any other altered state of consciousness? Writers were asked: When absorbed in writing have you ever experienced 'déjà vu'?]

Question 8.

How would you describe the act of reading? In other words, what do you experience when you read a novel or poem in contrast to watching television or attending the theatre or cinema?

[Readers were asked the same question, writers were asked: How would you describe the act of writing? In other words, what do you experience when you write in contrast to reading, watching television or attending the theatre or cinema?]

Question 9.

At what age did you begin to exercise your shamanic abilities?

[Readers were asked: At what age did you begin to enjoy reading and why? Writers were asked: At what age did you begin to write and why?]

Question 10.

Did you suffer any particularly serious childhood illness or experience a serious childhood accident and at what age did this occur? [Same question for each group of respondents.]

Question 11.

(To respond to the following questions, simply place a 'Y' or 'N' [indicating yes or no] following the question unless you wish to elaborate.) [Same questions for each group of respondents.]

When you were a child did you:

(a) Have very vivid dreams?

(b) Relish the time you had alone to yourself?

(c) Day dream quite often?

(d) Feel especially fond of reading or listening to fairy tales?

(e) Have a very vivid imagination?

(f) Often find yourself absorbed in your own world?

(g) Enjoy reading books about other times and other countries?

(h) Spend a lot of your time in a world of self-created fantasy?

Question 12.

What personal satisfaction do you think a writer or poet of serious literature gains from the act of writing?

[The same question was asked of each respondent group.]

Question 13.

What relationship, if any, do you think exists between the act of reading and an awareness that comes from beyond one's own personal knowledge base or consciousness?

[Readers were asked the same question, writers were asked: What relationship, if any, do you think exists between the act of creative writing and an awareness which comes from beyond the writer's personal knowledge base or consciousness?]

Question 14.

In reading a work of fiction, is your imagination involved, and if so, to what extent and in what ways?

[Readers were asked the same question, writers were asked: Do you believe that writing, or more specifically the type of literature that you write, has shaped your interior world and, if you agree, can you state how important your interior life is as a result of this?]

Question 15.

Do you think that the reader of a work of literature is part of the writer's creative fantasy?

[Readers were asked the same question, writers were asked: When you are in the act of writing, are your imagined or potential future readers a part of your fantasy?]

Question 16.

Has your consciousness ever been affected during or following the activity of reading, and if so, in what way?

[Readers were asked the same question, writers were asked: Have you ever experienced a particularly coherent altered state of consciousness during or following the activity of writing or reading?]

Question 17.

Is place significant to you in terms of your identity and if so in what ways? (Place can mean your home, a foreign country, an imaginary place, a place in literature or a place in your daydreams.)

[All respondents were asked this question.]

Question 18.

What effect, if any, do you think that places have on individuals or groups of people?

[All respondents were asked this question.]

Question 19.

Is there a writer or poet whose work clarifies the idea of spirit of place for you and could you explain how that writer's work brings this about for you?

[All respondents were asked the same question.]

Question 20.

Has the activity of reading or writing ever induced in you a state or feeling of ecstasy, meaning a heightened awareness almost like or including a trance state, a feeling of detachment from your physical body or locale and into the imaginal scene of the fiction you are reading or writing?

[All respondents were asked the same question.]

The writers were asked two additional questions, Questions 22 and 23:

Question 21.

Do you ever consider that the reader of your work may read a subtext, which has significant personal relevance to them, into your work?

Question 22.

Do you ever read a subtext into a work of fiction that you may be reading?

(End of questionnaire.)

In the analysis of the questionnaires in Chapter 4, I have detailed, first in 4.1, the responses of the shamans since it is from these that my central hypotheses may be established, namely, that a manifestation of SC still exists. Thus, it establishes a template from which the remaining groups might be assessed. This is followed by the readers' responses in 4.2, and the writers' responses in 4.3. Chapter 4 constitutes the empirical research showing the direct responses or quotations of the participants in italics.

3.6 Serendipity and Textual Research

I suspected that it might not only be useful but imperative to examine the works of the three authors. I am quite familiar with the works of the three writers and had previously met Thomas Keneally on a number of occasions and David Malouf once, and consequently, construed that their writings often metamorphosed beyond the intention of the author. I suspected that the reason for this, and perhaps something that could be discerned through an examination of their texts when aligned with their responses, was that the writer frequently contrives to set-up something between themselves and what they write in order to cancel out their authorial intrusion. My suspicion was that this something might well be constituted in the imaginal and literary construction of place; that like the shaman, the writer of mythopoeic literature is a causal agent in activating the continuum between the actual reality or locale and the imaginal manifestation of that locale; a dialectic of consciousness and imagination. Thus, the deepest satisfaction of reading mythopoeic writers may come from the discovery of a new set of tensions in one's own mind or psyche. These tensions may widen consciousness and intensify it, removing the preoccupation with self, somewhat in the sense of *participation mystique*, yet at the same time reflecting a process of interiorization of the imaginal place in which the self finds itself located.

This raised the issue of what constituted the author's work, and how to identify the important themes in their work, a dilemma that became palpably clear to me when I first examined the responses of the three authors. I wondered what could be found in the succinct but brief response of David Malouf, and what is it that separates a writer's imaginal work from other things that she writes such as notes, lists, scribblings and marginalia? I saw, in spite of some extraordinarily detailed answers, sometimes narrow if not guarded responses that might only be of

use to me if the missing parts of the author could be found in the spaces, gaps and places within their corpus of work.

Through the textual research, I also hoped to determine if it was possible in a narrative, somehow to locate a third identity, one that represents the reader's perspective, one that may seemingly even be in conflict with the author's perspective, intention and motivation, perhaps an identity that suggested an interior dialogue within the author's psyche. These issues are analysed in Section III where the empirical data and textual research will be discussed in the light of the broad issues raised in Chapter 2, together with extensive reading on related topics and the results of informal conversations with relevant scholars and readers in the field.

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CHAPTER 4
RESPONSES OF THE SHAMANS, READERS AND WRITERS

4.1 The Shamans' Responses

(a) *Introduction*

As discussed in Chapter 2, shamanism is a phenomenon dating back to the very beginnings of human beings as producers of myth. It is a complex and enduring expression of the human spirit extending beyond the individual self, whereby the shaman mediates between the individual mind and the archetypal, transpersonal realm sometimes revealed in dream, vision and trance (Ryan, 1999:2-3). Ryan contends that the shaman personally encounters an ontologically prior reality, a realm of essence, within the outer sheath of what is understood as reality and that the shaman employs a universal grammar of symbols more basic and essential than any that are culturally specific, which reach back to humankind's deepest psychological and even biological foundations, very much like Jung's archetypes.

(b) *Shaman 1. Maureen R.*

Maureen did not answer all of the questions, sometimes a single response covered several questions.

Q1 Maureen thinks of herself as a creative writer and shaman but differentiated between the two types of consciousness in that creative writing involves something similar to Jung's active imagination: *...as a creative writer and shaman, I don't experience these two modes of 'altered consciousness' as the same thing: creative writing involves ... what Jung calls active imagination – an activation of the imaginal powers and their concretisation as primarily images. Many folk are able to enter such realms, the difference with the writer is that s/he is able to evoke them with words that convey or capture the ambience and essence of the imaginal place as art. The writer must also be able to invite what Coleridge calls 'the willing suspension of disbelief' (as Tolkien does). S/he can do this only in the imaginary place and vision is internally consistent with its own 'laws'. This similarity with*

shamanic journeying comes in here: shamans and mythopoeic writers often visualise similar beings and detailed vast landscapes. Here visionary writers and artists who tap into the collective unconscious – such as Dali, Turner, William Blake, Dante, Milton, Keats, Shelley, Goya, Tolkien – are closer to shamans than the major fantasy authors. Creative writing, per se, in other words, does not necessarily have any affinity with shamanic 'ecstasy'. Ecstasy – or the ability to step outside of oneself and into other worlds – is the key feature of shamanic consciousness (as Eliade writes). Again, there are vast differences with creative writing here. In writing my own epic mythography, for instance, I am at no time present in it; I write rather as a God-like observer who is simply (i.e. passively) recording (here on Earth) what I see and hear – faithfully 'serving the vision as artist' … furthermore, I have to stay focused in the present in order to employ all my technical and critical abilities as an artist. In shamanic work, on the other hand, I leave space-time and actually enter via trance state the Otherworlds in an active role, on a mission to find souls, advice, remedies, healing wisdom, whatever. And here's the overlap with my writing; many of my shamanic realms and Guides are also featured in my epic mythography, set in another galaxy.

Q2. Yes, she has been influenced by the classics, science fiction and poetry, particularly the Metaphysical poets and the Romantics: … *all of the work I love has influenced me deeply.*

Q3. *Probably going off the deep end throughout 1993-94. Here I was a borderline case and if I hadn't been able to pull myself out of the Abyss (of the collective unconscious), I probably would have ended up on a funny farm. In retrospect, I view this semi-sane period as a shamanic initiation similar to schizophrenic breakdown.*

Q4. Maureen stated that she could work only in *harmonious surroundings that have some resonance with Nature*, especially in periods when she was writing intensely.

Q5. Maureen feels that she is in a state close to that of creative-imaginal consciousness most of the time and, … *If it's a good work, it extends my range of feeling and experience of life; if it's a great work, it's able to evoke 'the sensation of the mystical (Einstein), or 'the sublime' that transcends emotion.*

Q6. *Several books have changed my life in the above ways; no I can't exactly describe how, since the change was transrational – beyond words to convey. The main works are: and by far the most powerful novel I've ever read; Mervyn Peake's*

Gormenghast Trilogy; Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, Charles Williams' supernatural thrillers, C.S. Lewis's space trilogy. Poems? John Keats' "The Eve of St Agnes", Milton's Paradise Lost, Spencer's Faerie Queen.

Q8. Tapping into an eternal and universal stream of vision. … *I feel awe and admiration when I read excellent writing – the boundless powers of human imagination never cease to amaze and inspire me.*

Q9. Practicing shaman for about three years.

Q10. No serious childhood illnesses.

Q11. All.

Q12. *The satisfaction is in knowing that one has been faithful to the vision (which exists independently) and that one is 'soul fed' by it.*

To be the vehicle of a new mythology is the greatest gift.

Q13. Maureen responded: *In reading good mythopoeic writing, one is tapping into the 'primal sympathy' (Wordsworth), and into what Jung calls the collective unconscious as the realm of myth, both experiences which transcend personal consciousness.*

Q14. Maureen believes that the reader-writer relationship is reciprocal; *you have to actively put something into the reading experience, preferably your own 'active imagination' in order to meet the writer halfway. Otherwise it is simply passive entertainment. This leads to Q15 in that no the reader is not part of the writer's fantasy but there is a common mental receptive state.*

Q17. *Home is a sacred space where I can surround myself with sacred objects, natural treasures and art that keep me connected to the vaster realm of Nature and Art. My imaginal Home – which my soul always yearns for – is Andemar, my spiral galaxy, which I know in detail and am more comfortable in than in any place on Earth. Andemar is my primary reality; Earth secondary.*

Q18. Maureen suggested that … *places affect us all in different ways according to temperament and typology (Jung's four functions and introvert/extravert polarity). The extravert finds identity in place as a space in which to achieve and relate to others; the introvert finds what the space means privately to him/her on the inner plane.*

Q19. Maureen named the fictional places in the literature of Lindsay, Dunsany, Peake and Tolkien and stated *that all are equally believable, unique in atmosphere, internally consistent, imaginatively vast in scope, concrete, evocative of the sublime and transcendent as it is incarnate intangible, imaginal reality.*

(c) *Shaman 2. Rebbe Yonassan Gershom*

Rebbe Gershom has published several works on shamanic rabbinism and is acknowledged in his community as a shamanic rebbe. He prefaced his responses by explaining that many religious Jews would regard the term 'shaman' as pagan but that he used it since there were similarities between how a Hasidic Rebbe and a shaman might interact with God and His people. He also explained that his response would be from a comparative perspective: *OK, so we have this phenomenon among shamans – now what in Judaism is similar to this – since the two cultures are really the same and we might experience similar things?*

The Rebbe explained that he was a traditional Breslover Hasidic Rebbe (not a rabbi, although one might also be a rabbi as well). Rebbe said that he did enter an altered state of consciousness when writing and becomes *oblivious to everything around me for hours at a time.* The tales he writes are based on real people and in this altered state of consciousness: *I seem to actually go back in time, and could sense the souls of the people around me. I was not conjuring them up as "spirits" they just seem to come when I was working on a tale about them or their village. And I would seem to step back in time and actually be there as I wrote.*

Q1. The Rebbe responded by saying that a Hasid does not read secular poetry and novels and that books to religious Jews means religious books. He considered the Psalms a form of poetry, and the Bible and the Hasidic stories to be literature and that the characters in them influenced him. Such reading, he explained, was *devotion and soul seeking also,* particularly since such literature *contained all the emotion and human feelings a person could experience,* including anger, since the literature was spiritual.

The Rebbe wrote that in the Passover Haggadah it is said, "Every person should regard himself as if he were a slave in Egypt, and as if he were personally freed". He explained, … *so we Jews personalise history, until it becomes internalised as part of our consciousness as individuals … this is why … we do not forget the Holocaust even though it ended over 50 years ago. Because these were … part of our consciousness … it is all here and now.*

The Rebbe wrote that he had memorized *vast amounts of the Psalms*, in Hebrew, which has a different rhythm than that of the King James version and that these 'niggun' come to him in times of joy and sorrow, that these are sung over and over like mantras and in shamanic terms, were like power songs.

Q3. The Rebbe responded to this question from the perspective of his past life as a child but also as a believer in reincarnation, and his *REAL past lives … when I go back in time … I go back to another incarnation. My strongest power vision, I lived in all those times in other lives; in Egypt, in the Middle Ages, with the Baal Shem Tov in Eastern Europe. Secularists call this fantasy but it is not … it is very real and more than just imagination. And when I tell the stories, I actually go back to the energy of that time.*

The Rebbe explained that in his present incarnation he had a very isolated childhood and that *my mother was not very loving … was very verbally and physically abusive* and that he had to *learn very early to rely on myself and not on people around me for emotional support … so I became somebody else when I was alone … but I think this was also the beginning of my creativity and spirituality.*

Q4. *Yes, setting is important. Storytelling happens around the Sabbath table ('tish') … which is a whole ceremony … a ritual setting. A Hasidic Rebbe goes into an altered state of consciousness when he holds tish. The Hasidim sing and rhythmically pound on the table, and the Rebbe begins to close his eyes and sway his head back and forth, and makes an ascent of the soul to another realm, where he hears the songs and stories he will tell.*

Q6. Rebbe said that in Hasidism, *making 'I' statements is considered egotistical, one does not disclose private things and that this is why Hasidic mysticism does not get studied the way some other mysticisms and shamanism do …* and that he felt *uncomfortable talking in 'me' consciousness.*

Q7. *Yes, all the time*.

Q8. *Reading … allows me to go completely into the world of the book …I get hyper and frantic if there is too much fast sound around and I cannot read or write … I can't go into myself … So on the Sabbath, I can travel back to the Hasidic world I once knew and be there as a sort of respite from the rest of the week.*

Q9. *It was very early … I fantasized myself out of a really bad family situation and a total lack of social stability … when things get too pressured, I withdraw into my own world.*

Q10. *At age six I almost died of scarlet fever. This was also when I had my near-death experience and after that I was not afraid of death.*

Q11. Yes to all.

Q12. *A Hasidic Rebbe does not write for personal satisfaction, he writes for God and the healing of the People … So what am I healing? The sadness of the*

Holocaust. You see in my altered states I can go back to a time BEFORE the Holocaust … if I use shamanic terms, I journey to the land of the ancestors in a sort of dreamtime where the pre-Holocaust world and its people still exist in the other world … I visit there and receive gifts such as stories and songs which I then share with the people in my writing.

Q13. *Reading … somehow opens a doorway that allows me to go back to those times in a sort of time warp of consciousness … there are times when I just get some obscure reference or detail in a story that I consciously would have no way of knowing, but it later turns out to be accurate … I am rather poor at reading Hebrew … I don't just study Hasidism, I access it somehow in my own consciousness.*

Q14. *The imagination creates the characters differently for each reader.*

Q16. *Yes … Sometimes when I really get into a book, I really live in it and sometimes find it hard to come back to the real world.*

Q17. *Place is certainly important historically, in the sense that Hasidim came from Eastern Europe … But Hasidic Jews – and religious Jews in general, do not live in place as much as in sacred time. The Sabbath is, in Heschel's' words, a palace in time … it is a whole other world from the week days. Is the Sabbath a place? Shamanically, yes, it is a sort of magic circle that we draw in time, not space … Sabbath preparations and observations transforms that location into another kind of space that is connected to all Sabbaths that Jews have observed for over 5,000 years … non-Jews don't get this at all … because they do not understand the mystical structure of time … you could say that in terms of physical place, there is a part of me that lives in Brooklyn … a part of me lives in Uman, Ukraine.*

Q18. *I think that people who have lived for generations on the same piece of land have a strong affinity for it – they may even reincarnate as their own descendants. Native people certainly believe that this is true.*

Q20. *Sure I had a love-hate relationship with Germany when I was there. As long as I stayed in the present it was a beautiful country. But if I allowed myself to think about what happened to my people there, I hated the place. I saw the big cathedrals and saw 'Inquisition' … now I'm supposed to feel connected to Israel … I do accept that it is my ancestral home but I don't feel the mystical connection that some Jews feel.*

4.2 The Readers' Responses

(a) *Introduction*

Reading came before writing. Although we think of the word 'reading' to mean the scanning of text, reading is, however, a broader, more complex human function. We read the environment, expressions on faces, the movements of a ballet dancer. We read at both a conscious and subliminal level, often simultaneously, thus, it is both an archaic and complex function, and in that sense we are all readers. Readers, in the sense of book readers, often experience literature that leads to personal revelations and find themselves unexpectedly aroused and emotionally affected, sometimes even transformed by a particular work, sometimes to the very core of their being. C. S. Lewis helps us to understand this in his suggestion that reading literature:

> … enlarges our being by admitting us to experiences not our own. They may be beautiful, terrible, awe-inspiring, exhilarating, pathetic, comic or merely piquant. Literature gives the I to them all. Those of us who have been true readers all our life, seldom fully realize the enormous extension of our being which we owe to authors. We realize it best when we talk with an unliterary friend … he inhabits a tiny world. In it, we should be suffocated. The man who is contented to be only himself, and therefore less a self, is in prison. My own eyes are not enough for me. Even the eyes of all humanity are not enough. I regret that the brutes cannot write books. Very gladly would I learn what face things present to a mouse or a bee; more gladly still would I perceive the olfactory world charged with all the information it carries for a dog … In reading good literature, I become a thousand men, and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in a Greek poem, I see with a thousand eyes, but it is still I who see. Here as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do (Lewis, 1992:137,139,140-141).

The writer John Fowles suggested that from a reader's perspective *… all literature is an attempt to escape, an effort to transcend iron-reality* (Fowles, 1998:119). However, not all reading is a response to escape and David Malouf offers another viewpoint of the act of reading and of a special state of consciousness that ensues, one that takes us very close to the suggestion of MLC, when he opines that it is not:

> … an act of reading that is merely passive: of readers who are happy to have books speak for them – though that is certainly

> what they do: for the deep unuttered occasions of their lives. The reading I have in mind is an act of the imagination that is equal to, for all its difference from, the imaginative act of writing. The power of reading lies in our capacity to enter into the world of the book and become a mover in it, to make that world our own. It's the active capacity to live, for a time, in some other life than our own daily one, and in that way add to our experience, to make new discoveries in the world of the senses, to see new connections between things, to make leaps of moral awareness that give us a more complete hold on our world (in Tulip, 1990:279).

David Malouf elaborates by defining readers as a particular body of women and men for whom the act of reading, the experience they have in books, is as essential as daily bread and that the real reader belonged to no particular type or stratum of society, or profession or level of education. What he or she possessed, in the same mysterious way that other special abilities appear, is " …the capacity to enter passionately, and with all the senses, into the physical act of approaching words and touching a world" (in Tulip, 1990:278).

(b) *Reader 1. J.C.* (Retired senior secondary school teacher of English literature.)

This respondent frequently alluded to the first verse in the *Gospel According to Saint John*, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'. She began *I am interested in the notion of the "Word" becoming "Flesh" and "dwelling amongst us".* As she said later in response to Question 12, *The writer is a translator of experience, thus, writing and reading is, to me, a mystical and creative experience. It is a quest and therefore highly religious, to evoke, distil and shape experience, knowledge and wisdom succinctly and as perfectly as possible. It is making the "Word" flesh. Writing is both a personal and collective function which shapes the energy of ideas and fashions those ideas into readable words on the page. Very satisfying, like God creating the world, through the Word.*

Q1. She responded by saying that … *words have a kind of spiritual significance and writers undergo a process of creation which is kind of mystical. The reader undergoes a process of re-creation when reading so it is all a very mystical and creative process which the writer shares with the reader. We* [the writer-poet and the reader] *are the two arms of God and the book is God's mouthpiece.*

This respondent felt that there was … *a very strong spiritual dimension to reading* and that literary *genres all seem to run together – they speak to my soul* and she was *intrigued* by the way *favourite authors, Tolstoy, Dosteovsky, Henry James, G. Greene, James Lee, Thomas Merton and Joseph Campbell (I could go on, but these are some) – of course, Shakespeare* … bring understanding to the human condition and its origins.

Q5. Here, the respondent revealed just how much reading had influenced her when she wrote; *When my marriage broke down I read Henry James' Portrait of A Lady. In about Ch 41 or 42, Isobel Archer thinks about leaving her husband. She weighs up the pros and cons. This character seemed to articulate my own experience, responsibilities, my own feelings of being trapped etc. It helped me to make a decision as well as illustrating or beautifully articulating my own quandary. Anna Karinina, War and Peace, Crime and Punishment, The Power and the Glory, Dr Zhivago, the Bible, The Teachings of Buddha – these are some of the books that have spoken to me at a deep subliminal level.*

Q6. Here, she said, … *My perceptions are more sharp, a little bit like blundering on through life and suddenly, after looking through a glass darkly, you experience a profound revelation. As I said once the creative process begins, i.e., reading and re-creating what the writer has conveyed, then I think the Word (see Gospel of John) does become flesh and you do enter a different realm of consciousness; the world of the book …. It is a very mystical process.*

Q7. She believed that … *reading is a transformative act in the sense that you become what you read. Your mind is given free play, you have the power, like the writer, to shape images and realise them. Reading is re-creative and responsive so that it is more accurately defined using your own faculty of the imagination.*

Q8. The respondent wrote … *Yes! Reading is an empathetic process … For myself, I experienced this on reading Second Coming by W. B. Yeats. The images presented in this poem draw the reader into that sense of falling into a narrow cone of chaos (the widening gyre) so that one is presented with a portrait of Hell, of encroaching evil … an anarchy similar to the situation in Kosovo today is envisaged and the feeling of horror seems as real as it is repugnant, all-encompassing and doom fraught. The mind and emotions are in free play, associations are made, the flesh crawls and the mood stays for hours and is recurring. As in the gyre one is drawn in and enveloped by a process of identification. The same thing happened to me when reading T.S. Eliot's Journey of the Magi.*

Q13. The respondent wrote, … *Reading and the religious experience are similar in that both encourage and promote some kind of awakening; both are revelatory. The writer/poet has a sacred duty, e.g., such as Coleridge says in Kubla Khan, the poet/writer is the long-haired, wild-eyed poet – mystic who translates our experiences for us. He / she works in profound philosophical truths. Reading is like praying, opening the mind to the unknown (and the soul).*

Q14 and 15 The respondent wrote, … *Yes! Take John Fowles' novel The French Lieutenant's Woman for example. Fowles takes the reader into many possibilities. He challenges us to choose our ending, even our path, the same as the characters' paths and endings are chosen. The writer manipulates our feelings, ideas, assumptions, beliefs, expectancies … As in Fowles' book, we are the other character in the book [story], the unspoken observer [in the place that we are taken to] but very much a part of the writer's intention.*

Q16. She responded, … *Yes! My unconscious has been affected. I am completely drawn into the world of the writer, poet … It is something like a trance, a transcendence of the real physical space I occupy. It opens the mind, elevates the spirit and makes the world and its possibilities infinite. This is why I identify it (reading) as being a mystical experience.*

Q18 and 19 Her response was, … *Place is very much there in the subconscious and conscious mind of e.g., [for example] J.R.Tolkien's Middle Earth in The Lord of the Rings saga means something special to me – Places are where I learn things. Place is where our quest lies and it is part of us, just as it was for Frodo in The Lord of the Rings … Places are associations, not entities in themselves. Place is a symbol for many things.*

Q20 Here, she wrote, (in the context of discussing Tolstoy's War and Peace), … *The land draws together its people and insinuates itself upon the reader in such a way that we regard it as a shaping force in the lives and emotions of its people. Without sounding too pretentious, the people arise or emerge from it as if begotten. Tolstoy's creative genius allows him to use it, not so much as a backdrop, but as a major protagonist who shapes ideas and character and draws all threads of the story together, just as the vast network of rail lines has drawn different and disparate areas of the country, so Tolstoy uses place as a unifying principle.*

(c) *Reader 2. J.M.* (Retired Teacher of English Literature - HSC Coordinator.)

JM began by explaining that she is *a confirmed bibliophile* and elaborated in Question 2 by stating *I read through the night, and consequently feel too tired for work every morning. I often feel resentful about being at work because it's a waste of good reading time. …. Reading makes me more tolerant than I'd otherwise be … reading makes me more accepting of humanity.* (Indeed, in response to Question 9, JM wrote, … *I have no memory of not reading …* and that … *birthday and Christmas presents were always books, always rapturously received and dearly treasured to be read and re read over and over.)*) In response to Question 3, JM stated that, as a result of reading, she *lives vicariously and simultaneously, rather than a singular, limited, linear life experience.*

Q3. JM wrote that, … *Hardy's Wessex, Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg, Paretaby's Chicago, Yeats' Dublin and Coole Park, Wordsworth's Windermere … are all examples of symbiotic relationship between place and people* and that *the where is just as important to a work of literature as the who, the what, the when, the how and the why – and often … is instrumental in determining the others. … The spirit of place is so potent and pervasive that the writings in question could not be separated from it.*

Most significantly, JM wrote that these locales and settings include *artificially contrived socio/moral/emotional landscapes of the imagination … But, draw me back, inevitably, frequently, to the notion of the divine in nature … I'm a pantheist at heart, all ground is sacred.*

Q5. Here, she revealed that her childhood dreams *were often haunted by savages and wild beasts, all the terrors of the Amazon jungle* but that *Africa remains the dark continent … the Heart of Darkness.* She continued … *as a teenager, discovering Russian literature was a mind-blowing experience* and that Hardy's novels helped her *focus on the idea of landscapes as imaginative projections of darkness and light in the human psyche.*

Q6. Here, she conceded that she has experienced, while reading, *Déjà vu, yes, but perhaps more as a flash of recognition when some buried knowledge or partial understanding is freshly articulated … returning to places with new insights gained through reading, …* as was the case when she went to live in Ireland. She reported that *altered states of consciousness used to occur more frequently in the days when I was more self-absorbed and precious than I am now … poetry still has this effect.*

Q7 JM wrote that … *reading occurs in my own time, my own space (mostly my own bed). It occupies a separate dimension from whatever else might be happening in my life, or the world in general. Sometimes I read in a distanced, detached, outsider sort of way; at other times I'm fully absorbed and transported into another state of being.*

JM, like the other respondents suffered childhood illnesses, but hers was tinged with an esoteric element: *a succession of childhood ailments, which always seemed to occur at Christmas (i.e., the English winter) until we came to Australia when I was 9 … then I suffered a severe allergic reaction (allegedly to the new country) and was ill for two years until "cured" by a Bush Brother, Bishop Collins, who was known for his healing powers.*

Q13 JM wrote, … *if consciousness raising occurs in the act of reading, then the reader is participating in the writer's creativity and therefore gaining potential access to the Spiritus Mundi, or the beyond self experience* and that *there is a nexus, I think, between the imaginative reaching out for knowledge and the leap of faith, more often discussed in a theological context. In other words, the nexus between the intellectual and the spiritual is what constitutes imagination at its highest level … the act of reading can bring awareness of this otherness, which is self and not-self – sometimes received as an immanence, rather than a presence.*

Q16 Here, JM elaborated on her comments in question 13 by explaining that, … *Yes, frequently, especially in dreams. I often dream extensions of or conclusions to whatever I'm reading. This is often followed by stabs* [sic] *of 'déjà vu' I when I resume the reading next day, or later, to find I've already dreamt what I hadn't yet read. Fictional characters wander into my dreams to rub shoulders with family and friends, living and departed. Reading into the early hours of the morning, I find fiction dissolving into dream, dream into drowsy reality, drifting together into a sensual, sleepy dance – until the mind's music stops and it's time to wake up for work.*

Q17. JM averred, … *It's hard to claim total objectivity when reading fact or fiction, so a personal sub-text is virtually unavoidable.*

Q18. JM's response was significant; … *I belonged to a family that was frequently on the move, so home was the family, not the place. It took me nearly 50 years to settle on a particular locality where I could consider the thought of permanence – choice of one place meant rejection of the rest, so I gypsied about a great deal. I carry lots of places in my head, full of significance and associations. I don't feel I*

need to find myself or wear identity badges, in terms of place. The chameleon – c'est moi!

Q19 and 20. Regarding place issues, JM wrote, … *Confined places make people mad. So do open spaces … I'm sure that, individually and collectively, people have always been influenced for good or ill by their immediate surroundings. (It might be more pertinent to ask about the effects that people have on places.) It's hard to choose a single example, but let's take John Cowper Powys' A Glastonbury Romance. Before I read this book, I was already familiar with the setting; the Glastonbury ruins, Powys clarifies for me the idea of spirit of place by the sheer power of his language.*

(d) *Reader 3. J.C.* (Teacher of English literature, community worker and film producer.)

Q1. The respondent said, … *I read to extend my domain, as if in the process of reading I not only increase my understanding of the world but also tame it to some extent … aid internal … to live at some sort of ease within a recognised chaos. Many of the things I read are often banal (despite this I often find hidden details with these items fascinating) – shopping lists, weather reports, maps newspapers, business reports. When it comes to literature I usually read several books at the same time – autobiographies, children's books, histories, short stories, screenplays, novels. The genre that I prefer in my reading is poetry … Because of its passion, its intensity, its beauty, its deep reach into the psyche and its independence of thought due to its complete inutility. My favourite authors of poetry are Ovid (translated – unfortunately I can't read the original Latin) and Edward Lear.*

Of his current reading, Ted Hughes' *Tales from Ovid*, the respondent said, *it is breathtaking in capturing the spark of the original tales … I am always knocked out by the modernity of his* [Ovid's] *thought, his clarity, the sophistication and immediacy of his approach and the pure sense of life in his work. At the other end of the spectrum I adore many of the non-sense poems of Edward Lear. The Owl and the Pussycat is perhaps one of the most simple, beautiful and elegant poems written in English. His playfulness with language and his reaching into child-like fantasy is liberating.* The respondent elaborated further on this later in response to Question 4 by saying that *poetry is often located internally so the setting becomes the backdrop of my own mind.*

Q2. Here, the respondent simply stated that reading did influence his behaviour.

Q3. His answer was significant because he, like another respondent, alluded to the Biblical concept of the 'Word made Flesh', saying, that his education in a Catholic school had … *placed a huge emphasis on the power of the word, its taboos and its physical and metaphysical intimacy.* He elaborated upon this point in his response to Question 6 by saying that … *In reading I often feel connected in mind or experience with the author, often intimately, often with the same words … the literary experience is more a precise connection of minds.*

Q7 and 8. The respondent said that … *Reading for me is a shut down of all senses* and that *Consciousness becomes internalised.*

This respondent used fascinating terms in responsing to further questions, for example:

Q12. *A serious writer is compelled to write.*

Q13. *Although I believe we have some sort of collective memories it is largely through reading that we participate in the ultimate sport of changing souls, of being able to experience life as someone else does.*

Q14. *Words need imagination to transform them into internal physical reality.*

Q19. The response here was also provocative in that the respondent suggested that … *I feel that places have an inbuilt type of memory in the landscape, that you can feel the history of a place beneath your feet. To become part of that place an individual ends up sharing in its history.*

(e) *Reader 4. R.P.* (Teacher of English and French Literature.)

This respondent's answers were much more considered and tempered almost to the point of, it would seem, scepticism or of wishing to avoid any arcane connotations.

Q2. The respondent revealed very personal detail by stating that … *the wide reading done during thirty years has immeasurably deepened and complexified my concept of what the dialectics of trust/distrust, love/hate and faith/despair mean.*

Q4. The respondent expressed a preference for American literature but said that … *In Australian writing the perennial theme of the regions and their role in shaping the local psyche has influenced me; Voss, The Tree of Man, Tourmaline, Capricornia, the poetry of Shaw Neilson etc. One gets to know the inside nature of places and locations through such sources.*

Q7. The respondent said that … *Reading … is very personal … the story, plot and characters unfold in one's own mind. In reading one must recreate a text in a very intimate, personal way, and one tends to dialogue with the author on a sub-level.*

Q8. The respondent opined that in reading, … *the outside environment is partially distant … One identifies with a point-of-view, a character or a place, that nothing matters for the time being in the real world … poetry read for the first time can have the same effect.* The respondent had sometimes experienced a *quasi-mystical state of mind* when he felt a *profound resonance with a situation or character.*

Q15 and 16. The respondent suggested that … *some writers adroitly and craftily speak to the readers in asides* and that he sometimes felt *as if I could be the suffering person, and am put in their shoes.*

Q18. In responding to this question he revealed that he had never … *developed the same powerful and particular sense of spirit of place that one finds in the work of Stow, Thea Astley, David Malouf and Ruth Park.*

Q20. Here, the respondent said, … *that spirit of place and its effect on the human psyche is finely evoked in various Patrick White novels* citing the *eerie power of the inland deserts in Voss or the wildness of north Queensland's coast in A Fringe of Leaves.* The respondent continued, … *the novels and poems of Stow are filled with a rich symbolism of wind, heat, light, fire, sand, rock* and that there is a strand of Christian literature, *where the desert is the primal source of pain and salvation, destruction and transformation, temptation and prophecy and that Stow draws subtly on that cultural vein.*

(f) *Reader 5. N. van der W.* (Retired airline steward, member of a reading group and book club.)

Q1. The respondent said that he read widely but really … *liked to read science fiction and detective novels* and that favourite authors in these genres *have the knack of making you care for their characters and are able to make you think about uncommon situations.* The respondent elaborated on this point in response to Question 16 and said that he cares *for the characters as if they were personal friends or family* and that he was often *unaware of the printed page.*

Q6 and 7. It was not until this point that the respondent said that in reading … *sometimes the situations seem so familiar that I feel I have taken part in a similar*

event on a previous occasion, and that he sometimes became so heavily absorbed when reading that *if the 'phone should ring when absorbed in a book, it feels like getting an electric shock. It is worse than being roused by an alarm clock after a heavy sleep.*

Q8. The response here was also significant, … *When reading … I related to the people in the story and care very much what happens to them. When young, I often re-read books. If the story had a very sad ending, I would stop my second reading of the book before the conclusion. It was my way of making things all right.* Of great significance was this respondent's final comment that his former piano teacher *described composing music as the act of writing down music from her subconscious. To her the music has existed for all time. All she had to do was to listen carefully to her inner self and write down the notes. Maybe authors work in a similar manner?*

4.3 The Writers' Responses

(a) *Introduction*

The Swiss psychoanalyst Adolf Guggenbuhl-Craig suggested that creativity happens outside the individual psyche, that a power external to the one involved in the creative act is at work. He uses the term 'transcendent creativity' to describe "… something that comes through, shines through from another world" (Guggenbuhl-Craig, 1995:6). He further suggests that an individual possessed by this transcendent creativity has an almost mediumistic gift of detecting what is playing itself out and forming in the soul of the collective (1995:8).

The writers in this study confirmed this in their responses and, generally, provided a wealth of assenting explanation, except in the case of David Malouf, whose answers were brief but highly pertinent. In other instances a writer has either misunderstood a question or digressed, thus, in Chapter 5, I have compensated for this anomaly by expanding on their responses with selections from that particular writer's works. This not only acts to clarify the response and provide a more substantial engagement with the issue but such textual research emphasizes, enhances and clarifies the thesis generally.

(b) *David Malouf's Responses:*

David Malouf responded to my questionnaire on 14.02.2000 in the following manner, retyping some of the questions or integrating them into his responses. He began: *Some questions that don't interest me or which I can't answer I've ignored. The answers themselves are suggestive rather than analytical, therefore short. Some of them can be explained or illustrated from the books, especially 12 Edmonstone Street.*

Q4. How important is setting, locale or place in your work? (Please note that I am interested in how you imagine these settings or places rather than their appropriateness to the structure of what you are reading.)

Very. A lot of my writing is set in places I knew in childhood or youth and I find it useful in imagining and seeing characters, in catching the way they feel, to locate them in places I have a strong feeling for and know in the right season or at the right times of the day. Light seems especially important here and I often use it as the key I need for visualising a place, or as a key to calling up actual memories the writing may need.

Q5. Do you feel that your state of consciousness changes when you become absorbed in writing a poem or novel, and if so, can you describe how do you feel or the effect it has on you?

It seems to me that as you write you fall into a state where the mind is open that is, where it empties itself of ideas and opinions already held and you are ready to let in other ideas (sometimes ones that are quite contrary to your conscious opinions); ready too to let memories of other, till then lost experiences re-surface, that are called up by the needs of the particular piece of writing you are engaged in and which you have to be in this special state to recall.

Q8. How would you describe the act of writing? In other words, what do you experience when you write, in contrast to reading, watching television or attending the theatre or cinema?

Writing seems to me to precipitate this open but active state. Reading is also open but to what the book offers and film going-is what the images and events of the film lead you through. This open-ness is a suspension of normal consciousness in that it empties the mind, shuts out what is going on in the world around you at the moment, but also shuts off other lines of thinking, that is, ones that are not relevant to the writing, or reading, or watching.

Q11. When you were a child did you: (a) Have very vivid dreams? (b) Relish the time you had alone to yourself? (c) Day dream quite often? (d) Feel especially fond of reading or listening to fairy tales? (e) Have a very vivid imagination? (f) Often find yourself "off" in your own world? (g) Enjoy reading books about other times and other countries? (h) Spend a lot of your time in a world of self-created fantasy?

In response to all of these questions David Malouf simply ticked each item, indicating a positive response.

Q13. What relationship, if any, do you think exists between the act of creative writing and an awareness that comes from beyond the writer's personal knowledge base or consciousness?

We seem to me to have access to experiences, overheard or heard through the telling from our parents and other close members of the family, that we feel as personal because they come to us encapsulated in feeling. We pick them up in such a way that the experiences related seem to be our own. We have experienced them as emotion, and if we can get access to this emotion in writing we can also convincingly recreate the experience itself. So our personal experience goes back a good thirty years before our actual birth. Then writing may itself produce experiences that we have only in the writing, though they are, I'd want to say, real ones, as so many of the experiences we get through reading are also real.

Q16. When you are in the act of writing, are your imagined or potential readers a part of your fantasy?

Not at all.

Q18. Has the activity of writing (or reading) ever induced in you a state or feeling of ecstasy (ecstasy meaning hyperawareness, almost like or including a trance-state, a feeling of detachment from your physical body or locality, and into the imagined scene of the fiction you were writing (or reading)?

This is the state I have been calling open it deepens as you move into any session of writing. Loss of sense of place, even more of time. Certainly of body.

Q19. Do you ever consider that the reader of your work may read a sub-text, which has significant personal relevance to them, into your work?

Yes, inevitably.

Q20. Do you ever read a subtext into a work of fiction that you may be reading?

Inevitably, again.

Q21. Is place significant to you in terms of your identity and if so in what ways? (Place can mean your home, a foreign country, an imaginary place, a place in literature or a place in your daydreams).

Places experienced early are very significant in this way: the first house I knew, its rooms, its dimensions, its light, the kind of Queensland house it was, with verandas and an under the house. Also Morton Bay where I went as a child most weekends and where the sea was always an element.

Q22. What effect, if any, do you think that places have on individuals or groups of people?

Houses seem to be an important influence on the way small children learn to read space and map the world: light, heat, weather conditions at particular times of the day and in the seasons as they affect play. Weather, of course, determines much of what becomes cultural habit. Places too may play a part at particular moments in our lives so that they come to stand for, and even embody, particular emotions as we associate them with events. A lot of this is what the writer draws on and which constitutes what the reader sees as the particular world and atmosphere of his writing.

(c) *Thomas Keneally's Responses:*

Thomas Keneally preferred to answer the questionnaire during a telephone conversation of over two hours duration taking a conversational tone with many digressions and sometimes an answer that related to two or more, or an out-of-sequence question. However, this resulted in deeper, richer responses.

I began by describing to Thomas Keneally (TK) my belief that something like Julian Jaynes' idea of the bicameral mind and *participation mystique* was the state of mind accessed by creative individuals. To prompt him I quoted from his novel, *Bullie's House* (1981):

> When the world was still one thing, before everything was shattered into pieces, this piece getting labelled 'politics' and this piece 'love' and another piece in the corner 'culture', and another piece 'religion'. When poetry was something that happened 'outside' the covers of books, when song was magical and shook the sun, when art was an habitual process of the body like breathing and excreting, and when death – of which I happen to be ridiculously scared – was a passageway and not a brick wall (Keneally, 1981:65-66).

TK: *I sort of think that there is this unified consciousness and that's where, a holistic world, and that's where the arts come from. This explains why the world looks upon the novel as an entertainment and the novelist looks upon it as life and death. There's a crucial utterance that he or she has to get out of them or else. Often the final result is banal but it is, nonetheless, driven by this consciousness of making an utterance. I am aware of the fact that our souls are thus designed.*

The artist has a sense of art being something more than in a corner, something more than the Australia Council, something pervasive and important. And the other people who recognize that are dictators but in your normal pluralist liberal democracy, the arts tended to get to be deprived of their magic and put in the corner along with religion and so on.

But I feel that the tree of knowledge occurred, that we ate of the tree when we became sedentary people, when we began to produce crops and departed probably from the way of life of animist hunter gatherers which suited this holistic view of the world, of the importance of the utterance, of the importance of the painting, of the importance of the dance. Because in aboriginal society, of course, the Dance was more than dance it was a remaking of the earth, the painting was more than a painting it was a land title and a means of connection with the Deity or the ancestors. It was... and everyone was a priest as well as everyone being a poet, a singer, a dancer … they were dancers because the arts were a remaking of the earth.

Now when you write I think you've got a sense that you're potentially remaking the earth, you hardly ever do, but I think that's the weight, that's the sort of obsessiveness which gets books written and I think it's the obsessiveness that drives the writer, painter, whatever and which makes their activity so dangerous, so solitary and so dangerous to them and ultimately, so dangerous to the way people perceive themselves.

I also believe very strongly that the process of writing a novel or painting or anything like that, is to release the part of the brain where all the Jungian archetypes exist and where everyone is a painter and a dancer, and everyone is Christ, and Odysseus and Sisyphus and all the rest of it … I don't trust the doctrinaire view … that a man can't write from a woman's point of view or vice versa. There are cultural problems involved in cross over but they're not as great because it's the universal and unified mind which is brought into play by writing.

WH: You have crossed over, you have written as a foetus, for example. That continuum of consciousness, the collective unconscious, I think, can be accessed. You said you believed in a unified consciousness, is that, do you think, similar to de Chardin's Noosphere or Henry Corbin's Imaginal Realm?

TK: *Yes, I think that they said it in a classier way but that's what I'm striving for. I'm striving for that state of un-self reflecting grace which characterized the hunter-gatherer society because I'm very conscious in Bullie's House and indeed in the aboriginals who performed Bullie's House, that there is no fear of, no genre …. no terror of genre in the aboriginals. I mean they are all actors, all singers, all painters and all musicians and they cross over … I am suggesting that when we write, that when you write, well that's what's being called into play. A sort of mind that predates specialization, a mind which contains the entire mythic and imaginative history of humankind. This is what fascinates me.*

And of course anyone who brings that sort of consciousness into play is not only disliked by totalitarian systems but there is a threat in it to themselves and to others too. It's a very dangerous thing to do altogether but it's the only way I know how to write. I just believe that all the equipment we need to be everyone else is laid down in that noosphere … I think of it existing both spiritually and biologically, if there is any difference between those two. And being the part of existence necessary to art … to be the sort of strong man – political leader … you know, to be John Howard in other words, it's most convenient if that part of the brain is totally cemented over. It can't be eradicated but attempts are made by such people to obliterate it because in it lies potentially an overwhelming empathy with, you know, universal empathy. This is why writers bring this stuff into play all the time, because they are involved in crossing over the categories, because they contain all the archetypes in themselves and are conscious of that even if they're not conscious of how these archetypes will play when they begin a novel. I think that's why they're so politically troublesome because they spend all their time crossing over the cultural, categorical interface between things and they spend a lot of their time swimming in foreign, in alien waters, what other people would consider swimming in alien waters.

WH: You might like to know that it's been confirmed. There's a doctor in California, Leonard Slain and his recent book is *The Alphabet versus the Goddess: The Conflict Between Word and Image,* and what he's suggested is that, in fact, this division of hemispheres, one side was predominantly used for intuition, for art and

creativity and so on, but that as soon as we started to develop an alphabet and the written word, the energy if you like, the emphasis, crossed over to that other side of the brain which was used for hunting, for killing, for doing things and so he says that the more we become involved with the written alphabet the more aggressive we become. Now I think there the caveat is, well, yes, that's in the sort of literature we have today which is directional, which is functional but that highly imaginative literature, I think is the sort that is accessed by the other part of the brain, that is into this Imaginal Realm.

TK: *Well, as a matter of fact when I was on book tour in America for The Great Shame just recently, I was ploughing my way through Jarrard Diamond's book and he raises this interesting question of the first alphabets being devised for tax collection, which is definitely the sort of killing side of the brain, and he says it takes quite a time before that the first instance of another kind of way of the alphabet being pressed into service for the playful side of things, is when … is a wine jar which says, this is the wine jar of so and so, and those who drink from it will not be immune from the enchantment of divine Aphrodite and that is, he says, the earliest instance of the alphabet being used for more than tax collection and organizing a broader system of government than a clan or a village. You know, even in the alphabet, you know it's interesting that the very first instance he mentions a goddess. So it's almost like your bloke the Alphabet and the Goddess, the goddess then trying to invade the alphabet because it becomes essential to the sedentary life and in a way creates the concept of art, something that maybe one out of ten people do or one out of a hundred.*

Anyhow, I feel this stuff very strongly at the moment because I'm writing from the point of view of three women. I'm trying to reproduce what degradation is to women and what beauty means and so on and the process I began in Woman of the Inner Sea, in fact the stuff I was just transferring at the start of our talk was an interweaving; one of the women is in the 1840s and the other two are in the 1980s and 1990s and you've got to work out how best to interweave them amongst each other.

WH: Just adding on to that, is there a sort of organic wholeness in your work? For example, I think that *Victim of the Aurora, Gossip From The Forest, Season in Purgatory* and *Schindler's Ark* seem to be chronologically linked.

TK: *Ah, yes, yes. Of course, there was a phase when I was writing a lot about Europe … and so some of those books like Gossip From The Forest were an attempt*

to interpret Europe, however floundering an attempt, because I don't think you can understand Australia without Europe. So they were the equivalent in writing to the grand tour but I did see it and always have, and Schindler confirms this, as a grand tour of horrors.

Europe, if properly projected, not on Mercator's projection but properly seen on a fair projection of the masses of the world, Europe is a piddling place and yet it has the arrogance, it has both an extraordinarily dense cultural history, it has the gothic cathedrals, yet it has the arrogance of localities too, of exalting a particular regional identity over any other identity to the point of lunacy and self destruction. The Balkans is only one example; World War One was another example. I remember during the filming of … Naturally, I gather evidence of how dangerous Europe is. The rules of German citizenship would be intolerable even to Phil Ruddock. Even in the new one. The great virtue of the new world is that it is forced, it's not better or worse, but it's forced to a kind of flexibility of definition of what an Australian, or an American or a Canadian is. That's the greatest virtue of the new world.

And I remembered during the filming of Schindler there was a long weekend and the caterers were Croatian and were going back to Zagreb for the long weekend and I asked them how long it would take them and it turned out to be from Cracow something like sixteen hours, eighteen hours and I reflected that you could drive west from Sydney and not even be out of New South Wales in that time and yet he would cross dense assertions of local identity, cultural identity, assertions which had a pile of corpses to attest to every one of them. It struck me again what a dense dangerous place the old world was and how that at least we're delivered from that awful density in the new world … but still we're delivered from those awful assertions that my hundred square miles is the centre of civilization and anyone who does not attempt to fit my identity, localized in this particular region, is an enemy and must be expunged. So the idea that there's some conflict between being an Australian writer and a writer to the world, whether the world reads you or not, is another question.

But then I was a mad young writer anyhow I probably ..but you know they were not properly read. I'll give you an example. I'm sure you've seen the murder mystery in Victim of the Aurora, it is an allegorical murder mystery like Martin Amis' murder mystery in Night Train. The most important assertion of that book to me, and it may not have been properly conveyed, was that at the heart of an old classic,

pure Edwardian nationalistic, Antarctic race, lay the murder which was the initiating murder of World War I. It was a murder and a lie and it was a prelude to all the murders and lies of World War I. One understands why these tensions weren't expressed in the way they would be these days because you were not supposed to admit eternal hatred could grow in the hot house atmosphere of an Antarctic hut organized along a class system … But there must have been dreadful tensions when you think of them lasting out an entire winter in such an unnatural environment. One thinks of the viciousness that sometimes characterized the seminary with men with too much thought on their hands, men with too much reflecting time and not enough recreation on their hands.

WH: I have another concern that links into this and that is place. The idea of place behind all of these things; I'm developing the idea that there is a continuum of place. There's place where first of all it is just background to the things that we do, then there's place that we imbue with almost an animate presence of itself, that it effects us … There's the aboriginal idea of course, you know, they bury their placenta in the place where they're born because that anchors them and it becomes a very special place. And I see this coming through in a lot of your work too, that floating behind everything is this power of place.

TK: *Yes, definitely. I am absolutely convinced and writing The Great Shame only convinced me more that place is … that a sense of the spirits of landscape, is the most fundamental religion of humanity. That it's pervasive and indeed the children of European settlers have built it up in this time. I find that in the time that we've been here with this extremely non-European landscape, landscape is one of the reasons why, despite the opportunity to become an expatriate, you know I held, I only lost U.S. residency for neglecting to go back to the U.S. within a year time frame during the writing of The Great Shame so I sort of sacrificed American residency, consciously, unconsciously; unconsciously but perhaps by intent, during the writing of The Great Shame.*

I feel that Australia is particularly interesting for this reason, that inevitably, the view of God that people have is linked to landscape. Now I know that pantheism is a Christian heresy but pantheism exists because it is a more than theological opinion. It is an opinion that I'm sure is genetically encoded. That's why I say that animism, the idea that the landscape occupied by God is almost, is the most fundamental because it is the easiest to believe in. I wonder about Australia because we know that it's a fairly godless place because we settled it in

the Enlightenment whereas America was settled in the Age of Calvinist dissent. But it's also a threat to the European God because the Australian landscape has no purchase points for the European sensibility. It is a landscape, which as I've often said, gives the middle finger to European sensibility. We try to … we've made a number of attempts to make it into, and these appear in literature, to make it into well, if you like, a little England. Which is an attempt to which it gives the middle finger, we've tried to make it into the anti-Europe, the other place, the place that contradicts Europe but it won't even stand still for that concept. The place that reverses and mocks European prettiness, it won't even stand still for that.

Basically, it is what it is and there was a famous tribal God called Yahweh, he said, ' I am that I am' and the Australian landscape makes a similarly divine assertion, I am what I am. As a result you have to come to terms, if you're going to come to terms with a version of God, you have to come to terms with this new landscape which is presenting a challenge to the European concept of God. And so that's one of the aspects of Australia which fascinates me, you get Baron Field doubting that this was a part, a place for which Christ died. You get the same surmise in Patrick White's Voss; ' … did Christ die for this place, is this a redeemed place?' And the answer by Australia is that it doesn't give a fuck whether it's redeemed or not. It's just this confused loutish continent, just stands there saying, 'You want a bloody Georgian garden, go to buggery. Good luck, I'm not going to help you'

Of course, it's huge … I'm very much aware and of course I'm conditioned by everything that I've ever read, I'm very much aware of the, of hero ancestors in this landscape, I'm very much aware of the spirit of place in the Australian landscape. When I was young and reading European verse and European novels and so on, I was very, I felt very deprived that I couldn't find any reference points in these novels in this landscape.

I mean I do write about this a little bit in that book Our Republic, about how place presented a problem for the European soul and coming to terms with how to fit into this place and be civilized in a particular way is the great challenge for Australians. I remember talking a bit for an ABC documentary called Australian Spirituality, and I put forward these ideas that Australian spirituality was not like European spirituality for this reason. Actually, I write about this question of God and landscape and God and churches, I write about it in A River Town where Tim Shea goes to a Methodist church in Euroka, across the river from Kempsey and it's a

real church which really existed and he realizes that if you're going to relate to God there are a number of possibilities even in church. There's the dense highly coloured baroque Catholic relationship to God where saints sort of perch in the tops of the dense rain forest of Catholic dogma and these highly coloured saints like so many highly coloured parrots. So there's the Catholicism he sees as being more or less like a dweller of a rain forest but in the Methodist church he realizes that this provides you with a chance in its bareness and its utterness, it provides you with a chance to be God's Arab or God's Eskimo. And one of the characters inevitably raises this question in the novel I'm writing now; she's in the Sudan and you know you can have in a landscape of mists, she says you can have a sort of cosy intimate God; in a landscape of deserts you have an absolute God and definitely a 'he', the god of the desert who brings down hammer blows of withering heat on your head but also presents you with this sort of ultimatum of landscape, this utterness of landscape. So you know it's a recurrent theme of mine the question of God in landscape and that's one of the reasons why I keep on hammering on about this and the fact that he is so often the God of John Paul II is lacking in the Australian landscape might, you know, at least to me I find that there is something immensely more ancient, immensely more disorderly, immensely more rooted, and immensely more ambiguous in our landscape. So hence, comes my taste for ambiguous people like Thomas Francis Meagher and William Smith O'Brien in The Great Shame. There are good people who say tut tut, William Smith O'Brien may have had sex with a minor, and I don't approve of that in the slightest, but I don't think it disqualifies one from writing about it. I mean, in the Old Testament Noah got drunk, was rendered drunk by his daughters wasn't he and they slept with him? Stuff of that ambiguity, those myths of creation are always rooted in ambiguity and for a good reason, myths of renewal, so I think that there's some of that ambiguity in the Australian landscape too. That the Gods who inhabit the Australian landscape are ambiguous but they're also grandly whimsical and it just seems that I like that stuff. I mean it's either that or accept a God who permits evil because it's his will. I'd rather go with the ambiguous boys and girls.

WH: The questions I have are now more about you and why you write and things like whether you're influenced by the characters in you're novels. Whether they really do take on an independence, if you like, an autonomy, of their own.

TK: *I'm sure that follows from our earlier agreement, well our rough coincidence, our general coincidence of views – the place of the unconscious in writing. It is a*

characteristic complaint of writers that the characters take over and that is because you're writing not out of the demands of your consciousness but very much from the demands of that invisible part of the brain where all the intuitive wisdom is. So that you can use the front of the brain to edit, that's why editing is far less dangerous and in many ways far easier. The tough part, the hidden part of the brain doesn't have to be brought into play much but, you know, this unconscious mind has an agenda too, and it's a kind of inescapable agenda. I'm sure that it's the sort of an agenda which is set for us in some of our dreams when our innermost disappointments, recurrent anxieties, significant anxieties and other issues are presented to us. Where angers we don't even know we have, most significantly, are revealed to us. Where residual furies and residual fears, which we thought had been beaten, are revealed. So that part of the brain sets its own agenda for us and that's why the characters seem to have a drift of their own, an authority of their own. They're all manifestations of us but they're more than manifestations of us because they come from that, as you say, collective pool of myth and archetypes and all the rest of it. I was talking about this in Canada just before I came home last weekend at Harbour front and I said, for some reason, all the drowned maidens and all the drowned sailors emerge from the sea. But they're not bloated bodies, they're people with an agenda, they rise to the surface. Writing a novel, painting a picture, whatever, is like a depth charge into that area of the brain, a benign depth-charge in that it releases all the people we didn't even know we knew. The process … another common aphorism of mine when I'm talking about this thing is that I say you write novels with the part of your brain … there's something about the process of novel writing that you have to set down and start in a rational sort of way and you proceed in a rational, not irrational, a rational sort of way but on the other hand the process brings into play this side of your brain, this side of the brain that lets you find out that you know things that you didn't know you knew. And that you are capable of images and insights that you didn't know you possessed. And it's because the novel does release that, does reach down into that benign sediment, into the bottom of the sea. I definitely think of it as a sea, talking about the drowned maidens and sailors emerging. It would perhaps be more accurate or equally accurate to talk about it as a cemented over parking lot under which all those heroes and heroines are buried. And there's nothing like a male Australian childhood of my generation to produce such a store of buried maidens and sailors. But the fact that I spoke of sailors makes me realize that I thought of it as a huge …

I've used two Greek terms when giving talks, which I think they're both accurate: apelagos or a thalasos. I know thalata is … is it thalasos or thalassa? … But the sea, anyhow? I think of it as an ocean … let me just look it up. I've got a dictionary right here, won't be a moment … I think pelagos is the word for … yeah, from the pelagos meaning sea. Thalargic is an English adjective palagos meaning the sea … and I'll just look up, I think thalasos is the ocean.

(d) *Colleen McCullough's Responses:*

In contrast to David Malouf but like that of Thomas Keneally, Colleen McCullough's response was quite lengthy and detailed, approximately 12,380 words. She tape-recorded her answers from Norfolk Island, which I have edited, and she included comment that may not have been a direct response to the actual question but that elaborates feelings or ideas. She began:

Q1. *I can't NOT write* [sic]. Ms. McCullough said that she could write anything, including poetry … *everything except autobiography*. She praised the writing style of Mary Renault, … *beautiful writer.* She continued by explaining her belief that after one passes the age of about 25 *one ceases to have the kind of dreams, if you want to call them fantasies, that one has when one is in one's teens and early 20's.*
She also mused on the evolution of the writer and of how poetry was an important stage; she had never had any of her own published although twenty years ago she considered it better, by comparison, with the then leading Canadian poet, whom she did not name.

She said that she didn't think of poets like T.S. Eliot as poets – that they were … *wordsmiths* and that … *their language is fabulous, gorgeous, wonderful, interesting, imaginative but it doesn't speak from the soul or the heart.* McCullough said that *Tim* was her *bash* at the love story, that *Thorn Birds* was her *bash* at the Gothic family saga, *An Indecent Obsession* her, *A Creed for the Third Millennium*, which she regards as her masterpiece, as her futuristic-come-intellectual novel and *Ladies of Missalongie* as a spoof on the laced Victorian novel.
McCullough then made the statement, … *science fiction … I've written science fiction, never tried to have it published*.
McCullough responded that … *place is something that ties you down … place has never been important to me perhaps because I think my place is inside my mind … by that I don't necessarily mean imagination just intellect.*

Q2. McCullough replied that she was, … *not in the least* influenced by characters or places in her novels, … *they only live while I'm writing about them.*

Q3. *I think it's just genetic, it's absolutely genetic. I was just able to write*.

Q4. *Before I started the Roman novels I saturated myself in extremely scholarly works and read all the ancient sources – in Greek and Latin if I had to. I have to set eyes on a place, I want its topography, its ambiance, its atmosphere. Setting and place are not as important as characters – they are what moves everything. I'm a writer who is really involved in characters. I would never situate a plot in terms of place.*

Q5. *When I finish a book I am amnesic for the event, I don't remember how I feel. Yet the state of consciousness changes simply because I'm there, I'm in it. I'm not me, I'm them. It's like a brown study.*

Q6. *No.* [No book or poem she has written has ever changed her life.]

Q8. *I read to know. I think the greatest novel ever written is by Herman Broch, The Death of Virgil – wondrous imagery and feeling for the technique of language as well as the soul of language. I like James Joyce very much. I like some Patrick White but not all. Tom Robins is a genius. He's probably stoned out of his mind on pot the whole time, but that doesn't matter, then I absolutely like blood-curdling whodunits.*

I adore science fiction movies – the more blood in a movie the better I like it, it's probably the medical side of me. I don't like art cinema.

Theatre can be magic, I'm an observer and when you're an observer you read the written word.

McCullough expressed distaste for computers; *the damn things think they're smarter than I am, and I know I'm smarter than they are. So they tell me I can't do something. And I go, fuck that! I work on top quality paper, I double space, I work on a carbon ribbon. My typewriter fights me back, so I don't get RSI*

I'm so organized in my mind before I start … If I peel potatoes I do it properly. It doesn't matter what I do, it has to be done properly. I am the world's greatest nitpicker.

Q9. *I didn't begin to write, I always did write. It was usually triggered, I remember, by beauty of some kind, a flower or the stars, or moon or a sunset. I was a very forward baby, I spoke whole sentences at nine months … but I don't remember very much of my early childhood at all.*

And, in fact, I used to write, I thought I was writing. I had an exercise book and a pencil and I used to describe a wave, up and down, up and down, up and down, in absolute ecstasy because I was writing. There seems to be, which as a neurophysiologist is extremely interesting, connections between that part of the cortex where writing as a physical act happens and words as a spoken act and the cognisance of words, which of course is the parietal lobe.

I loved to read and it was so magical because it conjured up ideas on paper, I had to write, I had to do it, I had to be in it.

… I suspect that I am only masquerading as a writer and a painter … that really what I am underneath is Michelangelo.

Colleen McCullough stated that she had suffered two rather serious childhood illnesses both requiring isolation, the first at seven years of age when she was placed in the Isolation Hospital and Leprosarium in Sydney and the second at ten years of age in North Queensland. She also said that, … *I wasn't fat until I had scarlet fever… but I was highly intelligent.*

Q11. Ms. McCullough did not recall having vivid dreams as a child, except for one which … *took place in a medieval castle filled with Tiffany-like lamps,* and a second dream *… in a forest and the trees were full of birds which were embroidered in the most exquisite colours and threads.*

Ms. McCullough said that she spent twenty-eight years living alone and … *thoroughly enjoying every moment of it*. In spite of this she did not daydream a lot … *because that sort of time wasn't available to me … so my world was full of books, not of daydreams. I wasn't fond of fairytales.* McCullough also reported that she attended a … *very highbrow Catholic girls' school* and that there were only twenty-one students in her Leaving Certificate class. Again, almost in terms of a contradiction, McCullough said that … *the only film that profoundly influenced me as a child was Walt Disney's Fantasia.* She also said of herself in this section, … *I'm a wordsmith*.

Ms. McCullough also said that as a child she had a very vivid imagination and that … *whatever I read, I wrote a book about it – in the same style and genre – I lived in that book.*

Q12. *The fact of having done it … to have pulled it off.*

Q13. *I think that the depths of one's unconscious are enormous and I think when one writes one's able to build a bridge to the unconscious and trot across it and fetch back all these goodies that were buried.*

Q14. *I don't think that writing has shaped my interior world at all.*

Q15. *The characters shape the plot anyway* [in writing], … *It's a discipline, and sometimes a very gruelling one because the characters must absolutely be faithful to themselves … but so much depends on the mood of the person who's going to read, and correct or examine your paper.*

And when one is working with people, characters, I always think of them as whole people who actually did live and who we know did certain things. Quite often it's remarkable how much we do know about them … you have to find the missing bits and you can only find them in your imagination.

Q16. *No. I don't think of a reader.*

Q17. *No. I've never had a coherent or incoherent mystical experience in my entire life, let alone when I'm writing or reading.*

Q18. *No, it's too intellectual. When I write it's a multi-layered phenomenon. There's a part of me that's very emotionally involved. If I'm writing a sad bit, I cry. If I'm writing a funny bit, I laugh.*

Q19. *Yes. Somebody said that Thorn Birds contained universal truths. If that's so I have no idea what they are.*

Q21. *No, place isn't significant to me. It never has been. It's very interesting that I have very little sense of place. I've always thought that Norfolk Island is the place where the flying saucer is going to land. It's a spooky place this, very. For somebody who has no mystical experiences and no belief in personal gods or reincarnation or any of those, what I call quasi-disciplines, I have two ghosts in this house. One of whom I see, the other of whom I feel, I have no idea what they are. I know who they are. They're both Norfolk Islanders. Sonny Boy and Carcar. And they died. They were mates, they were great mates, they were alcoholics. They used to sit and drink under the banyan tree up near the school and they died during the 1960's. And they move in this house and they're very benign and the room doesn't chill; it's no 'Stephen King', it's just that I'll be making a sandwich for myself in the middle of the night and I will feel a man squeeze against me behind as he passes and put both his hands around my waist. And I just sort of have a warm feeling and think, 'Oh Rick, what are you doing awake at 3 am?' And I turn around and there's nobody there and Rick is upstairs sound asleep in bed.*

The other one moves on castors, wears a red shirt, he glides he doesn't walk, and I usually find him again at 3 am examining the contents of the refrigerator. The first time I ever saw him I thought he was a prowler. I do not believe in ghosts. But

this is a strange place. It's very odd. But I think there are time warps, field effects, and all kinds of scientific phenomena that we don't know or understand that are quite adequate to explain these things.

Place, no. It's, I suppose in a way, a harness to be attached to a place and people. The only things I can't live without are my typewriter, my typewriter ribbons, my paper, my books, my paints, my music.

I have a beautiful view out of my Scriptorium window…

There's one place I suppose that I remember with great fondness, and that's Connecticut in the USA where I lived for 14 years. Mostly because to an Australian, and I had spent 4 years in Europe before I went there, I had no concept of what four seasons were all about and in Connecticut it's the most incredible cycle. In the spring everything bursts into flower, from the biggest tree to the crocuses and tiny little things in the grass. The dogwoods, pink or white, with the blossoms laid on the branches, every blossom looking exactly up into the sky, and the planes of the dogwood trees in blossom – such perfect oriental harmonies. Beauty wherever one looked. Beautiful days, beautiful nights!

And then comes summer, which is 100° and languorous , humid – it's that real Porgy and Bess summertime, when the livin' is easy.

And then comes autumn when the nights go below freezing and the days are in the 80's and every tree has turned to more colours of the warm spectrum than I've ever seen anywhere else. You can cross the border into Canada, you can cross the border into New York State, but nowhere except the little New England states do you ever see the full glory of the Fall and the autumn colours. It's just mind-boggling. You drive down the road and you see the world's most perfect tree. And you stop and; you look at that tree, which might be purple, or plum. Some of the maples, each leaf has about ten different colours in it and I suppose it's all those variations give such individuality to forests. But then you turn the corner and drive on a little way and you find the world's most perfect tree. And so it goes.

And then comes winter, when it's so cold that the harbour freezes over and the snow gets a gold sheen on it from the sun. It's very fine. It gets up to 28° Fahrenheit – which is well below freezing. You think it's a heat wave. And everything freezes. And sometimes it rains and it rains below freezing so every minute twig on every little twig branch and so up and up to the whole tree. Gravestones are wonderful if there's been an ice storm … to go to a cemetery is just magical. The eves, everything, is coated, encrusted, with an inch of transparent

ice. And then the sun comes out and the whole world becomes a prism, a rainbow. And when the wind moves it chimes. And you go through a humdrum cutting in a mountain on a highway and where the moisture oozes out of the rock, as it always does, and there are these enormous fields of stalactites in the most ethereal blue. They're not white; they're blue. And then it all starts again in the spring.

But is that a sense of place? I don't think it is. I think it's a sense more of a cycle and of change rather than … to me place is stability, place is not change.
I write about such different things … because I am a nomad and I have no sense of place.

4.4 Discussion

The empirical research established that the readers, writers and shamans sometimes experienced a de-centred self, the term 'self' indicating a unified centre of personality and consciousness (Sharp, 1991:119), often imaginatively becoming the characters of the narrative, entering and experiencing the places of the tale, whether actual or fictive. The research also confirmed that there often occurs a unique relationship between the self and place, and that MLC has correspondences to SC in that it ushers the reader, and writer, into the Imaginal Realm, the dimension where the certitudes associated with persona and place are shattered. The responses also provided sufficient detail to assume that the shamanic realm is almost certainly an aspect of the Imaginal Realm and suggests, also, the involvement of the collective unconscious.

It might appear that the majority of respondents did not report childhood illnesses but a closer reading reveals that most experienced trauma that set them aside from family and friends and that in a sense acted as an initiation to an altered and extended consciousness that in turn shaped an expanded or de-centred self. Overall, they indicated that deep reading of mythopoeic literature not only instigated a profound and primal awareness of the boundaries of their being but also expanded those boundaries. It was as though the text read them more fully than they could themselves. There were significant correlations between the responses of the readers, writers and shamans that allowed the data to be categorised into four major groupings.

(a) *A De-centred Self*

All respondents with the exception of reader R.P. revealed that a form of daydreaming was important to them, that they engaged in it unashamedly and frequently and all, again with the exception of reader R.P., said that they also experienced vivid dreams. This indicated an essentially reclusive personality type. For instance, the readers, and the shamans too, were unanimous in their conviction that reading was one of their great solitary pleasures; that it was healing but, moreover, that it returned them to otherness; that imaginative literature is, indeed, otherness. A common experience to the respondents was that of being in an altered state of consciousness; hovering between the fiction of the novel, aware of the present but of being in another place, vicariously, throughout the period of reading, regardless of the diction, characterization, plot and setting.

This is not to say that readers unequivocally enjoyed this associative state. Indeed, they sometimes found themselves in the company of fictive characters whom they thoroughly disliked and in fictive places in which they felt completely alienated. These fictive characters and places were still, nevertheless, the terms of reference that seemed to define their reading identity. For example, Reader 1 wrote of one text that, … *the images presented … draw the reader into that sense of falling into a narrow cone of chaos … an anarchy similar to the situation in Kosovo today is envisaged and the feeling of horror seems as real as it is repugnant, all-encompassing and doom fraught. The mind and emotions are in free play, associations are made, the flesh crawls and the mood stays for hours and is recurring.*

Reading precipitated a changed self-identity and often separated them from a world they did not really like and wanted to get away from. When the shaman Rebbe said of his reading, … *so I became somebody else … but I think this was also the beginning of my creativity and spirituality,* he exemplified the general responses of the group members. Shaman Maureen described reading as sometimes facilitating a state of *ecstasy*, … *or the ability to step outside of oneself … a key feature of shamanic consciousness …* and where in writing her own *mythography,* she was not … *present in it,* but rather … *as a god-like observer who is simply recording* what she sees and hears. This response also typified that of the respondents overall in that in reading, they entered a myth-like elsewhere-place.

The respondents implied that they read not to find out what happened but what happens, not what took place but what always takes place, and their literary selections seemed to be part of a complete world of probabilities, of which every mythopoeic work forms part. It was apparent that for the readers their reading was not simply the comprehension of one story after another but rather a process involving an intertextual continuum that literally constituted an existentially elsewhere-place in their lives. The writers also acknowledged the same process of intertextuality in their texts, the implications of which are discussed in Chapter 5. This seems to indicate also the presence of a symbiotic relationship between mythopoeic-reader and mythopoeic writer; all ostensibly functioning as independent psyches but as soon as they read or wrote in mythopoeic mode, a collective mind or *Mind-at-Large* was activated. In fact, all of the readers stated that they read, frequently, even if unwittingly, in quest of a mind, of experiences and of places more original than their own; the shamans stated this emphatically.

The writers' responses clearly confirmed the phenomenon of the de-centred self, the obliterating of the egoic persona. In particular, David Malouf described the writing process as one in which he falls into a state where his mind becomes open, emptied of egoic ideas and receptive to new ideas, sometimes even ones that are contrary to those he holds in a conscious state. Thomas Keneally said that when he writes it is … *the universal and unified mind which is brought into play* … and that he strives to attain … *that state of un-self reflecting grace*, the opposite to egocentrism, and that he believed … *that all the equipment we need to be everyone else is laid down in that noosphere* … and that writers … *bring this stuff into play all the time, because they are involved in crossing over the categories, because they contain all the archetypes in themselves.* In other words, he becomes a de-centred self and accesses new identities in *Mind-at-Large* or the collective psyche. In the case of Colleen McCullough, her responses demonstrate a sharp demarcation in mentation from egoic consciousness to that of a peak experience or a state of animistic-like consciousness in her perception of the depth and beauty of the Connecticut countryside; a demarcation that reveals the involvement of *Mind-at-Large*.

Overall, the responses revealed the operation of a process of reverie that is implicated in the act of mythopoeic writing and reading. That reverie produces a de-centred self in the writer and reader, one that also precipitates a relationship between them and the various characters and places that populate or figure in

these narratives. The de-centred self that emerges from reading and writing; a conversation where the self is either speaking or spoken to, also experiences a hermeneutic of contextuality similar to that involved in the relationship between place and SC; in that both the reader and writer respondents reported the perception of imaginal places more substantial than those of actuality that seemed to correspond to or complement the measure of their involvement in that altered state of reverie or MLC.

(b) *Initiation*

All of the respondents were introduced to reading in early childhood either by an adult reading to them or as a result of their own imaginative inquisitiveness. However, most of them suffered early childhood trauma, sometimes life threatening or emotionally and psychologically painful; two were the only child in families where parents remained aloof or distant. These circumstances brought about a withdrawal from other children and adults, occasioning a greater involvement in the life of the imagination or what some might explain as the development of a fantasy-prone personality. It was as if their childhood illnesses, psychological or emotional traumas and isolation facilitated initiation to the Imaginal Realm.

Colleen McCullough, who suffered extremely serious childhood illnesses, at first dismissed any possibility of parapsychological involvement or altered states of consciousness and also any suggestions that place might be anything other than an extension of physical locale; she was insistent that characterisation was the be-all-and-end-all of plot. Her questionnaire responses indicated a rather practical, precise, scientifically disciplined personality given sometimes to nonchalant descriptions of the writing process. Yet, her responses confirmed my suspicion, and those of other researchers such as Kenneth Ring, Mercea Eliade and the late Professor John Mack, that incidents of childhood illness or trauma and or isolation, often emulate shamanic initiation, producing a fantasy-prone type personality (Ring, 1992:116, Eliade, 1951:xii, 33, and Mack, 2000).

Colleen McCullough confirmed this as her personality type when, in expressing her distaste for using computers, preferring a typewriter, a quirk she shares with David Malouf; she spoke of her typewriter in personified almost anthropomorphic terms. This is the same way she spoke of the characters in her fiction, as having an independent life of their own beyond her will, as existing in the

collective unconscious, their essence, bits and pieces of their lives accessed through her own imagination.

Then too, there was her expression of a metaphorical shape shifting in imagining herself as a Michelangelo, sculpting, expressing an intense emotional involvement in her work yet with an almost perfunctory approach to please her publishers. McCullough's use of anachronisms; the word 'scriptorium' in response to Question 9 conjures up an image of an anchorite, a medieval monk, and she also used 'brown study', 'leprosarium' and 'lazaret' and in their usage hints at other personas in her psyche. Ironically, her description of the transpersonal dimensions of Norfolk Island and of the two spirits or ghosts who haunt her home there and of her encounters with them belies her stated disbelief in the paranormal.

One can also note two distinctly different styles of writing within the pages of McCullough's response. At Question 21, when she begins to describe the ghosts that haunt her home, her writing suddenly assumes an almost staccato, stream of consciousness style, suggestive of an altered state of consciousness. However, it is in the description of the Connecticut countryside that her writing changes to an intensely lyrical style that reveals the mythopoeic dimension of her consciousness, a dimension that she refutes.

Thomas Keneally's responses clearly confirmed the influence of the unconscious in his writing; he expressed his belief that the unconscious mind has its own agenda, a sovereign agenda that is sometimes previewed in dreams. Indeed, Thomas Keneally seems to be a modern Prospero; he stated that he is both a participant in his mythic-narratives and an observer, a creating artist as well as created character. Keneally also suggested that in creating imaginal worlds, he re-creates himself and becomes a different person. By the very action of becoming a character of his fiction, Keneally transcends the barriers between fiction and reality, and in doing so, challenges his reader to re-think the nature of their own identity and to confront the Imaginal Realm or elsewhere-place. *This challenge might also alert the researcher to the need for caution in interpreting Keneally's and indeed the other authors' self reports.*

David Malouf revealed an awareness of distinctive shaman-like processes implicated his writing. He stated that when he was writing he was aware of a suspension of normal consciousness during which he became responsive to experiences, sometimes overheard but that he experienced as emotion and also as real. This facilitated a state that he calls open, a state of consciousness which

deepens as he moves into a session of writing, during which he experiences a loss of sense of place even more of time, certainly of body. Here David Malouf is speaking of the particular power of mythopoeic consciousness to retrieve the fictions, narratives and experiences embedded in the web of life that surrounds him. He is aware of a power to spin out of the web story-shaped narratives that implicate the myriad places in the world. He describes not so much an experience, nor a writer's intuition nor even a consciousness but rather the transpersonal aspect of the writer's psyche whilst literally enchanted in the state of MLC.

The writers' responses suggested that, like the shaman, they had little choice in their vocation and that their writing, like the trances of the shaman, constituted an imperative to provide an imaginal experience to the reader that would have the same effect of immediate illumination; one embedded in and emerging out of a sense of the place from which the narrative originates, or what formal literary criticism would term setting.

What Malouf, Keneally and also McCullough, despite her reticence, reveal in their responses is an engagement with a process of knowing that integrates the imagination, aesthetic sensibility, spiritual intuition, revelatory experience, symbolic perception, somatic and sensuous modes of understanding and empathic knowing. That process is exemplified in their writings and is examined in Chapter 5.

The shamans' responses identified the same process operating in their lives. The Rebbe said that reading … *somehow opens a doorway* that allows him to go back to Holocaust times *in a sort of time warp of consciousness;* that there were instances that he would become aware of some obscure reference or detail in a story that he *consciously would have no way of knowing, but that later turns out to be accurate.* This is echoic of Jung's musing that what science calls the psyche may be " … a door that opens upon the human world from a world beyond" (Jung, CW 15, par. 148). The Rebbe explained that he was rather poor at reading Hebrew but that he nevertheless accesses it somehow in this state of consciousness. The shaman Maureen also said there was a similarity of mythopoeic writing with shamanic journeying in that writers often visualise beings and vast landscapes and suggested that Blake, Dante, Milton, Keats, Shelley and Tolkein, amongst others, were very like shamans.

(c) *The Imaginal Realm and Boundaries of the Soul*

The Rebbe explained that what secularists call fantasy … *is very real and more than just imagination*, and that when he tells stories, he … *actually goes back to the energy of that time.* Most of the respondents described the same phenomenon and in the case of the readers and writers, a phenomenon that manifests in what I term 'the spaces between the words'; an ontological dimension behind the narrative that the shaman, the reader and the writer occupy, a potent and uniform contiguity: an elsewhere-place. All respondents appeared to experience place itself, of necessity, as generating an imperative narrative that compliments or allows the ego-gatekeeper to stand between two realms: that of actuality and that of the Imaginal that emerges out of the interstice between the words; or from a Kabbalistic perspective, even from between the letters of the words.

Thomas Keneally's belief that there exists a unified consciousness from where the Arts emanate, is really one that identifies Corbin's Imaginal Realm, de Chardin's noosphere, the Celtic Web of Wyrd and Jung's Collective Unconscious. Indeed, Keneally said that when *we* write, and here he was speaking of published writers, *we call into play a state of consciousness that predated specialisation, one that contained the entire mythic and imaginative history of humankind.* Albeit, Keneally asserts that in departing from the way of life of animist hunter-gatherers, we have lost the ability to view our lives, place and the world in this holistic way.

The readers stated that although they enjoyed reading for its sheer pleasure, it also had a soothing or healing function particularly in times of extreme distress or melancholy in that it provided a salve, a reverie that obliterated egoic concerns. In this sense, such an altered state of consciousness seemed comparable to SC in that it was described by them as a heightened, more animistic and altruistic form of perception. The readers also seemed to make unconscious distinctions between reading ordinary literature and mythopoeic literature; saying of the former, *… I read* such and such a book or story, whereas for mythopoeic literature they used more emotional terms such as, … *the story entranced me*, and in doing so confirmed the deeper psychological dimension or inner space of the soul to which mythopoeic narratives related. General comments related to the existentialist nature of mythopoeic texts were that they enlarged the self through a vicarious process of otherwise unattainable experiences and locales. Two respondents

described the act of reading as a transcendent experience that made them feel more complete.

The readers' responses also revealed that in reading books (and in the case of the writers, in their reverie of writing) they felt a veritable, albeit vicarious, involvement in the stories, relinquishing their sense of actual place to the enchantment of the imagined place on the page. Each new book, each imagined place not only increased their education, knowledge and sensitivity but literally extended their soul and seemed to capture a part of their identity in an elsewhere-place.

(d) *The Nature of Place*

The respondents all expressed perceptions of place as occupying a continuum that ranged from physical to imaginal domains, often exerting a tremendous influence on life. For example, Reader 1 saw place as a shaping force, something that insinuates itself upon the life and emotions of the individual as if *people arise or emerge from it, as if begotten* by it. Reader 3 believed that *places have an inbuilt type of memory* and that individuals *feel the history of a place beneath your feet* and that to become a part of that place an individual *ends up sharing in its history.* This raises interesting possibilities about the influence of place on the individual at the social and collective levels, particularly when we consider those places that resonate with especially puissant histories, for example, topographies of terror, such as Auschwitz or Ground Zero in New York, or others that symbolise both the sacred and profane such Jerusalem or Rome. An important issue here is that of degree; is it the whole place or just a section of it; is it permanent or does it fluctuate, perhaps resonating with only certain individual psyches and at certain times. Then there are the problems of how and at what level does the individual, and the collective, become aware of such influences, and in what manner is that influence experienced in MLC? The respondents provided interesting answers.

Reader respondents expected to be transported to an elsewhere-place but this seemed to be contingent on certain personal qualities of the writer such as, literary reputation, use of subject matter, storytelling technique, language skills and the sharing of a world view that made it possible for the writer to provide for certain

expectations or needs of the reader, embedded in metaphor, in a third reality or elsewhere-place.

Tom Keneally said that in writing *The Great Shame* (1998), he became convinced that … *place is … a sense of the spirits of the landscape* and that being *the most fundamental religion of humanity* … a sort of … *Animism, the idea that landscape* [place] is *occupied by God is almost,* the most fundamental type of belief since … *it is the easiest to believe in.* Keneally also spoke of a recurrent theme in his work the … *ultimatum of landscape, this utterness of landscape, the question of God in landscape.* These are interesting responses, relevant to the connection between place and mythopoeic literary consciousness, because they introduce the notion of interconnectedness, a pivotal concept espoused by quantum physics, a notion that in one guise or another permeates this thesis.

The shaman-Rebbe described place as embedded in *sacred time,* which in imaginal terms and also that of quantum physics is at once past, present and future, and to exemplify this, quoted the American Rabbi Avrahma Joshua Heschel (1907-1972) to suggest that the Sabbath was a place that … was *a palace in time.* Shaman Maureen in describing place personalised it in every instance and in suggesting that her *primary reality*, her *real home* is an … *Other-place*, also affirmed the quantum potential in place.

(e) *Reflections*

The responses of Colleen McCullough initially concerned me but also functioned to catalyse my thinking because she seemed to invalidate all of my assumptions about the nature of mythopoeic writing, and yet, somehow confirm them. It was in this paradoxical situation that I found the answer, one that permeates the whole thesis; the Gnostic potentiality of what at first appears to be contrary to ultimately be transmuted or reconciled into the quintessence of its opposite. Colleen McCullough is both an accredited scientist (neurophysiologist) and a recognized writer of fiction, two seemingly divergent vocations, yet somehow in her they are reconciled. The reconciliation comes from the realisation that the 'out there' material, substantial or scientific, is not such until it is recorded 'in here', in a sense, until it is imagined, that is, given a narrative of continuity. This was also very much affirmed in the case of the shaman, Maureen, for whom an imagined place, her *spiral galaxy, Andemar,* her *primary reality,* provides her with, as we saw

also in the case of Colleen McCullough, the experience of a rich texture of otherness, indeed, that facilitates the emergence of a de-centred self, of ambivalence, symbolism and also enchantment. In the experiences of these two respondents we see similarities between MLC and SC.

Fortunately, I found in all the responses confirmation not only of this but also of my most fundamental postulates. Firstly, there is a potential for a de-centred self to emerge from the act of reading certain form of mythopoeic narratives. It seems that the psyche's functioning is both enhanced and expanded by MLC and its concomitant mythic-narrative representations because they pierce the membrane between inner and outer, as in the case of the Palaeolithic cave pictographs, of the most important existential element of the outer world; the places in which we exist. The result of this is the unshackling of the mythic-narrative psyche and the reinvigoration of its primal reciprocal relationship with place.

The responses confirmed that we seem habitually blind to these subtle narratives of place and that the shock of deep recognition of the subtle nature of place comes only when the places we inhabit, in actuality or in imagination, become theatres of war, trauma or of epiphanies (like the particular locales that epitomise human or ecological holocaust) that force the egoic self to its wits-end. This is when we really bring place into presence, when it suddenly, in all its potent majesty, overwhelms the ego.

Secondly, that this vitalizing mythic-narrative function produces an altered state of consciousness that involves the dynamics of the Imaginal Realm. This also demonstrates the aptness of Patrick White's injunction that the writer's purpose should be to 'imagine the real' in their writings, to engage with the transcendent meta-historical imagination that is essentially religious or numinous. White's injunction was exemplified when Thomas Keneally suggested that writing a novel … *is like a depth-charge into that area of the brain, a benign depth charge in that it releases all the people we didn't even know we knew…* and that these characters, and by implication, the places they inhabit, *are manifestations of us and yet more than that; because they come from a collective pool of myth and archetypes.* Thus, in reading mythopoeic literature, the boundaries between subject and object, self and other, character and place, frequently collapse and we enter the Imaginal Realm.

Thirdly, that this intertextual collective pool mentioned by Thomas Keneally and also the writers and readers, either implicitly or explicitly, and which was emphatically known by the shamans is a syzygy, one that suggests a symbiotic and collective mind or *Mind-at-Large*, one that may be activated by mythopoeic literature, and apparently with greater ease by those who have experienced an initiatory shock or trauma, and which facilitates a transfer of imaginative energy from the literature to the reader and entry to elsewhere-place. Indubitably, it is here that we each, albeit often unwittingly, delineate the places and boundaries of our conscious personalities; that we delineate the places and boundaries of our souls as well.

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CHAPTER 5

TEXTUAL RESEARCH – THE LITERATURE OF THE WRITERS RESEARCHED.

5.1 David Malouf: The Shaman.

Scholarly, cosmopolitan and foremost among contemporary Australian writers of poetry and prose, David Malouf is lauded for the sheer intensity, lyricism and imaginative quality of his writing. Malouf says that he wants his poetry and prose " ...to change the way people see things, to change their state of being and feeling and perceiving" (Kiernan, 1986:28). One of the ways he achieves this is through the use of a code or cipher as the structural basis of his works in that one may observe the repetition throughout the corpus of certain motifs and symbols such as the child and childhood memory, exile or alienation, memory and imagination and the processes which bring these to consciousness and, of great importance, place. Place, not so much as geographic location but more in the sense of a temenos, something which lies outside of consciousness, that locality of belonging where the soul or psyche focuses itself.

However, my essential concern is with the rich spiritual and psychological complexities of the Malouf corpus, for these give it a unique transcendental nature or mythic quality. The transcendence experienced by Malouf's characters is usually within the context of the mythic-heroic journey or quest and, therefore, seems to require that they be tested or suffer before any epiphany can occur. When it does occur, that epiphany bursts in sudden, unexpected eruption up from the depths of the soul of the protagonists and places them in the presence of the Ineffable. Accordingly, mind and matter are shown to move closer together in his work and Malouf's vision of reality seems to dramatically and vividly express, metaphorically, elements of the quantum physics of Niels Bohr.

Throughout the Malouf corpus everything seems to be interconnected, permeated with a vital energy or life force and the physical, psychological and spiritual domains are encapsulated in a single, unified system. The corpus also has elements of the Creation Spirituality of Matthew Fox since the protagonists, on their journey of self-discovery, are led beyond the concerns of egoistic existence to mystic union with the Beloved or Ineffable in a way that requires a rediscovery of lost innocence, of the unwounded child that exists in each of us and which is so vividly illustrated in *An Imaginary Life*.

The themes in the Malouf corpus of freedom, responsibility, finitude, guilt, alienation, despair, death and of the individual's quest for authentic personal being also give Malouf's work a distinct existentialist tone, one which perhaps reflects the dilemma of twentieth century humankind, epitomized in Malouf haunting question:

> What else should our lives be then, but a continuous series of beginnings, of painful steppings out, pushing off from the edges of consciousness into the mystery of what we have not yet become? (Malouf, 1978:135).

(a) *The Role of Place*.

When David Malouf said that he has puzzled over " … the way in which the body, that small hot engine of all those records and recollections inhabits place and the way the spirit inhabits the body (Kiernan, 1986:28), he seems to be alluding not only to D.H. Lawrence's 'blood knowledge', which is discussed later in this chapter, but also to the existential question of where one's essence is located, ultimately, the concept of place. Places, in the Malouf corpus, that may exist and yet, may not. Places that are sometimes constituted by a higher order of consciousness superimposing itself over another, sometimes ordinary level of awareness. In a lecture given on his fiction and poetry Malouf said that his literature deals with

> … a whole set of oppositions that is right at the centre of almost everything that I do ... opposition between suburbs and wilderness; between the settled life and the nomadic life; between a centre – a metropolitan centre and an edge; between places made and places that are unmakeable or not yet made; between the perceiver in that poem (The Year of the Foxes) and all sorts of things which are other and that may be the animal world or simply some other consciousness (Hergenham, 1984:328).

These oppositions may be much more profound and include the spiritual opposed to the flesh; the verity of childhood memories remembered by the adult against actuality, and the tension experienced between the exterior, mundane life and the interior unfathomable one. We see these oppositions in the relationships of the protagonists, for example, between Johnno and Dante, Ovid and the Child and Digger and Vic. These oppositions generate a sense of incompleteness and compel the characters to question the meaning and purpose of their lives or to act in such a way as to force the other to do so and to a sense of expectation of an elsewhere place.

The spiritual insights or epiphanies experienced by Malouf's characters are never predictable within the context or structure of the story and often contradict the exterior circumstances. One such case is the Changi episode in *The Great World* when Vic drags Digger to the river ostensibly so that the fish will nibble clean Digger's putrid and gangrenous leg wound:

> All the stink and ooze of it was being taken back into the world, away from him, into the mouths of the living and turned back into life there ... When he came back into himself and looked about he was standing knee deep in oily water, stars overhead, so close he could hear them grinding and he could hear the tiny jaws of the fishes grinding too, as starlight touched their backs and they swarmed and fought and churned the blackness to a frenzy round his shins (Malouf, 1990:161-162).

This event is in itself not terribly important, in fact it is inconclusive. It is rather a motif of interconnectedness that Malouf uses; it is almost descriptive of a sort of *participation mystique*. Both Vic and Digger transcend their immediate circumstances, Vic " … was in a kind of wonder" and aware only of " … a pleasant contact" and Digger " … understood at last, but thought it must be a dream" (Malouf, 1990:161).

It is as if this reconnection with another state of consciousness reveals the individual's true nature, the soul. In a similar way in Malouf's short story *Southern Skies*, the adolescent narrator says that he was:

> … always abroad and waiting for something significant to occur, for life somehow to declare itself and catch me up, [and that he] … longed for the world to free me by making its own rigorous demands and declaring what I must be (Malouf, 1985:13).

A similar expectation is declared in *An Imaginary Life* when Ovid says:

> We barely recognise the annunciation when it comes, declaring: Here is the life you have tried to throw away. Here is your second chance. Here is the destiny you have tried to shake off by inventing a hundred false roles, a hundred false identities for yourself. It will look at first like disaster, but is really good fortune in disguise, since fate too knows how to follow your evasions through a hundred forms of its own. Now you will become at last the one you intended to be (Malouf, 1978:94).

Once the annunciation occurs a psycho-spiritual transformation begins, as the young narrator of *Southern Skies* declares:

> It was as if I had stepped out of the city altogether into some earlier, more darkly wooded area ... it was miraculous... I might

> have been catapulted twenty thousand years into the nearer past, or into my own future ... and I thought oddly that if I were to lower the telescope now to where I had been standing at the entrance to the drive I would see my own puzzled, upturned face, but as a self I had already outgrown and abandoned, not minutes but aeons back (Malouf, 1985:23).

However, the boy, in the midst of this numinous experience discovers:

> … at the point where my self ended and the rest of it began that Time, or Space, showed its richness to me ... I drew back, re entered the present and was aware again of the close suburban dark – of its moving now in the shape of a hand. I must have known all along that it was there, working from the small of my back to my belly, up the inside of my thigh, but it was of no importance, I was too far off. Too many larger events were unfolding for me to break away and ask, as I must have, 'What are you doing?' I must have come immediately. But when the stars blurred in my eyes it was with tears, and it was the welling of this deeper salt, filling my eyes and rolling down my cheeks, that was the real overflow of the occasion (Malouf, 1985:24),

and

> Nothing of what he (the professor) had done could make the slightest difference to me, I was untouched ... but what I had seen – what he had led me to see – my bursting into the life of things – I would look back on that as the real beginning of my existence ... (Malouf, 1985:25).

This 'deeper salt' that filled the young narrator's eyes is evocative of the grain of salt that dissolves in the ocean and symbolizes the uniqueness of the individual but at the same time the merging of that individuality with the Absolute. Thus, even the potentially traumatic sexual encounter becomes remote and irrelevant because it has no relation to the real self. Ego has been transcended. What is also significant in this passage, as elsewhere in the corpus, is the way Malouf enters into the mind of his characters and enunciates not only the humanness of the event but its mystical, spiritual significance and the influence of a higher consciousness or being towards which the human soul moves to assume its true identity and nature.

The Malouf corpus resembles the Dreaming of the Australian aborigines because the places where the annunciations occur become sanctified regions illuminated by memories but within a continuum that gives them relevance to the past, present and future. However, unlike the soul of the aborigine, the soul of the white person in the Malouf corpus, with mythic latitudes and longitudes removed, is adrift.

David Malouf thus sets about to forge anew the consciousness of his reader, to cause them to consider anew the real nature of individual existence and identity. That we must, in his words, like:

> The green things of the earth
> discover a fifth season to push through to, all
> grace notes, as their vegetable souls
> aspire to "the condition". A new species
> taps at the boundaries. Beethoven's Tenth is what
> it breathes (Malouf,1992:198).

(b) *The Child*

In *An Imaginary Life* David Malouf has created a deeper, richer, more intense level of experience and revelation than in any of his other works. This is achieved, partly, through the presentation of one of humanity's most profound mythic symbols: that of the Divine or Primordial Child. Although based loosely on the exile of the Roman poet Ovid the work reveals a state of consciousness rather than a dramatic event:

> … I am describing a state of mind, no place. I am in exile here (Malouf, 1978:16).

It is also one where unmistakably the voice of Ovid is really the same voice that articulates the major themes and concerns throughout the Malouf corpus. It is interesting to note that the adolescent narrator in Malouf's 'Southern Skies' utters similar words prior to his epiphany:

> … but what I am describing, of course, is neither a time nor a place but the mood of my own bored, expectant, uneventful adolescence (Malouf, 1985:12).

Out of that state of consciousness Malouf creates an allegory of modern scepticism and the evocation of desolateness and open space seems to insinuate that of the Australian landscape. This, together with the theme or sense of alienation is similar to that experienced by many settler Australians in the past as well as today; alienation and exile not only in the physical sense but perhaps socially, culturally and spiritually too:

As Ovid says,

> It is the desolateness of this place that day after day fills my mind with its perspective (Malouf, 1978:15).

The transcendental nature of the novel begins to emerge almost immediately and is revealed in the words of Ovid when he says:

> How can I give you any notion – you who know only landscapes that have been shaped for centuries to the idea we all carry in our souls of that ideal scene against which our lives should be played out – of what Earth was in its original blackness, before we brought to it the order of industry, the terraces, the fields, orchards, pastures, the irrigated gardens of the world we are making in our own image (Malouf, 1978:28).

Here Malouf is not only writing about the landscape in which the physical body finds itself but also the landscape of the soul. Peter Bishop has commented on the psychological, almost mystical quality of this particular work and classifies it as an allegory of a psychological descent and of spiritual reconciliation (Bishop, 1982:421). It is because of this that Malouf deliberately leaves vague and ambiguous the exact nature and status of the Child. The prologue tells us that the Child appeared at Sulmo only to Ovid:

> The Child is always there. I am three or four years old. It is late summer. It is spring. I am six. I am eight. The Child is always the same age. We speak to one another, but in a tongue of our own devising. My brother, who is a year older, does not see him, even when he moves close between us. He is a wild boy (Malouf, 1978:9).

Here the Child seems like an imaginary being, a supernatural presence or psychopomp, a projection of Ovid's own psyche. However, later on at Tomis, the Child is a real person who is seen by the Getae. This apparent inconsistency, the reality of the Child as an external figure in time and place and as an imaginal, psychic manifestation, provides the necessary ambiguity to give him archetypal status: as an energy from the personal and collective unconscious manifested in the world of matter.

The Child is both inside Ovid and outside him throughout the novel; is simultaneously a real being in the external world and a projection of an inner and, initially, unconscious part of Ovid. He is, in fact, from that same dream world and carries the same message as the centaurs in the early part of the novel:

> … suddenly ... out of the swirling sky, a horde of forms came thundering towards me – men, yes, horses, yes, and I thought of what I do not believe in and know belongs only to our world of fables, which is where I found myself: ... the centaurs ... uttering cries ...*Let us into your world,* they seemed to be saying. *Let us cross the river into your empire. Let us into your lives. Believe in us. Believe* (Malouf, 1978:23-24).

This mystery of the Child's nature and origins is sustained in a variety of detail throughout the novel. However, in the final section of the novel the Child's timeless, psycho-spiritual nature is stressed:

> It is spring. It is summer. I am three years old. I am sixty. The Child is there. He turns for a moment to gaze at me across his shoulder, which is touched with sunlight, then stoops to gather another snail from the edge of the stream. He rises and goes on. The stream shakes out its light around his ankles ... then wanders upstream on the other bank ... and with the stream rippling as he steps in and out of it, walks on. He is walking on the water's light. And as I watch he takes the first step off it, moving slowly away now into the deep distance, above the earth, above the water, on air (Malouf, 1978:151-152).

Walking on the water's light, the Child is almost a Christ-like figure. In traditional symbology the child is a symbol of the future, as opposed to the old man who signifies the past; but the child is also symbolic of that stage of life when the old man, transformed, acquires a new simplicity. Hence, the conception of the child as symbolic of the mystic centre and as the youthful re-awakening force. In Christian iconography children often appear as angels. In every case, C. G. Jung argues, the child symbolizes formative forces of the unconscious of a beneficent and protective kind (Jung, CW 9 (i), par. 260 and 270). Psychologically speaking, the child is of the soul, the product of the *coniunctio* between the unconscious and consciousness: " ... *one dreams of a child when some great spiritual change is about to take place"* (Cirlot, 1962:45).

Malouf's Child has all the necessary antecedent credentials of a divine or primordial nature, as Ovid, enchanted, reveals:

> My mind moves out continually to the deer forest and the Child. How does he survive out there? Naked. Unhoused. I see him often in my sleep, a ghost moving over the snow among the birches, chewing at lichen, digging under the ice for mold ... meanwhile, night after night, I hunt the Child in my sleep. I warm him with my breath. Or is it the breath of some animal that warms him, wolf or deer, even there in my dreams? Or does he perhaps sleep out the winter like one of the creatures, curled up in some hollow and tied to the continuance of things only by his own slow breathing (Malouf, 1978:54).

This child is at home in the elemental world and the pre-conscious instincts which once guided human beings at the *participation mystique* stage of evolution. In this sense he is not unlike Gemmy Fairley in *Remembering Babylon*, who has

become primitive. Both characters symbolize the id, that unconscious reservoir of primitive instincts in so-called civilized people.

However, perhaps the greatest mystery of *An Imaginary Life* is the nature of the transformation which Ovid experiences, especially in the fifth and final section and which culminates in transformation; that of his physical death and spiritual rebirth. That transformation is pre-empted when Ovid in dream after dream ventures

> ... out beyond the stubbled fields into the desolate plain beyond, into the grasslands beyond the edge of our world. ... the air is filled with the wings of cabbage moths. I fall to my knees and begin digging with my long nails in the earth. Sometimes wolves come, and they claw at the earth beside me. Howling. We dig together, and they pay no more attention to me than they would to a ghost. But I know that whatever it is they are scratching after, I must discover before them or I am lost. So I dig harder, faster, sweating, with the moonlight greasy upon me. Unable to tell myself: this is a dream. I know what it is we are looking for. It is the grave of the poet Ovid (Malouf, 1978:17-18).

This section is filled with potent symbols, for example: the moth, irresistibly drawn to the light and consumed by it, is a symbol of the soul's mystic, self-sacrificing love of the divine light (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994:676). The wolves, although in certain cultures have diabolical aspects, in others symbolize the spiritual and since it sees well in darkness, was regarded as a symbol associated with light and often appears as a companion to Apollo. There is also the legendary female wolf that suckled the abandoned twins, Romulus and Remus, and that became the emblem of Rome. She is a symbol of the helpful animal or of chthonic powers and occasionally appears as psychopomp (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994:1119 -1121).

Finally, after journeying beyond the River Istar for many days, Ovid and the Child come to it, the place:

> ... from here I ascend, or lower myself, grain by grain, into the hands of the gods. It is the place I dreamed of so often, back there in Tomis, but could never find in all my wanderings in sleep – the point on the earth's surface where I disappear ... It is not at all as I had imagined. There are no wolves. It is clear sunlight, at the end of a day like each of the others we have spent out here, a fine warm spring day with larks in the air (Malouf, 1978:150).

This passage suggests one of a number of things: perhaps it is echoic of the Christian Gospel message and the common initiation concept whereby an individual must die to ordinary life in order to attain psychic and spiritual transformation, in

order to participate in a life of higher consciousness, as is the case in shamanism. In this passage the world is essentially no different but Ovid is as one with it. It is also not unlike the common message woven throughout many of humanity's sacred texts in its epiphanic tone but it also is very similar to the bardo state described in the Tibetan Book of the Dead which suggests that the unconscious psyche does not perceive death as a total ending but as a radical change of consciousness from the ego's familiar frame of reference. The process of dying, hence, presents or depicts itself like birth into the other world of spirit. The passage certainly indicates an altered state of consciousness.

(c) *Transformation*

These epiphanies or transformational episodes are a common motif in Malouf's writing and are found throughout the corpus. Significantly, they seem to occur in 'in-between' places which again substantiates the idea of them as a temenos or sacred place. For example, Jock McIvor in *Remembering Babylon*, lives in a place where:

> The sense then of being submerged, of being hidden away in the depths of the country, but also lost, was very strong ... out there the very ground under their feet was strange ... and gave no indication that six hundred miles away ... this bit of country has a name set against it ... just nine years back, this very patch of earth you were standing on had itself been on the other side of things, part of the unknown (Malouf, 1994:9).

And he describes his epiphany thus:

> It was as if he had seen the world till now, not through his own eyes, out of some singular self but through the eyes of a fellow who was always in company, even when he was alone, a sociable self, wrapped always in a communal self that protected it from dark matters and all the blinding light of things, but also from the knowledge that there was a place out there where the self might stand alone. Wading through waist high grass, he was surprised to see all the tips beaded with green, as if some new growth had come into the world that till now he had never seen or heard of. When he looked closer it was hundreds of wee bright insects, each the size of his little finger nail, metallic, iridescent, and the discovery of them, the new light they brought to the scene, was a likeness in him – that was what surprised him – like a form of knowledge he had broken through to. It was unnameable, which disturbed him, but was also exhilarating: for a moment he was entirely happy (Malouf, 1978:106-107).

There is throughout Malouf's work an ambivalence about this transformational experience. By its very nature the experience is beyond words, beyond language. It is incomprehensible other than to the one who experiences it. This being beyond language must lead to consideration of another of the great seminal images or motifs that Malouf uses, namely, that of language or words.

In the early part of *An Imaginary Life* we are told that Ovid's expertise was the Latin language and which, initially, at Tomis he was eager to teach the Getic boy Lullo. Ovid later comes to accept the qualities of the Getic tongue and decides that this is the language he will teach the Child. However, Ovid becomes increasingly aware that there is an even far superior language, a non-verbal language of which the Child is expert:

> The true language, I know now, is that speech in silence in which we first communicated, the Child and I, in the forest, when I was asleep. It is the language I used with him in my childhood ... a language my tongue almost rediscovers and which would, I believe, reveal the secrets of the universe to me ... It is some earlier and more universal language ... a language whose every syllable is a gesture of reconciliation (Malouf, 1978:97-98).

At the end of the novel Ovid is rediscovering this 'language of the birds' a heavenly or angelic language, one which can only be understood by somebody who has risen to certain spiritual levels (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1969:590), and which expresses a sort of *participation mystique* or understanding at a primordial, but at the same time, sacred level of awareness. This is made clear later in the novel when Ovid says:

> ... who is he, this Child, who leads me deeper into the earth, further from speech even ... he who now is inducting me into the mysteries of a world I have never for a moment understood.... in ...a kind of conversation that needs no tongue, a perfect interchange of perceptions, moods, questions, answers, that is as simple as the weather, is in fact the merest shifting of cloud shadows over a landscape or over the surface of a pool, as thoughts melt out of one mind into another, cloud and shadow, with none of the structures of formal speech (Malouf, 1978:145).

Ovid reveals that his transformation brings a heightened sense of unity with earth, nature and indeed the whole world; it is surely a description of the state of *participation mystique* similar to that described in:

> The spirit experiences what the body does but in a different form. It does not move along a line with the body, northward, dividing the grasses' light. It expands to become the whole landscape, as if space itself were its dimensions; filling the whole land from

> horizon to horizon and the whole arch of the sky, its quality now the purest air, a myriad particles of light, each one a little centre from which the whole can be grasped at a single glance (Malouf, 1978:142),

and,

> I am growing bodiless. I am turning into the landscape. I feel myself sway and ripple. I feel myself expand upwards toward the blue roundness of the sky ... another world and another order of existence ... It is like the warmth of another body that has absorbed the sun all day ... I know suddenly what it is I am composed of, as if the energy that is in this fistful of black soil had suddenly opened, between my body and it, as between it and the grass stalks, some corridor along which our common being flowed ... I shall settle deep into the earth, deeper than I do in sleep, and will not be lost. We are continuous with earth in all the particles of our physical being, as in our breathing we are continuous with the sky. Between our bodies and the world there is unity and commerce (Malouf, 1978:145-147).

In this passage, Malouf is saying that it is not only possible for consciousness to survive death; rather, the unbroken continuity of consciousness reveals itself as a logical and utterly inevitable consequence of the way the world is woven. The novel must therefore look at issues of ultimate meaning, not as abstract ideas in some esoteric theology, but as the source of the passion that drives our, in this case Ovid's, life.

On the far side of the river Ovid's attitude changes:

> I no longer ask myself where we are making for. The notion of a destination no longer seems necessary to me. It has been swallowed up in the immensity of this landscape, as the days have been swallowed up by the sense I now have of a life that stretches beyond the limits of measurable time (Malouf, 1978:144).

Time and place seem to have no significance for Ovid and yet, within a few pages, Malouf has Ovid revert to his earlier mundane perceptions and yet, the human soul quakes when faced with the loss of its certitudes and in this especially frightening journey of transformation, this leap into the unknown, the soul is terrified in this unfamiliar territory, as Ovid reveals:

> As the Child and I set out upon it in the moonlight the noise is deafening, the groaning, the cracking, the grinding of the whiteness under us. Halfway across, far out in the glimmering waste of it, we can see nothing, neither the shore we have left nor the one that lies somewhere ahead ... Somewhere, in the middle of the crossing, I had the cold fear that there might be no other shore ... But the earth goes on. Even beyond Ister. There is another world out there ... We have come to the shores, and prepare to enter (Malouf, 1978:137-138).

Not only do we see in this passage the Child as psychopomp or spirit guide but in the last stages of Ovid's transformation the Child displays his mysterious and transcendental nature and seems to be able to be, simultaneously, in more than one place:

> His whole body strains towards some distance that I cannot grasp ... He is full of it ... he seems more and more to belong to a world that lies utterly beyond me and my human imagining ... It is as if he moved simultaneously in two separate worlds. I watch him kneel at one of his humble tasks, feeding me, or cleaning up my old man's mess. And at the same time when I look up, he is standing feet away ... a slight incandescent figure ... already moving away from me in his mind, already straining forward to whatever life it is that lies out there beyond our moment together (Malouf, 1978:149).

(d) *Echoes of Shamanism*

Malouf's sympathetic presentation of shamanism perhaps insinuates that he has a strong belief in the psycho-spiritual dimension of human life, at least, that the conscious mind is likely to be menaced by an almighty unconscious. As Ovid says:

> We have some power in us that knows its own ends. It is that that drives us on to what we must finally become. We have only to conceive of the possibility and somehow the spirit works in us to make it actual. This is the true meaning of transformation. This is the real metamorphosis. Our further selves are contained within us, as the leaves and blossoms are in the tree. We have only to find the spring and release it (Malouf, 1978:64).

The story is, in fact, a shamanistic allegory in that it is the representation of the physical exile of the poet Ovid but is actually the description of a mystical, psychological experience. It uses images of place to create a mythic geography but which really describes a temenos. It is a fable of the possibilities of the human spirit in transforming the material world and thereby initiating the process of individuation, either in life – or at death. It is an inward journey of self-discovery, a journey from the affected veneer of civilization and self-deception to the more primitive, essential but real elements of the soul. *An Imaginary Life* is also about being a foreigner in a strange land and in its indubitable relevance to the European settlers of Australia one might consider Jung's comments that for foreign invaders who have colonized countries, such as Australia:

> … 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 (Jung, CW, 10 par. 103).

Perhaps then what Malouf is also saying is that the exile, the invader is estranged from his psychological roots, his soul, his home, and that, allegorically, this story contains part of the myth of European Australians, of a subtle unconscious conflict that affects Australian culture and perceptions. Whatever the interpretation one is inclined to, one can see, as well, the contemplative, mystical, shamanistic mind at work as Malouf conveys a feeling of ecstatic delight, over a simple word, 'scarlet'. He forces the reader to see beyond and through the word and the imagined colour, to the point where we, along with Ovid, become filled with it:

> It is the first colour I have seen in months. Or so it seems. Scarlet. A little wild poppy, of a red so sudden it made my blood stop. I kept saying the word over and over to myself, scarlet, as if the word, like the colour, had escaped me till now, and just saying it would keep the little windblown flower in sight (Malouf, 1978:31).

The significance given to the word 'scarlet' has a sacred function; it serves as a metaphor for the numinous experience where the individual is awed, overwhelmed and yet fascinated. In all of Malouf's poetry and stories there are similar instances when the objective psyche perceives something wholly other which possesses a sort of indisputable authority or imperative, especially so in the case of place.

Throughout the corpus Malouf gives vivid and detailed descriptions of places in an attempt to show the relationship between place and events. These places exist or have existed in the material world. They may be in Brisbane or near the Hawkesbury River or even in Changi. At another level, however, Malouf conceives of place as an imaginal thing that, paradoxically, does and yet, does not, exist. In *12 Edmonston Street*, for example, Malouf recounts his shaman-like perception of the space underneath his childhood home:

> Down here is the underside of things: the great wedge of air on which the house floats, ever darkness ... a dream space, dark, full of terrors that lurk behind tree-trunks in the thickest forest, hob-goblins, old gods (Malouf, 1985:46-47).

It is the place where:

> ... a secret machinery gets to work in us, a hidden industry of the senses and the spirit, whose busy handling and hearing and overhearing is our second birth into the world (Malouf, 1985:9-10).

In a short essay where he describes his idea of the relationship between imagination and reality, Malouf writes, in a manner that is echoic of D.H. Lawrence's blood knowledge:

> There is only one way of experiencing the reality of the world we live in-that is through our bodies, our senses. But we humans are fortunate in having two ways of attaining that experience; either through actual events or, when it is working at its most powerful, through the imagination. And I would want to insist, myself, that what we experience in this second way, if it is deep and immediate enough, is every bit as real, every bit as useful to us, as what we experience directly in the everyday (Green and Headon, 1987:19-22).

In *The Great World*, we read that Digger has developed this capacity: that his home, Keen's Crossing, has become for him, a temenos, and that:

> Years later, in some of the worst times in Thailand, this connection would sustain Digger and help keep him sane, keep him attached to the earth; to the brief stretch of it that was continuous with his name and through that, with his image of himself. He could be there at will. He had only to dive into himself and look about (Malouf, 1990:199).

Digger also realises that:

> There was a tie, a deep one, between the name as he bore it and as the place did ... And not just by his being there. He could leave it ... but the link would remain. The name contained him ... wherever he might go ... There was a mystery in this that he might spend the whole of his life pondering ... that he would have to explore ... and he saw, regretfully, that he might have to forgo all these other places (Malouf, 1990:197-198).

This raises the question of to what extent and in what way does this physical place construct or influence the person? Malouf ponders too, through Digger, just what it is that constitutes place:

> What had Keen's Crossing been, he wondered, before his grandfather stopped here and claimed the crossing and built the store? Did it have any name at all? And, without one, how had anyone known what it was or that it was here at all? ... Nameless it would have been; untouched in all time by the heel maybe of even a single black. The same hard sunshine would have beat down on it ... But it was not Keen's Crossing. It wouldn't have known there were any Keens, to drive their horses across the river and cut down the first tree ... But then the two things met: his grandfather's axe and the hard trunk of one of its trees, and the first letter of a syllable cut into it. Keen meant sharp. The axe's edge was Keen. So the place got a name (Malouf, 1990:198-199).

(e) *Deeper into Time and Place*

Place for David Malouf facilitates the act of becoming. Places are remembered because of the things that happen within their borders, even including the objects within them that will leave the human body marked and scared; the body that gets cramps, sweats, stinks and grumbles or soars:

> ... till it might be angelic, gifted with unique, undeniable powers... of eternal instant being. It is always in a state of becoming (Malouf, 1990:54).

Implicit in the Malouf corpus, however, are meditations on the fragility of physical existence and its ephemeral nature. Malouf attempts to superimpose something over this physical existence in place: the last paragraph of *The Kyogle Line* exemplifies this. After seeing the Japanese P.O.W.s in the railway wagon and meditating on the layers of experience of both his father and grandfather, Digger is led to the perception of another existence that parallels the physical one but transcends it bringing him to an unnameable destination or place.

The same pattern exists in the essay, *A Place in Tuscany*. Richard Tipping and his exacting, technical production crew may be in the same physical place as Malouf but their perception of it is entirely different, at a different level of consciousness. Their presence, in fact, affects the natural order of Malouf's place, causing it to become snow-bound, like a *cordon sanitaire*. It is only when they leave that the transformation will be reversed, that its mythopoeic antecedents will be restored:

> ... and become a story that some child ... will tie his life to across fifty years (Malouf, 1985:102).

In the essay in which he writes about Campagnatico ... *a village in Italy that I happen to know well,* and the villagers' perception of the nature of the nuclear cloud from Chernobyl, Malouf says that the idea of the cloud ... *had entered their imagination in the most physical terms* (in Green and Headon, 1987:21). Malouf tells us that these simple village folk had no idea of nuclear physics, the anti-nuclear movement, fallout or international politics, yet once they had grasped the horror of it all, even though it was unseen, their imagination made it real to them. Here, as in many other instances in the corpus, Malouf seems to be describing a process similar to that experienced by some people in their late years, or in dementia or in mystic experiences where they are aware of their immediate, familiar circumstances

of time and place and yet, simultaneously, can be in some other time and place. A time and place peopled, too, just as substantially, by identities of another time and place.

In explaining how his poem *An Ordinary Evening at Hamilton* works and how it made the writing of *An Imaginary Life* possible, Malouf says that the crux is a subjective experience that precipitates belief:

> The movement of that poem is from something observed, described – objects, events – straight through into the mind, and the experience in enacts – the *belief* – is that there is no disjunction between thought and object, between mind and body – that the old subject/object dichotomy is resolved in experience, in being itself. The movement of the poem, and whatever drama there is in it, is in the way in which objects stop being outside in a world perceived and end up inside the perceiver; in the way in which the poem changes those objects into perceptions. The whole movement of the poem is from the house and garden outside to a point where the house has become the house of the body itself and the anatomy that one is talking about is the body as the point from which the thing is experienced *in itself* but not as something *separate* (Neilson, 1990:54).

In *Fly Away Peter* Malouf leads the reader to a much deeper consideration of this issue, an altered state of consciousness, in fact, he describes a near-death-experience. The protagonist Jim has fallen unconscious on the battle field, mortally wounded but:

> Jim, doubtful, began to dig. He looked about. Others were doing the same, long lines of them, and he was surprised to see how large the clearing was. It stretched away to the brightening skyline. It wasn't a clearing but a field, and more than a field, a landscape; so wide, as the early morning sun struck the furrows, that you could see the curve of the earth. There were hundreds of men, all caked with mud, long-haired, bearded, in ragged uniforms, stooped to the black earth digging. So it must be alright after all. Why else should so many be doing it? The lines stretched out forever (Malouf, 1982:127-128).

This image of hundreds of men digging conveys a profound reality from beyond the limits of waking consciousness and it anticipates a transformative event. As a symbol it acts in the same way in which Malouf used it in *An Imaginary Life*. There the poet Ovid dreams of digging with wolves, digging to discover his own grave.

In both works Malouf deliberately leaves the significance of digging vague and allows the reader to interpret it. In *An Imaginary Life*, Ovid knows that whatever the wolves are scratching after, he must discover before them or " ... I am

lost" even though it is his grave. In *Fly Away Peter,* the dead Clancy gives Jim a similar clue:

> Jim looked around, astonished. It was Clancy Parkett, whom he had last seen nearly a year ago, and whom he believed was dead, blown into so many pieces that nothing of him was ever found except what Jim himself had been covered with. To give poor Clancy a decent burial, some wit had said, they would have had to bury the both of them. And now here he was quite whole after all, grinning and rasping his chin with a blackened thumb. Trust Clancy. Clancy would wriggle out of anything. 'I thought you'd been blown up.' Jim said foolishly. 'You just disappeared into thin air.' 'No,' Clancy told him, 'not air, mate. Earth.' And he held up a fistful of the richly smelling mud. 'It's the only way now. We're digging through to the other side' (Malouf, 1982:127).

This digging ritual might also be seen, metaphorically, as scratching away at the membrane that separates the material realm from the Imaginal Realm, the place of the soul and of souls.

Malouf's character Harland is not unlike Shakespeare's Prospero in The Tempest: both return to an island and exert some sort of control over nature, for both the opacity between nature and super nature is dissolved and both experience contact with the spirits of their milieu. The structured similarity allows Malouf to create a mythology for the Australian milieu out of local, identifiable images. It allows him to introduce an indigenous mythic quality that is superimposed over the tension and human conflicts produced by the characters of the overt tale. It is an example of Malouf's meditation on the many layers of perceived experience and of the way in which the soul and the body experience their milieus. To be sure, Malouf's world is that of the mystic poet and it is the preponderance of this in him that is the key to his work. He magnifies and deepens experience in the manner of the poet – almost as if he were in a trance in which he 'chants' of another plane of existence.

In his poem sequence *Inspirations*, Malouf creates perhaps one of the richest and most mystical encounters of the language of depth imagination in the cannon of Australian poetry:

> to breathe out
> air that has been taken
> deep and give it voice – clear vocables
> move into the real world glow there
> as stone

knife

forest.

It is that deeply religious poetry of transcendence – transcendence of the physical to an ephemeral world of perceptions and memories, which, though no less real than the physical, leads to an awareness of the presence of God: *naming all that is beautiful in this world after His nature*.

The theme of the animating power of the word is continued and in poem *V* of the collection, Malouf writes:

> There are so many things that need us to be looking
> before they can appear
> in our lives, in our poems. How else should they
> come into existence? Angels,
> centaurs, chocolate éclairs (Malouf, 1992:157).

In poem *VII* of the collection, he emphasises the theme of the breath of life by creating images of the physicality of the existence out of which the metaphysical change is effected by lines such as:

> Hearing you read the poems, hearing you breathe
> through them feeling your breath
> rub the world of objects...
> We are the conductors of an absolute music
> ... I bend
> an ear toward the pauses where air
> is drawn back to your lungs
> and charged, recharged. I'm carried
> forward as it swells into the place of
> your other reading
> ... We are conductors
> of heaven's fire its current
> music striking through us to the earth (Malouf, 1992:160).

Here then is Malouf's sense of life as being conditioned by the interaction of opposing forces: conscious and unconscious, civilized and primitive, of one individual against another, the power of the breath of life of an individual, literally, flowing out and around to invigorate his milieu, to animate what was previously inanimate. The prose and poetry of Malouf is also filled with sensualness. It feeds directly into his work, as if the sexual passion and energy was a necessary concomitant to a spiritual vision, a sort of reconciliation of the sacred and the profane. In Malouf's *An Imaginary Life,* for example, there is what might be identified as a homoerotic element in Ovid's need, in his emotional and physical dependency on the Child:

> Wandering along together, wading through the high grasses side by side, is a kind of conversation that needs no tongue, a perfect interchange of perceptions, moods, questions, answers (Malouf, 1978:145).

Again, in his short story *Southern Skies* the adolescent narrator declares that he was:

> ... waiting for something significant to occur, for life somehow to declare itself ... and longed for the world to free me by making its own rigorous demands and declaring at last what I must be (Malouf, 1985:13).

This happens as he views the night sky through a telescope, becoming aware of the immensity of time and space yet of his own mortality too. While in a trance like state, the professor has sexually assaulted the boy but he is now no longer vulnerable to chance encounters, even a potentially traumatic sexual one. In fact the event may rather be seen almost like a primitive sexual, homoerotic initiation rite, often part of the initiation of a shaman.

The words of shamans, like the harmony of music, can soothe and heal because of the way they penetrate a special area of our lives, their relevance to our mood and condition. Much of what Malouf writes about depends on a sort of existentialism, the sense of the uniqueness and the aloneness of the individual.

Malouf probes feelings and entanglements in a deep and strange way, just barely perceptible, sometimes surrendering fully to experience, allowing it to flow through himself. But he has that quality of genius that sucks out of ordinary experiences essences strange or unknown to ordinary men. He chants obedience to the primitive urges that rise in the soul, urging us to new gestures, new embraces, new emotions, new combinations – new creations – but within a psycho-spiritual matrix that is Australian; sometimes be it ever so subtle or hinted at.

5.2 Thomas Keneally: The Chanting Priest.

In 1985 I made a study of what I termed Thomas Keneally's European literature: *A Victim of the Aurora* (1977), *Gossip from the Forest* (1975), *Season in Purgatory* (1976), *Schindler's Ark* (1982); those novels set outside the contemporary Australian milieu, in a period from the beginning of the twentieth century to the end of the Second World War. These works examine the effects of imperialism on the individual and the inherited cultural accoutrements of European Empires. Although

the Keneally corpus is one where minor characters and motifs from earlier works are reinvestigated, often from a different perspective, as is the case in Shakespearean literature, these works, in particular, elucidate the theme of place as a temenos and the influence it has on bringing to individual consciousness an epiphany of the soul. Indeed, place is a significant influence in the Keneally canon, as one can see, for it was after Keneally's sojourn to Antarctica in 1968 that he published *The Survivor* (1969), and it was his United Kingdom tour of 1970 that produced his European literature, beginning with *Gossip from the Forest*.

Thomas Keneally had always intrigued me and I knew that at age seventeen he had entered a seminary to study for the Roman Catholic priesthood but left before ordination in 1960. However, the apostate Keneally may have subjectively rationalised the words spoken by the consecrating bishop at the many ordinations he must have witnessed, and indeed, the one he anticipated himself to be nearing: *You are a priest of the Order of Melchizedek, and for ever* (Hebrews 7:17). So it is possible that Thomas Keneally sees himself as an Ordinary of another priesthood, that archetypal priesthood of mediators between humankind and the ineffable; it is the Order of the Bard, the ancient and wise teacher. Keneally has, after all, said that as a child he was enthralled by:

> … the priest-figure in a landscape, in black under the Australian sun. An Irish priest with the Sacrament. A powerful, supernatural being – overdressed, who performed the work of the Irish spiritual empire. It was the appeal of this priest figure which enticed me into sacred orders (Hartley, 1985:118).

(a) *A Craftier Theology*

In *Bring Larks and Heroes* (1967), Keneally develops a thematic motif using the defacto marriage of Halloran and Anne Rush; namely, that in the absence of representatives of the major Western religious institutions, a deeper, often a more fundamental sacrament comes into play. That motif is widespread throughout the Keneally corpus, particularly his European literature, and often seems to emerge from places where those institutions or their representatives are absent or have become inconsequential; the Antarctic, Auschwitz or the more pristine places of the Australian landscape. Indeed, it is in such places that the truth of the Keneally protagonists is often revealed. It even seems to spill-over into the day to day reality of Keneally's life for he writes that one day, whilst touring Ireland, a plump

little Franciscan friar, who should not, according to canon law, have allowed Keneally, figuratively, a fallen priest, to enter the monastery cloisters and violate it but instead said, "... my antipodean friend, damn canon law!" (Keneally, 1970:49). Apostasy, but a 'craftier theology', a term that he used in *Bring Larks and Heroes* to describe a more potent and essential process that may replace an institutional rubric, in the very midst of the cloisters!

Thomas Keneally is like a medievalist historian, a Venerable Bede, recording the moral history of his age. He is the hereditary Irish bard, the raconteur storyteller whose tales force the reader to contemplate what he sees as the constantly recurring threat of individual extinction, man's inhumanity to man and the ease with which we can destroy each other, physically, mentally and spiritually. The world, for Keneally, offers places that are open and fluid systems but are intensely dramatic in their revelations. Thus, the horrific descriptions in *Season in Purgatory* of putrefying wounds, the vivid presentation of instances where the human body is cut, ripped or attacked by gangrene, as in the case of the young boy whom the Germans " … suspended by his genitals in a well" (Keneally, 1976:93). Such descriptions are not gratuitous authorial indulgences but rather essential detail in the literary exposition of the vulnerability of humanity and of the fragility of human life. Where it appears that there is a degree of authorial satisfaction in the way he describes what may be needless pornographic violence as for example, in *Season in Purgatory*, of the gorish detail of putrefying wounds on pages 39-40 and 74-75. Such seeming indulgence marks many of his novels, particularly *Confederates*, but especially *Schindler's Ark,* and it may rather reveal Keneally's desire to locate the soul, the sacred within the profane.

The themes of guilt, oath-breaking, loyalty and betrayal present in Keneally's work are of course traditional Catholic themes and identify the Catholic novel but Keneally's writings, become the medium by which he chants his credo and theology, a craftier theology. Indeed, Keneally's protagonists, apostates like him, pose questions regarding the social conscience of humankind in a world " … fuelled and governed by lies" (Keneally, 1977:6). As a theological student, Keneally would have been familiar with the theological implications of words, apart from the fact that they are a normal accompaniment to any form of ritual action, the word may also constitute a chant or magic incantation and:

> The sacrificing priest ... the chanting priest ... learned that the words of the sacred literature are themselves sacrosanct and eternal and to learn these words or to utter them is a way of

> becoming united with the divine ... to enter into mystical union with the word is to attain final bliss (Dillistone, 1955:142-46).

Keneally's literature demonstrates that he is overawed by the power of the word and the concept of the Analogy and obsessed with the oath motif in very much the same way as J R R Tolkien was in his imaginative construct *The Lord of the Rings.* This becomes clear in *Gossip from the Forest* where it can be seen that when an age or society is in the throes of profound transition, the first thing to disintegrate is language and communication. In the dedication of *Gossip from the Forest,* Keneally made the note; "In the season in which this book is written, the French Government persisted in exploding nuclear devices above the ocean where my children swim"; in this he establishes the theme of the temenos-like Australia and its innocent inhabitants pitted against a degenerate Europe and Europeans.

(b) *Antipodean Temenos*

Keneally seems to make use of the Australian ocker as a primary motif, a character who either overtly or implicitly intrudes into and disrupts that imperialist milieu of corrupt power, as is the case with the Australian flyers in *Schindler's Ark*, the Australian larrikin, Callaghan, of *Season in Purgatory*, or the perceptive and dependable Barry Fields of, *A Victim of the Aurora*. The presence of these Australian characters in the various situations contained in the works under examination seems to have a mediating effect. Even the very mention of Australia seems to provide a sort of juxtaposition to the insanity of the European milieux. In all of these four novels a hint or reference is made to Australia or Australians in such a way as to carry the connotation of them as ultimately being apart from, even immune from the European or British decay. Indeed, Keneally has said on many occasions that he believes Australia to be a sacred place and he was quite emphatic on this point in an interview with Geraldine Doogue which he made for Qantas In-Flight Entertainment in January 1984. It is also forcefully made throughout his book, *Outback* (Keneally, 1983:11); also in his article, *Tom Keneally meets Uluru: the myths and the realities* in The Sydney Morning Herald, page 45 on November 2, 1985, and in his essay, *On Being Australian,* (in Braddon, 1984:95). Australia, like Antarctica, that other continent with which Keneally seems obsessed, has a vastness and a timelessness and perhaps represents for him that essentially unsullied place

on earth with the potential to develop into the Thomist conception of the Ideal State.

In the Keneally corpus, generally, there is much psychological analysis with a pronounced Jungian inclination. In so many instances Keneally presents the reader with characters who exhibit distinct Jungian psychic processes or who are motivated by unconscious drives. The corpus also contains symbols and archetypal themes, endless corridors of fantasy and feeling which seem suddenly to unfold their mysteries before dubious witnesses; creative as well as destructive forces within the individual which other individuals and social institutions ignore at their peril.

A Victim of the Aurora, based on the story of the second Antarctic expedition in 1910 of Captain R.F. Scott – an event in history that has been mythologized – and in the same genre in setting as *The Survivor*, might be seen to incline, thematically, to a more universal eschatological or messianic view. *The Survivor*, is concerned with the enduring guilty conscience of an individual, Alec Ramsey, but the associated elements in that story include the perennial Keneally obsessions, homosexuality and cannibalism, the destruction of the human body and spirit, and some sort of alternative medium or mediator between humankind and the ineffable, in this case, *the Priesthood of Antarcticians* (Keneally, 1969:206). Nevertheless, the framework had been established for the more elaborate and admirable, *A Victim of the Aurora*. Given Keneally's bardic penchant and the fact that he was over-awed by the Antarctic milieu, it was to be expected that he would use that landscape again to chant his craftier theology and this can be intimated from some *Survivor* passages such as:

> One is nearer God's heart in Antarctica... We humanize landscapes with gardens and humanize the unknown with rituals... So Antarctica is a sacrament of the absolute, the same as all deserts are. It's a place for prophets... (Keneally, 1969:178).

The dedication of the work to Bob Hawke and the fact that it was published two years after the sacking of the Whitlam Labor Government alerts the reader to look for undertones, political and social, in the subtext. It is significant that Barry Fields, the Australian member of the expedition, is of greater perception, moral fibre and humanity than the others. Barry Fields perhaps represents the Irish-Australia that remained spiritual for nearly two hundred years or so while Europe experienced devastating change. Perhaps Australia too, in the Keneally canon is a 'sacrament of the absolute', where one is, nearer God's heart.

The *Survivor* story is presented by Sir Anthony Piers, who, as a young man was a landscape artist, an important point because this novel deals with metaphysical and physical landscapes: that in which the soul exists and that in which the body exists. The ecclesiastical imagery is deliberate in this novel: it is developed initially as the young Anthony Piers describes the members of the expedition as "...a worthy priesthood" (Keneally, 1977:41) but is fully developed, in this context, when the expedition members prepare to search for the missing Henneker and are "...whispering like monks" (Keneally, 1977:48). In Antarctica, however, all members of the expedition will be forced into confrontation with immutable, eternal values because there time is frozen and everything is recorded in the snow or ice: a footstep in the snow or a penguin, dead two hundred years, but yet perfectly preserved (Keneally, 1977:91) implicitly suggesting also that sins will be, metaphorically, frozen in time. Above all this is the light of the aurora, dichotomous in that it is ephemeral and yet eternal; it is a metaphor for those epiphanies, spiritual and psychological, in which essential nature or meaning is revealed. The members of the expedition express their redemptive desire, metaphorically, as they dig through the timeless landscape of ice and snow to collect from it some artefact that will, ironically, only affirm their own mortality and humanity: a mummified seal carcass, some object that has an eternal, imperishable state (Keneally, 1977:91). Here Keneally is also comparing Imperialist-Christian ethics with natural religion and the former is found wanting and it is obvious at this point that Keneally has deliberately written an epiphany in which he takes his reader behind the meaning of the words civilization and empire.

Keneally forces a realization of these facts by juxtaposing images and ideas. The "... wondrous day-night" (Keneally, 1977:86), creating a strange light and the majestic beauty of the vast ice mass of six million square miles with the ominous volcano Erebus in the background (Keneally, 1977:86); "... the consummate burial place" (Keneally, 1977:87). Antarctica is sacrosanct too, a temenos in that "... all governments have – by the Twelve Nation Treaty of 1959 – suspended territorial claims upon it" (Keneally, 1977:88). The pure white, eternal polar world, with its landscape and setting as analogues of states of mind, with its symbolism of Keneally's metaphysical longings, has always fascinated him. He is drawn to its power, dimension and timelessness and it becomes a sort of theatre, verily, a cathedral for him, a setting for acting out the rituals of humanity. One can find much that is significant in this place for Keneally for it facilitates again the

expression of that theme found in *Bring Larks and Heroes*, in the marriage of Halloran and Anne Rush; that one can rely on a 'craftier theology' in the absence of a priest.

(c) *Gossip from the Unconscious*

The plot in *Gossip from the Forest* is very cleverly woven by the use of historical facts of the Armistice and some impressionistic character sketches of significant individuals involved in it. It takes up, thematically, what has been treated in relation to *A Victim of the Aurora*: the effect on individuals and the broader social implications of degenerating European empires. Here Keneally also explores the theological and metaphysical significance of the word and its place in human affairs using as his model the armistice documents of World War I, but this novel too, provides the vehicle in which to introduce his perennial concern of the apostate's 'craftier theology'. The protagonist, Marshall Foch, acts as a *tabular rasa* onto which Jungian and mythic themes are projected and analysed. Foch dreams of a forest, an activity which he synchronously shares with Matthias Erzberger, the German plenipotentiary, the Foret de L'Aigle where the ceasefire signing will take place, in railway carriage 2417D. In the dream, youths play innocently until three women, representing Britain, France and Germany, decorate them with military ribbons; the young men immediately fall silent, strip and walk "...naked over the ivy [symbolizing womanhood] … and the ribbons they had so easily accepted became bleeding wounds" (Keneally, 1975:10-11). These intimate dream messages or gossip are from the *forest* of the unconscious and establish the mythopoeic tone of this work.

In the character of the Jesuit educated Marshal Foch we have, as elsewhere in the Keneally canon, a personification of the vindictive Inquisition monk, like those in Verdi's opera *Don Carlos*, who need to exercise power in determining punishment and mortality to vindicate their own way of life; "... a fakir, a mad monk" (Keneally, 1975:215). He can "... meditate as effectively as any monk. He has certain psychic powers" (Keneally, 1975:120). He had also published a treatise, *The Principles of Warfare*, which reflects, " … in accordance with his temperament ... war as a moral and mystical exercise" (Keneally, 1975:77). Clemenceau is another monk type figure, "... a lonely and ascetic man, who has ... lived alone since his bankruptcy …

and enjoyed more the splitting of coalitions than the parting of the vulva" (Keneally, 1975:189).

Keneally constructs this novel through a series of impressionistic narrative sketches, both of the characters and the landscape, metaphorically in the manner of Monet and it is no surprise that Monet is mentioned as the confidant of Clemenceau who thinks the artist something of a god (Keneally, 1975:171). The eighty-seven short scenes, each with a Brechtian title, for example, *To the Toilets*, *The General Who Swallowed a Hook*, and *The Suicidal Horse*, insinuate the omnipotence of Keneally as he plays with his characters and their routine humanity. The dreams, nightmares and portentous symbols in the text cannot be treated too lightly for they indicate a very significant sub-textual layer of the novel: Keneally's preoccupation with the psychology and symbolism of Carl Jung. Jung paid great attention to the Old Testament character of Job, the relationship between God, humankind and Satan and the significance of dreams. For example, in the Book of Job it is written:

> God speaks first in one way,
> and then in another, but no one notices.
> He speaks by dreams, and visions that come in the night,
> when slumber comes on mankind,
> and men are all asleep in bed.
> Then it is he whispers in the ear of man
> or may frighten him with fearful sights,
> to turn him away from evil doing,
> and make an end of his pride;
> to save his soul from the pit,
> and his life from the pathway to Sheol (Book of Job, 33:15-18).

In his essay, *Answer to Job* (Jung, CW 11, pars. 553-758), Jung asserted that the Old Testament Book of Job provides a remarkably comprehensive symbolic account of an encounter with the Self (through dreaming), a process that describes an individual experience in which the ego has its first major conscious encounter with the Self, an obvious theme in this novel. Indeed, *Gossip from the Forest* is very dependent on Jungian psychology to express its philosophical base. The conjunction of the Foch and Erzberger dreams and their content has been expressed by Keneally as a Jungian synchronicity; synchronistic in the sense that homosexuality or bisexuality in this novel represents an archetype which has been described as something that:

> … seems to move both from within and without, manifesting impulses, emotions, images, ideas and interpretive structures in the interior psyche yet also as concrete forms, events and

contents of the external world, including synchronistic phenomena (Tarnas, 2006:84).

Thus, the many references to implicit if not overt homosexuality, as is often the case throughout the Keneally corpus, and in this work on pages 19, 21, 22, 68, 111, and 155, which also suggest again a 'craftier theology', a process that manifests when something in the outer and inner worlds becomes coterminous. For example, in *Season in Purgatory,* there is Twinkum and the other homosexual British officers at his villa (Keneally, 1976:13). These men are, in a sense, echoic of the members of the Sacred Band of Thebes; soldiers, elite homosexual couples who fought together in ancient Greece (Davidson, 2007:5), the same general geographic area in which this tale is set. Then too, there is David's friendship with the older physician, Major Patrick Ellis who admits to him "...if it hadn't been for the war I would have run away with a twenty-three year old nurse or had an affair with a Guardsman" (Keneally, 1976:166). The motif of homosexuality or bisexuality serves to the reiterate the theme of potentially latent, volatile homosexuality attributed to all Imperialist men in Keneally's European novels. Such forceful sexual energy is given expression when in a less structured, more elemental world and represents the bisexual shaman archetype or character, common throughout the whole of the Keneally corpus. Keneally's world is an elemental one where women, representing the feminine earth element, have "...an ancient kinship with cats and snakes and other gods" (Keneally, 1976:190).

(d) *The Child Again*

In the case of the Marshal, Clemenceau, Wemyss and Weygand, some perverse event in their lives, often occurring in childhood, becomes the "... moment (that) reverberated in him all his life" (Keneally, 1975:183). The Marshal believes himself to be a mystic (Keneally, 1975:77). Wemyss is the progeny of a family which perceived things in supernatural omens and so he is compelled to see things by "... concentrating on the keeping of his monocle in his right eye" (Keneally, 1975:139); a single, unlidded eye being the symbol of the Divine Essence and of Divine Knowledge (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1994:363). Keneally implies that there are processes, archetypes in which all individuals are inextricably caught up for the whole of their lives and this is why he continually alludes in this work to soldiers as children or as childlike: " ... three elite children from OHL" (1975:200) " … the

young masters" (1975:201) the young soldiers like pubescent schoolboys " ... in the toilets reading ... something as innocent as pornography" (1975:35). Like children, these soldiers obediently enact the orders of their surrogate superiors. The childlike allusion also gives them a vulnerable innocence, a quality of being not responsible for their actions. Here again, Keneally reflects on the theological importance of words, and thus, when Groener says to Erzberger, " ... these words mean nothing any more. The world's vocabulary is changing" (Keneally, 1975:199), he is echoing not only a major theme of this work but also his concern that the immorality exemplified in the Armistice document wording may represent and indicate a universal moral degeneracy.

The third work in the collection of Keneally's European literature, *Season in Purgatory* (1976) is essentially a dramatized account of " ...real events that occurred off the Dalmatian coast in 1943 and 1944" (Keneally, 1976:6). In another sense, it is also the odyssey of one man's ascension through a Dantean milieux of Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso. The small band of Yugoslav partisans represents that small, ritualised community, common in the Keneally corpus. It is a logical literary and historical extension of the social and political circumstances inherited from the milieu of *Gossip from the Forest* and it reiterates the theology of revelation inherent in *A Victim of the Aurora*. It is also the precursor of the final work of the European literature, the ultimate horror, the exegesis of imperialism, mindlessness and destruction that is to be revealed by *Schindler's Ark*.

What is not clear in *Season in Purgatory* is whether Cleary has undergone some sort of metamorphosis and a spiritual purgation, or whether the " ... barbaric singing" (Keneally, 1976:197) of the tribe of partisans which " ... seemed to have Cleary half addled" (Keneally, 1976:198) has, perhaps, temporarily enchanted him. Certainly after he is wounded and shipped back to Ireland, he was " ... back milking cows again in Clare, under the tyranny of his womenfolk" (Keneally, 1976:206). In any case his experiences have transfigured him.

Again we see Keneally's use of symbolism in the description of David being amazed by Moja's unexplained hatred of flowers (Keneally, 1976:73). The flower is a universal symbol of the self, of purity, of the Virgin Mary. The flower, especially the golden flower and the blue flower represent, according to the medieval alchemists, the hermaphrodite (Jung, CW 11, par. 748). Thus, Moja's rejection of flowers may be indicate her inability to experience, psychologically, a unification of the opposites in her personality, again allowing Keneally to introduce the sexual

motif or archetype and its latent sexual power. Indeed, the idea of particular motifs continuing through the canon gains credence in *Season in Purgatory*, for example, in the case of the Australian, Callaghan, who with his carefree larrikin behaviour replicates his counterpart, Barry Fields of *A Victim of the Aurora*. Callaghan, like Fields, has an uncomplicated fresh and more pragmatic view of life. This is reiterated in the incident where the girl with whom Callaghan has been sexually compromised, is shot by the Partisans and he berates them, "Bastards ... Bastards'. He accused everyone. The Yugoslavs. The British. All Europe for its strife" (Keneally, 1976:130).

David's acceptance of the mantle of pacifism (Keneally, 1976:177) is an illustration of those moments when the destiny that each person carries with himself or herself, the destiny fully modelled by the unconscious, reveals itself. When this occurs, there is no uncertainty in the imperative course of action that must be taken and as David recognises, it simply has to be done. In this event, Keneally illustrates the final luminous encounter of the ego personality with the stranger within, the Jungian Self. Indeed, the same type of encounter was fashioned in Cleary; the very same unconscious processes of the self influencing the significant relationships in his life; similarly, with Moja and with Dr. Ellis and we also are shown a elemental part of the psyche that was both enchanted and yet horrifyingly overawed by the primeval chants of the Homeric-like partisan soldiers (Keneally, 1976:38). David's ultimate discovery of himself, of his real nature, is in a sense a terrible one, and his solution to the problem of what to be, was to exorcise this stranger, this other self, by a fierce, long, concentrated spiritual and psychological struggle that metaphorically paralleled the actual physical battle going on around him.

(e) *Beyond the Apocalypse*

Schindler's Ark (1982) is, metaphorically, Keneally's Book of Revelation, the apocalyptic book of his four European novels and which also portrays the righteous individual within the context of a messianic theme. Not messianism in the Judeo-Christian sense but more that of the existentialist in that in between the pain of an individual's life, between the capricious cycles of historic forces, the individual is free, Sisyphus-like, to celebrate their essential being and ".... the pragmatic triumph of good over evil" (Keneally, 1982:13). Survival, a recurring motif in the Keneally corpus, and the word *survivor* are used throughout the text. Structurally, the work

is the biography of Oskar Schindler, who is in actuality, simply a survivor too, a fact that Keneally often hints at in the text. Oskar is a man who stands in the movement of history, who " ...felt a sense of a grand shift in history, and was seduced by the itch to be party to it" (Keneally, 1982:43). One cannot help but feel that Keneally has projected himself into the character of Oscar, who is transfigured into an archetypal saviour figure, a transfiguration that seems to occur at the time he meets Itzhak Stern (Keneally, 1982:62). However, Oskar and the totally evil Amon Goeth are too often closely identified; " ... there was a mutual knowingness between them... as if they were soul brothers" (Keneally, 1982:184). In fact, Amon is later referred to as " ... Oskar's dark brother" (Keneally, 1982:185). Oscar is described as " ... a bounteous avatar who covers all eventualities" (Keneally, 1982:372), not only in the context of the mortal storm of Nazism that was unleashed on humankind, but also that of the unconscious mind where everything is seen as symbolic.

The emotive image of the child with the scarlet cape, perhaps facilitating an imaginative association with Little Red Riding Hood and the Big Bad Wolf, enables Keneally to make the statements that he otherwise fails to do with any conviction. The Wafen SS guard is only a child himself except that he is slightly older and in uniform, as was often the case in later Nazi Germany. Sometimes, however, these children in uniform act with a brutality quite beyond their years, a point explicitly made as a woman is shot, brutally, in full view of the 'scarlet toddler' and worse, when a boy slides down the wall whimpering, " ... as one of them...jammed a boot on his head as if to hold it still and put the barrel (of a gun) against the back of the neck – the recommended SS target – and fired" (Keneally, 1982:141)

Keneally begins by describing the child as the 'scarlet toddler' in this passage but after the brutal execution uses the term 'scarlet child' (with echoes of Hawthorne). The progression from toddler to child signifying that maturation has taken place by being a witness to this experience. This is the same child who displays a " ... pitiably admirable cunning" (Keneally, 1982:145) in not calling to her uncle; at three years of age she understands all the subtleties of adult interaction and manipulation and deftly moves herself out of danger and into hiding. It is the children who maintain their dignity and innocence in this story. The images are of thin, long-limbed, dark eyed children who suffer, metaphorically, at the hands of older children, the latter of whom, with few exceptions, are caught in a nihilistic movement, to surely themselves, later suffer a grotesque fate and spiritual death.

The Jewish children in the concentration camps suffer a kind of death too, a death of childhood for they possess an awareness beyond their years.

There is clearly evident in this work Keneally's recurring preoccupation with the human body, particularly that of the female and of its function, its vulnerability and perhaps too, he also examines the question of the nature and even anatomical positioning of the human soul. What, we hear the voice of Keneally question, happens to the human soul when the head is shaved, the body stripped naked and tortured, and brutalised to the extreme? In an attempt to explain this phenomenon, one might accept that the individual Jew was sustained amid such adversary and suffering by their conviction that Israel, the Jewish people, the chosen people, was predestined for this role. Of course, Keneally the theologian, is aware of this and it is an element of his 'craftier theology'. It is worth noting that no well-defined Australian character has been introduced directly into the plot of Schindler's Ark. There are, however, references to Australians as the flyers, one of whom " ... was holding the charred remnants of an English Bible" (Keneally, 1982:309), an image which strengthens the altruistic motif, shot down after dropping supplies to the partisans in " ... the primeval forest east of Cracow" (Keneally, 1982:309). These men who " ... should come all this way from unimaginable little towns in Australia to hasten the end in Cracow, give ...some sort of confirmation" to Oskar (Keneally, 1982:309). One can only suppose that Keneally is referring to his vision, similar to that of Manning Clark, that Australia, and Australians represent an interstice in the pervasive degenerative European imperialist heritage and carnage of that time. This proposition is given credibility by a later Keneally statement that Oskar, " ... in another age and condition ... could have become a demagogue of the style of ... John Lang of Australia" (Keneally, 1982:394) and in interviews in which Keneally admits that in the character of Oskar Schindler there is an element of Ned Kelly (Hartley, 1985:124), a character often seen as the equivalent to Robin Hood in Australian folk history.

Throughout the Keneally corpus the homosexual or bisexual motif represents rebellion against the status quo and compliments themes of guilt, betrayal, apostasy, mysticism and individual disorientation. In *Bullie's House* (1981), another Keneally play, Cleary, an anthropologist, tells the court that all cultures have failed the individual because there was a time when:

> … the world was still one thing, before everything was shattered into pieces, this piece getting labelled 'politics' and this piece 'love' and another piece in the corner 'culture', and another piece

> 'religion'. When poetry was something that happened 'outside' the covers of books, when song was magical and shook the sun, when art was an habitual process of the body like breathing and excreting, and when death – of which I happen to be ridiculously scared – was a passageway and not a brick wall (Keneally, 1981:65-66).

It is also worth noting that Keneally has a penchant of reconstituting characters in his various works; a Cleary appears in both *Season in Purgatory*, and *Bullie's House*, both characters representing something elementally primitive. A Pelham appears in *Season in Purgatory* and *The Survivor*, although the character in that latter work does not experience an epiphany as does the one in the former. However, the most obvious archetypal character to reappear throughout the Keneally canon is the oath-breaking apostate, always of Neitzschean stature, seen in the Keneally protagonists. It is the European literature which reveals and focuses Keneally's most deeply felt and compelling obsession in a way quite different to that of his other works. It is the way Keneally expresses this obsession; of the depths to which the human soul can plunge, of the way he portrays the divided soul caught helplessly between despair and affirmation, against a value charged landscape.

Gene Kellog has identified what he calls the 'Catholic novel', one in which the villains are secularized or lapsed Catholics [or apostates] and who, through their actions, exemplify the greatest weaknesses of their society. Kellog explains that the author of such a novel exhibits a tendency to enter into his subject by a " ...process akin to mysticism", that he portrays not only the human spirit, but all of nature as being under a metaphysical shadow because a flaw at the heart of the universe has estranged him from God (Kellog, 1970:274). That 'process akin to mysticism' might rather been seen in terms of the shamanic powers at play in the creation and reading of a work of fiction, discussed in Chapter 6.

5.3 Colleen McCullough: The Alchemist

I have entitled my analysis of a selection from the corpus of Colleen McCullough *The Alchemist* because what at first appears to be popular, recensionist historical fact or pulp romance, as distinct from elite literature, is really only the base material that McCullough uses to create the alchemical gold of mythopoeic text. What one notices most about McCullough's writing is its contradictory or dichotomous nature; moving from fact to imagined emotions and motivations, a

disguised or profound truth emerging from a seemingly Mills and Boone narrative. McCullough's work and range of subjects is immense; from her first novel *Tim*, published in 1974 to *The Masters of Rome Series*, of which the last volume *Antony and Cleopatra,* was published in 2007; her corpus, like those of David Malouf and Thomas Keneally, is interwoven with intertextual dialogical parts or themes.

(a) *Power of Sexualities*

In her first novel *Tim* (1974), whether consciously or otherwise, McCullough reverses the conditions of this Pygmalionesque story, by switching the chronological identities of the central characters in having the middle-aged Anglo-Celtic Mary marry the youthful Tim. By acknowledging the primal sexual urges and needs of a middle-aged, middle-class professional woman outside the bounds of mediocrity and social conformity, McCullough presents the psychosexual urges as an imperative function of self-identity, as she does throughout her corpus. However, *Tim* is also a parable of initiation. Both Tim and Mary, the protagonists, are incomplete and unfulfilled and literally, in terms of Platonic theory, long for the oneness inherent in the idea of an archetypal, androgynous creature. Implicit in this longing for origins is an element of dissatisfaction with modern sexual-social mores that legislates the mutual exclusivity of hetero and homosexualities and places a taboo on intergenerational sex. *Tim* is a variation on the theme of returning to a more innocent Edenic state (non-conformist purity and innocence) and elsewhere-place (the beach house), where the sex act initiates not guilt but liberty and development, and where, paradoxically, the young and the old transcend categories of time.

The theme of the potency and subtlety of sex, of the archetypal nurturing-feminine, as opposed to the popular girlie or glamorous type, is repeated in *An Indecent Obsession* (1981), where the major characters include Sister Langtry, a young woman of competence, dedication and humour who has a special relationship with one of her patients, Neil Parkinson, who suffers involuntary melancholia. Parkinson, like Honour Langtry, comes from the upper class but is one who "… made a mistake and his men paid for it" (McCullough, 1981:39), which brought about a total loss of confidence in him. A third character, Michael Wilson, upsets the balanced and professional, albeit passionate, relationship between Langtry and Parkinson. Wilson is suspected of "… unsound mind following an unsavoury incident" (McCullough, 1981:50); the near murder of an officer who made sexual

advances to him and his young, homosexual, but now deceased friend. Ironically, this incident seems to have resulted from the guilt at his own inability to reciprocate the love felt for him by that friend. Indeed, the homosexual theme is predominant, more as homophobia, particularly in the post war days when it was considered a perversion and was universally a social stigma. Ben, another character has fears about his own sexuality, in contrast to Luce Daggett, a villain of pure evil potential, whom Honour Langtry considers, "… some sort of moral imbecile, a psychopath" (McCullough, 1981:65). Luce will use his sexuality, expressed either as homosexual or heterosexual, to manipulate others, as can be seen in the fact that as a young man in Sydney he had prostituted himself with both men and women. Ironically, it is Michael, the melancholic, who is the voice of reason, and who says:

> I reckon homosexuals are like any other group of men, some good, some bad, and some indifferent (McCullough, 1981:241).

The implicit sexual symbolism of womb, breast and penis in these works are apt symbols for the life principle itself. Through the sexual urges new levels of physical and spiritual responsiveness are possible, the coarse urges are transformed into unifying spiritual principles. This is also a psychological novel, in the sense that particular attention is paid to the internal characterisation of the characters; to their motivations, feelings and thoughts and the way these affect the plot and in this case particularly so because it is here that psychological pathology, or abnormality, is studied but it is often the deviant or outsider who enunciates the truth.

(b) *Role of Myth, Symbol and Metaphor*

Throughout her corpus, McCullough uses myth, symbol and metaphor to subtly elaborate and give depth and meaning to that which would otherwise be lost. For example in *Tim,* in language evocative of the Hindu custom of suttee, Mary yearns "… to immolate herself on the flame of his fascination" (McCullough, 1974:141); an image that also serves as an excellent symbol for the approaching disaster implicit in her relationship with Tim but also as a symbol that hints at a process of transformation through fire. In this work the animal motif is quite frequent; Tim is repeatedly associated with images of dogs, Mary's neighbour, speaking of Tim, connects "… dimwits and dogs" (McCullough, 1974:18), Tim is obedient or responds "… like a dog"(McCullough, 1974:68, 118), and is described as a "… poor, silly creature as simple and faithful as a dog" (McCullough, 1974:215).

Every mythology seems to have some designations for the dog, as psychopomp (Anubis, Cerebus, Thoth); dogs act as intermediaries between the two worlds, that of the living and the dead, apparently identify sorcerers, perceive and guide human souls, have a familiarity with the invisible powers, and, finally, … they are guardians of the underworld (Chevalier et al, 1994:297-298). Although Tim is intellectually handicapped, he is the metaphorical therianthrope, serving as psychopomp for Mary to a different level of awareness and understanding.

In *The Thorn Birds* (1977), the use of symbols and images is also significant. One important image, for example, is that of the spider, for Ralph often thinks of Mary Carson as a spider, a symbol that reflects her maliciousness and weaving of a web of evil. However, the web of the spider also evokes the fragility of a reality that is no more than illusory and deceptive, an excellent analogy for the motives of those in this story. Ralph, the priest, repeatedly views Meggie as a sacrament, in keeping with his characteristic penchant to define things in religious terms; since he cannot love Meggie carnally he must translate that love into religious terms. For example, Ralph is aware of:

> … that mouth alive under his, not a dream, so long wanted, so long. A different kind of sacrament, dark like the earth, having nothing to do with the sky (McCullough, 1977:388).

A few pages on Ralph actually thinks of Meggie almost in the terms of actual transubstantiation of the Catholic mass:

> Tomorrow morning I'll say mass … but that's tomorrow morning … there is still the night, and Meggie … She, too, is a sacrament (McCullough, 1977:394),

although he does think of her as 'womanly', one of the things he especially loves in her (McCullough, 1977:313).

Another important symbol in this novel is the rose, particularly the " … dusky, pale pinkish grey, the colour that in those days was called ashes of roses" (McCullough, 1977:134). Roses and the colours pink and grey figure prominently in this work: roses and pink are the primary symbols of rebirth and initiation into the Mysteries (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1969:814), something that would not escape McCullough's attention. Grey, too, in colour genetics, is the first colour that humans perceive; grey in which the real and the imaginary are kept in perfect balance (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1969:456-457). The rose symbol is used again when Meggie farewells Ralph who presses her pink rose between the pages of his missal, his sacred prayers of daily office, as a romantic memento of Meggie, who

nevertheless reminds him that roses have thorns (McCullough, 1977:210). It is when Dane, the child born out of Ralph and Meggie's clandestine union, tells her that he wishes to become a priest that the full import of the name of the roses becomes apparent:

> Ashes of roses ... And I didn't understand ... Ashes thou wert, unto ashes return. To the Church thou belongest, to the Church thou shall be given ... God rot God, I say! God the sod! The utmost enemy of women, that's what God is! (McCullough, 1977:425).

The rose motif is used again at Dane's funeral, where his casket is covered with roses, but this time of course, symbolising sorrow and grief.

However, here is another of the alchemical keys to the novel; 'ashes of roses' implies that the flower must be burnt to become ashes, to be transmogrified in the fire in order to produce the colour or appearance of beauty. This, in turn, reveals the alchemical nature of the novel, and as DeMarr has pointed out, the novel bears an epigraph which summarizes a Celtic legend of a particular bird that searches for a thorn on which to impale itself and having done so, before it dies and because of the thorn, sings so beautifully that its song is the most beautiful in the world. This is recalled when Meggie explains to Ralph:

> Each of us has something within us which won't be denied, even if it makes us scream aloud to die ... Like the old Celtic legend of the bird with the thorn in its breast, singing its heart out and dying. Because it has to, it's driven to. We can know what we do wrong even before we do it, but self-knowledge can't affect or change the outcome, can it? We create our own thorns, and never stop to count the cost. All we can do is suffer the pain, and tell ourselves it was well worth it (McCullough, 1977:390).

(c) *Place and Elsewhere Place*

McCullough said in her response to the questionnaire that she uses place merely as a background or setting; however, in *Tim* she uses it in a most powerful manner. Indeed, place in this work, as it is really throughout the corpus, is both actual and symbolic. There is the metaphorical idea of place as class, as in social station, of not moving beyond a designated level of social expectations and behaviours, and here place exemplifies the clash of working class and middle class. The symbolic dimension of place is represented by Mary's holiday beach cottage; for Mary it represents a place of retreat and in its pristine symbolic associations it is pure and glowing under the sun and the moon; a place outside of social time for the

unsanctioned union of Tim and Mary, a union that is spiritual and later physical. It is there, near the beach and the archetypal sea, the latter a symbol both of that from which life emerges and also of the human heart and passions (Chavalier & Gheerbrant, 1994:838), that the alchemy of maturation through emotional and social growth takes place. The problems of love, sensual, romantic and altruistic, are negated along with the problems of inequality in love.

Again, in *The Thorn Birds,* McCullough uses actual locale or places with rich associations to give depth to much of the story; the Vatican, London and Crete, the latter as the setting for the final and most dramatic event in the plot. There are, however, places that are used as a symbol or metaphor for narrative elements. The natural beauty of the South Island of New Zealand is almost Edenic, similar in many ways to Paddy's native Ireland, yet human life there is hard and, like their ancestors in the Biblical Eden, there is no future there for the protagonists. The family moves to Australia where the cruelty and harshness of the land to aliens is repeatedly stressed. Indeed, in this work, in her detailed and evocative description of locale, McCullough uses place almost as if it were a character in the plot, particularly in the section that centres on the family, living in a poorer area of New Zealand, where their livelihood depends almost solely on shearing sheep. Central to the novel's plot is the later romantic and sexual affair that the protagonist, Meggie, experiences with Father Ralph de Bricassart, later Cardinal de Bricassart. In that regard it bears some resemblance, thematically, to Henry Morton Robinson's 1950 novel, *The Cardinal*, but it is the setting on a tropical island that is significant because of its Edenic undertone.

In *An Indecent Obsession* too, place is crucial to the structure of the narrative; the action or plot is set immediately after hostilities have ceased at the end of World War II but it is at an Australian military hospital camp on an island in the South Pacific. Again the South Pacific is used as it was in *The Thorn Birds,* to symbolise a light-filled Edenic elsewhere-place set aside from the horror of the actual post war world, but here the specific place is the mental or 'troppo' ward, literally the realm of the psyche. Some relief is given by the nearby beach, a symbol again of primeval balance, used in the same way as in *The Thorn Birds* and *Tim*. Since all the characters in this tale know they are soon to return home there is an overall sense of transience, albeit that the patients and the nurses are uncertain about their futures. Everything is in flux. They are in a nowhere place, a state of anomie.

The Ladies of Missalonghi (1987) was the work that McCullough was accused of plagiarising from *The Blue Castle* (1926) written by the Canadian novelist L.M. Montgomery and, as DeMarr points out, the parallels are clear (DeMarr, 1996:132). It is essentially the story of Missy Hurlingford and of how she finds freedom, love and wealth through marriage to a stranger, John Smith; it is the archetypal Cinderella story. Set in the fictitious village of Byron, which the reader must assume is located somewhere in the Blue Mountains of NSW, with its *bizarre urban nomenclature* (McCullough, 1987:20), McCullough names the village for the poet of *Childe Harold* and bears Byronic names for its locales such as George Street, Gordon Road, Noel Street and Byron Road, ironically, Caroline Lamb Place where the town's brothel is located (DeMarr, 1996:138).

(d) *Religious Allusions*

In *The Thorn Birds*, the plot and structure are relatively simple with the theme being developed gradually with strong religious allusions. The Irish-Catholic family milieu is clear from the beginning, although we learn later that Fee, the wife, is actually from an old and prominent New Zealand family. Padraic (Paddy) Cleary, the patriarch of the clan, is liked and respected by all around him. His wife, Fiona (Fee), is a woman with a past who loves her children, respects her husband but is living in a world that she did not want, but accepted, as her only possible way of life, again to some degree, mirroring the complacent Biblical Adam and the questioning Eve. Then there are Fee and Paddy's children, Frank, Meggie, Hughie, Jack, Stuart, Bob, and the twins, Jims and Patsy, but the story revolves almost entirely around the life of Meggie. In a reverse of the Biblical Edenic story throughout, in this narrative the theme is that women suffer because men, through thoughtlessness, cause their pain.

The work in the McCullough corpus that is undeniably a biblical allegory is *A Creed for the Third Millennium* (1985). In the dystopian genre of Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Orwell's *1984* (1949), this work imagines what the United States of America might come to be in the early years of the twenty-first century, the beginning of the third period of a thousand years on our calendar. Washington DC remains the seat of political power, with a key department, the Department of the Environment, depicted as 'utterly soulless' (McCullough, 1985:37). The story echoes the anticipation that seemed to occur at the beginning of the second

millennium, an anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ. The book continually reverses current geopolitical arrangements, for example a sort of European Economic Community and an Arab equivalent share power and dominance; England has a communist government and no longer recognizes a king, although the monarch is still recognized as King of Australia and New Zealand (McCullough, 1985:376).

The story is in a sense an analogy, often with subtle but significant twists, of the life of the Biblical Jesus and McCullough portrays the protagonist, Joshua Christian, as being unable to fulfil his destiny and also unaware that he is being manipulated. The English name Jesus derives from the Latin *Iesus* and the Greek *Iesous,* a rendering of the once common Hebrew name *Yeshua*, which is a contraction of Yahoshua or Joshua (Knight and Butler, 2007:32). Delighted when he is given the opportunity to write a book, Joshua, however, has writer's block and a ghost writer (the holy ghost) writes the book, *God in Cursing,* which takes its title from part of an the Elizabeth Barrett Browning poem, which reads, … for God, in cursing, gives us better gifts than men in benediction (McCullough, 1985:192).

The McCullough character of Joshua is very similar to the Jesus created by Nikos Kazantzakis in *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1951). That work follows the life of the Biblical Jesus Christ but as its thesis holds that Jesus, while free from sin was still subject to every temptation that ordinary humans face; fear, doubt, depression and lust. Kazantzakis argues in the preface to his work that by facing and conquering these temptations, Jesus became the perfect model for us to follow. In McCullough's novel the protagonist, Joshua Christian, although he believes in God, a god that is never defined and has nothing to do with institutional religion, is confused about who he is and what his mission is to be. He sometimes sees himself as a messiah figure, for instance, when Judith accuses him of egomania and "… of being on a God trip", but otherwise, at other times, as completely human (McCullough, 1985:324-326). Indeed, Joshua says that human beings must "… learn to live with God and self at the centre of their personal universe" (McCullough, 1985:100). Joshua's God is transcendent and beyond human comprehension, however, in one scene, when Joshua becomes demented he believes that by crucifying himself, Christlike, he will prove that "…a mortal man with no more god in him than any other can achieve a Christ-like status (McCullough, 1985:413); at another point, though, Joshua utters that he must be "… a man in order to help

Man" (McCullough, 1985:326). Judith confronts Joshua about his messianic obsession by telling him:

> If there is any reason in the world why you are where you are and who you are on this day, that reason is me! I put you here, I created you! And I did not put you here to act out a second coming (McCullough, 1985:324),

and in doing so, she is almost enunciating the words that Mary the mother of the Christ-man could have uttered.

There are many parallels to the New Testament Jesus story and many of the characters may be equated with characters in the New Testament. For example, the experience and action in the final year of the life of Dr Joshua Christian parallel those of the last three years of Jesus' life and Joshua, like the Biblical Jesus, was born in late December before the beginning of a new millennium (McCullough, 1985:98). Joshua like Jesus dies at the age of thirty-three. An important parallel can be made from the well-known passage in 1 Corinthians 13:3, regarding faith hope and charity, the same three qualities that Joshua seeks at the beginning of his mission (McCullough, 1985:149). The name Joshua Christian echoes the name Jesus Christ but is a more authentic rendering of the Hebrew Yeshua rather than the Greek Jesus. Even His father is called Joseph. As DeMarr points out, Judith Carriol's name echoes that of Judas Escariot (DeMarr, 1996:126), the traditional betrayer of Jesus, although many scholars have believed his actions much more complex than mere betrayal, as born out by the recently published *Gospel of Judas* (2006). An analogous reading of this work to Christianity gives a distinct impression that McCullough is alluding to the present day impotence of the more fundamental expressions of that faith.

DeMarr identifies many other similarities between the Joshua and Jesus narratives, besides some historical personages with parallels in the novel. The incident of Jesus feeding the multitudes (Luke 9:10-17) is specifically compared to the phenomenal sales of the Bible (McCullough, 1985:194), while the dispatch of Joshua's brothers to Europe and South America (McCullough, 1985:278) is not unlike the travels of the apostles to preach to the world the message of Jesus (Luke, 9:1-6). Joshua's appearance on a television show just prior to the publication of his book (McCullough, 1985:246, 264) might well be seen to parallel the Sermon on the Mount by Jesus which contained his essential teachings.

Generally, the male characters in the McCullough corpus seem to be deficient or damaged; or at least dull, thick and lacking any substance when compared to her potent, powerful feminine-archetypal women. However, standing back, it seems more a case that McCullough is rather conjuring-up that which has generally been lost to contemporary society, the truly strong feminine soul, the descendent of the Earth Mother or goddess. Indeed, embedded throughout the McCullough corpus there seems to be an authorial subtext of narrative primitivism through which she praises the primitive urges that exist beyond time, and place, thereby offering a critique of Western modernity with its Enlightenment values of instrumentality and reason. This reveals some important aspects of McCullough's attitude towards the primitive and place. First, what might appear to be her acceptance of the European position, generally, to be normative, is disproved on a closer reading because of the significant bearing of the thematic structures that I have described. Second, McCullough through these themes brings to life the place-elsewhere-place paradigm, a paradigm which all of her protagonists experience fundamentally and which determines their behaviour. McCullough, in the same way as Chaucer, is a recensionist and inventor; she retells a story by building it up from the known facts; like the true alchemist reworking the base material into something richer and more substantial.

5.4 Discussion

A critical element in my research was to broadly determine of each of the writers' narratives, from whence it came, under what circumstances or beginning, and with what design did it emerge or become active. Having analysed the narratives we must now search for clues in their structure, motifs and the usual elements of literary criticism, and consider what these reveal but against a backdrop of the responses of the writers to the research questionnaires provided in Chapter 4. Certainly, the narratives examined here have demonstrated that storytelling is a potent language of the psyche. However, we must examine the means by which that potency is achieved.

In such fictional works offered as a narrator's account, no first person pronoun refers exactly to the writer or to the moment in which they write but rather to an alter ego, a de-centred self in an elsewhere-place; a similar circumstance to that of the reader. Thus, the reading experience of this literature is that it creates

powerful narratives with imagery that re-enchants place in a way that is both artistic and shamanic and where, although the fictive nature of the text is realised, it nevertheless acts like a puppet show; more as a prompt to interpretative co-creation. Such mythopoeic literature, I believe, awakens the reader's mind to a wider sense of reality and in the act of reading these imaginal narratives the reader enters the reverie of MLC and discovers an elsewhere-place.

These texts bridge the gap between egoic-consciousness and place because both become enmeshed in mythic alternatives presented by narratives that poeticise the realities of life and endow ordinary places with epiphanic potentiality. These may well be places where the signs are contradictory, where poets are sacred lawgivers and where rivers may flow backwards, as in the case of Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*; where the protagonists are not as they seem, as in the case of Keneally's characters, and where objects and qualities are, in an almost alchemical manner, determined by the context of place, as is particularly the case with McCullough. It is literature where place is sanctified, responsive and shamanized and in which, like a Mobius strip, consciousness is seen to be externalised and place internalised, one somehow, unsurprisingly, the reverse of the other. Consider for example, Malouf's Ovid finding a desolate place transformed by the discovery of a scarlet poppy or Keneally's Schindler finding omnipotence instead terror in the Nazi-occupied Polish town. McCullough too weaves epiphany into the Edenic beach cottage, the pristine beauty of New Zealand and an island military hospital.

These narratives precipitate a sly disturbance of the reader's self, a spreading out of a de-centred self into places where often only the imagination has ventured, or otherwise feels connected. Even in spite of what sometimes seems a trite or platitudinous theme in the narrative, there seems to be a density of implication; there appears to be other things happening within the text that are not quite specified but which, nevertheless, reverberate. It is the writers' meticulous attention to language and an ability to suggest deeper existentialist resonances in these works that capture a moment in time and the relationship of the inner and outer worlds of the narratives' characters. Their writing seems to be assembled from layers of voices and fragments of memory, literally excavating their protagonists' souls from layers of places, scraping away the surface deposited in their lives by each place lived in.

In each of the narratives analysed, the movement is backwards (even by analogy to the Christ narrative in McCullough's futuristic, *A Creed for the Third*

Millennium) into a lost time and place; times that were remembered implicitly for what might have been, and the very definite influence of the particular place connected with that time. Each work also shows not only both the robustness but also the fragility of physical, psychological and spiritual existence and of how that robustness or otherwise is contingent on place. Indeed, every *genius loci* described throughout the literature of the three authors, or the milieu generated by it, seems to suggest that in its relationship to the protagonists, there is potentially, something evermore yet to announce itself. These places exhibit configurations that are beyond the power of urbane geography to explain, in which a random object or perception can suddenly manifest the deep natural history of the place or of the soul of the individual protagonist. Of course, 'place' is of central concern to the entire discipline of geography. However, contemporary scholarship in geography tends to shy away from any consideration of soul or spirit, and is usually more concerned with description and delineation. Here, each narrative captures the spirit that clings to certain places and spaces, which are best understood in terms of metaphor or metonym and each place is figuratively incised to reveal how it is imbued with stories and myth, a labyrinth, woven through time as well as space and where some primordial-archetypal element like the Child, the Virgin, the Soldier or the Saviour becomes a psychopomp leading the reader out of egoic concern to an aspect or potential of the Imaginal Realm.

There is something else, too, concerning place that insinuates itself in the selected literature; there is an interstice between the author and a particular place, an interstice that morphs into elsewhere-place; thus, between Malouf and his Brisbane there is something that allows him, in a sense, to still be there and yet both the actual and the imaginal constitution of Brisbane will go beyond that relationship with Malouf, and so too, Keneally's actual and imaginal Australia, Antarctica or his Europe, and McCullough's actual and imaginal Rome, the South Pacific or even a futuristic USA. I suspect that every place in the fictive corpus of each writer reflects a sort of template for elsewhere-place, even though each writer has embedded in his or her work a wealth and inexhaustible array of actual place signification.

Finally, to mention the names Malouf, Keneally, or McCullough, in a sense, anticipates or performs a literary classificatory function in regards to the subject narrative and suggests the grouping of a certain number of texts, sometimes thematically or historically, as I have done, for example, in the case of Thomas

Keneally's *European Literature*, which differentiates those texts from and contrasts them to others in his corpus. The corpora of Malouf and McCullough are often perceived to follow this pattern; Malouf tending to reveal the mythic dimensions and layering of story and place and McCullough assumed to muse on themes that are seen by some as populist and pedestrian, often quixotic. Albeit, each corpus seems to facilitate a sort of intertextuality or even metanarrative, perhaps brought about through a consistency of the unhinging of temporal sequences, common resonances expressed perhaps in 'popular' motifs such as the allusion to erotic situations (eroticism, however subtle it may be, is common in all of the works examined), a dialogism in which a variety of texts reverberate with certain themes or subtexts. On this last point I am indebted to Umberto Eco for his analysis of the way in which " ... texts talk to one another" (Eco, 2002:212-235), as a consequence of the common time, historical events and culture shared by authors and certainly, in the case of the writers I have examined, posits each as a historical figure at the cross roads of a certain number of events.

Ironically, Eco's theory is given credence in the work of two of the subject authors and both also serve to elaborate on the important relationship between the ecstasy of the shaman and the ordered perceptions of the priest. Both Thomas Keneally and Colleen McCullough invoke the disordered energies of the shaman in the priest figure through the mythic-sexual. Thomas Keneally has Father Doig confess that he has a homosexual lover, without whom he would have suicided (Keneally, 1985:288). Colleen McCullogh has Father Ralph personally aware of a different kind of sacrament [erotic] (McCullough, 1977:388). Both protagonists represent ordered institutionalised religion but beneath even these most institutionalised and ordered personas, potentially ecstatic, perhaps even shamanic forces lie in wait.

Each of the narratives examined is richly imaginative, beautifully written and, ironically, is usually open to more than one interpretation, albeit, within a prescribed temporal domain, as for example, in the case of Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*, which might be seen as an account of the exile and death of the poet Ovid, a metaphorical narrative of the Jungian individuation process or, an allegorical account of the evolution of modern Australia; still all within the Western cultural tradition even though their ultimate aetiology may depend on classical Greek thought. This multi-interpretive possibility is a feature, to some greater or lesser degree, in the narratives and imbues them with an extraordinary poetic power. Each narrative

also delineates the emotions and passions that lie at the heart of a life and the synesthesia that connects such feelings with the genius loci of place.

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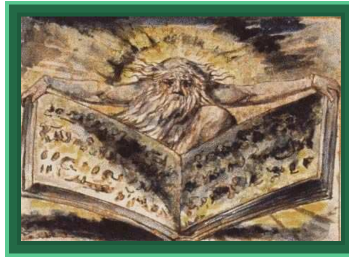

PART III

The NARROW GATE: BRIDGING TWO WORLDS

> Enter by the narrow gate, since the road that leads to perdition is wide and spacious, and many take it; but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life, and only a few find it (Matthew 7:14).

The universal symbolism of narrow gates found in the great religions and mythologies, clearly derives from initiation (entrance), or crossing a threshold, from life to death but also from death to liberation; gates open the way or passage to revelation. An appropriate metaphor, since in this part of my dissertation I explore how the shaman, and the reader and writer of mythopoeic literature might enter through the narrow gate that symbolises the difficulties of rising to a higher consciousness to penetrate the membrane that separates place from elsewhere-place and bridge the abyss that separates the mundane from the transcendent imaginal world.

The mythopoeic writer and reader and the shaman know that it is difficult, metaphorically, to pass over the narrow and perilous bridge; to find the door in the wall where none can be seen, to go up to Heaven by a passage that half opens only for an instant, to pass between two millstones in constant motion or between two rocks that may clash together at any moment, or to escape from between the jaws of a monster. Such potent metaphorical images, popular in contemporary consciousness through characters such as Indiana Jones and Superman, express the necessity of transcending the archetypal pairs of opposites, of abolishing the polarity that defines the human condition as it struggles to reach the ultimate reality or Otherness.

To discover the hermeneutic key to understanding the way in which mythopoeic literature influences the psyche of both mythopoeic writer and reader requires explanation through an extended discussion of all of the material thus far presented; a discussion that will frequently challenge some of the more sacrosanct tenets of the Western materialist and scientific worldview.

CHAPTER 6
THE MYTHOPOEIC WRITER

6.1 Introduction: The Mythopoeic Writer as Shaman.

The work of Jung, Hillman, Tolstoy and Guggenbuhl-Craig has shown that shamans have been identified as prototypic psychologists, as well as artists, storytellers, healers and priests. They produce and manipulate altered states of consciousness, work with belief systems, interpret dreams, even create and transmit mythologies, very much in the way the mythopoeic writers, Malouf, Keneally and McCullough, have demonstrated in their literature and affirmed in their questionnaire responses.

Shamanic ecstasy comes to the shaman in a trance condition and central to it are its supposed mysteries of flight, levitation, gender transformation, bilocation, and animal and bird incarnations (Bloom, 1996:141). If we define shamanism in the most widely used sense as a practice involving an altered state of consciousness which facilitates entry into supernatural realms to gain information beyond normal perception and cognition, then shamanic potentiality would have to be attributed to a large portion of most populations, throughout history and across cultures.

The neo-shamans and the mythopoeic writers and readers, may be seen from their responses to the research questionnaire, to experience, possess, exhibit, aver or be familiar with these mysterious elements, identified by Bloom. For instance, in both the Keneally and Malouf corpora there are many instances of flight-cum-levitation; Oskar Schindler is given an elevated almost omnipotent overview of Cracow (Keneally, 1982:139). Malouf's Ovid and the Child often experience flight-levitation, " ...He is walking on the water's light. And as I watch, he takes the first step off it, moving slowly away now into the deepest distance, above the earth, above the water, on air" (Malouf, 1978:152). Malouf's Harland is "lifted up, heaved violently aloft" and is observed by spirits, "watchers, stately figures, also black who looked on but did not move" (Malouf, 1984:47-48).

The interview with Thomas Keneally presented very strong evidence that as a writer he feels a definite connection with the role of the storyteller of the hunter-gatherer epoch; David Malouf stated that he wanted, through his stories and poems, to change the way his readers perceived things and even Colleen McCullough, the avowed pragmatist has shown herself, in her literature and seer-

like perception of ghosts and the Connecticut countryside, to epitomise the bardic storyteller.

Together with the evidence I presented in Chapter 2 for the existence of a narrative psyche and the transcendental conversation, that habitually unconscious dialogue that takes place between the individual and Mind at Large, it is clear that the mythopoeic writer is, in many ways, the heir of the archaic shaman-storyteller.

6.2 Neo-shamanism and the West

In the mid and latter part of the twentieth century there was a burgeoning interest in literature dealing with neo-shamanism. That interest may have gained its impetus, albeit indirectly, in the early work of Colin Wilson, notably *The Outsider* (1956), a study of alienation, creativity and the modern mind followed by his *Poetry and Mysticism* (1969), perhaps reinforced by the work of Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1958) and *The Poetics of Reverie* (1960) and from others such as James Hillman, Thomas Moore and Mircea Eliade. Eliade provides the bridge between the subtle expression of transcendence and neo-shamanism explicitly through his post war shamanic literature such as: *Maitreyi* (1933), *Two Tales of the Occult* (1940), and *The Forbidden Forest* (1954). Daniel Noel calls these works 'shamanovels', a term that intimates " ..the shamanic powers at play in the reading of a work of fiction" (Noel, 1999:32). The more overt expressions of neo-shamanism come from Michael Harner and Brian Bates but especially, in literature, through the works of Carlos Castaneda, in particular, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (1968). I am more interested, however, in a much longer tradition and its relationship with literature.

During the early to mid-twentieth century, C. G. Jung, perhaps along with the poet W.B. Yeats, may well have been the closest exemplar of a Western shaman that the modern age had seen. Yeats in his search for supernatural wisdom, his involvement with Aleister Crowley and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, his continual pursuit of supernatural truths through occult experimentation, much of it expressed in his memoirs, polemics and certainly his poetry, has been admirably documented in the two volume biography by Foster (1997, 2003). It is, however, Carl Gustav Jung who seems unsurpassed in this regard. It was reported, for example, that Jung wrote his *Answer to Job* (1952) during a period of illness during which a figure sat on his bedpost and dictated it to him (Edinger, 1992:17). The

pagan and Gnostic figure of Philemon was reported by Jung to be a psychagogue, psychopomp or guide facilitating access to his own and the collective unconscious (Wehr, 1985:183-185). Indeed, in her biographical study *C. G. Jung: His Myth in Our Time* (1975) Marie-Louise von Franz closes with the chapter *Le Cri de Merlin* (the final five chapters are all on Merlin) in which it becomes clear that Jung was not only fascinated by Merlin but, as Noel asserts, actively identified his psychology, if not his own personality, with Merlin's powers (Noel, 1999:19). Jung explained that he had the idea to inscribe the phrase *Le Cri de Merlin* on the back face of the Bollingen stone because:

> … what the stone expressed reminded me of Merlin's life in the forest, after he had vanished from the world. Men still hear his cries, so the legend runs, but they cannot understand or interpret them … His story is not yet finished, and he still walks abroad. It might be said that the secret of Merlin was carried on by alchemy, primarily in the figure of Mercurius. Then Merlin was taken up again in my psychology of the unconscious and remains uncomprehended to this day (Jung, (MDR), 1961:228).

To be sure, the figure of Merlin is that of the archetypal Western shaman. Before Merlin became Arthur's advisor and court magician in the late medieval texts, he had been seer, bard, Druid, Wild Man, and, most unquestionably, shaman, a theory substantiated by Noel (1999:15). Tolstoy (1985) also provides an excellent account of Merlin or Myrddin as pagan Druid or bard surviving in a predominantly Christian age and also of his influence on Western literary tradition. The poet, philosopher, historian and storyteller Jean Markdale in his remarkable work of 1981, *Merlin l'Enchanteur,* (translated into English in 1995, as *Merlin, Priest of Nature*) not only places the actual Merlin in history but also illustrates the influence of Merlin and the Merlin myth throughout the Western canon.

6.3 The Fictive Power of Neo-shamanism

Daniel Noel suggests that neo-shamanism was born because of the 'fictive power of imagination' (Noel, 1999:58) that not only provides a more mindful interaction, a type of " ..honest literary lying" for the writer (Noel, 1999:10), discerned especially in the fantasy works of Eliade but more especially identifies the likes of Carlos Castenada, perhaps beginning with *Tales of Power* (1975), and Ronald Sukenick, as 'shamanovelists'. It must also be remembered that the person who led the field in contemporary studies of shamanism, the scholar of

anthropology and comparative religions, Mircea Eliade, wrote fiction 'on the side', for example, *Maitreyi* (Bengal Nights, 1933) and *Noaptea de Sanviene* (The Forbidden Forest, 1954) written after the war and in 1978 he was even seriously considered for the Nobel Prize in literature. It has even been suggested that the psychoanalytic work of Sigmund Freud was, in essence, fictional and that Freud was a storyteller (Hillman, 1983:3-5). Eliade does caution against using the term shaman too broadly and especially synonymously with magician, sorcerer or cult priestess or priest, although the shaman may also be a magician, sorcerer, priest or priestess. The quality that marks the shaman for Eliade, however, is that the shaman is the great master of ecstasy, of the religious experience par excellence (Eliade, 1951:4). Indeed, Eliade also believes that SC may be present in many conventional religions, delineating the mysticism of the particular religion for the possessor of such consciousness is the great specialist in the human soul; who alone sees it and knows its form and its destiny (Eliade, 1951:8). In its simplest form, the world view of shamanic peoples is that of a universe with three levels or layers; our middle-world of ordinary day to day reality in addition to an upper-world and an under-world of divinities and spirits. This structure is best perceived through the fictive power of the imagination, which Marie-Louise von Franz suggests that today we call the unconscious (von Franz, 1975:99), the same world of spirits, guides and powers that the shaman knows and utilizes. If we are, however, to truly equate shamanovelists and mythopoeic writers with shamanism, and indeed, their readers and the shamans who responded to the research questionnaires, then we must look for the hallmarks of the shaman's vocation beginning with that of initiation.

6.4 Neo-shamanic Initiation

Kalweit identifies a threefold universal, transpersonal pattern, a pattern that is still far from being explained, of illness, spontaneous self-healing, and the development of healing powers as an indicator of shamanic vocation:

> … serious suffering over a period of years; no improvement or help from conventional medicine, but help from an indefinable nonhuman source; an astounding cure that no one expects; an attempt to free oneself from a superhuman or unconscious force in order to follow a particular lifestyle, followed by capitulation to an unyielding demand; acceptance of one's fate; the beginning of a new life along with a willingness to acknowledge latent

> extrasensory faculties and to use them for the sake of humanity; and finally the development of further paranormal faculties (Kalweit, 1987:60).

These findings are supported by Bailey (1998). Eliade provides additional examples and suggests that:

> … all the ecstatic experiences that determine the future shaman's vocation involve the traditional scheme of an initiation ceremony: suffering, death, resurrection. Viewed from this angle, any "sickness vocation" fills the role of an initiation; for the suffering that it brings on correspond to initiatory tortures, the psychic isolation of "the elected" is the counterpart to the isolation and ritual solitude of initiation ceremonies, and the imminence of death felt by the sick man (pain, unconsciousness, etc.) recalls the symbolic death represented in almost all initiation ceremonies (Eliade, 1951:33-66).

Eliade further believed that:

> … initiation is equivalent to a basic change in existential condition; the novice emerges from his ordeal endowed with a totally different being from that which he possessed before his initiation; he has become another (Eliade, 1975:151).

All of the respondents to the research questionnaire, without exception, stated that they felt different, set apart from the rest of their family or community. Two of the respondents had experienced intense schizoid episodes which were not dissimilar to SC in that they experienced a loss of the egoic self, indeed, a sense of separation between the egoic self and the environment; they felt identification with animals or external factors, sometimes with the planet as a whole. One described what could be seen as a sense of *participation mystique* as he lay slipping into a coma, alone in the bush, following a near-fatal snakebite. Abraham Maslow (1973) describes such experiences as peak experiences, which can also include dreams and initiatory sickness, as in the case of Colleen McCullough and Reader 2, Janet M, all of which constitute experiences of unity, not unlike a state of *participation mystique* (Kalweit, 1987:219).

A number of mythopoeic writers and readers display personality characteristics or such idiosyncratic behaviour that closely resembles the shamanistic profile. For example, schizophrenia and multiple personality disorder has been linked to shamanism (Kalweit, 1992; 210-211, 240) and it is worth noting that (in addition to the schizoid episodes revealed in my research questionnaire regarding Shaman 1 and one of the readers) a number of mythopoeic writers and

readers have suffered from this condition or at least displayed its symptoms or that of a similar condition. For example, the New Zealand writer Janet Frame received treatment in a mental hospital and suffered hallucinations (King, 2000:72-90). Thomas Keneally has written under the pseudonyms Bernard Coyle (Pierce, 1995:7) and as William Coyle he wrote *Act of Grace (1988)*; Coyle being his mother's maiden name, used ostensibly to protect Keneally's identity (Pierce, 1995:134). However, I believe that Keneally very closely identifies with certain of his protagonists: The young priest Maitland in *Three Cheers for the Paraclete*, the sentient foetus in *Passenger*, are also possibly members of the *Keneally Club*, one of the many other personalities of Thomas Keneally (Pierce, 1995:68–78). This is relevant to shamanism in the sense that the shaman sometimes assumes a different persona or channels a personality or spirit but also accords with general depth psychology where it is accepted that each individual has a primary personality and several sub-personalities. So the author John Fowles can write of the *John Fowles Club,* alluding to his multiplicity of personalities (Fowles, 1998:67). My research questionnaires identified a number of instances where the mythopoeic storyteller and reader have been seized by an image or presence during their reverie and have literally been under the control of that entity, much as was the case with Carl Jung and his Philemon, who according to Carl Jung, virtually dictated the cryptic, beautiful and Gnostic *VII Sermones ad Mortuos* (Edinger, 1992:17).

6.5 The Anima-Animus Entelechy

An important characteristic, which has to be given consideration because of its frequent appearance and significance, is that of shamanic inversion, sometimes manifested as homoeroticism, expressed alone and at other times together with transvesticism or gender transformation. Of course, I am not suggesting that homosexuality or transvesticism is or was a prerequisite or necessary characteristic of the shaman or of the mythopoeic writer and reader. Rather there is evidence that there is a close, indeed dynamic, connection between shamanism and the worship of Gaia, the Earth Goddess, Mother Earth and that particular ecstatic state of consciousness associated with shamanism. Carl Jung took this notion of original bisexuality and applied it to his own model of the contra-sexual nature of the self. In the Jungian model of the psyche, the male has an internalised female counterpart, the *anima*, while the female has an internalised masculine counterpart,

the *animus*. One might offer the very simple idea that any writer in creating a fictional character of the opposite sex does undergo some figurative but empathic imaginative gender transformation in order to more properly convey that character's actions, emotions and motivations. There are ever-present, though subtle, homosexual themes in the Keneally corpus, although Keneally has also written from the point of view of a foetus (*Passenger* 1979), a pre-gender stage in the development of the individual. David Malouf also has not obfuscated his personal bisexual-homosexual perspective besides allowing it a significant thematic position throughout his corpus. One must assume, of course, that the mythopoeic reader also vicariously experiences these things. It has been suggested that ritual and symbolic transformation into a woman is derived from the ideology of the archaic matriarchy (Eliade, 1964:258) but it does seem that there is a connection to be made between shamanic androgyny and earth or place. In his *Cosmic Memory*, Steiner wrote:

> The external formation of earth resulted in that the body assumed a one-sided form. The male body has taken a form which is conditioned by the element of will; the female body on the other hand, bears the stamp of imagination. Thus it comes about that the two sexed, male-female soul inhabits a single sexed, male or female body. In the course of development the body has taken a form determined by the external terrestrial forces ......(Steiner, 1961:88).

Steiner's vision of the androgynous human being is a variant of Plato's original beings of the Symposium and the androgynous Adam in the Hebrew midrashim but the idea may be traced back to the early Upper Palaeolithic era in Europe where figures of the Great Mother Goddess were carved on bones or rocks, in phallic form. However, it is an icon that continues from the Palaeolithic through the Neolithic right up to the proto-urban period in Mesopotamia. As the archaeologist Marija Gimbutas has noted:

> … concerning the Great Goddess of Life, Death and Regeneration ... throughout the Neolithic period her head is phallus-shaped, suggesting her androgynous nature, and its derivation from Palaeolithic times (Gimbutas, 1974:152).

In all shamanic traditions the shaman undergoes some form of initiation into the multi-layered world of spirits and learns the methods of trance and soul retrieval and such developmental difference sets them apart from the rest of the community or their peers. Eliade suggested that:

> The term 'initiation' in the most general sense denotes a body of rites and oral teachings whose purpose is to produce a decisive alteration in the religious and social status of the person to be initiated. In philosophical terms, initiation is equivalent to a basic change in existential condition; the novice emerges from his ordeal endowed with a totally different being from that which he possessed before his initiation; he has become another (Eliade, 1975:151).

In the research questionnaire, Question 10 sought to establish whether some form of (childhood) suffering or illness had brought about an 'initiation' into SC or MLC in any of the ten respondents; four indicated that it most definitely had; this included one shaman, one mythopoeic writer and two readers. David Malouf and Thomas Keneally did not respond to the question. Four respondents indicated that they had not suffered serious childhood illness but had literally been initiated in a much more definite way. Shaman 1, Maureen R, said that she was … *going off the deep end throughout 1993-94* and in retrospect viewed *… this semi-sane period as a shamanic initiation similar to schizophrenic breakdown.* Similarly, Reader 4, RP, experienced schizoid episodes from an early age, a condition which was exacerbated, some two years prior to responding to the questionnaire, by a near-death experience following a near-fatal snake bite, and who told me in conversation that as a result he now experienced a … *much deeper resonance* with most of the significant places in his life, most especially that particular locale in the bush where he became paralysed and almost died. In the case of Reader 1 JC, she did not allude to the question in any way but did state that as a top young athlete she spent many hours exhausted, after rigorous training, and in isolation from her peers. Reader 5, N van der W simply indicated that he was a very healthy child and did not suffer any childhood illnesses, thus making him the exception.

6.6 Mythopoeic Writers and Neo-shamanic Knowledge

The writer John Fowles claims that the idea to write *The French Lieutenant's Woman* came to him one morning while still in bed half asleep, when he had a visual mythopoeic image of a Victorian woman, who even had a name, Sarah, and who was standing at the end of a deserted quay, staring out to sea (Fowles, 1998:20). Images produced in such a trance-like state are termed by psychologists as hypnopompic imagery (Neher, 1980:42). Fowles says that the image of this woman obstinately refused to stare out of the window of an airport lounge, as he

had wanted it to be, but as if through some volition of its own, had to be on this ancient quay. Fowles perceived her as an outcast who represented a reproach to the Victorian Age and that he began to fall in love with her (Fowles, 1998:13-14). Fowles averred that such an imaginal process was something much more than fantasy, that there was a curious spiral rhythm as the mind approaches repeatedly a point of concern, repeats itself, goes back, destroys the time sequence entirely and the fragments of the mosaic form a kaleidoscopic pattern so that a new image takes shape (Fowles, 1998:xvii).

Similarly, Fowles' *The Magus* (1966), which also originated from an experienced during a very trivial visit to a villa on a Greek island where "… nothing in the least unnatural happened" but in his mind, a sort of synchronicity occurred and "… he kept arriving at the place again and again "… something wanted to happen there, something that had not happened to me at the time" and he reflects:

> … someone showed me a recent photograph of the villa, which is now deserted; and it *was just* a deserted villa. Its mysterious significance to me fifteen years ago remains mysterious (Fowles, 1998:14).

Here Fowles is articulating the personal and direct experience not only of landscape and place, and as Keneally articulated in his interview, that intimate connection which is, for the writer, so professionally generative and, for the reader, so personally regenerative and often, for both, synchronistic. Of course, Fowles, like Keneally, Malouf and McCullough, has an excellent understanding of the technical processes employed by the writer, such as research and the conventions of grammar and syntax but often, like them, uses terminology analogous to that which one would use to describe a shaman. For example, he says natural born writers are "… possessed, and in the old magical sense, by their own imagination" long before they ever begin to write and examines "… the inevitably split nature of the writer - the way in which he or she is both the I who writes and the I who is written about, the self who is both within and without the fiction" (Fowles, 1998:14). In fact he says quite directly of the writer's technique " … Novelists are like conjurors ... and the last thing a conjuror or magus wants is for his shamanistic tricks, his particular magic to be rumbled" (Fowles, 1998:xvii). More to the point, he has said that his writing has always been a semi-religious occupation, something that he cannot regard as a craft or occupation because he knows that:

> … when I am writing well that I am writing with more than the sum of my acquired knowledge, skill and experience; with

> something from outside myself … Inspiration, the muse experience, is like telepathy. Nowadays ones hardly dares to say that inexplicable phenomena exist for fear of being kicked in the balls by the positivists and the behaviourists and the other hyperscientists. But there is a metatechnics that needs investigating (Fowles, 1998:6).

A particular genre of literature that demonstrates in a unique way the characteristics of MLC is that of historical fiction, or as some popularly term it, faction; a *fictional* story based on factual events, people and places in history. In this regard I am especially familiar with Mary Renault and her Greek factions, *The Last of the Wine* (1956), *The King Must Die* (1958), *The Bull From the Sea* (1962), *The Mask of Apollo* (1966), *Fire From Heaven* (1970), *The Persian Boy* (1972), *The Praise Singer* (1979), *Funeral Games* (1981) and other shorter works, including a biography *The Nature of Alexander* (1975). Other outstanding examples are Valerio Massimo Manfredi's wonderfully mythopoeic and detailed Alexander trilogy; *Alexander, Child of a Dream* (1998), *Alexander, The Sands of Amon* (1998) and *Alexander, The Ends of the Earth* (1998), William Golding's *The Double Tongue* (1995), and Dorothy Porter's verse novel, *Akhenaten* (1992). In this genre there seems to be an extraordinary coalition of detailed knowledge about the protagonist (and sometimes too, other identities), the locale and the events but the detail exceeds the scope of the mythopoeic writer's knowledge. Indeed, the specifics of person, place, event and detail, which is often unknown or lost to history, even to experts in that field, seems to come unbidden to the mythopoeic writer.

Mary Renault is especially interesting, indeed outstanding as a study in this regard. Her biographer referred to her psychic vision of life in Ancient Greece, to explain the rich visual texture, those details of behaviour, dress and locale, which makes her text so animate and " ..for which there is no single traceable origin" (Sweetman, 1994:156). Renault's *The Last of the Wine* not only describes scenes and places that she had never visited but also some that no longer existed and which she imaginatively reconstructed from archaeological evidence. Indeed, it was not until her first novel on Greece was completed that she made her first visit to Greece (Sweetman, 1994:164). Ironically, it was then, while at the Acropolis, as she stood gazing towards Piraeus, that she realised her one error in that first novel. She had described the character Alexias staring at the ships in the harbour when, in fact, such a view was obscured by the curve of the land. More often, she discovered in her reverie whilst visiting certain places, again unbidden, some new

and essential detail to include in her work. For example, during a visit to the Acropolis, surely a temenos in the view of most people, she sat close to the shrine of Asklepios and began to draft the scene in which Alexias is ordered by the priest to run down to the Agora and back to see whether he should compete at Olympia (Sweetman, 1994:167). This seems to be an example of an archetypal or numinous potential affecting the perception of the mythopoeic writer and reader, one of either correcting the perception of place and or character. Mary Renault stated that when writing *The Bull From The Sea* she found the story resisting her somehow and two discrepant images of the character Theseus conflicted in her subconscious imagination; one was of him as a six foot three warrior and the other was of him as a slight wiry young acrobat; the latter won (Sweetman, 1994:178).

Mary Renault said, " ... that the chief pleasure of writing historical novels lies in the continuing tension between the particular - what is individual to the person, the society, the time - and what is universal, and the constant interplay of one through the other" (Sweetman, 1994:186). In his Philosophy of Conscious Action Garry Richardson sheds some light on this statement and explains how Mary Renault achieved such an extraordinarily accurate understanding of the Greek Classical period and of Alexander's life. Essentially, he says, because she immersed herself in that particular era, in her case, for years, and so through literally being saturated in the milieu of the period, she " ... can convey something of the consciousness typical of it, so that the story becomes real instead of being a transplanted modern one" (Richardson, 1987:27). Of Renault's novel, *The King Must Die*, Richardson says that the consciousness of the Minoans, the inhabitants of Knossos, was similar to that of the ancient Egyptians and " ... had something of the quality of a waking dream being more dreamlike than the consciousness we experience today" (Richardson, 1987:39). He says that Mary Renault captures something of the quality of this dreamlike consciousness in the first chapter of her novel *The King Must Die;* dreamlike in that it suggests a certain ambience, as of something seen through a bright mist. Sweetman writes that much of " ... The King Must Die was dreamed up as Mary wandered around Knossos", an interesting point suggesting that the locale influenced her thinking, " ... and let her mind journey with Theseus to Crete and back and that she had experienced that uncanny frisson of stepping down those gloomy stairs, into the darkened throne-room where Minos would have sat, terrifying in his bull mask" and that when she returned to Santorini, Mary " ... refused to go ashore for fear of breaking the spell" (Sweetman, 1994:169-

70). This clearly demonstrates not only what Richardson has been saying about consciousness being present or reflected in ancient artefacts but particularly, in this instance, of place enchanting a mythopoeic writer, as we have seen is the case from the research questionnaires.

Indeed, Mary Renault's personal notes reveal some autonomous process at work, something beyond her control, similar to the case of John Fowles and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, of having "…a new lead into truth", for she writes:

> Somehow, I couldn't tell how or why, I found the story resisting me. Something was dragging, something stuck … two discrepant images had thus been wrestling in my subconscious imagination (Sweetman, 1994:178).

6.7 Mythopoeic Perception

A reading of the biographical data of the mythopoeic writers (and readers) cited in this thesis reveals that they sometimes experience an altered state of consciousness in which material usually not perceptible in normal waking consciousness becomes available to them; it could appropriately be termed 'mythopoeic perception'. For example, in 1967 Mary Renault suffered a minor pedestrian accident which resulted, later at the hospital, in her feeling curiously detached, telling the young radiographer precisely what treatment she should be given (Sweetman, 1994:255). This traumatic event precipitated the writing of *The Nature of Alexander* and although she had long been obsessed with the young king, when she later saw a photograph of the Acropolis Head of Alexander it made her feel " … an almost physical sense of the presence of Alexander" (Sweetman, 1994:256). She would mention to Julie, her partner, almost reverentially, that she felt she had become one with Alexander, so totally was she absorbed into his world (Sweetman, 1994:264).

Renault's letters to a friend at this time make frequent references to their old teacher J.R.R.Tolkien, from which it is clear that Mary empathized with the hermetic universe he had created, suggesting that his books seemed to transcend fiction by becoming the historical record of a perfect alternative reality (Sweetman, 1994:264). In researching and imaginatively following Alexander and Bagoas on their journey across Asia, Mary, too, had slipped into a parallel world. She was, in effect, living in another country, an elsewhere-place. Even her rare references to

the real world convey an image of utter detachment, as if she and Julie, and Alexander and Bagoas, are all that remained of any significance (Sweetman, 1994:264-5). It could be contended that Mary Renault might more correctly be understood as having experienced an elsewhere-time rather than an elsewhere-place. In her Alexander trilogy, of course Mary Renault experienced an 'elsewhere-time' but the detail of her descriptions of the places in that literature, the exactness strongly indicate the perception of an elsewhere-place, as indeed I have noted with her experiences at Knossos on page 164.

Another example of mythopoeic perception and narration of life by a mythopoeic writer can be seen in the work of Jean Genet, whose ostensibly shamanic predisposition is equalled perhaps only by that of David Malouf. Genet was also an introverted child who experienced a rich and vibrant imagination and who had two distinctly different lives, one on the outside and another on the inside. His consciousness was primitive in the sense that he responded instinctively and directly to the forces of nature and he was a loner and Genet says of himself that he " ... was outside the social order" and wished to transcend the merely human experience (Knapp, 1968:16). In the words of Knapp we may discern a form of traumatic, shamanic initiation through isolation, one that leads to a confrontation with the Imagio Dei, the Jungian Self:

> Genet wrote that he had God in his guts. It became possible for him to know the numinous, the supernatural, the sacred aspects of life. Cut off from human companionship, living in utter isolation, a pariah, he entered into communion with his inner God, his Self. Thus, each important experience at this point in his life - his homosexuality, his thieving, his descent to the lowest and most scorned in the social order, took on a sacred aspect and became a ceremony (Knapp, 1968:19).

In prison during the dismal and lonely hours, Genet began to write. Prison, as place, had a profound experience on Genet and each of the novels that emerged from the experience should be seen as a psychodrama and the writing of them equivalent to the psychoanalytic process.

Our Lady of the Flowers, Genet's first work in poetic prose, was written in 1942 while he was serving his sentence in Fresnes prison, on the brown paper that the prison authorities provided for the purpose of making bags. Knapp tells us that one day, when Genet had been taken from his cell to the Paris Law Court, he returned to find his manuscript gone. He was then called down to the warden's office and punished: three days in solitary confinement, and bread and water for

using paper "… that wasn't intended for literary masterpieces" (Knapp, 1968:23). Genet rewrote these fragments of his inner life, word for word, fifty pages:

> … sincerely, with fire and rage … My solitude in prison was total. Now that I speak of it, it is less so. Then I was alone. At night I would let myself be borne along by a current of abandon. The world was a torrent, a rapid of forces come together to carry me to the sea, to death. I had the bitter joy of knowing I was alone. I am nostalgic for the following sound: as I lie dreaming in my cell, my mind idly drifting, suddenly the convict in the cell above me gets up and starts walking up and down, with an even pace. My reverie is also adrift, but this sound (in the foreground, as it were, because of its precision) reminds me that the body which is daydreaming, the one from which the reverie has escaped, is in prison, prisoner of a clear, sudden, regular pacing ... (Genet, 1949:91).

Yet Genet was not alone for his cell was populated by imaginary figures, they lived with him and were often composites of actual people but they took on an often extended imaginal existence of their own, indeed an autonomous existence very much like the character encountered by John Fowles which precipitated the writing of *The French Lieutenants Woman.*

Sartre, wrote in his introduction to Genet's *The Thief's Journal*, that the words which compose it, "… are those that a prisoner said to himself while panting with excitement, those with which he loaded himself, as with stones, in order to sink to the bottom of his reveries … dreams of words" (in Genet, 1973:10). Genet's works have been criticised because of their overt homosexuality, their pornographic content, yet I believe that this is the very quality that marks them as shamanic, for one need only consult Jung, Eliade and Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* to understand how closely the sexual act, whether symbolic or actual, is part and parcel of religion. Indeed, the Genet corpus is not so much pornographic as it is instinctual, for example, in *Funeral Rites*, he writes:

> In the state of ecstasy there is also an element of fear with respect to the divinity or his angels. The prick I was touching with my finger was not only my lover's but also that of a warrior, of the most brutal, most formidable of warriors, of the lord of war, of the demon, of the exterminating angel. I was committing a sacrilege and was conscious of it. It was his secret weapon, the V-1 on which the Fuhrer relies. It was the ultimate and major treasure of the Germans (Genet, 1973:143).

And in *The Thief's Journal*, (Penguin, 1975 edition) Genet writes:

> Thus, we sometimes stole, and each burglary allowed us to breathe for a moment at the surface. A vigil of arms precedes

> each nocturanal [sic] expedition. The nervousness provoked by fear, and sometimes by anxiety, makes for a state akin to religious moods. At such times I tend to see omens in the slightest accidents. These things become signs of chance. I want to charm the unknown powers upon which the success of the adventure seems to me to depend. I try to charm them by moral acts, chiefly by charity. I give more readily and more freely to beggars, I give my seat to old people, I stand... (Genet, 1975:21).

Also,

> As an operation of this kind cannot succeed by means of dialectics, I had recourse to magic, that is, to a kind of deliberate predisposition, an intuitive complicity with nature (Genet, 1975:57-58).

Genet is clearly identifying a state of consciousness that is akin to that of the shaman where his inner thoughts and his actions are somehow connected with or will influence the exterior world. He describes a type of *participation mystique*, a primitive magical state. Of course, one needs to address the problem of translation here but I suggest that the issue is not in the rewriting but rather in the way that the text is understood, and herein lies one of the qualities of mythopoeic literature; that neither the grammar and syntax nor implicature can, of itself, account for the particular effect of mythopoeic literature even in translation. In the context of my thesis, the first requirement of the mythopoeic writer and reader is not explanation but description, which brings with it the formidable challenge of describing the places and experiences occupied and perceived by another person and then seeing if those places and experiences have any more general meaning for humankind. In other words, do they provide an inclusive overview of the experience of being human and of the existential nature of place? One might well consider in his introduction to *Our Lady of the Flowers*, Sartre's comment on Genet's essentialism and apply it generally to the mythopoeic writer and reader:

> Genet's essentialism, a hierarchical conception of a world in which forms dovetail. Genet's imagination is essentialist, as is his homosexuality. In real life, he seeks the Seaman in every sailor, the Eternal in every pimp. In his *reverie* he bends his mind to justifying his quest. He generates each of his characters out of a higher essence; he reduces the episode to being merely the manifest illustration of an eternal truth (in Genet, 1975:46).

6.8 Mythopoeic Lies

In 1998 I read Binjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments: Memories of a Childhood, 1939-1948* (1996), which was believed to be the extraordinary memoir of a small boy, separated from his parents during the massacre of Jews in Riga, then taken to the Majdanek Nazi death camp, and then possibly to Auschwitz; and of how, at the end of the war he was taken to a Jewish orphanage in Cracow, and then to Switzerland where his adoptive parents repressed these memories by refusing to acknowledge them. The dust jacket blurb of the 1996 first edition advised that in piercingly simple scenes Wilkomirski provides the reader with " … fragments of his recollections, with a child's unadorned speech and unsparing vision, so that we too become small again and see that bewildering, horrifying world through a child's eyes". It suggests that there is no intervention of adult interpretations, and that from the mind of a little boy we experience love, terror, friendship but above all survival, and an arduous return to the real world.

I have read extensively on the holocaust, its history and literature and I have visited the most notorious of the death camps, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and so I read *Fragments* with immediacy. I felt angry and sickened because of the extraordinary, terrifyingly stark testimony of a child whose life had been shattered, a testimony of events of such vividness that I literally saw, felt and heard what had happened. I experienced the terror of little Binjamin and I heard him weep. I saw the faces of the Nazi guards at one moment playing with the children and the next dashing a little boy's head against a wall; I saw and smelled the pungent smoke billowing from the crematoriums (even though there were no crematoriums at Majdanek). I read the book in a state in which I seemed to hover in a large room filled with piles of clothing and rags and below me saw the little Binjamin tunnelling in through the rags and clothes, being hidden by gaunt-faced frightened women prisoners. I felt somewhere within my own being an empathy with his opening words:

> I have no mother tongue, nor a father tongue either. My language has its roots in the Yiddish of my eldest brother, Mordechai, overlaid with the Babel-babble of an assortment of children's barracks in the Nazi death camps in Poland. It was a small vocabulary; it reduced itself to the bare essentials required to say and to understand whatever would ensure survival. At some point during this time, speech left me altogether and it was a long time before I found it again (Wilkomirski, 1996:3).

I had not been affected as profoundly in reading previous Holocaust accounts as I was this one. Soon after, I discovered that Wilkomerski and his story had been called into question; that he was not who he claimed to be and his story fraudulent. Some critics have suggested that Wilkomerski, or rather Dossekker, is not even a Jew. I was surprised, as were other readers, some who had themselves been internees in the Nazi camps. Measured against all conventions of evidence and credibility, is his story fraudulent and of no account? In one sense his account is a fiction but in another sense it is almost shamanic in that Wilkomerski, we discover upon investigation, has transmuted the events of his life through a process of recension or metaphor with those of a child in a concentration camp and in this sense it is true. What is extraordinary, however, is the exactness of the detail he has provided of the life of a child in a Nazi death camp, so much so that even survivors of the camps believed that he was genuine (Lappin, 1999:42-43).

This raises issues of the derivation of authorship. The literary hoax, if that's what it is, perpetrated by Dossekker aka Benjamin Wilkomerski, must certainly be classed amongst the most intriguing of pseudo Holocaust biographies or hoaxes, depending on the position of the critic. This hoax or faux-autobiography is remarkable for its demystification of dominant Jewish cultural values, not only the academic reception of post-Holocaust literature and of Jewish literature in particular, but also concepts of authorship and historical scholarship that still prevail. On the one hand, *Fragments* exposed the multiple conditions of authorship, questioning the claim of originality; on the other hand, it exposed the many values that inform (Holocaust) scholarship, questioning the claim of historical scholarship. By deliberately presenting himself as a Holocaust survivor instead of an author, Wilkomerski directed his reader's attention to the cultural materials, to place, Majdanek Nazi death camp, and then to another camp, possibly Auschwitz. This was of course done to give *Fragments* an air of authenticity but it also touched on something in the collective psyche, not only to Holocaust survivors and Jews but also to non-Jews alike.

In the beginning of her article on this issue Lappin writes:

> … did it matter so much whether *Fragments* was fact or fiction? Wasn't it enough that its prose was so moving and powerful that it made hundreds of thousands of readers think about and perhaps feel – if not understand – the Holocaust? (Lappin, 1999:15).

In accepting such definition we thus allow Wilkomerski to demonstrate that authorship can be a form of historical scholarship approaching that of autobiography and that *Fragments* makes clear that both Holocaust scholarship and authorship are necessarily anachronistic: however much they are grounded in research, their representations of the past are motivated by present cultural values. Wilkomerski's hoax thus prompts a reconsideration of the distinctions that are currently drawn between autobiography, Holocaust literature and authorship. Authorship can be considered a form of Holocaust literature, but an authorship now redefined as not derivative, not self-originating. Holocaust literature authorship is not *sui generis*; writing dependent on pre-existing subjective cultural materials, selected by the author, arranged in an order of priority, and written according to specific and subjective values. Rather it seems that Wilkomerski, out of the trauma of his own life, accessed a dimension of feeling and emotion that rendered itself as valid, not fraudulent, even to those who had personally experienced such horrors.

A similar event happened in the Australian literary scene in 1994 when Helen Demidenko published *The Hand That Signed The Paper*, which subsequently won the Vogel Award for a first novel in 1994, followed in 1995 by the Miles Franklin Award, as well as the Gold Medal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature. Although published as a work of fiction it was supposedly based on the life events of her alleged Ukrainian family, albeit that Demidenko's real name is Darville and that her Ukrainian ancestry was invented. The novel relates events of the Holocaust in the Ukraine, which Helen Demidenko falsely claimed to have drawn from the experience of her Ukrainian family. Most reviewers and critics of Demidenko, including Robert Manne, Kathy Laster, Don Anderson, Michael Heyward, and Peter Craven, have all drawn comparisons to the notorious Ern Malley Hoax.

What is clear is that in both cases the pretence of recollection demonstrates that the marshland between memory, as, for example, in the case of the reflective works by Primo Levi, a genuine Holocaust survivor, such as *Moments of Reprieve* (1987) and *Survival In Auschwitz* (1993), and recovered memory or fiction and invention is treacherous. Mythopoeic fiction may be seen as a way of mapping and understanding that marshland. This situation is not as uncommon as might seem and is reminiscent of that relating to Martin Gray's book *For Those I Loved* (1973), which was also a Holocaust memoir that was exposed as fiction. Three other works, although not claiming to be anything other than fiction, *The Reader* (1997)

by Bernhard Schlink, *Yosl Rakover Talks to God* (1999) by Zvi Kolitz and *Address Unknown* (1966) by Kressman Taylor may well be thought to be direct testament resulting from the Holocaust. What is at issue is not empirical facts that can be verified but spiritual facts that must be pondered. For example, Wilkomirski perfectly captures, in the manner of Primo Levi, how one, or at least one's soul, never leaves the concentration camps, even long after the war.

Of all the reviewers of these cases, Elena Lappin seems to come closest to what I believe may explain these imaginative reconstructions. The idea of " … inexplicable shreds of memory" (Lappin, 1999:58) though finding form in what must be seen as anything other than fiction was nevertheless written in a way that was experienced deeply by both their writers and readers perhaps because of correspondence. The correspondences in the case of Binjamin Wilkomerski were his orphan status, obscure social origins, a childhood swamped with loss and change, prison-like orphanage institutions, and the great loss and memory of a mother.

Another aspect of this phenomenon, a technical one, may be seen in *The Emigrants* by W.G. Sebald, which first appears simply to document the lives of four Jewish exiles or émigrés in the twentieth century. Gradually, however we see how Sebald's precise, almost dreamlike prose works its mythopoeic magic, and the four narrations merge into one overwhelming evocation of exile and loss. There is another element, one exemplified by Holocaust literature; Schlink and Sebald exemplify a generation of German writers who share a complex relationship with the German past that represents an acknowledgement of guilt and yet contains a certain ambiguity. It is interesting that no significant German writer, between the end of the 1939-45 war wrote about the moral and physical destruction of their country, as Sebald says, " …with the horrendous place I came out of and the devastation wrought by history" (Wyndham, 2000:9). Yet certain events and indeed places seem to acquire archetypal status and thus have a particularly puissant effect on MLC. As Wyndham avers:

> All Sebald's work is fictional but not a novel, blending memoir, travel, history, crime essay and imagination into a stream of consciousness that manages to be allusive, fact filled and surreal. Conversations merge with artworks, memories, landscapes and dreams, often leaving the reader entranced but uneasy (Wyndham, 2000:9).

Like Keneally, Malouf and McCullough, and other mythopoeic writers, Sebald's work is conceived in the personal psyche and then it moves into a different

time and space, a different dimension; truly, it seems in the manner described earlier by the shaman Rebbe Yonassan Gershom. Such literature often possesses technical elements; elegiac and magical qualities of narrative tone and image, of archetypal theme, for example, of lingering guilt or extraordinary survival, of innocence and purity or the unspoiled often reflected in the image or motif of the child. In this regard Sebald explains that his stories:

> …point up the vexatious questions of the borderline between fact and fiction, which can never be determined. The borders are fluid. If one looks into one's own mind, thoughts are transformed; there is no distinction between the past and the present. The jumble I create is close mimetically to the way we think. But these texts are realistic narratives in a quite basic way: the author is always at pains to show what he writes is real (Wyndham, 2000:9).

6.9 The Imaginal Membrane

There is some correspondence between these mythopoeic writers and their works and the cave pictographs and their creators in that these works, too, are projections of an ancient psyche or an ancient part of the psyche onto the membrane of place. Such projections are intended to evoke a response from an audience or even to facilitate an almost magical simulation of a presence that links the inner world of the self with the outer world of place. The psyche then vicariously experiences the milieu and becomes connected to that place by virtue of an imaginal creation; thus, does one enter the Imaginal Realm.

Consider that it is the almost simultaneous initiatory dream and spirit possession that mark out the potential shaman, who then adjusts into the ecstatic trance that defines a divining vocation. In a similar way, virtually all of the mythopoeic writers and readers and shamans I questioned, have experienced an initiation of sorts in a way that forces them to experience a new reality someway between the empirical and the divine, one that has continued to influence them. This often leads to a distinct awareness of the de-centred self where mythopoeic writer, reader and the shaman, as was evident from the questionnaire responses, become emphatically aware of being, in a sense, besides themselves. This is perfectly exemplified in Jorge Luis Borges' famous essay 'Borges and I,' " …in which Borges speaks of himself, as his 'other', as a split subject; the 'I' who writes, acts, speaks, and has produced a few worthwhile pages, and the 'I' who watches and is

doomed to oblivion" (in Fowles, 1998:xviii). The de-centred self is split in two: self and other, subject and object, the seeing and the seen; the self becomes a multiplicity, fractured, a chaotic, disorganised disunity of many, sometimes reluctantly, co-existing parts. The writing of mythopoeic literature, the creating of another world, is an isolating and profound experience; one of the haunting presence of the other, the decentred-self that inhabits the lost domain, the elsewhere-place and as may be seen in the research questionnaires, bears a striking similarity to that experienced by the shaman.

The Jungian analyst Edward Edinger believed that history and anthropology taught that human society could not survive unless it psychologically contained a central living myth and that such a myth provides the individual with a reason for living and answers to the questions of human existence (Edinger, 1984:9). He suggested that if the creative, intellectual minority is in harmony with the prevailing myth that the other layers of society would follow its lead and may be spared a direct encounter with the fateful question of the meaning of life (Edinger, 1984:9). Similarly, James Cowan suggested that there must always be a cultural exemplar, or shamanic type, that reflects a condition of primordiality, that acts as a link between the natural and supernatural worlds (Cowan, 1989:15). Mythopoeic writers fulfil the requirements of that role.

As in all genres of fictive writing, Mythopoeic Literature contains certain essential, conventional elements. First there is the manifest and conventional content of plot, setting, characterisation and theme. Behind this, however, is the personal unconscious with its latent and associative content of which the manifest content is actually only a remnant or a distortion. There is also the influence of archetypal and other psychic elements such as individual and collective memory, and the attribution of cultural content and symbols. Acting to synthesise these is setting or place.

Mythopoeic literature may be understood as that literature which is neither a history or biography nor a fantasy but something in between, a place where the mythopoeic writer and reader seem to experience a strange altered state of consciousness, where they hover between the illusion of the narrative and the knowledge of reality. The writer of mythopoeic narratives, like the shaman, manipulates consciousness, their own and that of their accomplice, the reader. That, after all, is the end of all art, literary or magical, of making the reader, the

audience their collaborator in a strange dimension or reality, the Imaginal Realm. It is to an examination of that domain, the Imaginal Realm, which I now turn.

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The Arabic symbol for Qaf, the cosmic emerald mountain, the boundary between the visible and invisible worlds (www.ajabanzaban.com/images/text/alpha/qaf.jpg).

CHAPTER 7

THE IMAGINAL REALM

7.1 Introduction

> I see in fancy – I have a vision of – the world as the astronauts saw it – a shining globe, poised in space and rotating on its polar axis. Round it enveloping entirely, as one Chinese carved ivory ball encloses another within it, is a second, incorporeal, gossamer-like sphere – the unbroken web – rotating freely and independently of the rotation of the earth. It is something like a soap bubble, for although it is in rotation, real things are reflected on its surface, which imparts to them glowing, lambent colours. Within this outer web we live. It soaks up, transmutes and is charged with human experience, exuded from the world within … The storyteller is he who reaches up, grasps that part of the web which happens to be above his head at the moment and draws it down. (Adams 1980:10-11)

All of the mythopoeic writers, readers and shamans interrogated in my research, either directly or indirectly through their writing and reading, stated that they experience an altered state of consciousness, a reverie, in which they become aware of a decentred self or an extension of their self in a dimension or realm, an elsewhere-place, in which they access knowledge not available during ordinary consciousness. This chapter examines the tradition of a transcendent, transpersonal realm, a dimension that has been identified in many cultures the world over and throughout history. Its attributes may sometimes vary but essentially it seems to function as a realm of the imagination in its own right and not as something unreal or a fantasy but rather as something objectively self-existent; the cumulative product of imaginative thought itself. When the term 'imaginary', is used it usually means made up or something other than real. However, poets and mystics have always believed that the world of the imagination is a real world, a third kingdom, between the physical, sensate universe and the

higher realms of intellect and spirit - and that it is possible to gain passage to that realm or dimension.

There is in British tradition, for example, the idea of a transcendent intellect called *Sidhe*, which was known to the Druids as the Web of the Wise (Gardner, 2000:32), and which became known as the Web of the Weird or Wyrd, a strange netherworld fantasy dimension " ... a dimension in which our notions of time, space and causality are suspended" (Bates, 1983:10). In the Kabbalistic tradition, the *Sefer Ha Bahir* (The Book of Brilliance), a collection of mystical interpretations of the Bible, introduces the concept of other realities of existence beyond the comprehension of our physical senses (Zetter, 1999:48). Here, angels known as *Lipika* are responsible for recording in the *Anima Mundi* or World Soul, all spiritual events that occur upon the earth and the thoughts, words, feelings and deeds of humans (Ovason, 1997:22). The Australian Aborigines also have, what is perhaps, a much older tradition of another reality, the Dreamtime. The physicist Fred Allan Wolf suggests that the Australian Aborigines claim to have a memory of the realm of the dreaming spirit dating back nearly 150,000 years (Wolf, 1994:19). Wolf and others, Poulter (1988), Sutton (1989) and Ellis (1991), suggest that in this Dreamtime tradition reality is perceived in two aspects: firstly as a primary universe far more extensive than the secondary physical world and the physical universe which *arose as a dream* and, secondly, that in their view contains all of the past, present and future, as Wolf explains it:

> From this realm the world of mind, matter and energy continually arises as a dream, not only long ago but even today, suggesting that the universe or God is dreaming all of what we experience into existence and that this dream overlaps into what we experience as reality (Wolf, 1994:19).

Some researchers have accepted that the most important element here is that this imaginal habitation or realm is a dimension that is ontologically real. Henri Corbin recognized this potentially real elsewhere-place, as the Imaginal Realm. Corbin suggested that this strange other-dimensional place, the dimension accessed by mystics (and I propose, shamans and mythopoeic writers and readers) is, in fact, perfectly real. Its reality, he averred, is more irrefutable and more coherent than that of the empirical world where reality is perceived by the senses and that upon returning, the beholders of this world are perfectly aware of having been elsewhere; and that they were not schizophrenics who were seized by some terrifying and uncontrollable aberration of consciousness (Corbin, 1972:17). Corbin was emphatic

that the world which this type of individual visits is hidden behind the act of sense perception and has to be sought underneath its apparent objective certainty. It is for this reason we most definitely cannot qualify it as being imagined, as understood in the current usage to mean fanciful, unreal or nonexistent, indeed, this imaginal world is ontologically as real as the world of the senses and that of the intellect (Corbin, 1972:17).

Writing some years before Adams, Harold Bloom penned his beautiful description, resonant in the Sufi sense, of " ... the unbroken web" and also that, "... Qaf is an emerald mountain surrounding our world" (Bloom, 1996:149). Qaf is the holy mountain of Islam, behind which God resides, but interestingly, it is also the place of the origin of that mystical language, the 'language of the birds (Chavalier & Gheerbrant, 1994:590). It is worth noting that David Malouf sometimes alludes to the language of the birds, for example in *Fly Away Peter* (Malouf, 1982:28, 124).

In his introduction to Corbin's *Alone with the Alone* (1969) Bloom suggests that Corbin's Imaginal Realm, this unbroken web, is portrayed more fully and vividly by William Shakespeare than by the Sufi sages, and not only in visionary dramas like *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Pericles,* and *The Tempest.* Rather, Bloom opines, it is the cosmos of the high tragedies – *Hamlet, King Lear* and *Macbeth* where one becomes aware of the intermixing of the empirical world with a transcendental element, one that cannot be identified with normative Christian ideas of order or of the supernatural (in Corbin, 1969:xv). It is, Bloom suggests, " ...the world through which spirits are embodied, and bodies spiritualised" (Corbin, 1969:xiii). This is a world possessing extension and dimension, figures and colours, but these features cannot be perceived by the senses in the same manner as if they were properties of physical bodies; these dimensions, figures and colours are the object of imaginative [Imaginal] perception, or, of the " ...psycho-spiritual senses" (Ring, 1992:220-221). The medieval Persian philosophers called this world the Alam al-Mithal, or Imaginal Realm, Kabbalists called it the Olam Hademut, which means the same thing (Moss, 1998:108).

The same ancient mythological idea is restated by Schopenhauer in a way that suggests that we are figures in the field of a universal dream, dreamed as it were, by a single dreamer, in which all the dream characters dream too, so that everything " ... interlocks and harmonizes with everything else" (in Campbell, 1973:7). That idea is represented in the Hindu image of the god Vishnu asleep on the waters of the cosmic ocean, dreaming the dream of the universe. Laurens van

der Post, in *The Heart of the Hunter*, quotes a Kalahari Bushman as having said to him, " There is a dream dreaming us" (Campbell, 1973:8).

7.2 The Scientific View

These ideas have received support from disciplines other than Depth Psychology, Theology and some new-age philosophies. They have resonance in recent discoveries in theoretical quantum physics in which the world is conceived of as relationships and patterns. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin earlier postulated the existence of the thinking layer, the *noosphere*, the latest evolutionary part of the zonal composition of our planet together with the barysphere, the lithosphere, the hydrosphere, the biosphere that represents the unification of mind and matter (de Chardin, 1965:200-204).

The British biologist Rupert Sheldrake has expressed his belief that each species, indeed, nature, has a kind of collective memory which he terms a *morphic field* and in which spirit, mind, matter and body are interactive in *morphic resonance* and evolve by virtue of habituation. This theory comes very close to that of de Chardin's and has elements of Jung's collective unconscious but most significantly it unites mind and matter (Sheldrake, 1995:172).

Another remarkably similar theory is postulated by Alexander Eliot in his explanation of the form of *the mythosphere:*

> … a globe that permeates and envelops our habitual globes of fire, earth, water and air … a globe of mindstuff that swirls with patterns and energies, coruscating with powers of individuals and groups, symbols and stories (Eliot, 1997:9).

Eliot's theory seems to combine elements of de Chardin (the latest evolutionary manifestation), Sheldrake (not governed by timeless laws but rather out of habituation) and, Jung, in that it is the collective mind-field of conscious beings but, most important, in Eliot's model, not just of humans but of the whole of creation:

> … including, microbes, bugs, dragons, fairies, elves, goblins, ghosts, angels, demons, gods, and even Gods, along with us eternally would-be humans (Eliot, 1997:9).

This statement also seems to parallel the thoughts of Izak Bentov, another physicist who believed that the human psyche stores information which he called 'organised energy' which was needed by Nature " … to store in its large information storage hologram: the universal mind" (Bentov, 1988:7). Somewhat in anticipation

of my next chapter it should be pointed out that Bentov espoused that, "… all mass (matter) contains consciousness (or life) to a greater or lesser extent that may be refined or primitive" (Bentov, 1988:78). Thus, Bentov's proposition also affirms a possibility to be developed later in the thesis that there is an incessant and dynamic relationship between human consciousness and place.

The French physicist Olivier Costa de Beauregard, while studying the problem of entropy, came to the conclusion that the physical universe which the physicist studies is not the whole but rather the *aver* or affirmation of a much more primordial psychic universe, of which the physical cosmos is only a passive double. This psychic universe he calls an *infrapsychisme* or *subconscient,* which he claims should be regarded as coextensive with the four-dimensional Minkowski-Einsteinian block universe (in von Franz, 1992:48-49). Indeed, Costa de Beauregard came to the following conclusions: That the *infrapsychisme* is something similar to what Jung has called the psychoid aspect of the archetypes and the collective unconscious, that which contains a sort of *supraconscience* - something very akin to Jung's *absolute knowledge* and thus the whole material universe is like a gigantic cybernetic machine which serves the growth of consciousness in all individuals (in von Franz, 1992:50-51).

All of these recent theories bear close resemblance to the Middle-Earth avowed by the Anglo-Saxon, Icelandic and Norse-European shamans of around 700-1,000 CE. The Anglo-Saxon Middle-Earth shaman lived out a view of life called *Wyrd*; a way of being which transcended our conventional notions of free will and determinism. All aspects of the world were seen as being in a constant flux and motion of the psychological and mystical polarities of Fire and Frost: a creative, organic vision paralleling the classical eastern concepts of Yin and Yang. Implicit in this concept of *Wyrd* was a vision of the universe, from the gods to the underworld, as being connected by an enormous all-reaching system of fibres like a three dimensional spider's web; everything was connected by strands of fibre to the all-encompassing web. Any event, anywhere, resulted in reverberations and repercussions throughout the web rather as described by Bates (Bates, 1983:9-14).

This also has a resonance with Thomas Keneally's statement during my interview with him that:

> I just believe that all the equipment we need to be everyone else is laid down in that noosphere … I think of it existing both spiritually and biologically, if there is any difference between those two. And being the part of existence necessary to art … It can't be

> eradicated … because in it lies potentially an overwhelming empathy with, you know, universal empathy. This is why writers bring this stuff into play all the time, because they are involved in crossing over the categories, because they contain all the archetypes in themselves and are conscious of that even if they're not conscious of how these archetypes will play when they begin a novel.

David Malouf also accepts that there is this other way of knowing and in an essay, echoic of Corbin's definition of the imaginal, wrote:

> … we do not apprehend things only through *actual* experience. We can also, given the right conditions, grasp it through the imagination, and in such a direct and physical way that it becomes utterly real (in Tulip, 1990:284).

Malouf also seems to conceive of a web, the web of Wyrd, overlaying place, one that influences physical existence. The last paragraph of *The Kyogle Line* illustrates this when, after seeing the Japanese POWs in the railway wagon and in meditating upon the layers of experience of both his father and his grandfather, the protagonist becomes aware of another existence that parallels the physical one but at the same time transcends it bringing him to an unnameable, ineffable destination or place, a perception which is conveyed to him in an unfathomable language, perhaps one similar to, or different manifestation of the mystical language of the birds:

> … it provoked some sort of inner argument or dialogue that was in a language I couldn't catch. It had the rhythm of the train wheels … a different sound from the one our own trains made … It was, to me, as if I had all the time been on a different train from the one I thought. Which would take more than the sixteen hours the timetable announced and bring me to a different, unnameable destination (Malouf, 1985:134).

This elsewhere-place phenomenon from which extra-sensory knowledge seems to emanate is known to other writers too, for example, Aldous Huxley conceived of *Mind-at-Large* as a planetary or collective mind that is both an expression of humanity's deepest yearnings and transcendent to them (in Ring, 1992:12). The Australian writer Rodney Hall was told by the poet Robert Graves that he came to write *The White Goddess* (1948) in a trance and that he believed that one can tap into the collective unconscious and write about things that we have no previous knowledge of (Hall, 2002:5).

7.3 The Connection between the Imaginal Realm and the Mundane World

Robert Pirsig, the author of *Zen and The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974), says that everywhere we look we see incarnated human thoughts projected into the outer world and that knowledge of natural objects and the world of nature is by exactly the same process. Gary Richardson suggests that Pirsig's point is that there is no way or sense in which we can know and understand an object unless we know and understand the thoughts embodied in it, unless our own thinking thinks the thoughts of the object's creator as to its purpose and the details of its composition. Hence, his conclusion:

> … we live in an external world of thought incarnated in material substance, and we know that world by thinking the thoughts embodied in our own inner world (Richardson, 1987:77).

This causes us to ponder not only the possibility that perhaps there is, after all, a third realm but rather that is somehow embedded or connected to the places of our physical existence (Ring, 1992:219-221). Indeed, Marie-Louise von Franz suggested that the human psychic realm, the inner world, is a realm that is temporal but not spatial; it exists in time but has no physical area or locale; it is an elsewhere-place. However, von Franz suggests that we can imagine space in the psychic realm in just the same way as we can imagine a chair. However, just as we cannot take anything from external space into our psychic realm (such as a chair) we can go the other way: thoughts from the psychic realm can be projected into physical space and measured there precisely (von Franz, 1992:9-15).

Jung suggested that, we actually are a psychic process, one over which we have no control (Jung, 1961:4). The great religious and spiritual teachers throughout the ages have said as much in their claim that we are not physical beings evolving towards spirit but rather that we are in fact spiritual beings who are gradually becoming aware of our spiritual essence, or in Gnostic terms, that we are a split-off spark of the divine returning to its proper realm (Bloom, 1996:144).

This concept of an Imaginal Realm, as it is understood in Islamic mysticism and other ancient esoteric philosophies suggests that there is a dimension, existing between mind and matter, one that may influence creativity and be accessed, perhaps, through a process of synchronicity. I suspect that the Imaginal Realm is an aspect of, or something that is coterminous with *Mind-at-Large*, identified by Professor Kenneth Ring of the University of Connecticut. It also seems to have

many elements that suggest that other transpersonal paradigms such as Teilhard de Chardin's noosphere, Rupert Sheldrake's morphic resonance and even Carl Jung's collective unconscious might well be merely different aspects or constructs of the same phenomenon. All are non-spatial, non-temporal and non-substantial and seem in some way to be embedded within or connected to the places we inhabit.

Jung called it the *spiritus mundi* or *World Soul* (Jung, CW, Vol 8, Par 931) and we see that it has transcendent aspects that manifest in both the physical and psychic dimensions but it is eternal, its existence independent of time; a realm we enter with our thinking. If by 'spiritus' Jung meant that which exists independently of space, time and matter, including the human psyches, then the Imaginal Realm is that of the eternal timeless truths: the laws of number, of logic, of space and of time, of life itself and therefore of the archetypes of everything that has the potential to exist. Jung also tantalizingly suggests that all reality might, indeed, be grounded on this mysterious substrata (Jung, 2002:125). This suggests a reciprocal relationship between the places we inhabit and the human psyche, a relationship in which revelations and epiphanies occur and synchronicities too but that a part of each one of us, psychically, dwells not only in the spiritus mundi but is embedded in place.

It might be argued that in this discursion on soul, consciousness and the significance of place beyond materiality, that the importance of an embodied response to place is being diminished. This however, is far from the case. As we have discussed, in Keneally's work there often appears to be a gratuitous dwelling on the body and its fragility. McCullough and Malouf also reflect this in a much more subtle way, essentially referring to what I would term 'the suffering body' in response to place.

The Australian writer James Cowan, in tones reminiscent of the earlier quoted perplexed meditation of Pato Dooley, provides us further insight into this relationship, by analogy, when he has Fra Mauro say:

> The world and the spirit are somehow conjoined. They both thrive on one another as a seed does in the earth. Who but someone who has quit home and journeyed to distant lands would understand? .... I have been too willing to remain where I am rather than to take leave of this place and journey to where I am not (Cowan, 1996:133).

That 'someone' who has quit home and journeyed to distant lands may well be the mythopoeic writer and their readers who may readily quit the security of

ordinary egoistic consciousness and journey to the realm of the collective unconscious, the same world visited by the shaman, the world of the Gnostic exiled divine spark. That world is not an imaginary world nor is it an aspect of an aberrant psyche; it is rather another level of consciousness, a transpersonal level, the Imaginal Realm.

Thus, mythopoeic literary consciousness for both the writer and reader might be seen not only as a spur to psycho-spiritual evolution and higher states of consciousness but also as the shamanising of modern humanity and the sanctifying of place, permitting humanity to live in two worlds at once; the physical and the Imaginal and thereby making all places a temenos, liberated to live in mythic time, no longer incarcerated in the prison of chronological-cause and effect time and nominal place. If soul is embedded in place then it is time for a spiritual morphology and together with Henry Corbin, we might well ask of place:

> Who is it or to whom does it correspond, for example, who is the Earth, who are the waters, the plants, the mountains? The answer to these questions causes an Image to appear and this Image invariably corresponds to the presence of a certain state (Corbin, 1977:4)

What we now must examine is the nature of consciousness and MLC and also consider the relationship between these states and psyche or soul.

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CHAPTER 8

CONSCIOUSNESS AND SOUL

> What if there was a living agency beyond our every day human world - something even more purposeful than electrons? Do we delude ourselves in thinking that we possess and control our own psyches, and is what science calls the "psyche" not just a question mark arbitrarily confined within the skull, but rather a *door that opens upon the human world from a world beyond, allowing unknown and mysterious powers to act upon man* and carry him on the wings of the night to a more than personal destiny? (Jung, CW 15, par. 148, emphasis added).

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Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.

Time past and time future
Allow but a little consciousness
To be conscious is not to be in time.
- T.S. Eliot, Burnt Norton, Four Quartets.

~ ~ ~

Maior autem animae pars extra corpus est.
(The greater part of the soul is outside the body.)
Sendivogius (Hillman, 1981:89).

~ ~ ~

8.1 Consciousness

The words of these three great thinkers reveal important characteristics of both the soul and consciousness and in so doing hint at the nature of the relationship between them. Jung's words suggest a veiled but dynamic agency affecting individual life, a mysterious agency of another dimension. Sendivogius, in the quotation above, completely reverses the usual interiority paradigm of soul or psyche and this, considered with the earlier statement by Eliot, suggests that we really do exist outside of time and space as a decentred self. Indeed, many

paradigms of altered states of consciousness, particularly SC and MLC suggest a potential for such an expanded awareness that seems to access extrasensory data and non-ordinary realms or dimensions of place not available to ordinary waking consciousness. It is the function of this chapter then, to examine the nature and evolution of consciousness and its relationship to soul or psyche. However, a caveat; I use the term 'psyche' here as Jung did, as an *a priori* entelechy; consisting of everything that is conscious and associated with the ego, the unconscious and also the psychoid system (von Franz, 1988:4). It is important to note also that the Greek word psyche means soul: ... the soul is *naturaliter religiosa;* the soul possesses a religious function (Jung, CW 12, par. 14), and this is the sense in which it is used in this dissertation, albeit the word religious is to be read as spiritual or parapsychological.

The concept of consciousness is really quite a difficult one to understand, in spite of the common usage of the term by professionals and lay alike. Neither biology, nor physics, nor a combination of the two has been able to offer a scientifically acceptable explanation of consciousness (Ansari, 1999:24). Some scientists, for example, the Nobel Laureate Francis Crick, believe that neural circuits can explain the physical mechanism of consciousness, in other words, consciousness is but a mere epiphenomenon of brain functioning (Crick, 1994, chapters 2-5). Torey shares a similar view that reflective awareness evolved within a closed system and dismisses any form of panpsychism or animistic assumptions (Torey, 1999:xii). Julian Jaynes describes eight possible theories of the nature of consciousness: (1) consciousness as a property of matter, (2) as a property of protoplasm, (3) as learning, (4) as a metaphysical imposition, (5) as mere epiphenomenon, (6) as evolutionary, (7) as a misnomer for behaviourism, and (8) as the reticular activating system (Jaynes, 1977:4-16).

None of these propositions offers any encouragement whatsoever in a straightforward understanding of the origin, and more importantly, the nature of consciousness. All of these possibilities posit consciousness within the framework of some conventionally accepted or hypothesized scientific or philosophical framework but they still do not explain what consciousness is and where it is located. They tend, with the exception of Jaynes' theories 1 and 4, to translate psychological phenomena into neuro-anatomy or chemistry and conspicuously, at the risk of exacerbating the dilemma, do not mention the words mind or psyche. The research of physicist Roger Penrose seems to fit consciousness into the

interface of quantum mechanics and classical mechanics may reveal a new physics at the interface that is relevant to the phenomenon of consciousness (in Ansari, 1999:24-25). The conclusions of Penrose are not too different to those of Bentov that were previously cited; essentially that consciousness resides in matter.

We have a habit of locating consciousness in the head, somewhere just behind the eyes, a habit that is so ingrained it difficult to think of it otherwise. For normal consciousness, the outer world takes place in the area of space in which we experience ourselves as living and moving, a world that is common to, and shared with others but nevertheless, separate from them. Erich Neumann suggested that this ego consciousness is the distinguishing characteristic of the human species, one that has constructed a picture of a so-called objective 'real outer world'. This ego-associated consciousness and the world cognisable to it form an interrelated unity, albeit a unity where subject and object are opposing one another (Neumann, 1989:50-51). This is in general agreement with Julian Jaynes' most essential evolutionary theory of consciousness, the breakdown of the bi-cameral mind, to be examined here. However, esoteric traditions, such as shamanism, universally acknowledge that the black-and-white distinctions of ordinary consciousness may be merely shallow delusions (Sutin, 2000:13). Such is the case too with models of quantum physics and MLC, which go beyond the positivist paradigms. The implication is that individual identity and the location of that identity on the interior-exterior continuum may not be as definite as we believe and may also be delusional perhaps even variable. This is important when consideration is given to concepts of the de-centred self and of being in an elsewhere-place.

This exterior or outside world presents itself to us, or the self, through particular and distinct senses although perception of it is of a unified whole. However, this solid, good common sense reality is based on micro reality made up of vast empty spaces filled with oscillating fields of many different kinds, each one interacting with all the others. The tiniest disturbance in one field carries over into the others. It is an interlocked web of fields, each pulsating at their own rate but in harmony with the others, their pulsations spreading out farther and farther throughout the cosmos. This experience of totality intimates and interacts with a seventh sense, thinking itself, which does not at first seem to communicate with the outer world at all but rather only with the inner world.

The inner world and its ephemera is thought to be subjective as opposed to the more real-objective outer world and tends to be dismissed as a sort of residue

on the surface of existence. The inner world is, however, much more than mere introspection and encompasses what is often described as expanded consciousness, altered states and shamanic reality and, in actual fact, takes us into the realm of quantum physics. Indeed the work of scientists such as Rupert Sheldrake, Itzak Bentov and others, along with shamans and mythopoeic writers reveals that we see our common reality through a very restricted window. As Borges averred:

> Let us admit what all idealists admit: that the nature of the world is hallucinatory. Let us do what no idealist has done: let us look for the unrealities that confirm that nature. (Borges, 1977:114)

(a) *The Evolution of Consciousness*

In 1977 Julian Jaynes of Princeton University published his study, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, in which he hypothesized that until late in the second millennium BCE, humankind did not possess consciousness as we know it today and were, literally, unconscious, a result of the domination of the right hemisphere of the brain, and further, automatically obeyed the voices of 'gods'. Fundamentally, Jaynes asserts that contemporary human consciousness, a product of human history and culture which is essentially that of cataclysm and catastrophe and one that issues from the brain's left hemisphere, is a learned process brought into being out of an earlier unconsciousness or hallucinatory mentality similar to that experienced by schizophrenics and one that is still developing.

Jaynes' work examines three forms of human awareness, the bicameral or god-run human; the modern or problem-solving human; and contemporary forms of throwbacks to bicamerality, such as, religious frenzy, hypnotism, and schizophrenia. In the introduction to his seminal work, Jaynes poses the dilemmas, questions and impressions of consciousness that are inherent in the Western cultural tradition:

> O, what a world of unseen visions and heard silences, this insubstantial country of the mind! What ineffable essences, these touchless rememberings and unshowable reveries! And the privacy of it all! A secret theatre of speechless monologue and prevenient counsel, an invisible mansion of all moods, musings, and mysteries, an infinite resort of disappointments and discoveries. A whole kingdom where each of us reigns reclusively alone, questioning what we will, commanding what we can. A hidden hermitage where we may study out the troubled book of what we have done and yet may do. An introcosm that is more myself than

> anything I can find in a mirror. This consciousness that is myself of selves, that is everything, and yet is nothing at all — what is it? And where did it come from? And why?" (Jaynes, 1977:1).

These dilemmas, or more the case, perturbations to the Western psyche, however, are seen by others, particularly those in preliterate cultures where the content of the interior world is as privileged as that of the exterior world, as perfectly normal; they do not erupt into consciousness. Indeed, such a state might be seen as more akin to the state of *participation mystique*.

Jaynes believes that until approximately 3000 years ago essentially all human beings were without consciousness, as we experience it today (Jaynes, 1977:82, 317). Human beings, along with all other primates functioned by mimicked or learned reactions. However, because of their much larger, more complex brain, the human individual was able to develop a coherent language beginning about 8000 BCE (Jaynes, 1977:66). Human beings were then guided by audio hallucinations, 'authority voices'. In effect, these human beings were quite intelligent and could communicate by talking but were still, in a sense, according to Jaynes, automatically reacting even though that form of communication enabled them to cooperate closely to build societies, even thriving civilizations.

Jaynes' primary construct is the concept of a bicameral (two-chamber) mind that functions as an unconscious, two-step process. Hallucinations, automatic reactions and thoughts evolved in the right hemisphere of the brain and were transmitted or heard as communications or instructions in the left hemisphere of the brain to be acted upon (Jaynes, 1977:208, 269). The bicameral functioning is nature's automatic, learned mode of response without regard to conscious thinking. By contrast, human-initiated consciousness functions through a deliberate, volitional thought process that is independent of nature's bicameral thought process.

The major historic markers of Jaynes' theory of archaic thought and the break-up of the bicameral mind are:

(i) *All civilizations before 1000 BCE were built, inhabited, and ruled by non-conscious people.*

Jaynes cites examples from civilizations such as Assyria, Babylonia, Mesopotamia and Pharaonic Egypt, but also suggests that the transition to consciousness may be observed in other parts of the world. Chinese literature moved from bicameral non-consciousness to subjective consciousness about 500 BCE with the writings of Confucius. In India, literature shifted to subjective

consciousness around 400 BCE and can be seen in the Upanishad texts. According to Jaynes, the American Indians, [and one might well infer, all preliterate peoples, including the Australian Aborigines] however, never developed the sophisticated, metaphorical languages needed to develop full consciousness. As a result, their mentalities were probably bicameral when they first encountered the European explorers. For example, with little or no conscious resistance, the Incas allowed the Spanish white gods to dominate, plunder, and slaughter them. I offer an interesting exception to the paradigm; namely that of the highly sophisticated and literate, richly metaphorical Jewish culture and its modern day members who so passively surrendered to the authority of the Nazis throughout Europe in the Holocaust and indeed, in the ghettos throughout most of history. This signals the first flaw in Jaynes' thesis.

(ii) *Ancient writings such as the Iliad and the early books of the Old Testament reported both real and imagined events but later works exemplify the transition to the conscious mind.*

Jaynes cites much direct evidence for the breakdown of the bicameral mind and the development of consciousness, much of which comes from writings between 1300 BCE and 300 BCE. He describes how those writings gradually shift from non-conscious, objective reports to conscious, subjective expressions that reflect introspection. The jump from the non-conscious writing of the *Iliad* to the conscious writing of the *Odyssey* (composed perhaps a century later) is, Jaynes suggests, dramatically obvious, although I do not think so. In the *Odyssey*, unlike the *Iliad*, characters possess conscious self-awareness, the ability of introspection and can sense right from wrong, and guilt. Any difference between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is, rather, further evidence that perhaps more than one poet composed these Homeric epics. The transition from the non-conscious *Iliad* to the conscious *Odyssey* marks man's break with his 8000-year-old hallucinatory guidance system. By the sixth century BCE written languages began reflecting conscious ideas of morality and justice similar to those reflected today.

Jaynes further develops his thesis by illustrating and comparing the bicameral mentality found in the Book of Amos (circa 800 BCE) with the subjective consciousness found in the Book of Ecclesiastes (circa 200 BCE) and uses those differences also as a example for his paradigm. In the middle of that transition, the Book of Samuel records the first known suicide, an act that requires consciousness, and the Book of Deuteronomy illustrates the conflict between the bicameral mind

and the conscious mind. Jaynes provides additional references to the Biblical evidence for the bicameral mind theory in his chapter, *The Moral Consciousness of the Khabiru* (Jaynes, 1977:293-313).

(iii) *Ancient peoples were non-conscious, did not introspect and were mentally structured merely for survival.*

Ancient peoples learned to speak, read, write, as well as fulfil the necessary daily life tasks, occupational roles, including administration and complex decision making tasks, all while remaining non-conscious throughout their lives. Being non-conscious, Jaynes suggests that they never experienced guilt, never practiced deceit, and were not responsible for their actions. They, like any other animal, had no concept of guilt, deception, evil, justice, philosophy, history, or the future. They could not introspect and had no internal concept of themselves. They had no subjective sense of time or space nor did they have memories, as we understand these things. They were non-conscious and innocent, guided by voices or strong impressions in their bicameral minds, non-conscious minds structured by nature for automatic survival. A common thread or syndrome united most oracles, sibyls, prophets, and demon-possessed people; almost all were illiterate, all believed in spirits, and all could readily retrieve or activate the bicameral mind. Today, however, retrieval and expression of the bicameral mind renders the subject likely to a diagnosis of schizophrenic insanity, unless it manifests as shamanism or mythopoeic consciousness.

(iv) *The automatic bicameral mind became inadequate to handle the imperative to survive, and consciousness was invented.*

Jaynes theorises that the automatic bicameral mind became inadequate to handle the mounting problems threatening survival as societies became more complex. Since the hallucinated voices were becoming more and more confused, contradictory, and destructive, in order to survive, Jaynes believes that humans were forced to develop a new way of thinking, a new mode which today we identify as consciousness; a process that could solve infinitely more complex problems one that involved the newly discovered process of human introspection. Humankind's thinking process was further enhanced by new thoughts and insights created by comparisons achieved through metaphors and analogues. As the voices of the oracles became confused and nonsensical, reliance and adherence to them decreased and human beings began to contrive religions and prayers in an attempt to communicate with the departed gods. Jaynes illustrates how the concept of

worship, heaven, angels, devils, exorcism, omens, augury and sacrifice were devised as a way to evoke guidance and intervention from the gods – these external powers. However, as Christianity became a popular source of external authority, Christian zealots began physically destroying all evidence of competing gods or competing idols, as was the case with the great library at Alexandria. They then built their own idols and symbols to reinforce the external authority of Christianity.

(v) *Vestiges of the Bicameral Mind in Today's World*

Julian Jaynes identifies many vestiges of the bicameral mentality that exist today. In more recent times the major worldwide sources of external authority have been the philosophical doctrines of religion, along with the other forms of mysticism and metaphysics, combined with political doctrines such as Socialism, Fascism, and Marxism. All such doctrines demand the surrender of the individual's ego (sense of self or 'I') to a collective, obedient faith toward the authority of those doctrines. In return, those doctrines offer automatic answers and lifetime guidance from which faithful followers can survive without the responsibility or effort of using their own conscious minds. Thus, in a sense, all current political systems represent a regression into mysticism, from conscious man back to bicameral man.

It is not without a certain irony that Jaynes suggests that early Christianity with its teachings of Jesus the God-man was an attempt to shift religion from the outmoded bicameral and celestial mind of Moses to the newly conscious and earthly mind of humankind. Jaynes suggests that Christianity, although I would suggest all manifestations of the Abrahamic religions, then discovered a devastatingly effective tool for authoritarian control, guilt. Indeed, guilt not only worked on conscious minds, but required conscious minds to be effective. The vestiges of the bicameral mind combined with the human longing for guidance also, Jaynes believes, would have produced all of the prophets, oracles, sibyls, saints, idols and demons, ayatollahs and popes and even the Fuehrer. Jaynes illustrates how such external authorities exist only through the remnants of the bicameral mind. Moreover, he reveals a four-step paradigm that can reshuffle susceptible minds back into hallucinating, bicameral mentalities. The ancient Greeks, he suggests with rather inconclusive evidence, used a similar paradigm to reorganize or reprogram the minds of uneducated peasant girls into totally bicameral mentalities so they could become oracles and give advice through hallucinated voices, such as in the case of the Pythia at Delphi, an excellent example of which is given in William Golding's faction or historical novel set in ancient Delphi, *The Double Tongue* (1995). Jaynes

also points out that today, as throughout history, a symptomatic cure for demon-possessed people involves exorcising rituals that enable a more powerful authority or god to replace the authority of the demon. The New Testament, for example, shows that Jesus and his disciples became effective exorcists by substituting one authority (their god) for another (another god or demon). Despite religion, conscious minds caused the gradual shifts from governments of gods to governments of human individuals and from divine laws to secular laws.

Jaynes provides support to my thesis in that he also believes that artistic inspiration and poetic reverie are in a sense atavistic. Thus, the chanting cadence of poetry and the rhythmic beat of music are also rooted in the bicameral mentality. In ancient writings, the hallucinated voices of the gods were always in poetic verse, usually in dactylic hexameter and sometimes in rhyme or alliteration, all characteristic of right brain functioning. The oracles and prophets also spoke in verse and even today, schizophrenics often speak in verse when they hallucinate. Poetry and chants can have commanding beats and rhythms that can effectively block or alter consciousness. Poetry, of course, has always been identified as the language of the gods; it is the language of the artistic, right-hemisphere section of the brain. Plato recognized poetry as a divine madness. Poetry and songs also often have an abruptly changing or a discontinuous pitch whereas normal speech has a smoothly changing pitch. Jaynes demonstrates that reciting poetry, singing, and playing music are right-brain functions, while speaking is a left-brain function. That is why people with speech impediments can often sing, chant, or recite poetry with flawless clarity. Conversely, almost anyone trying to sing a conversation will find their words quickly deteriorating into a mass of nonsensical or inarticulate clichés.

Because listening to music and poetry is a right-brain function, music, poetry, or chants that project authority with loud or rhythmic beats can suppress left-brain functions to temporarily relieve anxiety or a painfully troubled consciousness; the same poetic reverie that Bachelard speaks of:

> Reverie is commonly classified among the phenomena of psyche détente. It is lived out in relaxed time which has no linking force. Since it functions with inattention, it is often without memory. It is a flight from out of the real that does not always find a consistent unreal world. By following the path of reverie … consciousness relaxes and wanders and consequently becomes clouded … in the realm of language and more precisely poetic language … consciousness creates and lives the poetic image (Bachelard, 1960:5).

It must be noted at this point that all of the respondents to the research questionnaire extolled the virtues of poetry and poetic reverie in some form or another, all the readers and one of the shamans, citing their favourite poets.

Jaynes also illustrates how phenomena like hypnosis, acupuncture, and déjà-vu also function through vestiges of the bicameral mind by demonstrating how hypnosis steadily narrows the sense of self, time, space, and introspection as consciousness shrinks and the mind reverts to a bicameral type organization; the same sort of organization that is manifested in SC and MLC. By comparison, bicameral and schizophrenic minds have little or no sense of self, time, space or introspection and the hypnotized mind is urged to obey the voice of the hypnotist; the bicameral mind is compelled to obey the voices of authority or gods. Jaynes also identifies how modern quests for external authority are linked to the bicameral mind.

Partial support for Jaynes' theory and my thesis regarding the involvement of the cave pictographs in altered states of consciousness, comes from the research of psychologists Nicholas Humphrey (1999) and Mell, Howard and Miller (2003), who all come to similar conclusions although they have based their work on different hypotheses. In an article entitled *Cave Art, Autism, and the Evolution of the Human Mind,* Humphrey (1999:116-143) illustrates the remarkable similarities in style and technique that exist between the cave paintings of the Upper Palaeolithic and the drawings of an young autistic patient who was almost completely devoid of language yet produced a series of remarkable drawings, mainly of horses and other animals that were technically much superior to those of normal children. As in the cave pictographs of the Upper Palaeolithic, the subjects are shown in motion, using perspective and foreshortening, and often in three-quarter profile. As the young female patient grew older and began to acquire some language the quality of her drawings deteriorated. In another study that establishes a link between levels of consciousness and artistic ability, three neurologists studied cases in which artists had suffered brain damage leading to dementia and yet in spite of this their art became freer and more original (Mell et al, 2003:1707-1710).

In other words, the bicameral mind is the human mind functioning in a particular, unconscious mode intended by nature. While it exists in all people, it can be controlled or dominated by a special mode of consciousness developed not through nature but volitionally, by each individual being. An individual can exercise

that mode of mind control or domination over themselves and others, or can allow that mode of consciousness in others to control or dominate their own bicameral mind.

The genus Homo began about two million years ago. Rudimentary oral languages developed from 70,000 BCE to about 8000 BCE, written languages began about 3000 BCE and gradually developed into syntactical structures capable of generating metaphors and analogue models. Only at that point could human beings invent and experience consciousness. The developmental time allowed by Jaynes seems to be too abrupt and although he presents many salient points, I have strong reservations with much of Jaynes' overall theory, particularly with his evolutionary timeline of 3,000 years.

(b) *An alternative structure to Jaynes' consciousness*

Jaynes illustrates that humankind's early writings, hieroglyphics, hiertatics, and cuneiform texts, reflect a mentality totally different from our own; a non-metaphoric, non-conscious mentality. However, this may be too simplistic and reductionist. The evidence suggests that the Palaeolithic cave paintings of 30,000 years ago are expressions of a linguistic order. As Thompson implies, the selection of a site, the preparation of tools and the coordination of a complex composition, as is the case with most of the pictographs in the caves at Lascaux, Chauvet and Altimira involves language ability and also both hemispheres of the brain working in harmony (Thompson, 1981:89). I would add that most importantly, the cave pictographs also imply abstract thinking and an awareness and expression of the transpersonal and imaginal. I am certainly not attempting to reconstruct the religious conceptions of the inhabitants of the Upper Palaeolithic period, but it is clear that even as early as forty thousand years ago preliterate humanity, as exemplified by the Australian aborigines, observed a basic periodicy of nature and through their rock carvings were conveying this and miniaturizing the universe.

It is difficult also to accept Jaynes' proposition of whole civilizations consisting entirely of non-conscious, yet highly intelligent, automaton-like individuals who suddenly, in an extraordinarily short period of time, by-passed nature to invent their own consciousness. The existence of bi-camerality in all human beings becomes increasingly evident because of the manifestations of: (1) the obsolete, non-conscious (bicameral) mind that seeks guidance from external authorities for

important thoughts and decisions, especially under stressed or difficult conditions; and (2) the newly evolved conscious aspect of mind that bypasses external authorities and provides thoughts and guidance generated ideopathically.

Consciousness requires metaphors and this is clearly one of the functions of the cave pictographs; to refer to one thing in order to better understand or describe another, as Lewis-Williams has indicated (Lewis-Williams, 2004:106-107). Consciousness also requires analogue models (Lewis-Williams, 2004:46,60). Thinking in metaphors and analogue models creates the mind space and mental flexibility needed to bypass the automatic, bicameral processes, as Jaynes has asserted, but both also require imagination. Conversely, the bicameral thinking process functions only in concrete terms and narrow, here-and-now specifics. The conscious thinking process, however, generates an infinite array of subjective perceptions that permit ever-broader understandings and better decisions. Metaphors of 'me' and analogue models of 'I' allow consciousness to function through introspection and self-visualization. In turn, consciousness expands by creating more and more metaphors and analogue models. That expanding consciousness allows an individual to *see* and understand the relationship between themselves and the world with increasing accuracy and clarity. The process also produces a decentred self in an elsewhere-place.

Consciousness is a conceptual, metaphor-generated analogue world that parallels the actual world. Humankind, therefore, could not develop consciousness until it produced a language sophisticated enough to create metaphors and analogue models. Jaynes' model also does not allow for the problem of qualia; how can one possibly explain, in terms of robotic behaviour or the simple mechanical firing of neurons, an appreciation of the animation, vivid visual complexity and appeal of the cave pictographs, in terms of the composition by the artists and interpretation by those who were intended to look at them?

It is conceivable that the cave painters were exceptional, linguistically and, ipso facto, consciously within their society, and that other members of society were not as fully competent linguistically. There is archaeological evidence that points to increased social complexity within Upper Palaeolithic sites (Lewis-Williams, 2004:79). Also, researchers have suggested that anatomically modern populations existed 50,000 to 60,000 years before they register on the West European archaeological record and did not evolve out of their inferior Neanderthals but in fact replaced them (Lewis-Williams, 2004:82-83). However, the most important

point is that there is no doubt in the mind of any researchers that our Upper Palaeolithic ancestors had fully modern language; they were able to create arbitrary sounds with meanings, to manipulate complex grammatical constructions, to speak about the past and the future and to convey abstract notions … notions that the Neanderthal mind could not grasp (Lewis-Williams, 2004:88-89).

Jaynes' essential thesis that consciousness is only a recent development seems to have, unfortunately, influenced others. The neuroscientist Antonio Damasio is another recent writer whose ideas recall those of Jaynes; in fact, he explicitly refers to Jaynes in his book that also deals with the way that human consciousness has arisen. Indeed, he seems to think that the evolution of consciousness may have extended into even later times than Jaynes suggests, for he maintains that Plato and Aristotle did not have a concept of consciousness in the way that we do today; that today we " … are conscious of a core self … the autobiographical self" (Domasio, 1999:174). In counterpoint, Harold Bloom's wonderful argument of the influence of the most potent shaman-like mythopoeic writer of all, William Shakespeare, in shaping egoic consciousness might be considered:

> The idea of Western character [as a product of consciousness and cognition], of the self as a moral agent, has many sources: Homer and Plato, Aristotle and Sophocles, the Bible and St. Augustine, Dante and Kant, and all you might care to add. Personality, in our sense, is a Shakespearean invention, and is not only Shakespeare's greatest originality but also the authentic cause of his perpetual pervasiveness. Insofar as we ourselves value, and deplore, our own personalities, we are the heirs of Falstaff and of Hamlet, and of all the other persons who throng Shakespeare's theatre of what might be called the colours of the spirit … it provokes considerable resistance from scholars when I say that Shakespeare invented us (Bloom, 1998:4-5).

Indeed, the rise of writing helps to break up the continuum of the sensorium, the parts of the brain concerned with the reception and interpretation of sensory stimuli; to locate consciousness in the written word, or perhaps more precisely, a narrative. What the written word, or narrative image is to the sensorium, analogously, the ego is to the entire consciousness, and the city or place is to the entire encirclement of nature. Writing, individuation and civilization are all parts of the one large cultural phenomenology (Thompson, 1981:196), but I would add that the ability to locate and identify the self, narratively, in a locale or place was also a part of that cultural phenomenology.

In Western culture we rarely acknowledge that we live in a world where Place and meaning is essentially a function of our own [usually unconscious] individual and collective projections. All that surrounds us, people, events, actions and, of course place, are infused with meaning that relates to the content of our own individual psyches and thus, we really inhabit our own psyches; the exterior world is an illusion. At any singular moment in time each individual's perception of their existence would result from a position somewhere along a continuum between consciousness and unconsciousness, or as Carl Jung believed, "… at bottom, the psyche is simply world" (Jung, CW 9(i), par. 291).

I agree with Jaynes' portentous words, " … in reality consciousness has no location whatsoever except as we imagine it has" (Jaynes, 1977:46) and this is supported by research by Ring (1992) and Crick (1995). It also suggests a clear relationship to remote viewing, which was previously known as travelling clairvoyance, and SC bilocation, in which the shaman undertakes voyages to other realms or dimensions. Jaynes cites the example of his friend in hospital with left frontal brain injury who regained consciousness, as he reported, in the corner of the ceiling of a hospital ward looking down euphorically at himself laying on the cot swathed in bandages (Jaynes, 1977:46). Those who have taken mind altering substances commonly report similar out-of-the-body or exosomatic experiences, and it is important to note the use of such substances in certain shamanic traditions. Jaynes, however, says that such experiences " … do not demonstrate anything metaphysical whatsoever; simply that locating consciousness can be an arbitrary matter" (Jaynes, 1977:46). When we consider that the soul, psyche or consciousness may well extend beyond the body, the individual and into place, such exosomatic experiences may, indeed, have a very significant metaphysical meaning. Bentov's model of consciousness, flickering on and off, positive and negative, Yin and Yang (1988:71) and which allows him to consider mountains and rocks (and therefore place) as possessing intelligence (1988:78-86), may not seem so incredible if we accept that consciousness and matter are inherently linked. Bentov's theory provides an excellent model upon which to understand MLC, as can be seen in the eloquent description of MLC provided by Robert Dessaix:

> A different cluster of memories and illusions from the one that empties the teapot or watches the news at seven. In the blink of an eye you're engulfed by waves of Goths and Franks, earth shattering love-affairs and trifling amours, war after war, archbishops, miracles, princes, cousins and second cousins swarming everywhere like ants whose nest you've accidentally

> trodden on – and, looking at these stones, this painting, this ring, you shrink to nothing, lose all your significance. And then you shake yourself – and piece by piece recover it (Dessaix, 2001:97-98).

Indeed, scientific investigations into the phenomenon of consciousness have demonstrated that people experience far more than their consciousness perceives; that they interact far more with the world around them and with each other than their consciousness thinks they do, and that the control of actions that consciousness feels it exercises is an illusion (Norretranders, 1991:ix). In short, consciousness plays a much smaller role in human affairs than Western culture has tended to believe. The bipolar continuum is really the nature of consciousness, oscillating backwards and forwards, being in two minds simultaneously, that of egoic consciousness and that of the bicameral mind of *participation mystique*.

It is interesting to note at this point that the writer Tom Keneally shows quite an extraordinary understanding of the nature of these different consciousnesses. Keneally intimates that remnants of natural thinking or the mental processes of the *participation mystique* are embedded in the modern evolved consciousness of every individual. In some individuals it may have evolved further and is now manifested as what is perceived as shamanic states of consciousness or MLC. In his response to the research questions, Keneally spoke of a mind that predated specialization, which contained the entire mythic and imaginative history of humankind:

> I just believe that all the equipment we need to be everyone else is laid down in that noosphere … I think of it existing both spiritually and biologically, if there is any difference between those two. And being the part of existence necessary to art … to be the sort of strong man - political leader … you know, to be John Howard in other words, it's most convenient if that part of the brain is totally cemented over. It can't be eradicated but attempts are made by such people to obliterate it because in it lies potentially an overwhelming empathy with, you know, universal empathy. This is why writers bring this stuff into play all the time, because they are involved in crossing over the categories, because they contain all the archetypes in themselves and are conscious of that even if they're not conscious of how these archetypes will play when they begin a novel.

Thomas Keneally has averred exactly what Jaynes suggested, namely, that religions and governments are rooted in [the remnants of] the non-conscious bicameral mind that is obedient to the voices of external authorities, obedient to the voice of God, gods, rulers, and leaders and that in spite of egoic consciousness

there is still at work a more primal process. Given that even the most dedicated researchers find it difficult, if not impossible to define consciousness, even to locate an area of the brain in which it might be localized, all that we are left with is the evolution of a form of subjective awareness. That awareness is related to the same area of the brain from which poetry and chanting originated. Often that awareness oscillates along a continuum between highly subjective and highly objective polarities.

Jung, contrary to Jaynes' thesis, cautions that Nature herself deigned to produce consciousness because without it things go less well. Though it has this practical function Jung warns that we tend to prize it as a fine achievement, and he reminds us that consciousness is also our own worst devil because it helps us to invent " … every thinkable reason and way to disobey the divine will" (in Adler, 1973:486). In other words, along the continuum of consciousness, egoic consciousness seems to be in absolute opposition to *participation mystique*. Martin Heidegger also identified these two polarities of consciousness: calculative and meditative. The former seeks definite results whereas the latter contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is and that as " … meditative beings we stand at once within the realm of that which hides itself from us" (Heidegger, 1966:55). This meditative thinking, as it is seen in symbols and metaphors in language, points to something beyond consciousness since language is symbolic and real metaphors are not translatable. If language is a function of the mind it points to something that has to do with the language making part of the brain " … and the obvious fact, as asserted by Hayakawa, that language determines the structure of consciousness" (Van Eenwyk, 1997:84). That something beyond language might well be soul, which we must now examine.

8.2 The Human Soul and World Soul (Anima Mundi)

Before fully engaging with the issue of the nature of the Soul and the Anima Mundi, or Soul of the World, it is necessary to clarify the idea of the de-centred self in relationship to soul and place. That might best be achieved by returning, in an illustrative manner, to the biographical information of the introduction to this thesis.

I remember myself in my infancy in that very significant first house in Tudor Street at Surry Hills and I have distinct and vivid impressions, mainly images; things I see, looking out from behind my eyes at the furniture, at my family and I

remember thinking about those events in particular and distinct locales as they were taking place. Sometimes I can even smell and physically feel the things connected with those events. I possess photographs of some of those events; I am a little boy at kindergarten, then, bigger at primary school and then at high school, then I am a young man in Greece and Israel and next, I am nearly as old as I am now. At any point along that continuum of memory, in spite of the fact that I can nearly always remember the emotions and sensations of the time, they are not me. Not the me that I am now. They, each one of them, are a part of who I am now but they, or the me then would have had no possible conception of the me that I am now. In fact, none of the people and places then, of which I had great certitude, exists now. Where now are these very real fragments of me as I experienced them and what of the places that I occupied? Have they too been extinguished by time? This of course not only means that past personalities or fragments of them and the memories of the places in which they existed, like the first house, are present within me but also an anticipation of an aged me, of new others, places and experiences. Jung notes this phenomenon in his own life (Jung, (*MDR*) 1961:33). What we clearly have here is an example of a decentred-self and an elsewhere-place, aspects of both the transcendent individual soul and the transcendent World Soul.

(a) *Describing the Human Soul*

Common usage of the word 'soul' has in the past generally been restricted to the religious context and the soul is generally conceived of as insubstantial. However, Sigmund Freud's work, as Bettelheim points out was the study of the soul, and he believed that the study and understanding of our dreams would help us to comprehend the previously unrecognised enormous inner space of the soul (Bettelheim, 1982:68). As early as 1905, in the opening passage of an article entitled Psychical Treatment, Freud wrote, " … Psyche is a Greek word and its German translation is soul. Psychical treatment hence means treatment of the soul" (in Bettelheim, 1982:73). In 1938, in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, Freud emphasised that his life's work had been devoted to trying to understand the world of man's soul and he concluded that the psyche and the life of the soul are the same thing (Bettelheim, 1982:75).

That concept of soul includes the thinking, but inferior, reasoning ego as well as the non-thinking 'it', the irrational world of the unconscious and the

emotions, and perhaps it also includes that consciousness of the blood and body that Malouf, Keneally and Lawrence have spoken of. The soul also is " … *naturaliter religiosa"*, that is, it possesses a religious function (Jung, CW 12, par. 12). Carl Jung, following the alchemists, called the soul *Anima Media Natura*, suggesting that the soul is in the middle between opposing natures; it is the medium, the conductor of both light and darkness, the bond between formless eternal light and the darkness of earth and underworld. In this sense it parallels Corbin's Imaginal Realm; " … the world through which spirits are embodied, and bodies spiritualised" (Corbin, 1969:xiii) and interestingly, the Jungian psychotherapist Robert Bosnak sees the soul as hermaphroditic, both male and female (in Spiegelman and Jacobson, 1986:33). The soul's relationship with the imperceptible may be of more importance than that with the perceptible, particularly when it is considered that the soul is both receiver and transmitter, that is, it perceives unconscious contents and conveys them to consciousness by means of symbols (Jung, CW, 6, par. 424). Ulanov proposes that the soul exists midway between the ego and the primordial unconscious, the latter expressing itself through the archetypal images that the soul receives, creates and transmits (Ulanov, 1999:21). In other words, the soul has archaic and instinctive roots, an important concept in this thesis. Jung also suggested that in its lower reaches, the psyche or soul loses itself in the organic-material substrate (place), and in its upper reaches resolves itself into spiritual form (Imaginal Realm) (Jung, CW, 8, par. 380). Besides its archaic nature it is immediate, insistent and commanding, manifesting in intra-subjective space where its effect is that of animating the ego to feel earnestly alive in a process of creative living that gives sense to life lived in the material physical world.

We recognize in the individual an organization of the soul that is interpolated between the stimulation of the senses and the perception of bodily needs on the one hand, and the imaginal on the other, and which mediates between them for a particular purpose. Sigmund Freud suggested that we call this organization the 'I'. Besides the 'I', we recognize also another region of the soul, the unconscious, more extensive, grander, and more obscure than the *I*, and this we call the *it* (Bettleheim 2001:61). The unconscious is one of the most profound constituents of the human psyche, from a Jungian perspective, in both its personal and collective manifestations. Jung provides a rather beautiful and mythopoeic description of it, thus:

> If it were possible to personify the unconscious, we might think of it as a collective human being combining the characteristics of both sexes, transcending youth and age, birth and death, and, from having at its command a human experience of one or two million years, practically immortal. If such a being existed, it would be exalted above all temporal change; the present would mean neither more nor less to it than any year in the hundredth millennium before Christ; it would be a dreamer of age old dreams and, owing to its limitless experience, an incomparable prognosticator. It would have lived countless times over again the life of the individual, the family, the tribe, and the nation, and it would posses a living sense of the rhythm of growth, flowering and decay. (Jung, CW 8, par. 673).

My conception of the soul includes much of which we are not consciously aware and I am influenced in my conception by both Freud and Jung who have each contributed immeasurably to the discovery of the true nature of the inner universe and the inner world of the soul. Freud evokes the image of the soul frequently in his work. For instance, in The Interpretation of Dreams, he states that the dream, and one might infer mythopoeic activity too, " ... is a result of the activity of our own soul" and in various places he mentions " ... the structure of the soul and the organization of the soul" (Bettelheim, 1983:71). The psyche, of which the unconscious constitutes the greater part, according to Jung, is soul and for Freud too, the terms were interchangeable (Bettelheim, 1983:39). However, Jung insisted repeatedly on the autonomy of the soul. In other words, the soul is not the result of causal factors, neither nature, inheritance, or by the environment and education. The soul is independent, autonomous and cannot, or only conditionally, be understood via the category of cause and effect (Guggenbuhl-Craig: 1995:31).

In the mythopoeic sense the word 'soul' is often used as a metaphor for an individual's innermost being particularly since it evokes so many emotional connotations. Psyche is frequently depicted in art as young and beautiful and in many cultures birds and butterflies are symbols that serve to symbolize its transcendence, fragility, beauty and insubstantiality. Insubstantial it is not, and it is not frequently associated with mundane life, but to Jung it was paramount in the daily life of the individual:

> The psyche creates reality every day. The only expression I can use for this activity is fantasy. Fantasy is just as much feeling as thinking, as much intuition as sensation. There is no psychic function that, through fantasy, is not inextricably bound up with the other psychic functions. Sometimes it appears in primordial form, sometimes it is the ultimate and boldest product of all our faculties combined. Fantasy, therefore, seems to me the clearest

> expression of the specific activity of the psyche. It is, pre-eminently, the creative activity from which the answers to all answerable questions come; it is the mother of all possibilities, where like all psychological opposites, the inner and outer worlds are joined together in living union (Jung, CW 6, par. 78).

Most thinkers on the nature of the soul, whatever their discipline, have entirely interiorised and relegated or associated the soul to the 'I', the thinking reasoning part of the human being. They tend to disregard the non-thinking, irrational word of the unconscious and of the emotions and other dimensions and that includes much of which we are not consciously aware. I remind my reader, however, of Sendivogius' observation that the greater part of the soul is outside the body. Thus, one might well conclude that it is not until the soul finds a place where it can dwell, authentically, that the individual, the group or tribe can feel complete and whole. The soul, as the centre of the mind, the passions and the body, is to most individuals something that remains largely hypothetical. However, in spite of its intangibility and the various ways in which it manages to prevail over our everyday conscious intentions, it nevertheless exercises a powerful influence over our lives, perhaps even defines the boundaries of our existence.

(b) *Soul and the Psychoid Dimension*

The third element in the makeup of the psyche is what Jung called the psychoid system. By this he meant that which in the psyche is completely unknown: unconscious material that never comes in contact with the threshold of consciousness, that which by its nature is unknown, the absolutely unconscious. Yet Jung also believed that, " ..the psychoid system is that part of the psychic realm where the psychic element appears to mix with inorganic matter" (in von Franz, 1988:4). Now we have to involve synchronicity, which according to Jung is an essentially mysterious connection between the personal psyche (and by implication of quantum mechanics the collective psyche) and the material world, based on the fact that they are only different forms of energy. Jung said:

> It is not only possible but fairly probable, even, that psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing. The synchronicity phenomena point, it seems to me, in this direction, for they show that the non-psychic can behave like the psychic, and vice versa, without there being any causal connection between them. (Jung, CW 8, par. 418).

According to Van Eenwky, archetypes, the very things that feed mythopoeic consciousness, are essentially the interface between psyche and substance in the sense that they convert the activity of the brain into an understanding of life events (1997:38). Even if we accept the relationship, it is not a harmonious one for according to Sufi philosophy, the human soul harbours within itself a deep anguish, the anguish of the separate self. This distress drives it towards liberation, the point where the egoic self no longer experiences itself as separate (Ansari, 1999:11). Thus, the manifestation, the almost subliminal cry, of the decentred-self in its longing for and return to elsewhere-place.

The descent into the unconscious is a necessary prelude to the ascent to a higher form of soul-consciousness. However, access to this higher soul-consciousness through shamanic or mythopoeic [literary] consciousness is usually only granted to those who have experienced a trauma or those who have been initiated into it, these days either deliberately through intentional design by themselves or adepts or, as is sometimes the case, when it is experienced as a schizophrenic episode. Such initiates cannot rest in the mundane. They descend into the unconscious, in trauma, shamanic ecstasy or mythopoeic revelry, to the realm beyond subject and object, to Nirvana or elsewhere-place, a place of mystic union. These forms of initiation have produced both the shaman and the mythopoeic writer and reader who have the potential and imperative desire to connect the human realm of ordinary consciousness with the divine or Imaginal Realm and in doing so, preserve the integrity of both the world and the individual.

However, because the Imaginal Realm is so highly charged and in some ways manifested in form similar to aberrant or diseased conditions such as schizophrenia, it falls to the shaman or mythopoeic writer to modify the powerful power of this realm. That process occurs through the medium of narrative and place in one or more of its many guises, for place is now revealed as the medium between the inner and the outer, it is the inner and the outer, it is the bridge between the mundane and the holy or transcendent.

(c) *The Symbiotic Relationship of Soul and Consciousness*

What seems to be emerging now is a concept of consciousness as not so much a distinct entity but a continuum, more in the sense of a Moebius strip, where each of the two sides or surfaces (the continuum of consciousness ranging from

egoic to unconscious) has the potential of presenting itself as the dominant surface (state of consciousness). This suggests a psyche that brings into play different facets of consciousness in an attempt to understand itself. Of course, another level located on that continuum of consciousness is that of somatic consciousness, examples of which have been cited in this thesis, particularly in regard to D.H. Lawrence and David Malouf. Two other particularly relevant positions along the consciousness continuum are, I propose, SC and MLC, which we will examine in the next chapter. First, however, it is necessary to provide a short prelude so that these modes of consciousness may be seen in their proper context.

Jean Piaget's clinical work with children identified a series of cognitive developmental stages that stops finally with formal operational thinking characterized by the abstract, analytical, inferential, and hypothetical thought we associate with normal adulthood. Individuals at this level of awareness possess both a highly developed self-consciousness and the ability to assume the perspective of others. Along with Piaget, Ken Wilber identifies a magical-animistic mode of consciousness characteristic of small children, from two to four years old (Wilber, 1990:254). Their thinking is magical in the sense that they have an " ... unrestrained and unrefined belief in action at a distance" (Wilber, 1990:254). Their awareness is pre-personal in that the subject has not yet had the encounters that will force it to recognize its separateness from other things in the world. Far from being egocentric, small children have little sense of ego at all. Indeed this sounds very much like the state of pre-egoic *participation mystique* described by Abram thus:

> Whenever we assume the position and poise of the human animal – Merleau Ponty's body subject – then the entire material world itself seems to come awake and to speak, yet organic, earth-born entities speak far more eloquently than the rest. Like suburbanites after a hurricane, we find ourselves alive in a living field of powers far more expressive and diverse than the strictly human sphere to which we are accustomed (Abram, 1996:65).

It is also analogous to that state of mind that existed prior to the break-up of the bi-cameral mind described by Julian Jaynes. Rather than being seen as an infantile state might not this be better understood as a remnant of a transpersonal consciousness that has all but effectively been destroyed in the Western cultural tradition by the privileging of egoic consciousness and is now only being rediscovered through quantum mechanics? I believe so, for as Radin explains:

> The doctrine that the world is made up of objects whose existence is independent of human consciousness turns out to be in conflict with quantum mechanics and with the facts established by experiment (Radin, 1997:128).

Over time, growing experience with the otherness of the world undermines this pre-personal view, replacing it with a mythic level of awareness. The newly humbled child's feelings of magical omnipotence are initially transferred to others. The first such transfer of power is to its parents, who are considered virtually as powerful as gods. This mythic or operational awareness is typically attained by children aged from six to eight years (Wilber, 1981:218). As the child matures further, increasingly concrete operational forms of awareness are replaced by formal operational thinking - the rationality of adulthood. Normally it has formed in modern children between the ages of eleven and fifteen years of age. According to Wilber it is this level of consciousness which is manifested in the typical individuals and defining institutions of the modern world since the Enlightenment.

At this point Wilber departs from Piaget's clinical work, arguing that we are on the brink of developing the next stage in consciousness evolution, which he terms 'vision-logic'. With the rise of vision-logic, rationality takes yet another step forward in its internal development, as Wilber says:

> The whole point of rationality and its capacity for multiple perspectives is not simply to abstract the commonalities . . . but to put oneself in the shoes of others and thus find a mutual enrichment and appreciation of differences (Wilber, 1983:28).

Wilber argues that vision logic, is holistic in character, it is able to reintegrate the dissociations that occurred between the true, the good, and the beautiful in the modern world. But it does so from a universal perspective rather than a particular culturally privileged standpoint. Vision logic, according to Wilber, is the final stage of human awareness before entering into the properly spiritual modes of consciousness that transcend the personal ego. These trans-egoic levels themselves consist of a series of stages that Wilber has distilled from accounts by religious mystics such as Plotinus, the Buddha, Meister Eckhart, St. Theresa, Nagarjuna, and others. The psychic is the first transpersonal level of awareness. It manifests paranormal psychic abilities, spontaneous devotional feelings and Emersonian nature cosmic consciousness. Next is the subtle level, the seat of archetypes, Platonic forms, personal deities, and illumination. It is followed by the causal level, characterized by unitive consciousness that is the contemplation of the

unity of the human and divine and absorption into the godhead. The highest level of consciousness is the direct experience of non-duality, where no divisions exist, and everything is equally the One (Wilber, 1983:29).

(d) *Anima Mundi or World Soul*

In Wilber's concept of trans-egoic vision logic one can discern similarities with the Celtic Web of Wyrd, the Noosphere of de Chardin and the Imaginal Realm of Corbin. Hillman advances a perspective that he suggests is not unlike that dismissed by the Western cultural tradition, of nothing less than the world ensouled. He proposes that we imagine the *anima mundi* not as above, encircling the world, a world of powers and archetypes nor within the material world but rather as a soul-spark, the seminal image that offers itself through each thing in its visible form; sensuous animated possibilities that offer themselves to the imagination (Hillman, 1981:101). It is not so much a thing as it is more a process when the soul of the thing coalesces with ours (Hillman, 1981:102).

Wilber's hierarchical model of consciousness development with its roots in the work of Piaget and other psychologists and its topmost branches in accounts from the world's greatest mystics accommodates comfortably my paradigm of consciousness as a continuum. Located at one end are manifestations or variations of the *participation mystique*, SC and other intensity states such as MLC, that are marked by a delimitation of one's own awareness because all existence is experienced as Identity, whilst at the extreme other end is found the narrow manifestation of mundane ego consciousness.

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Edward Burne-Jones, *The Beguiling of Merlin* (1874)

CHAPTER 9

MYTHOPOEIC LITERARY CONSCIOUSNESS

> Besides the obvious personal sources, creative fantasy also draws upon the forgotten and long buried primitive mind with its host of images, which are to be found in mythologies of all ages and peoples. The sum of these images constitutes the collective unconscious, a heritage which is potentially present in every individual ... This is the reason why mythological images are able to arise spontaneously over and over again, and to agree with one another not only in all the corners of the wide earth, but at all times (Jung, CW 5, p. xxix).

> Re-immersion in the state of *participation mystique* is the secret of artistic creation and of the effect which great art has upon us, for at that level of experience it is no longer the weal or woe of the individual that counts, but the life of the collective. That is why every great work of art is objective and impersonal, and yet profoundly moving. And that is also why the personal life of the artist is at most a help or a hindrance, but is never essential to his creative task (Jung, CW 15, par. 162).

9.1 Imagination and Literary Consciousness

In 1740 when Samuel Richardson's work of fiction *Pamela* was published it not only represented the modern manifestation of the popular novel, as we know it today, but it provided an intense emotional and imaginative jolt to thousands of individuals at a level previously unknown to them; it taught the middle classes the use (or re-use) of imagination. In fact, novel writing now became the fastest-growing industry in Europe (Wilson, 2006:256). Following in *Pamela's* wake was

Rousseau's *New Heloise* (1761) which was so popular that libraries lent it out by the hour, and then Goethe's *Werther* (1774), a story of love and suicide, was thought to be responsible in its influence for an epidemic of suicides, and the hero of Balzac's mystical novel, *Louis Lambert* (1832), possessed an imagination so forceful, that when he read a book he was transported to the places and scenes that it portrayed. Thus, within fifty years of its publication *Pamela* had been responsible for transforming the European mind whereby it now developed the free use of imagination (Wilson, 2006:256). The development of mythopoeic literature as a result of the Romantic Movement was one of the most remarkable in the story of the narrative psyche.

In his novel, *The Serapion Brothers* (1886), a story about a group of poets and musicians, E.T.A. Hoffman created the supreme symbol of the Romantic imagination, the monk Serapion, noted for the power of his imagination and who understands:

> … the duality which is the essential condition of our earthly existence … There is an inner world and a spiritual faculty for discerning it with absolute clearness – yes, with the most minute and brilliant distinctness. But it is part of our earthly lot that it is the outer world, in which we are entrapped, that triggers this spiritual faculty … you forget that it is the outer world that causes the spirit to use its powers of perception (in Wilson, 2006:258).

Those writers of the Romantic Movement, as I pointed out in Chapter 2, in a sense, rediscovered Imagination. It was not as a way of escaping reality, to revolt against the boredom of the mundane world, as was the way with predecessors Homer, Malory and Chaucer, but as a way of (re) creating reality. In the words of the anti-novel English Puritan, Nathaniel Ingelo:

> As soon as we have fiction of almost any kind, there is too much of the feminine in play … the reading of novels insidiously occupies the soul and disables its functions. Fictional narratives make a deep impression upon the affectionate part (in Doody, 1998:267).

Indeed, so powerful was this release of the imaginal, feminine and creative right hemisphere energy, of this new spirit on daily life, that it has been attributed as being the motivating factor behind the great advances in Western civilization; the Industrial Revolution, the creation of the great colonial empires and perhaps even the wars of the twentieth century (Wilson, 2006:259). Certainly, that notion of the Imagination being a direct solution to the boredom of mundane world, *the longing to transcend*, identified by Aldous Huxley and of which I wrote in my introduction,

may be illustrated in the case of Marcel Proust. Proust achieved his own mystical mythopoeic vision of *temps perdu* (forgotten periods of the past) initiated by the simple act of eating a madeleine dipped in herbal tea, after which he spent the rest of his life pursuing his vision, locked in his cork-lined room attempting to re-create his own past in minute detail (Carter, 2000:494). He thereby discovered his own inner laws of creation and imagination and produced, between 1913 and 1927, a masterpiece, *In Search of Lost Time.*

What I identify as MLC is generally and erroneously identified simply as the 'literary imagination' that often is understood to mean a talent to write convincingly or creatively. MLC is much more than that and is rather an awareness and experience of an aspect of the collective unconscious. It could well be a psycho-spiritual state in which the mythopoeic writer experiences an intense awareness of diverse events, personalities and realities, which resonate across time and space. The dimension in which this occurs is the Imaginal Realm which, as in the case of Mary Renault and her uncanny knowledge of Alexander and of the places of his time, manifests as a heightened awareness of that milieu, event, character or place. It can be, potentially, a numinous experience whilst in an altered state of consciousness, similar to SC. MLC also has the potential, to facilitate the vicarious participation of the reader, usually in a way that is instinctual and non-doctrinaire and which results in a heightened awareness of that scene, event, character or place. It also, as was shown from the reader responses, can be a numinous experience whilst the reader is in a reverie, an altered state of consciousness.

For example, Reader 3 said of reading, *consciousness becomes internalised as you cut yourself off from the sensory aspects of the physical world*, whilst Reader 5 described the act of reading as one of becoming *totally self-absorbed.* The consummate response, however, was given by Reader 1 who said that, ... *Reading is re-creative, just as the spirit recreates itself when we are waking and sleeping - at conscious and unconscious levels ...*She said that reading *... has a religious, spiritual dimension* that *... promotes some kind of awakening, ... reading is like praying, opening the mind to the unknown and the soul.*

As was shown from the textual research in Chapter 5, that altered state of consciousness involved in writing with its imaginal assemblage, comprising elements of history, biography and place-elsewhere-place, forces the mythopoeic writer and reader to drift at a point between the knowledge of the reality of their physical circumstances and that of the fictive milieu of the novel. It may also consist of

being in the presence of another, respectively the reader, the writer or a character from the mythic novel, as was the case, for example, with John Fowles in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Here again, some insight is provided from the readers' responses; Reader 3 said that the narrative he might be reading *becomes the backdrop of my own mind.* Reader 2 said that reading … *occupies a separate dimension from whatever else might be happening in my life, or the world in general. Sometimes I read in a distanced, detached, outsider sort of way; at other times I'm fully absorbed and transported into another state of being.*

The writers experienced a similar altered state, David Malouf calling it *open;* Thomas Keneally a *state of un-self reflecting grace*, and Colleen McCullough describes it as similar to that state of absorption required in solving a problem. However, the experience, and thus the literature produced by it, essentially bears the characteristics of myth and is mythological in its effect in the sense of presenting a known but hitherto obscured truth. The way that MLC, like certain forms of religious consciousness, manifests itself in writing is always focused in two directions, towards the unseen and towards the contemporary social (and personal) situation. Through imagination and language certain non-obvious entities and places with special characteristics are introduced, recognized and attend to. Another characteristic is the claim of those elements to priority and seriousness.

The implication is that a centre of personality that is transcendent to them activates the characters and places that populate the soul. A central importance of the act of reading in a state of MLC is its revitalizing effect on the ego identity. All of the reader respondents in Chapter 4 attested to this; the 'I' that is present in the literary place does not usually coincide with our usual ego. Indeed, our usual ego is only but one character in the imaginal situation, and seems to expand to encompass the egos of others. As mythopoeic readers, and in the case of writers too, we interact with characters and experience the milieu and minutiae generated by places drawn from the most diverse regions of the globe and from all periods of history. Since the categories of time and space are relative for the psyche, no span of time or distance in space divides us from our metaphorical kin and so long as they are recognizable to us along some dimension of our specific socio-cultural or religious experience, as was the case with myself, and also Mary Renault, in an intense, inexplicable, unbidden curiosity in Alexander the Great, they may share with us our here and now.

Thus, in MLC, the boundaries between subject and object, self and other, character and place, break down as in SC. What is interesting too, is that the narratives of mythopoeic literature often resemble shamanic narratives in that they describe a quest, wanderings, genealogies, miraculous births, deaths and resurrections, revenge and deception (Burkert, 1996:69). Consequently, as my empirical research revealed, writing and reading in a state of MLC takes both the reader and the writer to a heightened level of consciousness where non-duality is experienced. In other words the de-centred self, emerging out of normal consciousness, becomes unified in the place of the book, an elsewhere-place, a return to a type of *participation mystique*, which, in turn, probably indicates activity in the psychoid dimension, achieved or brought about by a type of synchronicity. This was confirmed in the research responses from both mythopoeic readers and writers. For instance, Reader 1 said that her unconscious was affected and she was … *completely drawn into the world of the writer … drawn into the world of the book … the world it presents and the possibilities … something like a trance, a transcendence of the real physical space I occupy … it opens the mind, elevates the spirit … a mystical experience.* Even Colleen McCullough refers to that state of mind as a … *brown study.*

9.2 Embedded Mythopoeic Literary Consciousness

Jung suggested that there is an archaic man in each of us (Jung, CW 9(i), par. 105), thus, the primordial, mythic soul is operative and influential in our psyches and its mythopoeic imperative needs to find expression in a narrative form. Regarding this connection between the soul and its propensity to give narrative expression to its mythic dimension, Jung wrote:

> The fact that myths are first and foremost psychic phenomena that reveal the nature of the soul … Primitive man is not much interested in objective explanations of the obvious, but he has an imperative need – or rather, his unconscious psyche has an irresistible urge – to assimilate all outer sense experience to inner, psyche events …. All the mythologized processes of nature, such as summer and winter, the phases of the moon, the rainy seasons, and so forth, are in no sense allegories of these objective occurrences; rather they are symbolic expressions of the inner, unconscious drama of the psyche which becomes accessible to man's consciousness by way of projection (Jung, CW 9(i), par. 7).

One of the most outstanding examples of the expression of MLC may be seen in the work of William Blake (1757-1827). Poet, painter, engraver, philosopher, prophet and mystic, his exploration of the human psyche was almost equivalent to that of Carl Jung. This is evident particularly in his series of engravings, *Illustrations to the Book of Job* (1821), which are not merely twenty two illustrations but also a commentary, a radical interpretation of the Old Testament story, an interpretation that is profoundly humanistic, existential and transpersonal. Blake was a severe critic of mere reason and the post-Enlightenment age and he, instead, emphasised the creative imagination and its role in spiritual unfoldment.

This process of spiritual unfoldment is at the basis of mythopoeic writers, for example, in what I termed Thomas Keneally's European literature and its similarity to the genre of Catholic novels (Hartley, 1985:iii, 101). The same spiritual unfoldment is manifest in what I have described as the alchemical approach of Colleen McCullough and is also obviously present in David Malouf's corpus. For example, in his autobiographical *12 Edmonstone Street*, Malouf describes his changed consciousness, an unfolding of the essential nature of place, in many places but particularly in the village of Campagnacio. A tangible example is presented again in his chapter, *A Place in Tuscany*, where Richard Tipping and his film production crew are seen to be in the same physical place as Malouf but their perception of it is entirely different, they are at a different level of consciousness, a more egoic level of superficiality and hurriedness. Their presence, in fact, almost affects the natural order of Malouf's place, literally causing it to become snowbound. It is only when they leave that the effect of their intrusion will be reversed:

> By tomorrow or the day after, the snow will be gone; the transformation will be reversed and become a story that some child in the village … will tie his life to across fifty years … and we have it on film. You can see me taking a walk in it, from nowhere to nowhere … When I turn around again the room is being restored to normal … It is as if a life-film were being wound backwards (Malouf, 1985:102).

Embedded spirituality is also present in the corpus of W.B. Yeats who perceived an archetypal, numinous, almost shamanic force at work in the daily revelations of life when he wrote:

> … I know that revelation is from the self, but from that age-long memorized self, that shapes the mollusc and the child in the womb, that teaches the birds to make their nest, and that genius is a crisis that joins that buried self for certain moments to our

> trivial daily mind. There are indeed, personifying spirits that we had best but call Graces and Gatekeepers, because through their dramatic power they bring our souls to crisis (in Harper, 1957:102).

The great poet Wordsworth saw himself too, as one who looks *... before and after ...* and shaman-like used his ecstatic vision to transcend *the limiting constrictions of the human condition, the limits of time, place, and corporeal reality* but he also knew the dangers (Tolstoy, 1985:235). Just as the materialist anthropologist (erroneously) explains the shaman as a person suffering from a psychosis that becomes steadily worse, so too, Wordsworth reported that he was condemned by prosaic contemporaries and in *The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind* he writes:

> Some call's it madness: such, indeed, it was,
> If childlike the fruitfulness in passing joy,
> If steady moods of thoughtfulness, matur'd
> To inspiration, sort with such a name;
> If prophecy be madness; if things view'd
> By poets in old time, and higher up
> By the first men, earth's first inhabitants,
> May in these untutor'd days no more be seen
> With undisorder'd sight.

9.3 Receptiveness to Mythopoeic Literary Consciousness

The reader respondents felt enlarged through a vicarious process of otherwise unattainable experiences, that reading generally expanded their awareness or consciousness, that the self becomes enlarged. Two described reading as a transcendent experience that made them feel more complete: Reader 1 said that she felt *larger* when she transcended the everyday by becoming *the unstated recipient of the writer's musings,* that she became, *the other character in the book [narrative], the unspoken observer, in the place that we are taken to, but very much a part of the writer's intention.* Reader 2 described her sense of transcendence and happiness because ... *fictional characters wander into my dreams to rub shoulders with family and friends, living and departed. Reading into the early hours of the morning, I find fiction dissolving into dream, dream into drowsy reality, drifting together into a sensual, sleepy dance - until the mind's music stops and it's time to wake up for work*.

David Malouf, in words that might well be used to articulate the experience of the Palaeolithic cave painters, says:

> There are lots of figures and subjects and pictures and sounds that keep recurring ... I really do think of them as rather like a whole set of annunciating angels, waiting to tell us whatever it is. But we have to be very careful to let them speak first: our tendency is always to think we know what they're going to say, not to hear what they've got to tell us. I think there's some tact you have to develop; these figures must be allowed to come right up to the edge of a poem or a piece of writing, even if they're then dismissed. Certainly more and more what I try to do in writing, and also in moving towards what I think of as the occasion of a poem, is to put myself in contact with these obsessive figures - or whatever they are. Maybe there are only half a dozen of them anyway, for any writer ... just yourself and those figures, and somewhere the language in between. And you let *that* happen (Tulip, 1990:296).

D. H. Lawrence in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922) also articulates the imperative to record the feeling of that interface between the human emotions and something approximating the numinous that the Palaeolithic cave painters must surely have felt when he wrote

> It's no good looking at a tree to know it. The only thing is to sit among the roots and nestle against its strong trunk, and not bother. That's how I write about all these planes and plexuses – between the toes of a tree, forgetting myself against the tree ankle of the trunk. And then, as a rule, as a squirrel is stroked into its wickedness by the faceless magic of a tree, so am I usually stroked into forgetfulness, and into scribbling this book. My tree-book really (Lawrence, 1971:43).

James Cowan describes the feeling, the way the mythopoeic elsewhere-place, … *the world beyond,* takes hold and obliterates normal consciousness when he writes:

> Such a world emerges not from the sea as an island appears to do after a long voyage but from a state of enchantment inspired by the mind taking leave of itself. It becomes a place of annihilations, abysses and epiphanies that have been fashioned during that intermediate state between waking and sleeping, when the senses are still asleep (Cowan, 1996:135).

Indeed, so different is this state of MLC, suggests the psychologist Robert Johnson, that individuals who have a great sensitivity, a receptiveness to the archetypal world are too often pathologized by society and by psychology in particular. These are people who don't have the option of being normal; in fact, he suggests that normality may be a great danger to a gifted person (Johnson, et al, 1998:32). This is an interesting point because all of the respondents to the research questionnaire,

in all categories, revealed a certain quirkiness that in spite of the futility in attempting to define what the term 'normal' means, might still be considered a little more unconventional than average. For example, David Malouf shares with Colleen McCullough an intense distaste for computers instead preferring to use typewriters whilst Tom Keneally is an extraordinary didact. The shamans too, displayed unusual idiosyncrasies; one is dyslexic and the other unapologetically displaying intense mood swings. Each of the readers, also, were a little unconventional, quirky; Reader 1 was in her youth an extraordinarily accomplished athlete, is educated but presents with a certain confronting earthiness in her language, Reader 2 is a cat-lover and displays feline photographs, images everywhere and on everything, Reader 3 loves, intensely, children's nursery rhymes, Reader 4 suffered a very near-fatal snake-bite, followed by months of extreme, unpleasant and uncontrollable mood swings and Reader 5 is a polyglot and world traveller.

9.4 The Mythic Dimension

Myth is sometimes popularly dismissed as a fantasy or at best an antiquated way of presenting a moral or analogical point but not embodying a truth that should stir the hearer or reader to their very soul. However, interpreted with discretion and used in conjunction with archaeological evidence, mythology can well provide keys to understanding our own origins. Joseph Campbell, who during his lifetime was considered the world's foremost authority of mythology, claimed that:

> … mythology is not a lie, mythology is poetry, it is metaphorical. It has been well said that mythology is the penultimate truth – penultimate because the ultimate cannot be put into words. It is beyond words, beyond images, beyond that bounding rim of the Buddhist Wheel of Becoming. Mythology pitches the mind beyond that rim, to what can be known but not told. So this is the penultimate truth (Campbell, 1988:163).

Myth also shows the way ideas become embedded in the collective consciousness; for example, we frequently use the metaphor of Achilles heel to describe an inherent weakness in a person. This of course comes down to us through the myth that describes Paris shooting Achilles in the heel with an arrow, thus destroying him. It becomes even more interesting when we consider that the Hindu god Krishna suffered a similar fate, that the Egyptian God Ra was bitten on the heel by a snake, that the god Osiris was likewise afflicted and that the Greek smith Hephaestus was made permanently lame, along with Oedipus, which means

Swellfoot (Campbell, 1988:31). The same might apply to the therianthropic figures of the cave paintings and then later in the mythologies of some many diverse cultures. This suggests that myth, or rather mythic content, may emanate from the collective unconscious and be diffused through a process rather like Rupert Sheldrake's morphic resonance and that dimension, as I have suggested, is consanguineous to the Imaginal Realm. Indeed, Carl Jung believed that the whole of human history could be reconstructed from the contents of an individual's unconscious (Jung, CW 11, par.280) and, conversely, as I have suggested, where individual psychic content contributes to the collective.

We can, however, say with Jung that there is no external physical place where culture originates, that there is only the one universal collective unconscious of the human species. For the Jungian psychologist Erich Neumann the culture of the Great Mother is universal and ubiquitous; it does not diffuse from Lascaux (Thompson, 1981:16). I am not suggesting that any one of the many geographic locations of cave pictographs should be considered the birthplace of the collective unconscious. What I do suspect is that they are rather the earliest manifestations of it. Neumann, too, rejects diffusionist explanations of prehistory and argues for an evolutionary explanation in which the human mind is everywhere true to type and quite naturally constructs images of birds and snakes and other animals (Neumann, 1970:264-266), and perhaps also, I would add, therianthropes. What it does indicate, however, is that there is a collective unconsciousness that unites minds separated by time and space. This was the point made in describing the evolution of the narrative psyche in Chapter 2. Even Sigmund Freud was deeply interested in prehistory and was fascinated by Greek mythology; he studied it assiduously, and collected Greek, Roman and Egyptian statuary (Bettelheim, 1982:14). It is of particular importance to my thesis to note that Freud makes many allusions to classical literature, often quoting Goethe, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche and other poets and writers, and throughout his psychoanalytic writings discusses art, literature and religion in an attempt to engage both our conscious and unconscious understanding (Bettleheim, 1982:15).

D. H. Lawrence was convinced that there was a non-mental consciousness in the blood, 'blood-knowledge' that proceeds and is more reliable than intellectual knowledge. In a 1915 letter to Bertrand Russell he wrote:

> Now I am convinced ... that there is another seat of consciousness than the brain and the nerve system: there is a blood consciousness which exists in us independently of the ordinary

> mental consciousness, which depends on the eye as its source or connector. There is the blood-consciousness, with the sexual connection, holding the same relation as the eye, in seeing, holds to the mental consciousness. One lives, knows, and has one's being in the blood, without any reference to nerves and brain (Lawrence, 2004:xxiii).

Here Lawrence is probably using blood as a metaphor for sensory, non-rational perception of content from the unconscious and of which he was later to expound in *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious*. He later went on to refer to this blood-consciousness belief as his great religion:

> My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true. The intellect is only a bit and a bridle … We know too much. No, we think we know such a lot …. And we have forgotten ourselves … We cannot be. 'To be or not to be' – it is the question with us now, by Jove (in Steele, 2004:xxi).

Jung wrote about a conversation he had with Pueblo Indians who told him that white men were crazy because they thought in their heads, and when he queried this he was told that … the Americans were mad because they believed their thoughts were in their heads, whereas any sensible man knew that he thinks with his heart (Jung, CW 8: par. 669). Jung mused that the Pueblo Indians:

> … are just about in the Homeric age, when the diaphragm (*phren*: mind, soul) was the seat of psychic activity. That means a psychic localitization of a different nature. *Our* concept of consciousness supposes thought to be in our most dignified head. But the Pueblo Indians derive consciousness from the intensity of feelings. Abstract thought does not exist for them … consciousness and thought to them are localized in the heart (Jung, CW 18: par. 16).

This would seem to confirm Julian Jaynes theory, not of the time sequence but of the essence, of the break-up of the bi-cameral mind, or at least of a non-egoic state that somewhat resembles that of the *participation mystique*. In order to amplify this idea of body consciousness, I submit an interesting, if not provocative, interpretation of Christian tenets from a Gnostic-MLC perspective. I suggest that one must see gnosis in two forms: there is the gnosis of *The Book of Genesis* that is entirely different from the second gnosis, the gnosis of the return to the bicameral mode via the subjective 'I' which first arose. This reactive mode, or chamber, within which the subjective 'I 'eventually evolved, that extraordinarily versatile mode

which allowed human beings to function without the knowledge of a personal existence such as we now have. Thus, I am intrigued by the following code or cipher provided by Jean Doresse to unravel the creation story in Genesis:

> … the human brain is *Eden*; the membranes enveloping the brain are the 'heavens'; and the head is 'Paradise'. Epiphanius makes similar observations in connection with the Ophite-Nazarenes. He observes that there is a river with branches flowing out of Eden (the brain), and these branches he identifies with the human senses. The eye is the river Phison; the ear is the river Geon; and the breath is the river Tigris. Doresse's footnotes also reveal that *the land of bondage* (Egypt) in the Biblical Genesis equals the *evil of matter*, so when it is said that the Gnostic master Mani 'left Egypt', it simply means that he died. Here then is the underlying meaning of Gnostic teachings made clear, the verbal code used by these early psychologists brought to the surface for our scrutiny and admiration. And at the base of it all a vision of reconciliation, a vision of opposites reversed and in union, a vision in the 'heavens' (high up inside the head) of a coiled serpent which speaks not of evil but of energy. So when in their obscure teachings these sectarians speak of Christ mastering the serpent, they do not mean that he mastered evil, but that he brought the serpent as *energy* (the energy of the biosystem in relation to consciousness) under control (cited in Lockhart 1999:220).

There are indeed, many narratives, universally, that must be seen as mythological variations or metaphors of great events in the psychological history of humankind, or rather the evolution of human consciousness, especially, mythopoeic consciousness. I have an inclination to understand Lawrence's body-blood consciousness as a state or manifestation of non-mental consciousness, a consciousness that precedes and is more reliable than intellectual knowledge. It is, in sense, a metaphor for an elemental consciousness, a consciousness that is capable of piercing that membrane between the inner and the outer, between place and elsewhere-place. It is a consciousness that most importantly involves the body, and by implication, the place in which that body is located: mythopoeic consciousness. Thus, the meaning of the artefacts of mythopoeic consciousness vastly transcends their content and becomes the best possible expression for something that is essentially ineffable. As I suggested in Chapter 2, throughout the history of humankind, the psyche has attempted to express itself in ways that represent both the inner and outer worlds. Thus, it seems logical to assume that the images of the cave painters and those used by the shaman are projections of the archetype, or in other words, archetypal images, and similarly, the mythopoeic literature of the writer poet and the responses of those who interact with their

work; the (original) viewers of the cave pictographs and the readers of the mythopoeic writers has the potential to elicit not so much an interpretation of the symbol but more the experience of it.

It must be accepted that the state of mythopoeic consciousness that visionary shamans and mythopoeic writers enter is not aberrant. Its veracity is irrefutable and more coherent than that of the empirical world where reality is perceived by the senses and when upon returning to ordinary consciousness, the beholders of this world are perfectly aware of having been to an actual elsewhere-place. They are not schizophrenics who are seized by some terrifying and uncontrollable aberration of consciousness. The world that they visit is hidden behind the very act of sense perception and has to be sought underneath its apparent objective certainty. For this reason we definitely cannot qualify MLC as representing the 'imagined', meaning fantastical or nonexistent. MLC facilitates access to a world that is ontologically as real as the world of ordinary consciousness.

In fact, MLC, or aspects of it, may be the key to our continued survival as a species since it provides a deeper awareness of our transcendental nature; that we are evolving towards spirit, or rather that we are in fact spiritual beings who are gradually becoming aware of our spiritual essence. Thus, reading and its accompanying state of absorption could be seen as a spur to psychological, or more especially, psychospiritual evolution and higher states of consciousness, the 'shamanising' of modern humanity so that it might be able to live in two worlds at once, the physical and the imaginal.

The following chapter will examine the nature of place as a continuum that parallels consciousness, including its mythopoeic and imaginal dimensions.

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CHAPTER 10

THE MYTHOPOEIC DIMENSIONS OF PLACE-ELSEWHERE-PLACE

> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
> (Milton, *Paradise Lost,* Book 1, line 247)

> It is the desolateness of this place that day after day fills my mind with its perspectives … We are at the ends of the earth. The country lies open on every side … with a view to infinity … empty as far as the eye can see or the mind imagine … But I am describing a state of mind, no place (Ovid, in Malouf, 1978:15-16).

10.1 Introduction

You are the soul and story of every place in which you find yourself (Anon).

During the course of my research I discovered this maxim, the origin of which I was unable to establish but which began to reveal its puissance and relevance to my research when I considered it in the context of the theme of Richard Matheson's novel *What Dreams May Come* (1978). Essentially, Matheson proposes that the process of imagination both internalises the outer world and externalises the inner world. Further, to borrow the words of William Mahoney, that " … whether divine or human, it is precisely the imagination that fashions and recognizes the universe as meaningful, abiding, and valuable, that is to say, as real" (Mahony, 1998:7). Matheson's mythopoeic narrative concerns itself with issues such as guilt, suffering, existential transformation, the transmigration of souls, and the essential, eternal nature of the soul. The pervasive construct throughout the book is that of the ancient South Asian tradition of Maya; Maya that generates the world that we recognize as reality while at the same time espousing that it is illusion and which, according to Vedic thought, reflected an unfathomable and even miraculous power of creativity and transformation:

> The deities' Maya was an extraordinary imaginative art through which they drew forth and thereby gave reality to the objective world itself (Mahony, 1998:6).

Thus, the experience of human life and, in the Buddhist sense of *What Dreams May Come*, post-mortem existence, equates as a narrative of imagination about another divine narrative of imagination. This lends itself to the proposition that the place-elsewhere-place continuum, true to its archetypal nature and because

it is by definition unconscious and so encountered indirectly, is cast like a shadowy template across the collective consciousness. As it actualises in the reality of the life of the individual, it attracts specific content from both the personal unconscious and consciousness in addition to culturally specific minutiae. Although the general experience of the place-elsewhere-place continuum may be objectively indistinguishable, the individual encounter with it is highly metaphorical, indeed mythopoeic.

Whilst individual psychic content may translate the encounter, nevertheless the essential form of place manifestations along the continuum remains archetypal since it is fashioned by the collective unconscious. Also, the continuum comprises a system of correspondences, between microcosm and macrocosm, inner and outer, material and immaterial. This is analogous to the movement between the literal and the metaphorical to a point where the two combine to produce an authentic experience of place, to reveal place as it truly is.

To return to Matheson, I believe that what he proposes is that the elsewhere-places we inhabit imaginally are aspects of the Imaginal Realm of which Henry Corbin wrote, and are essentially the only reality after death and, perhaps, in life as well. Considering that the Vedic worldview espouses that the sensual world is really only an imaginary one substantiates such a notion. This is not to say that the sensate world is worthless, unfounded and untrue. It does suggest, however, that it is rather a contingent world; its very existence dependent on the power of the imagination (Mahony, 1998:209). Maya, after all, means artistic creation, and the *Yogavisistha* teaches us that the illusion of art (including the art of literature) is of the same nature as the illusion of life.

This complements the paradigm that I proposed earlier in this dissertation; that consciousness is not so much a discrete section of the psyche but more a continuum, one rather like a Mobius strip. The soul reveals chimera-like aspects of itself that accord with different states of consciousness particularly MLC. If we accept that psyche and matter are two different aspects of one and the same thing and thus in continuous contact with one another (Jung, CW 8, par. 418); or, as Jung put it; at bottom *psyche is simply the world* (CW 9,I, par. 291; cf. CW 10, par. 13), this presents a number of possibilities:

(i) That the place-elsewhere-place continuum, too, adheres to this same Mobius strip-like structuring modality, paralleling shifting states of consciousness.

(ii) If soul as consciousness needs place in which to be aware, then all manifestations of place are to some greater or lesser degree conscious or ensouled; a notion that Bentov suggested thirty years ago (Bentov, 1988:78).

(iii) That the ensoulment of place, rather than being seen as a form of animism, may be more positively observed as underpinning constructs such as Jung's collective unconscious, de Chardin's noosphere, and the Web of Wyrd.

(iv) That the locus of place is shifted between subject and object as if, lying now more with us, now more with the world, it finally lies somewhere in between.

(v) That place is potentially a fundamental structuring element of consciousness, yet soul permeates place in all of its manifestations. As Harpur so succinctly put it:

> According to the Neoplatonic tradition, psyche or soul is the underlying principle – the very stuff of reality. It is imagined both as macrocosm, 'great world', and as microcosm, 'little world'. It is both a collective world soul, containing all daimons, images and souls; and an individual soul containing a profound collective level, in which we are connected to each other and indeed, to all living things. Depending on our perspective we can see ourselves as either embracing the Soul of the World or as being embraced by it, although both are the case (Harpur, 2002:37).

Such a construct also elucidates Jung's concept of the psychoid system, a third part of the psychic realm, where the psychic element appears to mix [to some greater or lesser degree] with inorganic matter (in von Franz, 1988:4). That construct also supports my thesis that the fundamental nature of place is archetypal, not in metaphysical immobility and remoteness, but in a constantly changing form or gestalt. The essence of place manifests in different forms along a continuum, albeit that essence and form cannot be neatly separated. Let us now investigate that continuum.

10.2 Place as a Mobius Strip-like Continuum

This place-elsewhere-place continuum must not be conceived of as possessing either a literal or consecutive structure, although it is real, structured and vital. Indeed, I tremble when I contemplate the extremely potent and complex nature of the continuum, especially in its mythopoeic manifestations. It is then like a palimpsest, revealing layers and reflecting the influences of many times, cultures and the constituents and influences of individual and collective psyches. Then it is that I begin to understand place not through the traditional privileging of conscious

perceptual stimuli of a locale or space but rather through the elevation of the imaginal experience of it. It is then that the place-elsewhere-place archetype reveals itself in dreams, MLC and SC, although not limited to these, and affirms that it has always been and will always be a primary existential element.

The de-centred self within each of us (examined in Chapter 4.4) is intimately and ceaselessly connected with this essential place continuum and is particularly discernible in an examination of adult narratives of remembered childhood places, in the biographical narratives of the aged and of those who have experienced trauma, exile or homelessness. These reveal how we become oblivious to the movement of the self and time, and experience a kind of *participation mystique* consciousness that permeates the natural world that our ancestors experienced prior to the break-up of the bi-cameral mind. MLC closely replicates this state of mind for it reminds us that the world of place-elsewhere-place is a sovereign domain, and that our proclivity for Gnostic-like melancholy is an ineluctable part of living in the physical world. Often the mundane narratives of the world and certainly the imaginal mythopoeic narratives of the soul constellate the place-elsewhere-place continuum in a numinous 'I-Thou' manner; the primordial archaic soul is revealed in a *hieros gamos* with the ineffable realm of place.

We commonly use the word place as a noun to describe locale, physical environment; a particular part of a surface or body, social, familial or professional position or as a signifier of prestige, a step in a sequence, an appropriate moment or point, but in its mythopoeic dimension we can see it for what it truly is; an artefact of the psyche. The place-elsewhere-place continuum is archaic and yet immediate, insistent and commanding, elusive, dichotomous and, I suspect, the most profound structuring principle of the human psyche. Today it is through this place-elsewhere-place continuum that the dominant ego not only discovers its separateness and identity but also its solitude and uniqueness, its aloneness, as distinct from that original and archaic condition of *participation mystique* and in this new solitude, its imaginal imperative, embodied in the Platonic myth, of reunification.

At this point we must consider again the words of Pato Dooley for they reveal not only the imperative of a soul striving to reconcile itself to the nature of place, but also allow the development of a provisional definition of place: place is the existential measure, physically, psychologically, emotionally, imaginally and spiritually of being, of existence and of both individual and collective identity. Both

the ‘there’ and the ‘here’ are for Pato real but at the same time also affective and imaginary constructs of place. His words exemplify a process of consciousness that is consistent with a continuum of place, from the sensate and actual to the imaginal, symbolic and archetypal. Indeed, I believe that the aetiology of symbolic places, sacred places and imaginary places reflects an archaic psychoid process that manifests at the interface between the individual and the physical environment. The archetype is activated by a complex or emotionally charged ideas or images (Jung, CW 8, par 201 and 198), such as the cave pictographs or the images produced by MLC and SC.

In some indigenous cultures, and also with individuals experiencing altered states of consciousness, the inner world of the self is synchronous and often symbiotic or interdependent with the outer world of place while in others, egoistic factors, cause the inner world to dislodge the outer world, to colour it. My hypothesis is that the perception and experience of place is more than a neurological event. The correlation of place with the field of consciousness in the quantum-theory sense of interconnectedness may be exemplified in the six realms of existence in Buddhist cosmology (Thurman, 1994:29-33 and Kornfield, 1993:141). The most painful of these six realms is an unending hell, characterized by an intensity of pain, fire, icy coldness and torture whilst the highest of the realms is experienced as being filled with pleasure, angelic beings, rapture, celestial music, delight and peace. Between these extremes are two visible realms, the animal and the human realms. The animal realm is often characterized by fear (eat or be eaten) and dullness, while the human realm is said to have the right balance of enough pleasure and pain to be optimal for spiritual awakening. The final two realms are realms of spirits. One is a realm of power struggle called the realm of the jealous and warring gods, a domain of territoriality and titanic struggle. The other is a realm of intense desire called the realm of the Hungry Ghosts, characterized by beings with pinhole mouths and enormous bellies who can never be fulfilled in their seeking or longing (Kornfield, 1993:141). This description should not be dismissed as merely poetic or metaphorical. Henry Corbin speaks of perception as possessing a personal character; of the field of vision defined by the dimension of being (Corbin, 1977:78).

I suggest that there are similar ways in which an individual might experience place, a variety of possibilities ranging from the sublime to the bizarre. As an affective phenomenon, it might be loosely characterised by one of the following

positions on the place-elsewhere-place continuum, although I believe that there are no clear demarcations between these points since place is as we conceive it in our consciousness, the unconscious and imagination.

(a) *Actual or Sensate Place*

If the place-elsewhere-place continuum corresponds to varying states or levels of consciousness, each of which generates a related narrative potential, then we have first to consider actual, physical place and its correspondences to egoic consciousness and observe that it may possess the following characteristics:

(i) It occupies a definite geophysical area, with specific dimensions, characteristics and qualities and may be distinguished by facture. Actual place is bounded and functions to unify, although it excludes as well as includes and embodies aspects of the vertical and horizontal and perhaps some expression of a centre or focal point.

(ii) Sometimes actual place may be distinguished by being occupied by a particular person or group such as a family, tribe or corporation, exemplifying also how it is fundamental in the formation of identity, status and difference.

(iii) Actual place is ultimately defined by embodied existence; an amalgam of the fundamental structure of the human body, its finite spatio-temporality, its capacities for sensation and movement, its uniqueness and also by a kind of provisional existentialist value that relativises relations between the egoic-self and actual place. This last element involves the normative uprightness, symmetry and facing of the body, with the egoic-self conceptually located in the head behind the eyes. It is delicately reiterated in much of the basic and attributed meaning we take as inherent in actual place and also the knowledge we have of particular place and the aetiology of that knowledge. An apposite illustration of this is provided in Chapter 1 where I describe the way that I perceived, occupied and was affected by my first home.

(iv) The elements that comprise actual place stand in relation to individual memory and existence like a palimpsest or the rings of a tree, the tangible detritus of time and history are its components, as I suggested in Chapter 1.

(v) Just as actual place relativises relations to the wider world it also makes possible the articulation of psychic content, both individual and collective, and relations by division so that by the assignment of the parts resulting from this

division, specific real spatial relations arise together. An apposite example of this is provided in Chapter 2 where I describe how the wall of the cave provided a basis for the depiction of collective imaginal content, a specific social or socio-religious organization and for the specific collective relation of that group to the larger world.

(b) *Place as Vital, Animate Energy*

Much of the literature written about actual or sensate place is striking in its denial of any animate, inherent dynamic and autonomous capacity or quality to affect the individual or group. However, there is literature that attributes to place an animation and energy that defies rational explanation. Examples of this are Findhorn in Scotland and the various active sacred sites around the world where miraculous events take place, where things happen; where there definitely are observable phenomena that defy rational explanation. This may be attributed to synchronicity and the psychoid dimension, a dimension, as Jung suggested, involving a coalescence of psyche and matter (Jung, CW 8, par. 380). Heselton provides help to understand this phenomenon:

> There seem to be strong parallels between energy in the body and energy in the landscape … If the Earth is a living being its energy flows and sacred centres correspond to the meridians and acupuncture points in the human body … Some have taken the parallels between the human body and the Earth much further and have postulated *chakra* points on the Earth's surface which have specific effects in landscape terms appropriate to the nature of the corresponding chakra. The heart chakra, for example, has been seen in terms of a river curving around a conical hill with a church. (Heselton, 1991:79).

Of relevance here is the research of Dr. Patricia Newton, a psychiatrist with John Hopkins University Medical Institute, who has undertaken biochemical analysis of patients she has worked with who exhibited paranormal behaviour resulting from alterations in the Earth's electromagnetic field:

> Increase and change of the electromagnetic field has a profound effect upon the melanin centres of the brain. Melanin centres in the brain are also precursory, at least melatonin is precursory, in the foundation and development of adrenalin, serotonin, and norepinephrine, the neurotransmitter peptide which have to do with altered states of consciousness and brain function (in Chandler, 1999:198).

Is this possibly the beginning of a scientific explanation for the energies of what has been termed the *spirit of place*? Actual places are experienced as having qualities that are transcendent and potent; Lourdes, Jerusalem, Lake Eyre, the arid salt pan which flooding rains transform into Australia's mythical inland sea, ley-lines and aboriginal song-lines are examples. The ancient practice of Feng Sui and its Western counterpart, geomancy, involve the perception of place as being influential and portentous, almost in the same way that archaic consciousness attributes autonomous animate qualities to place, qualities which force us to experience more deeply its nature. These practices involve identifying lines of energy that can be mapped and sometimes that energy affects imaginal-symbolic perceptions whereby these energies are metamorphosed into entities; dwarfs, elves and daimons representing the hidden forces of nature embedded in particular places.

A variant of this quasi-scientific electromagnetic force explanation for our attachment to place as an energy field is offered by Maurice Cotterell:

> This electromagnetic view also explains away another enigma perplexing scientists who cannot understand why rates of schizophrenia in West Indian immigrants is higher in England compared with figures for the indigenous population of the West Indies, and higher than those of the progeny of West Indians born in England. This is quite simply due to biorhymic desynchronisation: whenever an organism is removed from its place of birth (to a different geographical point on the surface of the earth) it is subjected to a different combination of magnetic fields from the sun *and* the earth (together), because the earth's field will have changed (this is how the homing pigeon finds its way home). This different magnetic field, through the process of *electrochemical transduction,* disrupts hormonal levels throughout the endocrine system. In its simplest sense we call this *homesickness*. The body, like the pigeon, simply wishes to return to the geographical place on the earth's surface where it was conceived, where its endocrine system was in equilibrium. Homesickness is a biochemical response, like jetlag, to a shift in magnetism affecting the endocrine system (Cotterell, 1999:259).

However, much more striking is the view offered by Jung that there is a mysterious potential within places to affect the physical structure of the individual:

> 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 [sic] themselves in the second generation of immigrants. That is the mystery of the American earth. The soil of every country holds some such mystery. We have an unconscious reflection of this in the psyche: just as there is a relationship of mind to body, so there is a relationship of body to earth. (Jung, CW 10, par. 18-19).

Jung proposed that physical place also generates an influence on the unconscious:

> The foreign land assimilates its conqueror … Everywhere the virgin earth causes at least the unconscious of the conqueror to sink to the level of its indigenous inhabitants. 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 (Jung, CW 10, par.103).

Jung's thesis receives support when we consider the first generation of Australian convict offspring, the Currency Lads and Lasses. Manning Clark describes their parents as individuals who were severely disadvantaged not just socially but also because of disease, poor nutrition, poor hygiene and personal resources (Clark, 1962:94–95). Yet their native born Australian children, defying the Mendelian laws of genetics and behaviourist theory were, according to the first hand observations of Commissioner Bigge and others at the time:

> … generally tall in person, and slender in their limbs, of fair complexion, and small features … capable of undergoing more fatigue … less exhausted by labour, than native Europeans and for the most part are easily distinguishable - even in more advanced years - from those born in England (Ward, 1958:80).

Russel Ward attributed such change to a feeling of " … being at home, of belonging in the country" and cites reports of their prowess in all manner of sports, a unique larrikinism and, above all, their intense display of being Australian (Ward, 1958:88-91). Conversely, if the relationship between ego consciousness and place is one of repulsion or where the original spirit of place has been deformed, then place may exude a malevolent or manifestly perverse spirit. Bahiyyih Nakhjavani describes this process in her mythopoeic narrative, *The Saddlebag* (2000), thus:

> Constantinople was a cruel city which changed its face each night so as never to allow its inhabitants the complacence of thinking they lived in it. For roads and alleys shifted, buildings died and were reborn elsewhere, and nothing was what it had been the day before in Constantinople. It was one of those cities that take root and live on their inhabitants rather than the other way around, spreading labyrinthine alleys in the mind (Nakhjavani, 2000:89).

Such a process was also described by cohort reader 1 when she acknowledged instances in mythopoeic literature where place draws together its

people and shapes their lives and emotions as if it had begotten them and then insinuates itself upon the reader. Similarly, cohort reader 3 attributed an inbuilt memory to place so that one can feel its history *beneath your feet* and become aware of place and share its history. Thomas Keneally seems to identify the energy of place most potently as the *spirits in a landscape* and personifies the Australian continent as loutish towards the European sensibilities. Colleen McCullough reveals Norfolk Island as being subject to, as she said in her response to the questionnaire, " … time warps, field effects and all kinds of scientific phenomena that we don't understand".

(c) *Place as Sacred or Numinous Geography*

Some locations are perceived by local or indigenous inhabitants as existing within a sacred dimension; places such as Stonehenge and also those where cave art abounds such as Lascaux, Chauvet and Altimira. In Australia and elsewhere around the world, certain rocks outcrops, trees, and caves are sometimes perceived as mythic and totemic places in a conceptualised sacred topography, criss-crossed by invisible dreaming tracks or songlines. Some scholars may, as we have seen, attribute these tracks to electromagnetic factors or ley-lines. However, I rather observe a metaphysical process in operation, somewhat analogous to the Roman Catholic mass, in that these places constitute a literal act of transubstantiation. Some anthropologists refer to such sacred geographical places as *cognised landscape*. (Devereux, 2000:29). The perception of such places is constituted by psychological and physiological factors acting on an individual in their perception of place. There can be a symbiotic relationship in which geographical and geomorphic features affect the individual, where elements such as temperature, altitude and terrain interact with the psyche to activate a profound, almost numinous perception of place. In *Mysteries of the Dreaming*, James Cowan suggests:

> … that the Aborigines have made the face of the earth their Bhagavad-Gita, their Torah, their Bible or Koran. Indeed the Dreaming is the Aboriginal Ark of the Covenant which they have been carrying about the Australian continent since the beginning of time (Cowan, 1989:2).

(d) *The Human Body as Primordial Place*

The body is the place that the ego inhabits as the gatekeeper between the inner and the outer worlds and so it is useful now to consider the way that the body inhabits place. Body awareness of place is visceral and neurological and knowledge of place may be carried in the bones and muscles and it undoubtedly played a greater role in the life of the individual prior to The Great Transition described in Chapter 2. Body memory, the belief that the body itself is capable of storing memories as opposed to the brain, may well be the 'blood consciousness' that D.H. Lawrence refers to (Lawrence, 2004:xxiii). David Malouf provided some insight of this phenomenon when he said:

> … the way in which the body, that small hot engine of all those records and recollections inhabits a house [read place] … may be as mysterious as the way in which we say the spirit inhabits the body (quoted in Kiernan, 1986:28).

In *An Imaginary Life* (1986), Malouf's Ovid opines that " … the spirit experiences what the body does but in a different form" (Malouf, 1986:142) and later in the same work opines that " … we are continuous with earth in all the particles of our physical being, as in our breathing we are continuous with the sky. Between our bodies and the world there is unity and commerce" (Malouf, 1986:147). Mythopoeic writers seem to understand this connection, inevitably alluding to it in their work. For example, James Cowan ponders the issue in *A Mapmaker's Dream* (1996) where he suggests that *the nude body is our primary presence, the first land we encounter when we enter the world* (Cowan, 1996:123), and that:

> … the natives [read *archaic man*] used their bodies as veritable spirit maps on which they used to draw the place where they had been conceived. These people expressed the land in which they lived as symbols daubed all over their bodies … the idea of a body map … rather than carrying about with them an elaborate piece of parchment detailing the earth's contours and coastlines, the natives had chosen to use their own bodies to express what they had discovered about their homeland. They had made their bodies a projection of their world … each native torso became the embodiment of a sacred landscape (Cowan, 1996:121-122).

Similarly, Queequeg, the noble savage or archaic man in Melville's *Moby Dick or The Whale* (1851) is tattooed in just such a way by which a sort of *participation mystique* occurs, his tattoos reflect a *complete theory of the heavens and the earth*

(Melville 1851:434). David Malouf describes the mechanics of such a process, of how the soul through the body:

> ... expands to become the whole landscape, as if space itself were its dimensions; filling the whole land from horizon to horizon and the whole arch of the sky (Malouf, 1978:142).

Malouf's Ovid elaborates on this theme of *participation mystique* when, in a sudden realisation that between his body and the place where he finds himself, where an annunciation or epiphany has taken place, there is " ... some corridor along which our common being flowed" (Malouf, 1978:147). In this utterance we find affirmation that the boundaries of our personalities or psyches have some analogous relationship with the physical boundaries we inhabit. This also implies a reciprocity between inner and outer; an exchange that occurs within particular places.

(e) *Place as Transition between External Stimuli and Internal Self.*

Place sometimes seems to act as a conduit for an energetic transition to occur, whereby we feel overwhelmed by unrecognisable stimuli embedded in an environment or where, conversely, the environment appears to reflect our mood or affect. It is really at such times that we also experience something of the *participation mystique* as personal psychic content seems to become reflected or embedded in place. Cowan's Fra Mauro describes the process thus:

> I know that the boundary between myself and Nature sometimes wavers and melts away, so that I can no longer be sure whether what I see with my own eyes springs from outward or inner impressions. An experience such as this is one sure way of discovering how creative we are, and how deeply our soil participates in the perpetual creation of the world. The same invisible divinity is at work in us as it is in Nature (Cowan, 1996:28).

The first colonial free settlers to Australia, and no doubt their convict predecessors, perceived the open pristine country before them as one reflecting an absence of history and of previous lives, or as Ellen in Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* perceived it:

> ... it was easy here to lose yourself in the immensity of the land, under a sky that opened too far in the direction of infinity ... into a world where nothing, not a flat iron, not the names of your children on your lips, could hold you against the vast upward expansion of your breath ... It was the fearful loneliness of the

> place … the absence of ghosts … no other lives had been lived there (Malouf, 1993:110).

Here Malouf shows how we react to places in spatial terms by giving them meaning, the aetiology of which is culturally conditioned and which, in turn, condition individual responses. Thus, the many accounts of the early Australian convict and colonial settler's perception of the landscape as hostile and which produced a constant emphasis on survival with such intensity that it obliterated the possibility of experiencing this primordial-like place for joy or reflection.

(f) *Place as Existential Phenomenon*

Cognised or known landscapes should be understood not only as a result of simple neurological processes but as existential knowing as well. Sailors and travellers with their continual moving to and away from places that are both known and unknown ultimately experience an intense sense both of belonging and of anomie; such knowledge may well explain the archetypal status of seamen in mythic literature. They exemplify the idea that human existence demands a familiar place in which to exist, to set down roots and become a part of particular place, and in existentialist terms this might be satisfied as well by imaginal as well as actual place.

At this point it is worth considering Martin Buber's concept of *I and Thou*, a dialogical encounter in which our fundamental attitudes of moving, intensely and deeply, towards or away from a person, nature [place] or the world of the mental [imaginal or elsewhere-place], demarcate the basic relations of I-It and I-Thou, and which constitute both self and other in radically different ways:

> … objectively, in terms of uses, causes, effects; or intersubjectively and personally, that is, morally, even aesthetically. Authenticity, responsiveness, even genuine presentness (and thus freedom) are attained only in the I-Thou relationship (Honderich, 1995:106).

Buber averred that it was only when a person was " … concentrated into a unity" that they could proceed with an I-Thou encounter " … with mystery and perfection" (Buber, 1970:134).

In terms of relationship with actual or imaginal place, this would suggest that the most authentic and intense I-Thou experience occurs when this 'concentrated unity' [de-centred self], a coalition of psyche and somatic stimuli,

coalesce with place and absorb its real or imagined geographic, geomorphic and symbolic features, features such as individual and culturally ascribed significance, temperature, altitude and terrain, since the term 'concentrated unity' also implies absorption of the other. Conversely, an I-It relationship ensues when the encounter is understood and perceived as being utilitarian, instrumental, exploitative or manipulative. Examples of the I-Thou relationship with place have been provided by all members of the reader, writer and shaman groups in my empirical research presented in Chapter 4.

There is another way in which this existential aspect might be seen. My examination of NSW Police charge sheets over many years, when writing psychosocial assessment reports for sentencing courts, revealed that in many cases when the offence of break and enter was committed, the accused defecated or urinated at the place of their crime. Jean Genet records a similar observation when he describes how a fellow prison inmate told him that whenever he committed a burglary, he performed a rite; " … he took a crap at the scene of his crime" (Genet, 1949:187). My contention, supported by Genet's reflection, is that we have an existential need to mark our territory, the way an animal does; to somehow embed (and be embedded or absorbed) in places of importance to our essence, a gesture, a token or part of ourselves in a way that changes the surface nature of that place into something more primal, that somehow brings about a more intense, albeit private, elemental signification of that place and in so doing, also brings about some change in us.

David Malouf makes a pertinent observation along these lines about the importance of first houses in the life of the individual, one that strengthens the notion of the existential phenomenology of place:

> Our grand house … was a little world of its own, to be mapped, explored, re-mapped, interpreted and made the repository of its own powerful mythology … First houses are the grounds of our first experience. Crawling about at floor level, room by room, we discover laws that we will apply later to the world at large; and who is to say if our notions of space and dimension are not determined for all time by what we encounter there (Malouf, 1985:8).

Malouf proceeds to describe this " … first and deepest education as the result of a secret machinery that gets to work in us, a hidden industry of the senses and the spirit whose busy handling and hearing and overhearing is our second birth

into the world" (Malouf, 1985:9-10). That 'second birth' into the world is the birth of the knowing-conscious psyche as it insinuates itself into place.

(g) *Place as Symbol.*

In literature we find many examples where place acts as a symbol. In Melville's *Moby Dick* the sea is symbolic of the mythic night sea journey or, more precisely a descent into the underworld. In a similar way Malouf's barren land in *An Imaginary Life* symbolises Ovid's state of mind, and the forest in Keneally's *Gossip from the Forest* symbolises the gossip or unordered content of the forest of the unconscious. I find also that Colleen McCullough often conjures-up the symbol of Edenic milieus to define places in her corpus. Generally place as symbol requires, perhaps needs or impels, the individual to engage with place at a deeply soulful level: the wilderness may affect an individual to adopt a different persona or set of values, a church or sacred place elicits feelings of the numinous, war or holocaust memorials, symbolically invade ego-consciousness. Again, James Cowan helps us to understand this process when he writes that the Australian Aborigines:

> ...found their land to be an ideal vessel for all the great metaphors that helped to make sense of the world. It was in essence a far more resolved chrism of reality than any I might like to burden it with in terms of its economic or social affiliations. Aboriginal land, so to speak, is less a thing that one walks upon and exploits, as it is a provisional *sura* that we 'read' whenever we wish to experience wholeness (Cowan, 1989:10).

In other instances place acts as a symbol of the tension that exists between the persona we think of as embodying true identity and the deeper, truer persona that place mirrors or forces to the surface of consciousness. William Shakespeare understood this and throughout his corpus shows how individual personas are changed and transmogrified using the symbolism engendered in place; Lear by the stormy heath, MacBeth by his castle and Prospero by his island.

(h) *Place as Archetypal Image.*

Every sensory aspect of particular places is ultimately experienced as an aspect of the inner world as well. In effect, place inhabits and possesses us as a form of enchantment, particularly when it manifests as an archetype. Indeed, most

preliterate peoples sense their traditional lands not only in terms of sacred or symbolic geography but at both the individual and collective levels as well, as encompassing all possible expressions of the place-elsewhere-place continuum. For example, in a work prepared by a group of Australian aboriginal elders, one described how:

> Aboriginal culture is spiritual. I am spiritual. Inside of me is sprit and land, both given to me by the Creator Spirit. There is a piece of land in me, and it keeps drawing me back like a magnet to the land from which I came. Because the land, too, is spiritual. This land owns me. The only piece of land I can claim a spiritual connection with - a connection between me and the land - is the piece of land under the tree where I was born, the place where my mother buried my afterbirth and umbilical cord. The spiritual link with that piece of land goes back to the ancestors in the Dreaming. This is both a personal and a sacred connection - between me and the land, me and my ancestors (Rainbow, 1997:12).

Here, place is experienced as the core of life and existence of both the individual and collective, where the psyche synchronises with place to constellate a powerful place-elsewhere-place archetype. Such an archetypal process is not culturally specific, and its universal nature is implied in a statement made by the author David Guterson, regarding the city of Seattle, where he was born in 1956:

> I'm haunted by Seattle. Its streets are haunted by the feet of another time I cannot readily explain. The city, for all its understated beauty, is lost to me now, in most ways. Or perhaps like many people, I confuse place and being. I cannot separate myself from the city (Guterson, 1998:56).

James Cowan, through the words of Fra Mauro, describes how the process manifests as an archetypal image:

> ... all we picture to ourselves or see with our eyes is inseparable from ourselves. Such things do not exist except as an extension of that inner world to which we give so little credence in the conduct of our normal daily lives (Cowan, 1996:136).

In another of his works dealing with the Dreaming of the Australian Aborigines, Cowan describes the *kurunba* or life-essence, a metaphysical expression denoting the presence of a cultural layer within the landform itself that has been inspired by mythological contact with the Dreaming (Cowan, 1989:40), a notion that again is best understood as a psychoid process where the psyche finds expression and relationship in matter, manifesting as an archetype. This is very different to place existing in the Imaginal Realm.

(i) *Place as a Dimension of the Imaginal Realm*

It is conceivable that we may become literally enchanted by a place; indeed, such a state of enchantment may be the most authentic way of experiencing place. It occurs when the perception of place seems to parallel the principal condition for the imaginal set down by Henry Corbin; as an act of creative imagination that transcends the subjectivity of ordinary imagination (Corbin, 1998:117-134); a domain that is hidden behind the act of sense perception but is ontologically as real as the world of the senses and that of the intellect (Corbin, 1972:17). Here place is the product of a more purposeful attribution than simply remembered or imagined place. In a way that very much parallels the imaginal criteria established by Henry Corbin and discussed in Chapter 7, Robert Dessaix writes in his autobiography about his imaginary place, a city, that:

> …does exist, but not quite in the same way as, say Vancouver or Wellington. I don't wish to sound mystical, but it's existed for me since I was a small boy of about six, pottering around in the backyard where the bush came up through the chook yard …. It was there in that backyard that I started to imagine my own Pure Land. It wasn't just a fantasy or a game I played there with myself; it was and still is a parallel world …. Part of me lives there and has done for over forty years. (Dessaix, 1994:26-9).

As a parallel world it may possess concomitant simulated sensory and neurological stimuli; David Malouf seems to understand this and in his *An Imaginary Life*, Ovid, tells us:

> …we humans are fortunate in having two ways of attaining that experience [of the world, of place]: either through actual events or, when it is working at its most powerful, through the imagination. And I would want to insist, myself, that what we experience in this second way, if it is deep and immediate enough, is every bit as real, every bit as useful to us, as what we experience directly in the everyday. The whole point of storytelling or drama may be just this: that by experiencing things in imagination, in apprehending and exploring them that way, we can save ourselves from having to live them out as fact (quoted in Tulip, 1990:281).

This, or a similar experience, seems to happen to the cohort shaman-Rebbe as he travels back to the Hasidic world, the place of his ancestors that he described in his questionnaire responses. It also happens to the protagonists throughout the Keneally corpus too; certainly his Schindler does this, layering the imaginal over the

armaments factory and the ghetto. I also see it clearly in the work of Jean Genet of whom Knapp wrote describing the process of how Genet, shaman-like, metamorphosed his prison cell into a truly imaginal domain:

> … into a cathedral with all of its mysteries and miracles, both sexual and spiritual, taking place before the reader's eyes, its litanies being chanted by the inmates, its confessions being heard… the simple prison bed upon which a convict lies turns into an altar … [amid] the benumbing odours, those pungent and suffocating human smells .. the pictures of murderers framed in coloured glass that are placed on the walls of the cold bleak cell turn into stained glass windows stamped with glazed images of Our Lady of the Flowers .. (Knapp, 1968:34).

C.S. Lewis also was especially responsive to the power of imaginal place and wrote that he knew, and was more curious about, the geography of particular places in myth and literature than some actual locales " … was sounder on Toad Hall and the Wild Wood or the cave-dwelling Selenites or Hrothgar's court or Vortigern's than on London, Oxford and Belfast" (in Hooper, 1982:19). So too, for many readers, is Shangri-La, Oz, Ruritania, Atlantis, Narnia, Baskerville Hall and Alice's Wonderland.

10.3 The Mythopoeic Meaning and Experience of Place

The relationship between mythopoeic consciousness and the ensoulment of place can be illustrated in the phenomena of diaspora, exile and anomie, particularly in the case of Jews and Arabs, of Armenians and Hazaras and other displaced peoples. As an exemplar, Jews have always seen themselves as, and have often been forced to become, wanderers; twice exiled from Israel and living in diaspora throughout the ages. Such peoples metaphorically carry place within themselves as they wander to other locales. Unlike the immovable artefacts that testify to a people's occupation of place, narratives of one's identity can be carried, physically as well as spiritually, from place to place. Jews, as well as other displaced peoples, have taken with them their laws and ethics, their myths, their stories of ghetto life and the marks of their expulsion; tattooed numbers or torture scars and the anomie acquired in the course of imprisonment in concentration, extermination and temporary refugee camps. Such exiles and wanderers, like seamen, are intensely aware of the nature and affirming essence of place in contrast to the perception of place as a de-humanising interface; merely zones of transit where actual places become placeless and thus, dehumanising. The new urban shopping centres and

entertainment developments, themed restaurants, multiplex cinemas and mega-stores provide no useful stimulation to the senses, soul or imagination but rather a palpable sense of disintegration; not connection and community but banishment; spaces like the airport transit lounge where the traveller lapses into a trance of confused time-zones and a sense of in-between-places. Ironically, in such zones the narrative returns to the collective; the culturally non-specific language of pictographs to give superficial meaning to our lives; to denote male and female toilets, customs clearance, non- smoking areas, entry, exit and prohibited areas, nationals this way, aliens that way.

MLC, however, discerns or ascribes an implicit subtext to place; a layering of meaning that is embodied in its representation as setting but which in normal consciousness would be indiscernible to the sensate eye. In a mythopoeic narrative, we read the surface of place and uncover the hidden layers, the palimpsest, the narratives and the possibilities of elsewhere-place. We do this through metaphor and symbolism, the writer being merely the medium through which the Imaginal Realm is accessed, a process that has been described in the following way:

> The literary meaning of the experience of place and the literary experience of that meaning of place are both part of an active process of cultural creation and destruction. They do not start or stop with an author. They do not reside in the text. They are not contained in the production and distribution of the work. They do not begin or end with the pattern and nature of the readership. They are a function of all these things and more. They are all moments in a cumulatively historical spiral of signification (Thrift, 1981:12-13).

That 'cumulatively historical spiral of signification' is the place-elsewhere-place archetype, one that has resonance with that of the Great Mother archetype. Marie-Louise von Franz suggests that the concept of matter derives from the archetype of the Great Mother and may be found in the personal images of paradise, the kingdom of God, heaven, earth, a piece of land, the forest, the sea, matter, the underworld, the moon, the cave and the tree, among others. Psychologically, it is whatever is kindly, sheltering, it is places of transformation; " … all these images belong to the Great Mother" (von Franz, 1988:15-16).

If we consider the relationship of this archetype to the archetype of the self, what emerges is a dynamic that is inherently relational, where the self seeks to encompass place. Jung described the self as not only the centre but also the

circumference, embracing both consciousness and unconsciousness (Jung, CW 12, par. 44). Like any archetype, the essential nature of the self is unknowable, but its manifestations are the content of myth and legends (Sharp, 1991:119) where it is often represented as a *complexio oppositorum,* a union of opposites (Jung, CW 6, par. 790). The self seeks to project or embed itself into place and perhaps *spirit of place* is a third element that emerges out of relationship as the self uses the ego in order to locate itself in time and space. In such instances place appears numinous and, like the Dreaming of the Australian Aborigines, becomes a spiritual realm that maintains a unity and continuity with the material world in the present. From this process we may fathom the potential psychoid nature and multi-dimensionality of place. Place is not so much an entity which is perceived, it is more a spectrum of possible experiences analogous to various states of consciousness. The inner and the outer places are not so much opposites or polarities for, to the psyche, each involves the other, needs the other and is reciprocal to it. Thus, place has all the qualities required of an archetypal energy or image and is a syzygy, a unity.

Place, in all of its guises, delineates the human condition, the collective and individual identity, life and circumstances. The perceived physical, social, geopolitical and historical boundaries of the places we inhabit produce equivalent boundaries in our personas. We embed place in our language, within in our being; for example, almost every child is familiar with the coupling of place to narrative with the words, … *once upon a time in a land far away …,* narrative and place carry each other. The birds, fish and animals and all animate creatures import place in to their metaphorical language by scent marking places as their territory; by being symbiotically related, indeed dependent, on the topography, climate and geomorphic features of place, and the currents and water temperature of ocean locales. Even the trees carry a place narrative for we can read the story of their locale, their place, in the layers of their rings, the texture of their bark, their root systems. Everything in a locale tells the story of place, and not just imaginatively. The story of place leaves its imprint in so many ways that it is important for the human inhabitant of place to know their story in relation to that particular place. A deep appreciation, an understanding of the history and functioning of the places we inhabit, is a necessary inspiration and guide for our own effective physical and imaginative functioning as individuals and as a species. Indeed, we are the soul and story of every place in which we find ourselves.

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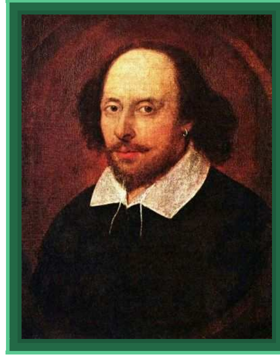

William Shakespeare.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSION: THE SACRED HERITAGE

> The centuries come and go, literary fashions pass, but the magician reappears before us: shifting his shape and changing his name, now mocking, now awe-inspiring, but essentially the same character whose flame flew over all Europe eight centuries ago. Trickster, illusionist, philosopher and sorcerer, he represents an archetype to which the race turns for guidance and protection (Tolstoy, 1985:19-20).

This dissertation has examined issues of polarities: the conscious and unconscious, place and elsewhere-place, the inner and the outer, the relationships between mythopoeic writer and reader, the exoteric and esoteric. Another evident concern has been the nature of the Imaginal and the Imaginal Realm and, of course, that of the soul and the de-centred self.

11.1 An Epistemology

The concepts that I believe necessary for an understanding of Shamanic Consciousness and Mythopoeic Literary Consciousness rest on the assertion that the universe consists not only of material substances but also of events or energies that occur in complex interlocking relations to form a vast web of interconnectivity. This web which anticipates the *participation mystique*, de Chardin's Noosphere, the Web of Wyrd, Sheldrake's morphic resonance and Jung's collective unconscious.

Each individual psyche possesses a complex narrative potential arising from memories of significant events and multiple explanations of past events and places that allows them to shape their essence or soul and determine its boundaries. What emerged from the cohort responses was that below the sensory perception of the places we inhabit and the events that unfold in them lies a palimpsest of embodied

experience; a layer of the soul that deals with the interconnections between places and events, and even anticipates future places and events and mythologises them through a process of symbolic abstraction.

The information one gains through this aspect of soul, which manifests for some as SC or MLC, is never clear and distinct the way information from either sensory data or abstract thought can be. Rather, it is wild and vague, heavy and primitive; in a word, mythopoeic. As wild as this mode of perception may be, it lies at the root of all human experience. It exists prior to egoic perception, complements it throughout the life of the individual and supplies the base knowledge from which humans form abstractions in order to grasp the coherence of their lives as enacted in place. In a balanced tension with egoic consciousness, SC and MLC produce an awareness of a de-centred self, a personal existence across time and beyond place; one gains a sense of personhood because at the deep root level of the collective, an individual perceives continuity across the events and places of their life, both actual and imagined.

11.2 Emergent Themes of the Research

(a) *Meaning Beyond the Triviality of the Mundane*.

One of the things I set out to establish was the existence of an imaginal-mythopoeic tradition that reflects a dimension of the psyche that transcends the meta-historical tradition of Western civilization. The historiography of that dimension, where the individual becomes an active co-creator in an existential narrative of a different dimension of awareness, was described in Chapter 2. What it established was that the act of reading and writing a fictional narrative, or more particularly of creating (co-creating, in the case of the readers) mythopoeic text, is frequently undervalued and what we often fail to consider is that it is really myth-making, accessing another dimension, an elsewhere-place; it is an act of the greatest existential importance. This has been substantiated in the responses of the cohort mythopoeic writers, the works of other mythopoeic writers, and confirmed by the cohort readers. Parallel with this are the responses and textual material relating to shamans, a template of sorts, that allowed comparison.

(b) *Living Simultaneously in Two Worlds*

It is clear from the shamans' responses and the extended textual research material, that when fully initiated the shaman lives simultaneously in the material world and in a shamanic realm where s/he is able to converse with entities from that realm and explore its topography. The experiences of the mythopoeic writers and readers were very much the same; they too seem to enter a different dimension of consciousness, of experience and knowledge. The fact is that when ordinary waking consciousness gives way to SC or MLC, an entirely different faculty takes command, a faculty that knows things usually hidden from the everyday ego because it facilitates journeying to an elsewhere-place foreign to ego consciousness.

An explanation of the dynamics of this capacity of shamans and mythopoeic writers to see more deeply through the membrane between mundane existence and the hidden is described in Chapter 2, in the section *From Hermeticism through Sufism to Romanticism.* There I described a double vision which reflected a kind of Hermetic consciousness that is not disturbed by problems of subject and object, consciousness versus the unconscious, inner and outer, material and immaterial; a consciousness that travels freely along the place-elsewhere-place continuum. In this mode the shaman and the mythopoeic writer, and reader, experience a borderline perception that sees the one in the other, intertwined. Indeed, this concept of double vision or simultaneous existence should not imply seeing two things at once or existing in two places at once or of transforming one into the other. It is a single mode of perceiving and existing in which the doubleness or polarity of things , as in the finest metaphors, is obvious because we are both seeing and seeing through, experiencing existence on both sides of the place-elsewhere-place-consciousness Mobius strip-like continuum. Along that continuum an irrefutable primordial intelligence operates freely because the subject, the ego, is in abeyance; the shaman or mythopoeic writer becomes the universe's experience of itself as a human being … after all this body is made of the very stuff of the universe. There is no outside or beyond to the realization of the universe from which to come; the shaman and mythopoeic writer, prior to initiation or an initiatory event, only thought they were a separate identity, as was explained in the empirical and textual research described in Chapters 4 and 5.

(c) *Cave Art as Catalyst of Consciousness*

The elsewhere-place of the mythopoeic writer and shaman was first revealed in the Palaeolithic cave pictographs, which really constitute a narrative about the relationship between the universe and the individual. Some of the pictographs do depict everyday occurrences; some perhaps reflect an attempt at sympathetic magic whilst others may well be only simple graffiti. However, those outstanding pieces from locales cited in this research demonstrate the mythopoeic psyche at work and are the precursors of modern mythopoeic literature. Those pictographic pieces such as the therianthropic figures and the dots and slashes are partially explained by Lewis-Williams in his neuropsychological theory. However, I have presented them from a shamanic-neuropsychological perspective, a construct of the interaction between neurological processes and the dynamics of depth psychology. For example, therianthropic and hybrid figures are a universal feature of rock art and mythologies around the world and throughout time because they are universally experienced in altered states of consciousness (Hancock, 2005:564).

The research of Robert Bednarik demonstrates certain universal themes appear in the visions of people from vastly different cultures suggesting the existence of a " ... collective unconscious of iconic form constants" (Bednarik, 1990:78). The implication is that these universal themes are contained in the cave pictographs, and are not only effective by virtue of their visually artistic and anthropological context but also because they represent an essential archetypal narrative that is manifested through MLC in various textual forms. It is interesting to note that the work of researchers such as the late Dr John Mack (2000), Professor Kenneth Ring (1992 and 2000), Patrick Harpur (1994 and 2002) and Thomas Bullard (1987), suggests very strongly that the entities encountered by individuals in near death experiences and so-called UFO abduction cases, resemble the weird creatures and therianthropes of the cave pictographs. Ethnographic studies of shamans examined side by side with UFO abductee and Near Death Encounter recollections reveal not only similarities but also interwoven and intricate connections with some essential and primordial aspect of consciousness. Bernardo Peixoto, a shaman of the Brazilian Ipixuma tribe, who gained a PhD, qualified as an anthropologist and held a teaching post at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, reports that the spirit guides or helpers acquired by shamans always appear in the form of animals or therianthropes (Hancock, 2005:325).

Indeed, what I suggest is that the cave pictographs may have been the catalyst that, virtually overnight in evolutionary terms, transformed anatomically modern but intellectually dull, uninspired and spiritually barren humans into behaviourally modern spiritual and imaginative humans. The therianthropic figures might be explained as representing the 'animal divinity', an aspect of the psyche that reflects interconnectedness with the whole of creation, the *participation mystique*, which was perceived by the primordial psyche. What the cave painters were experiencing was intensity consciousness, manifested as a narrative in mythopoeic consciousness. This facilitated access to a dimension of the Imaginal Realm, an ontological prior reality; a form of perception that seemed to penetrate beyond the substance or *membrane* of the cave walls of that time and place. Consequently, the sophisticated genre of cave art that emerged reveals a sacred imaginal dimension perceived at both the individual and collective level, a dimension displaying numinous, archetypal symbols, of an elsewhere place that is taken to exist immediately on the other side of the membrane of place.

(d) *The Mythopoeic Membrane of Place*

The membrane of place may be the surface of a cave wall or the physical surfaces of actual, sensate places or it may be the page of a book. The shamanising artists of the cave pictographs and their readers certainly pierced the membrane to enter this otherworld or elsewhere-place in an altered state of consciousness that was the beginning of mythopoeic consciousness, which I have shown may be identified in various manifestations from pre-historic times to the present. Sir Maurice Bowra saw the beginning of literary consciousness in primitive song, my hypothesis simply moves back further in time to mythopoeic narrative cave image. Indeed, a reference to Bowra's work but incorporating my parenthesised-italicised terms perfectly states my case:

> … [Palaeolithic pictographs] words exert so strong a hold on us that we can think of nothing else, we still speak of their enchantment, and though this is no more than a metaphor, it was not always so and is indeed a relic of what song [*the mythic text-image*] once was. In primitive song [*paleolithic cave pictographs – mythopoeic text*] it still has a powerful place and is accepted both by singers [mythopoeic writers] and audiences [*mythopoeic readers*] as entirely natural and proper. The primitive song-man [*mythopoeic writer*] feels within himself an eruptive domineering force which he must release upon others. He wishes to exert an

> influence, to impose a special vision, to create in others a state of mind which is more than understanding or sympathetic … He sees song [*mythopoeic text*] as an instrument by which some special force in himself is directed at others and works his will on them … which aims at influencing supernatural powers (Bowra, 1962:255).

Bowra's statement distils the essence of the responses made to the research questionnaires, sometimes metaphorically, for example, in emphasising the need to pierce the mundane. It certainly reiterates, for instance, David Malouf's stated intention to " … change the way people see things, to change their state of being and feeling and perceiving" (in Kiernan, 1986:28); and Thomas Keneally spoke about a time when we were all poets. Colleen McCullough's description of the Connecticut countryside is a potent example of the expression of *participation mystique*, almost an eruption of stream-of-consciousness writing as if she is describing something that is taking place within her own soul.

(e) *Piercing the Membrane of Place*

I have argued that certain individuals, represented by the cohort of this study; mythopoeic writers and their readers, and of course the two shamans, can more readily access and experience more intensely than most, a mythopoeic dimension identified as the Imaginal Realm, which is an analogue of the same dimension accessed by shamans throughout history and across cultures. That small percentage of people develop the mythopoeic imperative, as was determined through the questionnaire responses, by virtue of some trauma, illness or enforced solitude in life which isolates them and produces an equivalent to shamanic initiation or heightened imaginal capacity, an ability to pierce or see through the surface of place to an elsewhere-place.

That imaginal capacity is played off against what I defined in Chapter 10; place; the absolute self-referential reality in the phenomenal world that generates a narrative of varying intensity. Everything in the egoic-life of the individual has to be seen in the context of place, thus place is a generator of existential narrative, of identity, the quintessence of egoic reality. However, since place is a continuum of possibilities paralleling levels of consciousness, inner psychic content can be projected onto place when it is otherwise preceived as a *tabula rasa*. It is this movement from imaginal elsewhere-place to physical place and back to imaginal [paralleling the movement from *participation mystique* to egoic consciousness and

back to *participation mystique*] that is at the core of human existence. The importance of the experience of the place-elsewhere place continuum is that it so clearly portrays the *coincidentia oppositorium*, the conjunction of opposites that are brought into human consciousness; a truth that must lie at the core of an existential transpersonal model of human existence. Perhaps the most mythopoeic way to express this is that there is another place, and it is hidden in this one and, ironically, to pierce the membrane, we must look inward.

(f) *Mythopoeic Literature as Shaman's Drum*

> People are, in their most profound aspect, creatures of poetry. They like to make up stories out of the deep metaphors of existence. These metaphors are a part of our physical environment and resist all our attempts to make them rational. They are bridges to the irrational, that well of supra-sensibility that we go to at times when we experience thirst (Cowan, 1989:9).

Each of the mythopoeic texts cited in this dissertation was approached as a psycho-spiritual document, a symbolic record of intense inner experiences. Each one satisfies the requirements for the criteria of a literary work emerging from MLC because the contents of the fictive literary creation are beyond the purview of the individual psyche of the mythopoeic writer and reader. The research has demonstrated that rather than being an expression of the mythopoeic writer and readers' personal psychic content, mythopoeic documents constitute a self-realization of the transpersonal objective psyche, the mythic other with which the de-centred self seeks reconciliation. Mythopoeic narratives constitute a *nekyia*, an account of a descent into the darkness of the otherworld, in a quest for the archetypal Self. Mythopoeic narratives are a profound expression of encounter with the collective unconscious and underscore the correspondence between the internal tension from which mythopoeic literature emerges and the hidden complexities within the readers as well.

Excluding the Shaman-Rebbe, all of the respondents in the research stated that they were not conventionally religious and thus in a Jungian sense, having withdrawn such religious projections, their inner world becomes immensely enriched. This is a necessary precondition for the emergence of psychological content because having no conventional religious projections, they are more predisposed to discovering the transpersonal contents of their own unconscious.

Indeed, the Shaman-Rebbe is really not unlike his academic sister-shaman in that his Hasidic tradition with its mythic structure has similarities with her mythically structured *spiral galaxy* of *Andemar with its sacred objects.*

The research has shown that the mythopoeic writer and reader are simultaneously a participant in the imaginal drama and an observer, a creator and a creature, a creative artist as well as a created character in an elsewhere-place. In creating a work of art, s/he creates a place and in (re)creating oneself, s/he thereby becomes a different person in a new place. The mythopoeic writer reveals him or herself as a character of fiction that has transcended the barriers between fiction and reality, thus challenging the reader to re-think her/his own role with regard to reality and the self. However, whilst the writer can only move within the boundaries of the particular place(s) of the imagination or mythopoeic narrative they are creating, the reader(s) can change those place(s) into a multiplicity of imaginal possibilities. The mythopoeic narrative, like the shaman's drum, has a dual function: as the instrument of isolation and of interaction, of total unrelatedness and at the same time, of connectedness. In addition, it creates the connection to the world outside the drama as it does not merely contain narrative, but takes on a life of its own and acts as an allegory.

The responses to the research questionnaires revealed that for both the mythopoeic writer and the reader their horizon is, on the one hand, broadened by the narratives, but in another sense narrowed. They often contain an allegorical description of everything that goes to make up their own inner world, which enables them to become aware of the decentred self and another place, an elsewhere-place. Thus, mythopoeic literature forms the bridge between the two realms: the external place and the inner elsewhere-place, because all possibilities are contained in its narrative.

(g) *The Suprapersonal Aspect of Creativity*

The Swiss psychoanalyst Adolf Guggenbuhl-Craig suggested that creativity happens outside the individual psyche, that a power external to the one creating is at work. In other words, creativity is impersonal and he uses the term 'transcendent creativity' to describe something that comes through, shines through from another world (Guggenbuhl-Craig, 1995:8).

The research questionnaires suggest that the mythopoeic writers, and to a lesser extent the readers, have an almost mediumistic gift of detecting what is playing itself out and forming in the soul of the collective, shining through from another world. It has a historical lineage, a lineage with the deeply mythic sense that there are certain secrets, which, if discovered, reveal the nature of real or decentred-self, and actual or elsewhere-place. SC is an established fact and, as suggested earlier, may well be identified in its complete nature as an emergent element of quantum physics. Its more recent manifestation has presented itself in the form of the neo-shamanism of the psychoanalyst, such as Jung, Hillman and even Freud, and the *shamanovelist,* such as Mircea Eliade, Carlos Castenada, Paulo Coelho and the like, and the mythopoeic writer, such as those cited in the research.

What also emerged clearly from the empirical research was that the richness, import and substantiality of the imaginal realm becomes more apparent when we participate in the imaginative creativity of others. It is as if an archetype is constellated, as von Franz suggested:

> … wherever known reality stops, where we touch the unknown, there we project an archetypal image (von Franz, 1972:3).

The beauty in the works of Malouf, Keneally and McCullough and others could not speak to readers as it does if there was not richness and complexity within us with which it can resonate. This observation leads to the interesting realization that, in order to see what is going on in the inner world, one needs to project that inner world in some way onto the outer world of place, or to bring something of the outer place into the inner realm. This confirms the archetypal nature of mythopoeic literature and the symbiotic relationship of the mythopoeic reader and writer. They participate in each other's creativity, and in so doing expand consciousness, individually and collectively.

(h) *Elsewhere-place and the De-centred Self*

The questionnaire responses when considered together with the extended textual research, describe a place within place which seemed to be dependent neither on sensory perception nor on ordinary cognition. It may be apprehended in certain altered states of consciousness that destabilize ordinary perceptual modalities and cognitive systems. David Malouf illustrates it in the Changi section of *The Great World* and also in *An Imaginary Life.* Thomas Keneally provides many

examples of it as a European or imperialist milieu superimposed over a natural place such as Antarctica or a forest. Even Colleen McCullough, the metaphorical atheist of mythopoeic literature, allows it prominence in her literature, as revealed in my analysis of her corpus. Even the anecdotal evidence found in the questionnaire responses points to the existence of this parallel dimension, the Imaginal Realm.

Throughout history there appears to be no culture or society, whatever the aetiology of its development, that has not identified an elsewhere-place or extraordinary dimension of existence. Harpur suggests that by the second century in the ancient world everyone, pagan, Jewish, Christian, Gnostic, Muslim and Buddhists believed in the existence of beings who existed and populated another dimension, an intermediary world (Harpur, 2002:5-6). This is particularly fascinating because it provides evidence beyond the Western cultural tradition of a nexus between the physical and non-physical, the literal and metaphysical, through which we might pass, not as egoic self but as a de-centred self. Ovid in Malouf's *An Imaginary Life* provides some hint as to the nature of the de-centred self:

> We have some power in us that knows its own ends. It is that that drives us on to what we must finally become. We have only to conceive of the possibility and somehow the spirit works in us to make it actual ... Our further selves are contained within us, as the leaves and blossoms are in the tree. We have only to find the spring and release it (Malouf,1978:64).

These attributes of the psyche are the very substance of mythopoeic literature; pervading the characters, plots and situations acted out within the container of place in its many manifestations. Indeed, mythopoeic reading and writing have a certain similarity to psychoanalysis in that they too are activities of introspection where consciousness is turned away from the external world toward the inner nature of things, to the imaginative interpretation and explanation of what is hidden but needs to be known.

One of the most interesting findings to emerge from my research is that mythopoeic fiction is never simply a communication employed by a writer or storyteller but rather is a collective phenomenon, an assemblage that constitutes a semiotic or archetypal regime. What my research suggests, particularly when considered in the context of Chapter 9, is that mythopoeic storytelling can never simply express, no matter how implicitly, an author's biography or predilections or the author's intended meaning in a personal style, as in the case of Colleen McCullough.

Mythopoeic fiction rather puts to work collective forms in which the author may indeed have a psychological investment but which, perforce, must be seen as a synchronic unity of structurally contradictory elements manifested in the consciousness of both the writer and the reader. The narrative text and its author is only one half of the equation of perception and understanding on the part of the individual reader, the mythopoeic reader's receptiveness or state of mind is the other; the three; text, writer and reader, converge in a synchronous elsewhere-place. True to psychological convention, as was shown in Chapter 8, such a synchronicity gives rise to an archetype. What must be recognised is the emergence of the *coincidentia oppositorium* as a crucial archetype of the human psyche, and an acceptance of a potential human response to place that is far richer and far subtler than anything modern psychology has yet identified. That view posits place and the personal narrative in contingent and inter-relational social locations, that is, the personal as place. It is the dialectical process of making sense of not only locale but of the cosmos through mythic dialogue, experience and re-conceptualisation that creates a place imagination. Place imagination, in the mythopoeic literary sense, is a two-part concept; first it acts as a meta-narrative that includes presuppositions about self meanings and rational dimensions and, second, in a spatial and symbolic sense, it reveals how metaphors and symbols shape the possibilities for envisaging self-space and existential concepts of belonging of the soul within the place-elsewhere-place continuum.

The archetypal basis for mythopoeic narratives makes them perpetually relevant to our lives. They derive from collective efforts that span history, lending them immunity from the vagaries of individual consciousness and its prejudices. What follows for the reader is a single existential moment of awareness, a heightened awareness of a place, a sense of deep intimacy with it, a soul soliloquy of symbiosis with place. Like the Kabbalah, mythopoeic literature uses the power of language as an instrument of deep perceiving and knowing. As in the case of the cave paintings, it focuses the mind in such a way that the reader feels included and held by a sort of play across and throughout the 'membrane' of text, where from moment to moment their awareness belongs unconsciously to that of the narrator, to the consciousness of mythopoeic reverie.

Everyone's life is based on story telling and most of the cohort subjects live their lives in the places of stories, sometimes almost as if they were a character in a story. Indeed, the research suggests that each of the cohort respondents very

much perceive their life as a story: each one having a structure and a plot, one that may not always be perceived except at moments when there occurs a conflux of external events and an inner state, a synchronicity. The point is that our lives have a narrative structure, rather like that of a novel, although the narratives we would like to live may not necessarily be those that we are living or are meant to live.

11.3 The Mythopoeic Writer as Spiritual Functionary in the Realm of Place

I have shown how the modern Western pictorialization of imagination came about and how the cave pictographs were a kind of *parergon,* an ancillary manifestation of creative consciousness emerging from place. With the pictorialization of imagination it became more difficult to distinguish the rational from the imaginal by appeal to nature. MLC emerged from metaphors, sensation, memory and imagination, and it became more difficult to distinguish because all had the same aetiology; sensate place.

The research has now enabled us to perceive the writer of mythopoeic literature as one who, like the shaman, accesses an ontological prior reality, a realm of essences, the Quintessential, the remnant of the *participation mystique* or what I have termed elsewhere-place, still embedded within what we term or see as place. The term 'ontological prior reality' identifies the essential element that lays at the core of existence and that is independent and free of humankind's representation of reality. That core reality is place. I have also established that the psyche has its own deep psychoid roots in this ontological prior reality and that these roots are what the shaman and the mythopoeic writer present in their ritual and symbols and mythopoeic literature, and what Jung later identified, following their evolution into human experience, as the archetypes.

Each of the three cohort writers have intention behind their writing: David Malouf said that through his writing he wished to change the way people see and experience things. Thomas Keneally is unquestionably a priestly figure engaged in the sacramental task of relating the spiritual and core elements of Australian experience to the rest of the world, and devising a 'craftier theology' for the soul in this unique environment. Even Colleen McCullough, in spite of her denials, has demonstrated her capacity to see through the mundane, to draw near the numinous and return to tell us of it. Each of them provides us with a deep soulful engagement with truths about existence, identity and the nature of the places we

inhabit. We have seen also from the cohort readers how it is intrinsically healing and liberating for the soul to be told the stories, the myths of its tribe, the verities of an elsewhere-place, the dimension beyond and yet within the mundane.

I am certain that David Malouf, Thomas Keneally and Colleen McCullough and most of their readers would not think of themselves as shamans. However, the research affirmed that they are participants in a great tradition, spiritual functionaries in the realm of place, a tradition that parts the *mists of Avalon*, that wonderful metaphor in Marion Zimmer Bradley's brilliantly evocative novel, in which the parting of the mists that separate the holy isle from the mundane world is a responsibility and a privilege reserved for adepts of the *Old Ways* who help us to define the boundaries of our souls.

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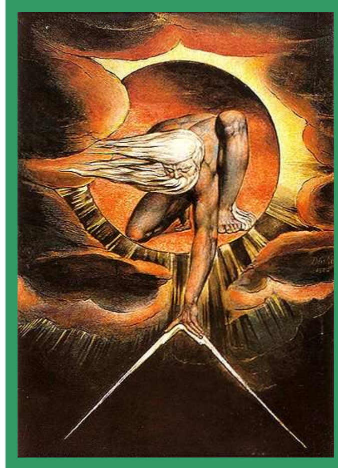

The ancient of days, c.1824.
William Blake

But to the Eyes of the Man of Imagination,
Nature is Imagination itself.
As a man is, so he Sees.
As the Eye is formed, such are its Powers.

(William Blake - Fragment from the letter to Dr. Trustler, 23 August 1799.)

The ultimate dreamer of the vast life-dream is finally … but one … and … the multiplicity of appearances follows from the conditioning effects of time and space. It is the one great dream dreamed by a single Being, but in such a way that all the dream characters dream too (Schopenhauer).

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