

## Weaving Voices Article (Feb-June 2004)

### *Contributions of the Members of the C. G. Jung Society of Sydney*

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## LANDMARKS Papers by Jungian Analysts from Australia and New Zealand

COMPILED BY HEATHER FORMAINI  
ANZSJA: MANUKA, AUSTRALIA, 2001 PP XII + 288.

A REVIEW BY WARREN COLMAN

*The following review was originally published in the Journal of Analytical Psychology and later in the Australasian Journal of Psychotherapy. We extend our thanks for their permission to reproduce it in the newsletter.*

Considering that ANZSJA, the Australian and New Zealand Society of Jungian Analysts, has only a couple of dozen members, it is a remarkable feat to have produced this book containing papers by twelve of them. This makes the book itself a landmark achievement, a coming of age for a new Jungian society. Its most distinctive feature is a rare sensitivity to the interaction between culture and psyche, informed by the particular circumstances of the Australian experience, especially the painful history of the incoming Europeans' treatment of Australia's indigenous peoples. These historical and cultural circumstances have produced a deep concern with questions of collective, cultural and personal identity.

Many papers inhabit a liminal landscape of borders and borderline experience – not only the borders between different cultures but also the borders between the psyche and the physical world, ranging from the somatic body to the 'landmarks' of geological landscape. Jungian psychology proves to have much to offer in the search for a conceptual framework through which these liminal experiences may be understood: for example, several authors draw upon Jung's idea of the psychoid level where the worlds of spirit and matter are experienced as being two aspects of the same 'substance'.

Heather Formaini has compiled the book in a very creative way. Like the curator of an exhibition, she has carefully arranged each paper within a structure that reveals an overall unity in which the particular features of the individual contributions are shown to their best advantage. This is particularly noticeable in the two papers that have previously been published in the *Journal of Analytical Psychology* (Petchkovsky and Clark). Here, Petchkovsky's research into the indigenous sense of subjectivity is shown to be part of a wider project also described in the previous chapter by Craig San Roque, while Giles Clarks' apparently unrelated concerns with the 'psychoid' level of experience in the analytical crucible takes on a new meaning in the context of the psychoid landscape experienced and described by San Roque.

The book is bounded by opening and closing chapters, whose content make no reference to Australia and yet which also turn out to be concerned with the overall themes of boundaries and liminality which reverberate throughout the book. Dale Dodd's opening chapter on Buddhism and Psychoanalysis is about the interpenetration of two very different traditions, one ancient, one modern; one Eastern, one Western. Dodd acknowledges the differences between them but argues that each has something to offer the other – while Buddhism has a less developed understanding about the nature of human (relational) attachments, psychoanalysis has a more limited view of the possibilities for human development. The potential for interpenetration on the basis of a respect for difference nicely sets the tone for the chapters which follow. The closing chapter is something of a *tour de force*, an analysis of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* as a prolonged meditation on *Thanatos* rather than *Eros*. Here,

then, the boundary is that between life and death. Sally Kester brings her expertise as a music lecturer into a fruitful '*conjiunctio*' with experience as a Jungian analyst to produce an impressively strong and authoritative reappraisal of this most European of cultural icons.

For this reviewer, the highlight of the book is Craig San Roque's 'Coming to Terms with the Country'. Through his description of a series of remarkable incidents in his initial encounters with Aboriginal thought and locations, San Roque explores the central value and function of the *Tjukurpa* ('dreaming') in indigenous psychic and cultural life. He goes further than merely taking on the influences of a different culture as an 'add-on' to his own. He has attempted to immerse himself in the Indigenous culture, to remake his own conditioning and put his own world-view in the melting pot. He succeeds in conveying the radical otherness of the spiritual, psychological and cultural assumptions implicit in *Tjukurpa* and the yawning cultural gap between Indigenous culture and Western culture – it's as difficult for them to operate with our cultural assumptions as for us to operate with theirs. Instead of assuming that ours are the 'norm' and that these people should adapt themselves to the therapeutic modalities of the West, San Roque has undertaken the journey of a psychic explorer in order to meet them in their world and to translate his analytic skills into a context where they might be meaningful and useful to the painfully obvious wounds inflicted on them by the incoming culture.

One of the many riches this chapter offers is an insight into the specific difficulties faced by the Indigenous peoples in dealing with alcohol. San Roque's 'guide', Japaljarri explains that the Aboriginal people do not have the *Tjukurpa* for alcohol and so they need to learn the whitefella's dreaming, in order to deal with it. As San Roque puts it, it is 'as though there was no "place" for thinking about alcohol and petrol sniffing properly; no location for thought within the Aboriginal culture'. Although his analytic skill in the use of imagery and symbolic thinking offers him (and the reader) a way in to the language and myth of Indigenous thinking, he also conveys the enormity of the task involved – one which, he says, few professional 'health' people seem prepared to undertake.

This theme is taken up again in the following chapter by San Roque's colleague, Leon Petchkovsky whose research into 'stream of consciousness and ownership of thought' bears out the richness, complexity and sophistication of the indigenous peoples' mental life. He shows that their conception of subjectivity is broader than that of Europeans, extending to non-human entities, including inanimate elements, and draws links between their strong conviction that 'thoughts come from *Tjukurpa*' and Jung's view that psychic life 'happens' to the ego rather than being created by it. He then quotes San Roque's comments on this conclusion which throw further light on the problem of 'alcohol work' in Indigenous culture: In Western culture, the emphasis is on 'personal responsibility' but for the Aboriginal peoples, such 'ego' responsibility is problematic and potentially dangerous since it involves setting oneself at a distance from *Tjukurpa*. For the Aboriginal people, responsibility is *collective* – the problem is that alcohol undermines this responsibility by loosening the connection to *Tjukurpa*. Emphasising personal responsibility in the treatment of alcohol problems thus only serves to compound the fundamental problem which is the dislocation from the locus of responsibility in *Tjukurpa*.

Peter Fullerton is well aware that his encounter with *Tjukurpa* is that of a (respectful) outsider. He describes with wry, self-deprecating humour, his 'Jungian anticipation' of learning about *Tjukurpa* myths and stories on a visit to Uluru (Ayers Rock). Instead, he found a new understanding of *Tjukurpa* as a 'living relation' to place through an intimate involvement with the practical realities of its geology and zoology. He uses this insight as an imaginative inspiration for his own 'dreaming', seeing the relation between the wholeness of Uluru and the fragmented boulders of its neighbour Kata Tjuta (once part of the same rock formation) as an image of the relation between the self and its deintegrates. Applying these ideas to his clinical work, he suggests that the idea of a single impervious self is a defensive illusion ('anti-story') which needs to give way to the possibility of many stories and many selves.

Fullerton, Clark and Brown all explore issues of psychosomatic disturbance. Giles Clark's chapter on 'the animating body' takes us into a clinical equivalent of the psychoid world of beta elements in which San Roque found himself in Central Australia. His experience of a borderline patient whose dream was an uncanny echo of his own initial pre-analytic dream is reminiscent of San Roque's 'counter-transference' grief at an indigenous 'site' – both take us into the non-differentiated world of

the *unus mundus*, (a theme also explored by Anne Noonan's chapter on 'Psyche and Environment'). Clark suggests that 'psychoid substance' arises out of the most primary processes of 'energetic relating'. Anne Brown's chapter, 'Volcanic Eruptions', although making no specific reference to the Australian landscape, also starts, like Fullerton's, with geology – in this case, the geology of volcanoes - before moving into an exploration of the volcano-image in myth, and the 'volcanic' eruptions of emotion and body in infancy and adolescence. In this way she offers a multi-faceted, holistic image of 'an indivisible mind/body state of being' which creates disturbance but also offers the possibility of reintegration and transformation'.

Anne Noonan diagnoses anxiety of those who fear to enter the volcano of transformation: the 'dread of loss of identity and abandonment' in the clinging by many Anglo-Celts to a past of excessive nationalism, Britain and the Queen. Pam D'Rozario places this in the wider (but neglected) context of the psychological difficulties inherent in migration, thus returning to the book's central concern with the experience of being an Australian. Using the Gnostic text of 'The Hymn of the Pearl' to illustrate nine stages of migration, she successfully combines the archetypal perspectives of the spiritual journey with the psychological perspective of actual migration in the outer world. She points out that the disorientation and loss of identity associated with the experience of being the stranger can be denied and defended against by projecting the image of the Stranger onto the indigenous peoples. They are then the recipients of fear and distrust as if *they* are the strangers and are forced to carry the alienation and humiliation of the migratory experience. Instead of the migrant moving on from this towards a renewed identity that reunites the old and the new, there is then, as Noonan suggested, a regressive idealisation of the country left behind.

Inevitably, in a collection of this kind, some chapters are less successful than others, although to some extent this may also be a matter of personal preference. Formaini's own chapter on 'The Father's Body' and Glenda Cloughley's chapter on 'Jocasta's Lament' seemed to go over rather the well-worn ground of the evils of patriarchy while Patrick Burnett's chapter on 'Dream Interpretation in a Group Setting' seemed somewhat out of place in this collection. Nevertheless, it may well be that Formaini's concern with the impact of the absent father has more 'bite' in the context of colonisation where women and child-rearing are left on the periphery while the men go out to 'conquer Nature' (and whatever indigenous people happen to be there).

As a whole, the book is an impressive tribute to the vitality of ANZSJA and a 'landmark' display of what Jungian Psychology has to offer those who seek a deeper understanding of the Australian experience as well as what the Australian experience has to offer the world of Jungian Psychology.

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