

Chapter Three

A seed is planted ...

A Call to Mindful Action

In this chapter I will trace the origins of Steiner Education in Europe, its context and its emergence in Australia.

From out of the ash destructive fires, sprouting seeds and green shoots emerge.
(Korobacz 1988:1)

I gaze out onto the street. It is unusually empty and quiet. Nothing is happening. Not even the dogs are barking. I am in Ubud and its Nyepi day on the Balinese religious calendar. On Nyepi the world expected to be clean and everything starts anew, with human beings demonstrating their symbolic control over themselves and the life force of the world. I had arrived on the eve of the festival unprepared. Even the automatic tellers were closed and there was nothing to eat. Fortunately food had been prepared the previous day and a simple nasi goreng (fried rice) was brought up to me for breakfast.

What to do?

I organise my writing table, I may as well commence work. I look out over the straw-coloured rice fields. Not a working duck in sight! A breeze ripples over the stooped and heavy-laden heads of rice. Over and against this peaceful scene I contemplate the chaos and turmoil in the Europe at the time my parents were born.

Following the Armistice of November 11 1918 and the ensuing collapse of the Central Powers and with the Allied blockade still in effect, economic and social chaos ensued. In Germany, the growing ranks of the unemployed were swelled by the return of disgruntled soldiers from the Western Front and because of hunger and destitution,

many were driven to join active revolutionaries of many persuasions, of the right and left.

As the peace Conference at Versailles opened on January 18 1919, violent street battles erupted in Berlin. (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2006. Ultimate Reference Suite DVD) The fomenting chaos within the crucible of Central Europe presented itself as a window of historical opportunity for meaningful wholesale change.

As a child, I recall my mother relating to me stories of the life in Germany. Born in 1917, she told me about her memories of the tumultuous times following the Great War: about suitcases of money required to buy loaves of bread, the rise of Hitler and the National Socialists, surviving the war years and the uncertainties of the post-war years until her arrival, with my father, in Australia in 1949. She spoke about her association with Anthroposophists, about Rudolf Steiner, Steiner Schools to which, she said, she would have sent me and my brothers, and her training as a kindergarten teacher. It was another world, made real by blue 'Airmail' letters from grandparents in an illegible Gothic script and the arrival of presents and Nuremberg 'Lebkuchen' (gingerbread) in time for Christmas.

Before the Armistice, and as early as 1917, Rudolf Steiner, a well-known public figure, speaker and philosopher was being asked by various members from within high levels of government of the Central Powers (Tautz 1991:1) for ways '... to show the German people the way out of this blind alley' (Von Lerchenfeld, cited in Wachsmuth 1989: 315) Steiner who had already published *A Theory of Knowledge Based on Goethe's World Conception* (1886), *Truth and Science* (1892), *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* (1894) and these informed the two Memoranda he offered by way of a response.

Steiner's thinking had developed out of, and in opposition to the neo-Kantian philosophy that dominated the thinking of academia and formed the power base of knowledge in the universities in Central Europe. In the three and a half decades leading up to 1917, he sought to establish a foundation of truth that included the possibility of understanding the spirit, together with the body and soul.

The two Memoranda included a peace plan and an outline of his thoughts about a threefold form of governance. These memoranda were presented by Count Lerchenfeld of the State Council of Bavaria to the German government and later by Count Ludwig Polzer Hoditz to the Austrian government through the Prime Minister. These memoranda were not enacted (Wachsmuth 1989).

It was Steiner's explicit perception that the consequences of a world without a reawakened and conscious awareness of spirit, would lead the world to the brink of disaster.

For a thousand years the idea of spirit as being an integral part of the human being had been banished (The Ecumenical Councils online). Steiner called on people to accept the possibility that human being was a being of body, soul and spirit saying:

It is important to realize that we are now living in an age when we must awaken the spirit once more, so that it can participate in the affairs of men [sic] (Steiner 1972a: 31). Spirit must again be recognized (Steiner 1964:71).

With the imminent collapse of the German Empire and with it, the eclipse of Central European culture, Rudolf Steiner challenged the German people to take stock of the nation.

The German people believed its empire, constructed half a century ago, was secure for all time. In August 1914 they thought that the coming

catastrophe of war would show it to be an invincible structure. But now they can only gaze upon its ruins.

Such an experience must give pause for thought and self-reflection, for it has shown the opinions of half a century, and particularly the dominant ideas of the war-years, to be an error of tragic dimensions. What are the underlying reasons for this disastrous mistake? (Steiner 1999:116).

Steiner then committed himself to providing practical solutions for social and cultural change based on this philosophical understanding. The most fruitful endeavour was in education.

Today too, we are faced with a world in chaos. The faith and certainties placed in the invincibility of science and its assurance of prosperity and progress during the post-war years have collapsed in the face of environmental degradation, climate change, financial collapse, educational inequity, poverty, issues of social justice and a series of ongoing and destabilizing wars (Chomsky 2010). Globalisation, driven by the digital revolution, has brought great benefits to people through immediate access to information, immediate worldwide communication and rapid travel around the world. In the wake of its triumphal procession, however, the logic of economic rationalism is accompanied by the twin spectres of regional resource exploitation and destruction of local values and culture (Chomsky 1999).

The Two-headed Dragon

Between Ulverstone and Burnie were two enterprises that attracted my childhood attention. Winding our way along the Bass Highway that hugged the rugged coastline, we had to pass by two factories that daily polluted the environment. As children with acute olfactory senses, we always made a ribald fuss, winding up windows and accusing each other of making the smells. The first sign of us approaching the beast was the ghastly stained coastline that only a fire-breathing, bile-spewing dragon could devastate. The eastern head was called the Titan, a paint pigment factory owned by a British

Company. Opened with fanfare in 1949, it was justified and praised with the well-worn argument that it was a source of income for the work hungry-labourers of the North West Coast. As it turned out, the sea for miles on either side was turned a sickening oxide colour that resulted from waste being poured into it. And, as you came in view of the factory, tall chimneystacks belched out nasty alien substances.

As a sixteen year old, I obtained holiday work at the Titan as a gardener. It was the first time that I realised the Titan had gardens! The job also included watering and mowing lawns around Company homes reserved for British managers and chemists who were, one had the impression, doing time in the colonies.

The Titan provided work for many along the coast and I was picked up every morning by a local car pool. On arrival, the car was parked in an appointed car park and was always clothed by a cover by its fastidious owner. It was then that I learnt that that in the smoke belching out from the dragon's nostrils were serious pollutants including vaporous sulphuric acid. Before the dragon snorted, an alarm siren blew warning for everyone to stay under cover! The car may have been protected but what of the workers? Another disturbing phenomenon was the layer of white ashen powder that covered everything, including the plants, like a shroud.

Having survived the first trial, we waited for the next. The western head of the beast was another belching demon that went by the name of 'The Pulp' (Australian Pulp and Paper Manufacturers - APPM). Stretched along Emu Bay on the outskirts of the deep-water port of Burnie - named after William Burnie, a director of the Van Diemen's Land Company - spread a huge factory, with countless steaming chimneys. It didn't appear as volatile as the Titan, but it was certainly smelly and the gauntlet of its olfactory assault was longer. Although I never worked at the Pulp, I did work nearby, managing

traffic on a highway upgrade with a stop/go sign and lived during the week in a Public Works Department camp opposite. Both of these enterprises eventually were closed or heavily scaled back... shrugged off by the island.

Once more we are called to pause to take stock and ask what the reasons are for these disastrous mistakes. What actions are required of us to bring about change? Despite tireless outer efforts to rectify what are but symptoms of a deeper malaise, a comparable effort is required to change who we are, in order to become, as Gandhi advised, the solutions we envision for the world (Cited in Zanjone 2009:14).

Education as a Cornerstone of Social Reform

In the following months, Steiner made himself the centre of this public activity by delivering seventy open lectures addressing workers in some of the largest factories in Southern Germany: Daimler (now Mercedes-Benz), Bosch and the Waldorf Astoria Cigarette Factory; speaking to leading industrialists, such as Robert Bosch; and discussing labour problems with unionists and employers in the Industrial Council (Wachsmuth 1989:359).

People were burning to form new initiatives. Workers from all works of life met, banded together and took part in Rudolf Steiner's lectures in overcrowded, smoke-filled rooms. Captivated by his words, people were happy to find a man who did not talk like someone living in an ivory tower. They talked with him about the great social problems in very concrete detail. (Steiner 1995:4)

The director of the Waldorf Astoria Cigarette Company, Emil Molt, an active supporter of the Three Fold Movement, proposed to Steiner in April 1919 the establishment of a school for the children of his workers in Stuttgart. He and Steiner collaborated over coming months resulting in the establishment of the *Freie Waldorfschule* (Free Waldorf School) that opened on September 7 with 253 children and 12 teachers (Barnes 1997:138).

Of all of the social proposals that Steiner put forward at the time, it seemed that the Free Waldorf School seed of initiative was the only one that took root and prospered. For this delicate plant, Steiner held high hopes.

The life of the Waldorf School was very close to Steiner's heart and he visited often to continue the instruction of the teachers and fine tune the direction of the School (Steiner 1986; 1996b) He saw the school movement initiative, in a small way, as being the seed for the future that he hoped might bear healthy fruit. He voiced his concerns for the future of the world's social life shortly after the Waldorf School's inception but saw in the practical teaching methodology by the Waldorf School that it addressed the needs of the threefold human being as '... labour[ing] for the social future of humanity' (Steiner 1945).

From as early as 1919, Steiner stated: 'The Waldorf School has been founded as a model' (Steiner 1986:54) and that all subsequent Steiner Schools should be based on it. At the time of Steiner's death in 1925, four new schools had been established: two in England, another in Hamburg and the fourth in the Netherlands. By the outbreak of World War II, sixteen schools were operative. Despite the closure of Steiner Schools by the Nazi regime throughout its jurisdiction before and during the war, the year after the end of hostilities (1945) saw the re-opening and establishment of twenty-four schools throughout Europe.

New seeds blown on the winds of the postwar European diaspora saw the establishment of Steiner Schools in North and South America, Africa, Australia and New Zealand. By 1977, there were one hundred and forty two schools worldwide, which included new schools in Europe (Childs 1996:37). The number of schools swelled in the 1990s following the breakdown of Communism in Eastern Europe and at the turn of the twenty first century, schools opened in Asia (Japan, Vietnam, India, Thailand, Philippines, China) and the Middle East (Israel and Palestine). In 2008, some

nine hundred and fifty eight schools and one thousand five hundred Kindergartens were operative (*Waldorfpädagogic* 2008).

Among those that carried the seeds of Steiner Education to Australia was my mother, Elisabeth Korobacz who was educated in early childhood care by teachers who were Anthroposophists. She immigrated to Australia in 1949 from Germany with my White Russian father, Viktor.

Here in Australia, its settlement as an English colonial outpost still largely defines and determines its governance and approach to living on this continent. Australia's European discovery was born out of the triumph of the new science of the Enlightenment (Roe 1965) and with its surety of unassailable reason, promised unlimited intellectual command. Cartesian mathematics allowed the production of maps that reduced place to a precise point on a Euclidian and geometric grid. Space became an abstract checkered game board on which the economic and political elite played out their strategies of world rule. Place was relegated as a subjective phenomena.

When the Portuguese explorer De Quiros in his caravel; Magellan and Torres in their Spanish galleons; and Cook in the 'Endeavour', plied the Pacific in search of Terra Australis Incognita, it was space that so tantalized and tortured them. Space is abstract and the Pacific, broad and open, empty and alluring, stimulated the Catholic imagination with visions of a Southland of the Holy Spirit (McAuley 1994:193). None saw in the flat doldrums of the Pacific, the seascape that Kupe and his *tahunga* (shaman-priest navigator) saw as they read the waves, the ocean currents, followed the directional migration of the whales, the flight of the birds and the whispered voices of the stars as they plied their waka (large Polynesian canoe) towards Aotearoa (New Zealand) (Ngati Kowhai o Waitaha 1994). Australia's early European visitors, such as Dampier and Tasman were unimpressed with its inhabitants and their lack of an identifiable culture and its alien and inhospitable landscape.

Cook put his faith in his daily astronomical readings, mapping coastlines (when he found them), taking soundings (while sailing through the Great Barrier Reef) and nutritional science, (providing his crew with sauerkraut, rich in Vitamin C, keeping the scourge of scurvy at bay).

During his second and third voyages, Cook had at his disposal an accurate chronometer (invented by Harrison) that made possible the measurement of longitude (Sobel 1995). By placing Greenwich, the nerve centre of the British Admiralty at 0° longitude, Great Britain announced itself as the centre of geographic and economic power. Place was reduced to a point on a map that took no account of human experience or human relationships. In 1770, in the name of King George III, Captain Cook claimed New South Wales as a possession of Great Britain. Only a mind shaped by the Enlightenment could declare the vibrant, occupied space of the Australian continent 'terra nullius'. In 1788, regardless of its Indigenous inhabitants, a British settlement was established in what they called and what is still known as Sydney.

Fortified by their Anglo-Celtic culture and confidence in the new science, the settlers of Australia struggled to adapt to an alien landscape. They sought comfort in making the unfamiliar, alien and strange landscapes familiar, by giving them the names of home: Middlesex Plains, Mersey River, Surrey Hills, Liverpool, Launceston, Newcastle, Perth ... (Carter 1987). With their honed sense of possession, they wove the co-ordinates of these places into the grids of their maps.

Having displaced the Indigenous inhabitants from country, 80% of Australia's population lives along the slither (within 50 kms) of its Eastern and southern coastlines. (Most Australians still live near the coast – Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998). They struggled to come to terms with the extreme climatic conditions of fire and flood and, exacerbated by erratic climate change weather conditions, continue to do so. Cocooned by the economic wealth of the mineral resource boom and its accompanying technological accessories, the challenge of the tyranny of distance has

been met by the invention of the combustion engine; the challenge of drought by the construction of dams and heat, by air conditioners run on electricity.

In formulating the vision for the Free Waldorf School, Steiner identifies the difficulties facing education through the intervention of business interests:

The cultural life has gradually become one that does not evolve out of its own inner needs and does not follow its own impulses, but, especially when it is under public administration, as in schools and educational institutions, it receives the form most useful to the political authority. The human being can no longer be judged according to his capacities; he can no longer be developed as his inborn talents demand. Rather it is asked, “What does the State want? What talents are needed for business? How many men [and women] are wanted with a particular training?” The teaching, the schools, the examinations are all directed to this end. The cultural life cannot follow its own laws of development; it is adapted to the political and the economic life. (Steiner 1972a:20)

The European presence in Australia, which has been dominated by Anglo-Saxon-Saxon/Celtic culture – and in particular land ownership – has only had a short history. Political leadership at the top has been slow to understand this country but awareness has grown on the periphery where survival in an isolated, ‘hostile’ environment has depended on adaptation, innovation, and strength in community, courage, independence, intermarriage and acceptance. (Cole 1988, Rothwell 2009)

By way of example, I offer a conversation with a tour guide from Wild Goose Tours, a local Indigenous business that took tourists out onto the flood plain of Kakadu National Park. I had organised the tour as part of a field trip for students from Kormilda College. We had been expecting Mick Alderson, buffalo hunter and charismatic member of the local Indigenous community to lead the tour and were disappointed to see a man of European origin leap from the bus.

Dairy entry

Patonga, Kakadu National Park, July 1989

'Goo'day, Mick's feeling a bit crook, so you've got me instead, I'm Alan.'

Although spritely and wiry, Alan had a head of snowy hair and at a guess would have been in his late fifties.

'We'll be traveling towards Jabiru and then back down the highway for a bit.'

He paused as he focused on the traffic as we took the turn north along the Kakadu Highway.

'Yes, look ahead and across to the paper-barks and screw palms on your left and into the flood plains. That's where we're headed, into Gagadju country, except we're getting there in a roundabout way. It's not open to tourists, unless they come in with us.'

It was a fair drive but I realised Alan was going to be talking all the way. His reference to 'us' alerted me to his part in the business.

'I came up here in the 60s from Adelaide as a young bloke and I found work building and fixing up the roads. After the wet, great stretches of road would disappear. None of them were sealed in those days. There were a few small uranium mines here then and there was a buffalo shooting camp for rich city slickers back at Nourlangie. They also took them out fishing for barramundi.'

'Have you lived here since?' I enquired.

'No, after a couple of years I went back to Adelaide, but I couldn't stand it. This place gets into your blood. Within nine months I was back for good.'

Turning onto the Arnhem Land Highway at Jabiru, we cruised through the endless eucalypt forest.

'I remember driving along here at the beginning of a wet with my wife and it was pouring down,' Alan continued as we passed over a creek crossing. 'It was getting dark and could hardly see a thing in front of us and we didn't want to get caught out. Driving slowly, I saw a tree across the road and stopped. I got out to clear it and was getting pretty wet. Then, unexpectedly, my wife said in an urgent voice, "Run!" Knowing she was never one to panic, I took off. As I leaped forward, I heard a swish through the air and knew immediately what it was. Bolting onto the verge and looking for a big stick, I turned and saw this enormous King Brown disappearing into the scrub. My wife said it had probably sheltered amid the fallen tree and had reared up and towered behind me. Now I'm six foot two, which would make that King Brown about nine foot.'

On telling his story and the way he kept referring to his wife, it dawned on both Deirdre and me that she was Aboriginal.

Aware of the stigma and shame attached to these liaisons by the white community, we discreetly enquired if it was the case. Alan answered in the affirmative and was happy to talk. 'If it weren't for the Aboriginal women, people like Paddy Cahill and the other buffalo shooters and croc hunters would never have survived. They worked for them during the hunting season, tanning the hides. They gave them comfort and in the wet season, kept them alive. If the supplies ran low, they knew where and what to hunt and if they got sick, they fixed them up with bush medicine. They were smart in the ways of the bush and passed it on to us,'

I have just returned from a temple ceremony where dancers performed the Sang Hyang Dedari (Trance Dance). The dance is intended to appease the gods and goddesses, with the hope that they will bless the village and is usually performed when a village is suffering from illness or a bad harvest. I was mesmerized by the graceful and co-ordinated movements of the young dancers and in contemplation was taken back to another ceremonial dance in East Arnhem Land.

Garma, Gulkula, August 2004

For an hour the Gupapuynga mob sat patiently and seriously focused on the edge of the *bungal* ground (ceremonial outdoor dance space), the old men, warriors and boys resplendent in their golden-yellow loin cloths and bodies exquisitely painted in yellow and red ochre, depicting their kinship totem. With ceremonial spears and digging sticks (a sign of working together), encouraged by the women sitting on the edge of the *bungal* ground, the body of dancers rose to the call of the singers, the rhythmic beat of the *bilma* (clap sticks made of hardwood) and the insistent drone of the *yidaki* (didgeridoo). They commenced dancing the ‘catfish dance’. Then, in ceremonial formation, brandishing their spears they preceded towards elders of the Gumatj clan. Standing at the other end of the *bungal* ground, representing and leading the Gumatj clan, Galarrwuy Yunupingu waited in dignified repose with his hands behind his back, indicating his welcoming reception of the advancing Gupapuynga who were giving it their all. With great ceremony, filled with deep feeling, Galarrwuy was presented with a work of art, depicting one of the many totems shared by both the Gumatj and the Gupapuynga. This ritual represented a renewal of the songlines that had lay dormant between the two clans for some forty years. This is Garma 2004, ‘... people with different ideas and values com[ing] together and negotiat[ing] knowledge in a respectful learning environment’ (Dr Yunupingu, quoted in Garma 2004:3).

Later, I am sitting at a typical Top End open air dining area (roof for shade and no walls for the air flow) at Gulkula, the traditional Garma festival site. Set among the stringy bark forests with a spectacular view of an azure blue Arafura Sea, I am enjoying the cooling sea breeze, contemplating what I had just witnessed, not certain what had transpired, and knowing only that it was significant, powerful and sincere in intent. I will eventually find out more of the background to this ceremony from Trevor Van Weeren, Garma's web page designer and former Yirrkala resident, but for now, sitting across from me in the restaurant is a very overweight Jack Thompson together with an Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) presenter, whilst behind me sits Fred Chaney, former Aboriginal Affairs Minister in the Fraser Government in conversation with Dr Marcia Langton, the Foundation Professor of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne. Yesterday, Ted Egan – songwriter, performer and Northern Territory Administrator – officially opened the Garma Festival, the cultural showpiece of the Yothu Yindi Foundation. This festival, which takes place every year at Gulkula, creates an environment where Yolgnu (the Aboriginal people of north-western Arnhem Land) and Ngapaki (non Indigenous Australians) meet, exchange and talk culture.

Following one of the many intersecting songlines of my life... I too am here.

Where had time flown since that barbeque in suburban Darwin in 1989 where I was a guest of John and Morag Hocknull? That evening with the representatives of a number of Northern and Central Australian Land Councils set me on a rapid learning curve of what it meant to be an in a Western dominated Australia. Together with my wife Deirdre, I had just arrived to teach at Kormilda College, a boarding school for Aboriginal students meeting the educational needs of the Top End of the Northern Territory. The school had been recently restructured and we had been hired by its new enthusiastic Director, Dr Peter Harris, who was inspired by the challenge of providing Aboriginal students with western educational opportunities. We had Steiner School teaching backgrounds and he hoped we might help breathe new life into the difficult interface of Aboriginal versus western education. During that dinner in 1989, we met Galarrwuy Yunupingu who spoke about the Yolgnu vision of a 'both ways' education:

an education, which would recognise the importance of Aboriginal knowledge and traditions, and overlap these with *Ngapaki* skills and information. Unfortunately, the ‘one way’ stream that was crystallizing in Kormilda soon numbered our days in the Top End.

Now, fifteen years later, Deirdre, and I find ourselves at Garma accompanying some thirty fifteen-year-old students and three teachers from Shearwater, the Steiner School we co-founded in Mullumbimby in 1993. Following three weeks of travel through outback Queensland, Katherine Gorge, Kakadu National Park and Darwin, the Year 9 class bumped their way over the dusty, red Bulman Road to Yirrkala where they were warmly welcomed by the teachers and students of the Yirrkala two-way school...

Sitting among the women Deirdre recognised a former student of ours at Kormilda College who approached her.

‘Do you remember me?’

‘Yes, I remember you.’

It was Bim Bim, Galarrwuy’s daughter. We have no trouble remembering or recognizing Bim Bim, who as a confident, alert and dignified 14 year old, was comfortable in negotiating western ways. Here she is fifteen years later, sitting among a powerful body of Gumatj women, reminding her father to also speak in English so that the Balanda (Europeans) might share in the proceedings.

Time collapses again and I have a vivid memory of arriving at Kormilda, somewhat burnt out and jaded by our painful – although fruitful – experiences in helping pioneer the second School to be founded in Australia: the Lorien Novalis School in North-West Sydney. We had ventured north, via Hobart, perhaps not realizing yet how important our new songline would turn out to be. Even in 1988, Darwin and the outback Northern Territory in particular, was still very much ‘cowboy

country', one of the few remaining geographical frontiers in a rapidly shrinking globalised world. There were still vast, panoramic spaces devoid of human habitation; undisturbed meandering rivers, flood plains, rugged escarpments and endless miles of flat scrub where one could go bush and find oneself in an environment rich in wildlife and native flora cared for in traditional ways by its Indigenous custodians. Throw into this crucible the western presence of cattle, mining, defense and government, close Asian proximity, a diverse ethnic population, and you'll get an idea of the vibrant community forging a new culture that could well serve as a model for the rest of Australia. David Bowman, the principal Research Fellow of the Charles Darwin University, echoes here in a forward to Hancock's *Top End* our feelings of then:

There is a tangible sense that history is being made here, with a new way of life being wrought by both Indigenous people and more recent settlers – from Europe, Asia and other parts of Australia. This sense of newness is amplified by Aboriginal history, which reaches back over a thousand generations into deep time. (Hancock 2001:5)

It is this new social chemistry that brought up for me the significant question of identity confronting all of us and like Somerville (1999) I ask: what does it mean to be Australian? What is it about this place that makes us Australian? What can place teach us? And what and how can consciousness of place bring to the content and practice of education?

Dr Yunupingu (former principal of the Yirrkala two way school and nationally and internationally known leader of rock group *Yothu Yindi*) is one among many who take a more positive approach. 'We are living in fluid times, trying to discover in more *profound* ways what it is to be Australian' (Dr Yunupingu, cited in Garma 2004:19). He goes on to say that he believes most Australians think Aboriginal Australians have a special contribution to make in answering this question but what that contribution might be remains largely a mystery to them. Through his people's vision of Garma, he wishes to demystify Aboriginal knowledge. And one aspect of this mystery, that non-Indigenous people have come to understand, is the Aborigine's profound relationship to the land.

When Galarrwuy spoke, he did so with a conviction born from knowledge of the law/lore/dreaming, gained by a living knowledge of country and ceremony, including song, dance and stories of the Ancestors and their songlines. And, during that eventful barbeque in 1989, he reminded me of the depth of my own western esoteric/mystery tradition, one that we are familiar with when working with the foundations of Steiner Education.

The Founding of the Free Waldorf School in Stuttgart

In April 1919 Steiner arrived in Stuttgart to launch the Threefold Movement for Social Renewal. Two days later on April 23, he was invited to address the workers of the Waldorf Astoria Cigarette factory.

In those days and in such discussion, thoughts of an all-compassing pedagogical reformation also arose. People felt that only a social pedagogy held within a free Spiritual Life could bring life-giving water into other areas of a parched and barren society. On the crest of a wave of the Threefold Movement, Emil Molt, then the Director of the Waldorf Astoria Factory in Stuttgart, put this impulse into effect by founding a school. (Steiner 1995:4)

Following the talk, together with Herbert Hahn and E.A.K. Stockmeyer (two of the future Waldorf teachers) he spoke with the plant managers. With their support, Emil Molt, the proprietor of the factory, invited Steiner to take on the ‘establishment and leadership’ a school for the children of his employees (Barnes 1997:146).

Within a few days, Steiner returned and agreed to undertake the task conditional on four stipulations: one, that the school should be open for all children, not only those from the parents of the factory; two, that it be co-educational; three, that the education be based on a comprehensive twelve year curriculum – as opposed to the customary streaming of students at an early age into university entrance and vocational trade schools; and four, that the teachers have freedom to run the school outside of the control of government and economic interests (Barnes 1997:146).

This fourth condition was the most radical as there was no tradition of private school education in Germany and all teachers were salaried civil servants. Steiner saw in education the seeds of the solution to the social problem (Wachsmuth 1989:357) and insisted on the freedom of the teachers working out of the cultural and spiritual sphere if education were to realise its creative potential. This was to be a fully independent school, freely supported by the economic sphere and compliant with the legal requirements of the State of Württemberg. It was significant that Württemberg was at that time (1919) the only state that would permit the establishment of independent schools ('Freie Schule') (Childs 1996:42).

Emil Molt happily accepted these conditions and set about employing his gifted organisational skills in bringing together the physical circumstances of the school, including the purchase and renovation of a restaurant in Uhlandshöhe on an eastern hillside of Stuttgart (Murphy 2012).

On August 20, commencing with an evening introductory lecture, Steiner launched into an intensive two week teaching training course for the selected foundation teachers, guest participants and Emil and Bertha Molt. In his introductory remarks, Steiner outlined the daily schedule of study:

The course will be held as a continuing discussion of general pedagogical questions, as a discussion of the special methods concerning the most important areas of instruction, and as a seminar to practice teaching. We will practice teaching and critique it through discourse. (Steiner 1996a:31)

These courses have now become the cornerstone of Steiner education study. (Steiner, 1966, 1967, 1976b) Each seminar session commenced with speech exercises, lead by Marie Steiner in order to cultivate speech - the foremost communication instrument of the teacher – and to awaken and enliven it to realise its dynamic and formative potential (Steiner 1967). On September 6, 1919, Steiner outlined the learning program for the eight classes and on the following day a thousand people gathered in a municipal auditorium to dedicate the *Freie Waldorfschule* (Independent Waldorf

School) to its task. In the following week, the two hundred and fifty three inaugural students met with their teachers and lessons commenced. By 1923 the school had grown to become a full twelve-class school with an enrolment of a thousand students.

The Establishment of Glenaeon, Australia's First Steiner School

Although Anthroposophy in Australia was studied while Steiner was still alive, the impulse to establish a school did not emerge until 1951. Eric Nicholls, a Melbourne trained architect who joined the office of Walter Burley Griffin, succeeded Lute Drummond as General Secretary of the Anthroposophical Society in Australia. He was enthusiastic about establishing a Steiner school. In a meeting of that year, it was proposed that Sylvia Brose, then a teacher at the Frensham School in Mittagong would train in Steiner education in Edinburgh, and return to Sydney to begin a school. The opportunity to obtain a venue for a school arose in February 1956 when the Anthroposophical Society purchased *Dalcross* at Pymble, and *Glenaeon* (11.75 acres of natural bush land) at Middle Cove. In 1957 Eric Nicholls formed the nucleus of a school council and Sylvia Brose returned from the Edinburgh Rudolf Steiner School to take charge of the foundation class at Dalcross.

I recall meeting Sylvia Brose in 1972, some eight months before joining Lorien Novalis. The Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) flew me to Sydney for a job interview and I took the opportunity to visit the Glenaeon Steiner School. Sylvia Brose received me and introduced me to Garry Richardson, the Chairman of the Glenaeon School Council (heir to the Victa Lawnmower estate) and benefactor of Lorien Novalis School.

Glenaeon was nestled between Castlecrag and Northbridge among twisted pink angophoras of a steep sandstone gully along which a creek flowed its way into one of

the arms of Sydney Harbour. It was a steep and difficult site to build on, but obviously not impossible as the extensive range of buildings attest to.

Hidden in the gully was a bamboo patch, which became an imaginative haven for the children. Riana Vanderbyl, a pupil in Sylvia Brose's foundation class, writes eloquently about this refuge, which seems to have left a deeper impression on her than the formality of the classroom.

The bamboo patch was our sanctuary. It was a living temple and a template of possibility. To pass beyond the known world you climbed rocks and jumped over vine-roped ledges that hung above the creek caves, entering a portal of rippling light into the shushsh - shush - shushsh of the floating island where stillness whispered, welcomed and waited.

Behind its living wall of serried shafts, shadow and sun fell in watery stripes through the fluted cool. Surrounded, as though by a thousand eyes, gradually you became aware of your breath and your own heart beating as you moved with alert reverence into a larger living entity. It could be a humbling experience to be there alone.

Deep within this dappled luminescence swathed in swaying green were secret forests with fortresses and lookout towers, cubbies and colonies. The tall springy stalks when climbed, bunched and bowed, became prancing ponies or high masts swaying above the rolling waves - a fleet of Argonaut's ships in a heavy storm, or the wings of giant birds sweeping us aloft to exotic lands. Here was the battleground for gods and heroes. The secret paths were alive with leaping Ninja and gymnast warrior swordsmen disguised as solitary monks ready to ambush (Vanderbyl 2013:18).

Close by in Castlecrag was the community of houses designed by Walter Burley Griffin. Influenced by his American compatriot Frank Lloyd Wright and Steiner's body of teaching, Griffin was a sensitive environmental architect. As in his plans for Canberra, the streets of Castlecrag meander, curl and turn back on themselves in harmony with the lie of the ridges and fall of the gullies. His distinctive flat roof houses, built out of the local sandstone, were blended into the environment, taking care not to impose or dominate. Thoughtful planting and landscaping re-enforced these considerations.

Steiner sought to establish the idea of an embodied self whose sovereign identity is realised by acknowledging his/her spiritual origin. He saw thought, particularly sense-free thinking as a spiritual activity from which all free activity is initiated, free of worldly precedent.

I had to show that man [sic] could never become a free being unless his actions have their source in those ideas which are rooted in the intuitions of the single individual. This ethical individualism only recognized as the final goal of man's moral development what is called the free spirit which struggles free of the constraint of natural laws and the constraint of all conventional moral norms ... (Steiner 1976a:138).

Steiner called this approach to knowledge making Spiritual Science or Anthroposophy and applied his researches to developing new approaches and directions in agriculture (bio-dynamics), science (astronomy, mathematics, botany, zoology) the Arts (architecture, sculpture, painting, music, speech and drama, Eurythmy (life movement), social and political reform and education. What attracted me to Anthroposophy was its human centeredness and how knowledge and understanding of the world were holistically and inclusively connected with self-knowledge. The Self was embodied and the body in turn found residence in place, a geographic location. It was this inclusive understanding that gave me a sense of identity while at the same time securing me with a feeling of connectedness.

With the exception of a handful of inspired teachers, I graduated from university unfulfilled and Faust-like, still searching and only marginally wiser. On my graduation from the University of Tasmania in 1972, I moved to Sydney's northwest where I joined a fledgling Steiner School in Glenhaven. It was here that I immersed myself in the study of Steiner's approach to knowledge while learning the art of education the hard way – through day-to-day practical experience.

Fortunately that school, Lorien Novalis, was given direction by Douglas Waugh, a lifelong student of Steiner's work and one time pupil of Walter Burley Griffin, the American architect, whose design of Australia's federal capital, Canberra, had brought him and his wife, Marion Mahoney Griffin (also an architect and artist) to Australia. Doug was a former teacher of English and scientific book editor with Angus and Robertson. He was concerned that the teachers receive a rigorous study program to ensure that they secure a firm foundation in spiritual matters and its implementation in the education of children. As a young teacher, I was in awe of his capacities. He possessed a mind of razor precision and panoramic overview and he was able to link his understanding of the spiritual to personal experience.

Key to his teaching was to promote the enhancement of diverse forms of educational communication. Central to this teaching was his understanding that the human being was itself, a work in progress, in a constant state of becoming. Life was a journey and that journey was interwoven with and intersected by the journey of humanity as a whole and the journey of the world we live in. The human being carries within multiple forms of identity and is capable of multiple forms of expression. To privilege any one of them would be at the expense of the others and especially that sacred part of us, which Thomas Merton calls the 'deeper silent self' (cited in Zajonc 2009:30).

'And what lies at the end of the journey,' I remember once asking him. Doug responded with a timeless story about the Gautama Buddha.

Soon after his Enlightenment, a man, struck by the Buddha's appearance, asked,

‘Fellow traveller, who are you, a heavenly being, a god?’

The Buddha replied, ‘No’

‘Are you a magus?’

Again he replied, ‘No’

Are you a man?’

‘No’

‘Then what are you ?’

‘I am awake.’

A long journey indeed! And which pathway should we follow?

Inspired by Goethe’s artistic engagement with the world, Doug considered the pathway of artistic engagement and work as a moderating and cautious way forward. He encouraged self-expression and creativity through active involvement with sculpture, painting and music. Above all, he held the arts of Speech and Drama and the movement art of Eurythmy, as developed by Rudolf Steiner and his co-workers, in high regard. Doug had realized by painful experience the limitation of intellectual communication and that living intelligence and its exploration is better served through the cultivation of aesthetic engagement. This form of personal activity would not be healthy or complete without commitment to social and community initiatives, such as education, in which the individual, together with like-minded colleagues would also provide needed community services.

For us as teachers, this form of personal development also became professional development. The holistic approach to education in Steiner schools is often characterized by the phrase ‘head, heart and hands’. Nigel Thrift (cited in Cresswell 2008:37) also acknowledged the three-fold condition of the human being: thinking, feeling and willing. He too thought that for too long the head has subordinated the body in the study of social geography. He saw places as being constructed by people doing things.

Steiner (1972b) considered education as an art form and encouraged its aesthetic delivery. This has been supported by Eric Berne who commented that '[F]or children, the senses in one's early years are more aesthetic than intellectual' (Berne quoted in Porteus 1990:152). Taking this approach to children's education at Lorien Novalis, involved developing a praxis (Kolb 1984) of experiential learning in which a recurring process of reflexive engagement with theory, action and reflection took place. It was more chaotic than this afterthought suggests, alchemical rather than organised experiment.

Doug was also adamant about consciously acknowledging the place in which we lived. In his role as an editor with Angus & Robertson he sought to bring the understandings of science to a wider public in a pictorial way through the lived experience of writers working in the field. He encouraged us to explore, investigate and study Australia's geology/geography, flora, fauna and the human engagement and bring the immediacy of our researches to the classroom. He enthused us with his vision of Australia, its potential and spiritual future. He suggested we reflect and re-evaluate the appropriateness of European content of what had become known as 'the Steiner curriculum' and the Anglo-centric agenda of the State run schools, and consider creating imaginative content that better met the needs of children living in this place, on the oldest of continents.

Doug also foresaw the environmental problems that now besiege the world. The premise of this thesis, that we as human beings can become creative place makers in partnership with our immediate environment (geographic, social, cultural), rests on the understanding that we have access, through 'intuitive thinking' to generative spiritual processes that can determine how things will come to pass, to effect the course of destiny.

Conventional theories of cognition perceive brain activity as the result of other, invisible, unknowable forces; atoms, chemical forces, the unconscious, or in other words, the immediate product of our environment. Welburn (2004) has made the case

that Steiner should be seen as having offered a moral view of knowledge not as abstract objectivity but as a creative relationship between knower and known, that knowledge cannot be separated from the 'locus of its emergence: the self in development' (96). Thinking is self-generated, self-sustained and has to be taken as the starting point for all knowledge, both of the human being and the world. Without this self-sustaining activity we could know nothing about the world. All knowledge begins with the elaboration of thoughts about perception.

However, Steiner's point was that new ideas and initiatives can and should arise through the individual embedded in a community that fosters, recognises and protects the individual who is able to selflessly serve the community through his or her initiative (Steiner 1979:97). Steiner was convinced that liberated spiritual life (in the individual) is a necessary foundation for developing social understanding (98). For Steiner spiritual life in this sense was essentially the activity of free thinking where

...the human being is not a passive onlooker in relation to evolution, merely repeating in mental pictures cosmic events taking place without his participation; he is the active co-creator of the world-process, and cognition is the most perfect link in the organism of the universe (Steiner 1981:297-8).

His social ethic was most concisely summed up in his aphorism,

The healthy social life is found when in the mirror of each human soul the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the community the virtue of each one is living. (117)

The activity of becoming conscious place-makers comes up against the monolithic edifice of the centrally controlled state and its institutions, designed in part, to maintain itself. Foucault (1981) recognized in the power of the state, its implicit connection to knowledge and truth, produced as it is, as a result of 'multiple constraints'. It would not have truth be the '... reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves' but a '... thing of this world' (131) centred on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions that produce it. To control and produce its 'regime' of power/knowledge/truth, it creates and maintains, institutions of research, instruments

of dissemination (media, education), instruments of control (army, police, prisons, mental institutions) and control of the economy. The area of contestation is narrow and viewed as an ideological struggle.

In order to open up discourse that would challenge the assumptions, practices, and outcomes taken for granted in dominant culture of the regime' in the area of education, Gruenewald (2003) proposed a 'critical pedagogy of place' that seeks the twin objectives of decolonization and 'reinhabitation' through synthesizing critical and place-based approaches. He proposed that a critical pedagogy of place asks all educators to reflect on the relationship between the kind of education they pursue and the kind of places we inhabit and leave behind for future generations. Gruenewald concedes that developing a movement for critical, place-based educational practices to be a difficult proposition, given the cultural complexity of decolonizing and reinhabiting places and the current educational climate that is '... increasingly focused on quantitative, paper-and-pencil outcomes' (11).

The struggle between the centralised state and the outlying periphery (the place based embodied centre) is a phenomenon of the times. I have experienced individual and group initiatives stifled by asphyxiating compliance requirements, place-ignorant benchmark testing and placeless national curriculum agendas. Non-compliance threatens the receipt of government funding.

Like a restless underground river that continues to threaten to break out onto the surface of world events and that flows throughout this thesis is the disturbing contradiction that besets human nature in contemporary times. Ben Aharon (2011:3) in his study of the transformation of human consciousness in recent times and its expression in the areas of philosophy, science and art, articulates this conundrum succinctly: why, despite discovering in more fully conscious ways, that we are '... beings of *becoming* inhabiting a universe of becoming', are we always looking for eternal un-becoming? Why are we seeking to cling to the eternal in its seventeenth century reformulation in matter and invoke laws of conservation to uphold and justify

an unchanging eternity? Ben Aharon suggests that this riddle lies at the base of ‘... the most ancient of human drives’.

While this work does not investigate the pathway of political contestation, it acknowledges that challenge and change (whether it be in education or in any other area of life) has important repercussions and consequences. (See my interactive model for contemporary learning on p.350).

Steiner foresaw in the isolating nature of reductionist science, the environmental degradation of the planet. The Cartesian guillotine that severed the connection between body and mind guaranteed the fragmentation of human activity and its resulting alienation. It is for this reason that I have given space to elaborate Steiner’s inclusive monist philosophy of ethical individualism and his later Anthroposophical worldview. In calling on the recognition of the human being as threefold being (body soul and spirit) he wished to bring about at-one-ment or communion of mankind through conscious recognition of the inter-connectedness of life.

Emerging from the writing of this chapter, I discovered separate strands of enquiry that strangely resonated between Europe and Australia. Like musical overtones, they came together not in sequence but rather as the harmonics of a chord. To arrange these chronologically was to destroy the harmonic. Building on the learning of the previous chapter I wanted to keep place at the centre of the writing. I found the work fell almost naturally into being arranged by place. When I spoke of one place there was an echo of another time, and of other places.

In summary what became clear through the process of composing this chapter is that there is a clear echoing of four essential components in the establishment of Steiner Education in Europe and Shearwater. These are: a crisis requiring ethical action; the struggle to allow the possibility of spirit; diaspora; and the creation of

foundation schools that saw, as critical work, the nurturing the teachers as creative people.

In Europe the first Steiner school was a response to the crises of Central European identity and the call for ethical action while in Australia the Lorian stream of Steiner schools were established as a response to the crises of place and also a call for ethical action. During the early decades of the twentieth century, Steiner struggled with how to admit and communicate the possibility of Spirit in philosophy; while in Australia we struggle with the acknowledgment of the Indigenous understanding of country, in which spirit and place are indivisible.

The fourth mentioned essential component concerns the nurturing of the teachers as free creative agents. In the Free Waldorf School the teachers were encouraged to transform a philosophical idea into a living school and that became the impetus and model for the creation of other Steiner Schools. In Australia the nurturing of the teachers in the first of the Lorian stream of Steiner schools enabled those teachers to go out to other places and create new schools.

The third component is the interesting nature of diaspora. It brings into question the morality associated with the consequences of colonisation. Can the seeds of inspiration and the 'cuttings' from cultural institutions be successfully transplanted to other continents? Can what is being brought as cultural diversity and new ways of learning to a place that is other, harmonise and adapt to a new environment? Does place enhance and transform a plant cultivated in another clime?

These seeds travelled from Europe to Australia with those migrating from one place to another, leaving traces like the dots of songlines found in in the desert paintings of Indigenous Australians. The seeds arrived here with my parents and others. So too has a seed travelled with me as I have moved from one place of learning to another within Australia, and through my songlines I trace the process of diaspora.

Songlines of Learning

My Learning Places

2

Places of Apprenticeship

In this folio I outline the seminal influences I experienced in becoming a teacher during my stay at the Lorien Novalis School. It was here that I learned to become an active educational place maker.

‘What do you mean by “stop”?’ I asked.

A ‘stop’, he said was a ‘handover point’ where the song passed out of your ownership, where it was no longer yours to look after and no longer yours to lend. You’d sing to the end of your verses, and there lay the boundary.

‘I see,’ I said. ‘Like an international frontier. The road signs change language, but it’s still the same road.’

‘More or less,’ said Flynn. ‘But that doesn’t get the beauty of the system. Here there are no frontiers, only roads and “stops”.’

Suppose you took a tribal area like that of Central Aranda. Suppose there were six hundred Dreamings weaving in and out of it? That would mean twelve hundred ‘handover points’ dotted around the perimeter. Each ‘stop’ had been sung into position by a Dreamtime Ancestor: its place on the song-map was thus unchangeable. But since each was the work of a different ancestor, there was no way of linking them sideways to form a modern political frontier. (Chatwin 1998:59)

Behold a man clothed in Rags, standing at a certain place, with his face from his own house, A Book in his hand, and a great Burden on his back ... (J Bunyan, cited in Backhouse 1996:11).

The restless journey of my parents from the Asiatic side of the Urals, through to Central Europe and across the equator to the Southern Hemisphere’s Australia and then even further South over a turbulent strait of water to Tasmania, found finality in the home they created in Gawler. My father was done with travelling. The only regular excursions he made after he settled were to the neighbouring towns of Devonport, Penguin and Burnie to watch the Ulverstone Robins play Australian Rules football. On the odd occasion, he even ventured to Wynyard and Latrobe.

Despite the stability of this healthy environment, I, in turn, developed an adolescent restlessness whose inner voice at first whispered and eventually screamed:

‘Get me out of here!’ That cry, I was later to realise, was actually heard by thousands of other young Tasmanians who spread their wings and dispersed to all parts of the globe to pursue careers and vocations that small Tasmania would never have been able to accommodate. Many, like the migratory shearwater, return to visit the ‘nesting grounds’ of their childhood with fond memories and not without a little guilt in wresting themselves free from the nourishing breast and comforting arms of their former home.

I bided my time. Like the ripples on a disturbed pond, my range of adventuring radiated slowly but steadily outward. I caught the bus or rode my bike to the Ulverstone Central Primary School and commenced my secondary education at the Ulverstone High School, a kilometer to the east. In order to matriculate, I travelled daily to the Devonport High School and eventually released myself from the clutches of the North West coast on enrolment at the University of Tasmania.

The Sandstone Crucible

Lorien Novalis School for Rudolf Steiner Education (Normanhurst)

In response to the general lamentation of the cultural paucity of Tasmania, my esteemed teacher, Dr. Wojtowicz’ smiled as his imagination was illuminated. He replied in an unexpected alchemical way: ‘Civilization is like a chemical process. Before changes, alterations and creativity can occur, formulas are required with specific ingredients. These ingredients also require being of sufficient quantity and mass. Tasmania had little of the first (creativity) and not enough of the second (population)’ (T Wojtowicz n.d., pers. comm.).

It was time to heed the insistent call of that inner voice and get out...

I had expected much from university. After three years of study, I felt disappointed that it had not answered the great world questions that I sought to

elucidate. Like Faust – who had after all studied Philosophy, Law, Theology and Medicine – I stood as perplexed as ever in face of the meaning of life!

I then remembered the conversations with my mother about Anthroposophy and how they had resonated in me in an otherworldly way. Faust-like again, I had dabbled with the otherworld, through the use of hallucinogens. And though intriguing, the consequent fragmentation and depression had led me further distant from dealing with the riddles of existence.

I began reading the books and lectures of Rudolf Steiner and about the implementation of his work in meaningful endeavours such as Education, the Arts, Agriculture and Science. My interest waxed.

In 1972, there was an optimistic mood of change in the air. The tired coalition government of William McMahon was disintegrating and an energetic Labor Party, led by the visionary Gough Whitlam, was poised to take power.

Later that year, my mother sent me a clipping from a German Anthroposophical Magazine in which a Steiner School in Sydney, Lorient Novalis, had advertised for teachers for its recently established enterprise. I responded and received a positive reply from one of its founders, Alan Whitehead. With my young family, we flew to Sydney to investigate the School and were picked up by Alan and his daughter Aanya at the Normanhurst Railway Station. He drove us to the School immediately where we were quickly introduced to the staff and made welcome.

The School had a vibrant, communal energy and it was immediately obvious that the staff cared about what they were doing. Everyone, students and teachers, called each other by their first names and the children were busily engaged and occupied. Meals were cooked on the premises with the whole school joining together for lunch.

The building at Normanhurst was a bungalow home at the end of a cul-de-sac that had been purchased by the then Chairman of the Gleneaton School Council, Gary Richardson. Bedrooms and living rooms had been magically transformed into classrooms and teaching spaces, complete with a Kindergarten and its own play area. The backyard play area lead down to a creek where the children played among the sandstone boulders, ferns and angophoras. Endemic to the Sydney region, this sandstone ecology would for the following fifteen years contribute to shaping where I was to live and who I was to become.

We were driven over to Annangrove where Thomas and Gudrun Ludescher hosted us for our stay. They rented a small but comfortable shack on the property of Rainer and Eva Fieck who were also co-founders of the school.

Thomas and Gudrun were graduates from the Steiner Teacher's Seminar in Stuttgart and had initially traveled to Australia to follow the renowned speech teacher Mechthild Harkness, who had heeded the call of Alice Crowther to teach in Australia. Thomas and Gudrun had also worked at Warrah, a Steiner Curative School and Home in Dural.

Rainer Fieck had Anthroposophical connections through family in Germany. He too had worked in a Curative Home on his arrival in Australia, in his case at Inala in the West Pennant Hills, under the watchful eye of Dr Joachim and Kyra Pohl.

He then took up an appointment at the Gleneaton Steiner School where he taught woodwork and commenced teaching a Primary School Class. It was there that he met Alan Whitehead and their fateful connection lead to the commencement of Lorien Novalis. During our visit, Rainer was engaged in running a successful business, *Ark Toy*, making aesthetically designed, innovative wooden toys including meaningful play equipment and useful children's furniture out of radiata pine. It was he who developed the prototype for the primary school desk, design unchanged, that is still in use throughout many Steiner Schools in Australia.

In Rainer's workshop, I also met David Jacobson who was helping *Ark Toy* meet its Christmas rush orders. David, one of Gleneaton's founding students, was studying architecture at Sydney University under the tutelage, among others, of Glenn Murcutt, and had been commissioned by the Lorien to design the Kindergarten. He was later to design many Steiner Schools throughout Australia and is Shearwater's design award winning architect.

Rainer had an energetic manner, with a confident relationship to the world around him. Eva was a dutiful parent and, as her youngest son Gero was now spending time in the Kindergarten, she was able to turn her attention to her choice of study: the movement art of Eurythmy. Her second daughter, Undine, who was one of the founding students of Lorien, eventually became a colleague and Primary School Leading Teacher at Shearwater, The Mullumbimby Steiner School.

On the weekend, we visited Alan and Susan at their home in Maraylya, a further twenty minutes drive in the direction of the Cattai Creek that flows in to the Hawkesbury River.

Alan, trained as a graphic artist, was the art teacher and a high school Class Guardian at Gleneaton and Susan was the founding Kindergarten Teacher at Lorien Novalis.

With little cash flow, they had managed to pioneer a much loved home in a part of the bush not renowned for its rainfall. They ran chooks, kept a vegetable garden and a small orchard had been planted. Both were highly imaginative people but where Alan was decidedly voluble, Susan was reticent and shy. Alan had a wonderful veneration for nature that, together with his vivid imagination and artistic sensibilities, would lead to the creation of hundreds of stories, plays and songs that would inspire a generation of Steiner Teachers within what became known as the 'Lorien Stream'. Through her

own appreciation of nature, Susan too would create wonderful stories for the Kindergarten, drawn from the wisdom of a deep-seated spirituality.

Next door at Maraylya, I was introduced to the Hans and Pam Schultz who were also involved with the running of Lorien. Hans was German and a professional artist who worked in the Art Department at Formica. His design sense was instrumental in creating the distinctive and unique letterhead and logo for Lorien Novalis. Pam, who worked as a laboratory technician at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (C.S.I.R.O.) would for years carry the burden of being the bookkeeper/treasurer of the School. This she pursued with unsung integrity and credibility. She would also successfully complete a cycle as a Primary School Class Teacher.

In the following week, I also met Marcus Harkness, a young man of my own age whose talent as a musician/ songwriter would inspire many teachers within the Lorien Stream. Thomas Ludescher took me to an end of year performance at *Boama*, the Speech and Drama Studio run by Mechthild Harkness. There, students performed monologues and items of poetry and demonstrated Eurythmy. Mechthild gave a polished and memorable performance as Lady Macbeth in the “dagger scene” and on that evening, I also met Marj Waugh, that consummate artist of Speech and Eurythmy who was later to play such an important role in the artistic development of Lorien Novalis.

The teachers at Lorien spoke of forging a new way in education, not just emulating and repeating the well-tried European formula of Steiner education practice now well established in Europe and America, but a spiritually founded education that took into account the continent of Australia and its Southern Hemisphere location. In the same breath, the name Doug was mentioned in hushed tones, a teacher, a man adept in Spiritual Science, someone who had patiently mastered the path of spiritual training of Rudolf Steiner, a man of razor sharp mind who married Aristotelian scholarship with clairvoyant capacity.

If anyone could build a school out of nothing, I was confident these people could do it. Here was a place where I could heal the fragmentation of ideology, identity and practice.

Fired with enthusiasm, there was agreement for me to join this creative venture and to return early in 1973 before the commencement of the new school year. With Garry Richardson's assistance, the School had acquired a five-acre property along Old Northern Road in Glenhaven and the rambling brick house required extensive modification to accommodate the school.

Lorien Novalis School for Rudolf Education (Glenhaven)

It was on a warm sunny afternoon on December 30 in 1972 that I drove our fully laden FB Holden the short distance from my family home in Gawler to Devonport where the Bass Strait ferry, The Princess of Tasmania was berthed. Following embarkation and a deep blast of the ship's horn, the ferry passed through the heads of the Mersey River and slipped my small family out of Tasmania. On the previous evening, my father, in a prescient moment, reminiscent of a scene from a Dostoevsky novel, wept, in sympathy he said, for the suffering that he saw I was to pass through.

On disembarking the following morning, we followed the Princes Highway out of Melbourne that passed through Gippsland and followed the coast up into New South Wales. It was New Year's Eve and as evening approached there was not a room of accommodation to be had. We drove all night and on the following morning arrived at Glenhaven; five minutes drive from Castle Hill.

Convicts were sent up here early on to farm a patch of good soil. Cotton and coffee failed, but the colony's first orange trees prospered. Irish convicts rebelled and marched on Parramatta, but marines near Vinegar Hill in another of Australia's small slaughters stopped the uprising. When the convicts and soldiers disappeared a few farmers remained and for the rest of the century five families bred and interbred in Castle Hill. Soldiers coming home in 1919 were given plots of land to go bankrupt growing passionfruit and oranges. After the Second World War, when Sydney began to sprawl in all directions, a Green Belt was declared and Castle Hill found itself in a cordon of five- acre farms. (Marr 1995:267)

Thirty kilometers northwest of Sydney Cove, Lorien Novalis was perched on a ridge at Glenhaven, overlooking a panoramic view of the Blue Mountains in the west. Past an orchard of oranges, the property fell away into undisturbed sandstone bush country, with its creeks, twisted angophoras, grevillias and banksias. On top of the property, one of New South Wales' oldest established roads, The Old Northern Road, passed by the front gate.

With the aim of finding new country for settlement and farming to feed the struggling colony, Governor Phillip, with a retinue of twenty one men, is credited with being the first European to visit the area, traveling from Parramatta in April 1791. On their way through present day Pennant Hills, the expeditionary party raised the British flag. Some five kilometers to the south of Glenhaven, was the village of Castle Hill, where Australia's only winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature – Patrick White - lived and wrote.

On arriving in nearby Dural we rented a small cottage and caravan on the property of a Mrs. Richardson who ran an organic garden on her five-acre block off Annangrove Road. A widow, – her husband was brother to Victor Richardson of 'Victa' lawn mower fame, she was also aunt to Garry, Lorien's generous benefactor. The cottage was a bit run down but nothing that a bit of handiwork couldn't redeem. That was the way it was at Lorien, 'to build something out of nothing' as my mother would often say. The industriousness of my parents had prepared me well for what was to come.

The Place By The Lake

Intense summer light sparkled off the Hawkesbury River's estuarine waters as we descended towards the river crossing where, in the distance, yachts and other watercraft danced on their moorings. The bridge, catering to both motor traffic and rail, extended like a causeway into the blueness of the crossing. On the northern side, engineering works of ancient Egyptian monumentality, like a visionary project of along forgotten pharaoh, allowed the highway to cut through massive layers of the Sydney sandstone, exposing towering walls of multi-coloured lamination.

The Lorien Novalis teaching faculty had requested that Doug Waugh conduct a course of instruction that would offer inspiration for the coming school year. Doug agreed and he and his wife, Marj, kindly offered as a venue, their recently acquired home on the shores of Lake Petite, which flowed into Lake Macquarie.

Their modest bungalow was situated at the top of the property, next to a neighbouring house and close to a road, along what Doug termed the 'fear line.' All the blocks on their street were long and narrow, having direct access to the lake. Part of any visit to Doug and Marj was a stroll down their seventy-meter 'pad' as they called it, which they had planted out with hundreds of shrubs and trees. What was once a bare tract of lawn was over the years transformed into a sheltered grove along which, in his peripatetic manner, Doug mused and discoursed on the mysteries of life. The planting also attracted the birds and part of Marj's routine was to feed the butcherbirds mince. At the water's edge, one could take advantage of the well-appointed seating and take in the tranquility of the lake. If he were in the mood, Doug would take you out onto the lake in his aluminium dinghy, which he manoeuvred with strength and skill, steering it through a small connecting strait to the wide and often choppy expanses of Lake Macquarie.

‘It’s a good place to talk without being monitored,’ he once conspiratorially quipped, alluding to his connections with the intelligence community. Having worked in Military Intelligence with the AIF in New Guinea in 1942-43, no visit was free of a convincing and clear, in-depth analysis of both the local and the world stage and the machinations that went on ‘behind the scenes’.

The trip to the lake became a regular pilgrimage, whether as part of a group or on an individual basis. I became one of his pupils and he my mentor.

Place as a Wellspring of Imagination

The Lorien Novalis impulse was based on two shining pillars; the first was to ‘Australianise’ Steiner Education, drawing inspiration from our own time and place, rather than from central Europe of the 1920s. The second was to imbue every element of the work with the Spirit of Creativity (as recommended by Steiner) – to seek fresh new forms, whether academic, artistic or activity. Only then can the soul and spirit of the child be truly illuminated. (Whitehead 1992:13)

As the commencement of the term began to loom, the Lorien staff returned from holidays and made enthusiastic preparations for the new school year. *The Maples*, its name honouring the magnificent liquid amber that dominated the view from its western balcony, was a sturdy red brick house, which we proceeded to modify in order to accommodate the Kindergarten and three primary school classes. Downstairs, the garage was transformed into a woodwork and craft teaching space. Timetables were arranged for the term and playground duties organized.

There was no obvious hierarchy among the teachers and minimal structure. There were no predetermined salaries and teachers were entrusted to write their own weekly income cheque. It was at once egalitarian and naïve. Here I was, a raw untrained teacher with a young family, asked to draw my own salary from a very limited school fund! Luckily I had the income backing from my university holiday work that I had managed to squirrel away to support my first year at Lorien in my

position, which would best be described as a student teacher. Grateful for the freedom to learn, I set about organizing my own learning program; teacher education in painting and drawing with Inessa Tenekist, Eurythmy with Marj Waugh, Speech with Mechthild Harkness. During the day, I sat in on classes and taught all classes and in the evening I read hundreds of Steiner lectures, attended endless College (Staff) meetings, School Council meetings, planning meetings and, most exciting, sat with Alan, Susan and Marcus learning how to create stories. On the weekends, I often attended school working bees.

Places Among The Trees

Architecture and the Lorien Novalis Kindergarten

One of the enduring work relationships that I have is with the Manly architect, David Jacobson, a man of steady gaze, structured thought and well-considered action. He has a strong head of wavy (now greying) hair, is wiry of frame and has slender, tapered feet reminding me of the figures in ancient Egyptian friezes. David has always enjoyed the forces of nature and since I have known him, has always lived by the sea: Lavender Bay, Church Point Manly and now Suffolk Park. His considered and respectful awareness of nature and the influences of Glen Murcutt, Richard Lepastrier and Walter Burley Griffin, who all share a strong architectural sensitivity for landscape, have shaped David's approach to design.

While still a student, Lorien Novalis commissioned him to design the Kindergarten building for the Glenhaven site. His first consideration was the site and he nestled the extensive complex next to the protective spread of the liquid amber tree. It was an impressive design under a major hexagonal dome surrounded by three smaller hexagonal spaces.

With a Schools Commission grant and a bank loan, construction of the Kindergarten commenced under the direction of Rainer Fieck. An excellent source of matured Oregon pine beams were recovered from the Shell petroleum storage plant at Rose Hill. These were milled to produce the hexagonal sectioned columns, which were

hoisted into place by a hired crane and connected to allow the construction of the roofs. The Staff continued to build the Kindergarten for the duration of their 1974-75 holidays, regardless of their level of skill.

It was through the continued educational, architectural and financial planning, negotiating with local government and eventual construction of the Lorien building program that I learned about the processes, understandings and skills required to complete what, at first sight, might appear to be a simple project.

Apart from learning how to read architectural plans and balance sheets, understand sequential construction processes and apply for building grants and bank loans, what fascinated me most about the building process was the architectural brief and how it could be translated into ‘timber and gal’. Many examples of Steiner School architecture throughout the world appeared to me to stand like concrete monoliths that are pale imitations of the second *Goetheanum* that dominates the Jura limestone hill in Dornach, Switzerland. I recall a weekend seminar at Doug’s where building was often a point of discussion ...

‘Why wouldn’t you want to build one of these?’ enquired Doug indicating the black and white plate of a classroom block built in West Germany with its distinctive stubby, steep-pitched roofs and small windows.

‘It looks like a gnome’s house,’ caroused the enthusiastic Kindergarten assistant.

‘It just wouldn’t look right in the Glenhaven landscape,’ muttered Alan.

‘Why not?’ countered Doug patiently

‘Well, those steep-pitched roofs are meant to shed snow and it doesn’t snow here.’ I offered.

'Those small windows wouldn't offer much of a breezeway on a hot February afternoon,' continued David, 'and where are the shady verandas to relieve the children from the hot midday sun and keep them dry when the afternoon thunder storm breaks?'

'Yes, let's get rid of the masonry. Timber cladding and plenty of aluminium sliding glass windows will save us heaps on materials and on an air-conditioning bill,' added the accountant.

'I don't want any trees cut down to make room for any building,' insisted Ben, the science teacher.

'And while we're at it, we'll decrease the size of the roof height, the kids are only little,' continued the bursar, already counting the savings.

'Yeah, if we follow that path, we might as well use 'Renta Demountables' or Bi-steel sheds! They're really cheap,' responded David sarcastically, 'and you'd save on an architect.'

'There needs to be a place for aesthetics and volume!' chimed in the eurythmist. 'How can I provide the children a sense for 'back space' if you give me a pokey box to move and speak in? But, above all, the building must be beautiful.'

'You wouldn't be happy until you had the Taj Mahal,' said Terry the builder who had sat quietly to this point. 'I've only got a limited budget. Let's keep it simple.'

'Byron's got a point,' called Doug, 'The building, when designed, and it will be a beautiful building, will in all likelihood, leave a more meaningful imprint on you, more so than you having an influence on its design.'

The room went silent.

'Don't underestimate the influence that structure and space have on all of us. The children are more impressionable than us. That's why you have a talented architect to arrange space and organize structure in a most appropriate way for the development of the children. In the Kindergarten and the early years of Primary School, transparency of structure is vital. The children need to see the structure of the building and how it keeps standing. The structure of the columns, lintels and roof rafters need to be visible and obvious. These should not be hidden. They can become an artistic feature. Internal space is just as important. Remember what Dr Steiner said about the first Goetheanum.'

'Didn't he say it was something like one of those European cake tins?' responded the sculpture teacher.

'Yes, a 'kugelhupf,' continued Doug, 'the cake that is shaped by a decorative tin. The interior becomes the qualitative element. The space created by the structure becomes a multi-dimensional medium with which the teacher and the children create anew every day. The space is sacred and should not be tampered with and it must be respected as such by the children and adults.'

Kelly, our very practical Class Four teacher broke the thoughtful silence.

'Would those verandas be roomy enough to teach craft under David? And while I can get a word in, I need a good storeroom and a handy place to keep my painting equipment.'

'I worry about the trees. I don't want them cut down. Their seeds bring in the cockatoos. Lose one and we lose the other,' insisted Ben.

'Ben has a point.' Everyone settled and gave Doug their full attention. *'You have a beautiful rural site out at Glenhaven with magnificent stands of gum tress as well as the distinctive deciduous liquid amber. Consider the lie of the land and be sensitive as to where and how you place your buildings. Even in crowded Hong Kong where land is sold by the square yard, architects will consider the 'feng shui' and consult the local geomancer.'*

'Feng what?' queried Rick.

'Wind and water,' continued Doug. *The Chinese have been aware of Earth's energy flows for centuries. We call them etheric currents or undine lines. The Aborigines call them songlines and their sacred sites mark the intersections of these lines.'*

'Look what have they done to the Tank Stream!' wailed an alarmed Ben.

'Where are we going to find a Geomancer?' queried Don already adding a new item onto the stretched budget.

'Don't worry about it, that's why you've got David,' countered Doug still maintaining his patience.

'Now here's one for you Don,' interjected an excited Tom, turning to the flustered accountant, *'there's all this wonderful Australian light. Why pay all that electricity?'* and, pointing to the black and white photo, he continued, *'Could we lift the roof and create clerestory windows?'*

'Good idea ...'

Since that first meeting, I have sat in many others where building matters were raised and the points of considerations never alter: place and placement, light, weather (usually sun and rain),

volume, functionality, aesthetics versus available finance and time frame.

Dobell Place

Where I Lived in Kenthurst

Looking for a property to purchase in the Dural area was a daunting prospect. It was in the five-acre Green Belt and prices for most lots were well beyond our modest resources. There was one overlooked block however, which had been ignored. It was a five-acre block, but ninety percent of it plummeted into a deep sandstone gully and raced up the other side, stopping short of any alternative access point.

We began to look at positives: a quiet cul-de-sac, undisturbed wilderness views, affordability and no possibility ever being built out. Local Council permission to build had been given on the only possible site on the rocky ledge off the road, overlooking the gully and we had been told that bushfires, if they ever did occur, never burnt in a North/South direction along the gully. This information proved to be thankfully correct when the severe Kenthurst fires swept through nearby properties in 2003.

We consulted David Jacobson who, after visiting the site, considered a building along the edge of the cliff to have exciting possibilities.

The property was purchased and I set out to put into practice all I had learned about building at Lorient... without the interference.

David presented us with interesting plans that in no way resembled the standard Australian suburban bungalow. Instead of having everything contained under one roof, he had designed the kitchen/living area (surrounded on two sides with veranda) on the most spacious part of the block and scattered the bathroom/laundry/toilet and three bedrooms on the tapering ledge along the cliff. These were connected by a series of

veranda galleries and outdoor living areas. We would be experimenting with an Asian outdoor living concept and could probably contend with it nine months of the year, but the winters were still chilly. We did have a feature fireplace added in the living area and decided to give it a go.

We hired Charlie Sievers to build the house. He had already successfully built some of the Lorien classrooms. Charlie was a German immigrant who survived the freezing winter of the ill-fated Hitler's Russian campaign. He was also a former Steiner school student. After completing his two-year immigration service commitment to the Australian government, working on the Snowy Mountain scheme, he took up biodynamic farming in Bombala, Southern New South Wales and later, in Dungog (Hunter Valley), and became a well-known lecturer and teacher of Anthroposophy.

With his 'offsider,' David Julian – another ex-Bombala biodynamic farmer – Charlie successfully completed the project with Teutonic thoroughness and skill.

A feature of the house was its positioning and the land and vegetation itself. Perched on the edge of the cliff - there was an immediate drop varying from four to seven meters - the house appeared to be suspended among the treetops that grew up out of the gully. A visitor once commented that he momentarily thought he was stepping into a tree house! One of the trees was a grand angophora (Angophora Costata), with its salmon coloured, spiraling trunk that annually made a dramatic display of shedding its bark, like a snake shedding its skin. Then there was the ghostly scribbly gum (Eucalyptus Haemastoma) on whose grey-white bark parchment, the grubs of the scribbly gum moth wrote messages and scribed pleasing glyphs of graffiti. If only I could read the writing of the bush ...

After a long day of working in the pressure-filled environment at Lorien I often descended into the gully, past the Christmas Bush (Ceratopetalum), that bloomed so exuberantly in the summer, down to the gurgling flow of Kenthurst Creek at the bottom of the gully and sat by the rocky pools. Sometimes, I would climb up the gully to inspect the property on the other side from where I could gaze north along the valley and contemplate the sandstone wilderness. On one occasion, I was surprised by a magnificent bloom of waratahs (Telopea Speciosissima) whose crimson flames flashed like a beacon through the bush.

I was searching for something and, perhaps, the land had answered.

Polarity

Chapter Four

**Knowledge of the world and self-
knowledge.**

How do I learn?

New ways of learning.

... we proceed at first from simple to more complex forms; but then we reach the most complicated stage in the middle of the development, after which it becomes simpler again while also becoming more perfect.
(Steiner 1998:12)

In this chapter I seek to explore how we know about the world and how we learn. It has significant implications for how we educate.

We believe in abstract forces too much, in human capacity too little.
(Flanagan 2011:225)

The dramatic interplay between the thundering waves and the massive granite boulders sent curtains of spray heavenward. Foam from the wash of the surf was gathered by blustery wind gusts, sending it tumbling and rolling along the wet glistening sand of the beach. It's been a stormy weekend here in the South West. We are in the season that the Nyoongar, the local Indigenous people refer to as 'Makuru', a time of cold westerly gales. (W Webb 2012, pers. comm. 4 April). Yesterday I walked along a stretch of the Cape to Cape Track from Redgate to Conto's, witnessing the elemental fury of the surging waves of the Indian Ocean, which had been whipped into frenzy by fifty knot winds. At one point, I had to cross the swiftly running waters of a swollen creek that had intersected the beach. The beach itself had been severely eroded by the stormy seas and had cut a stepped terrace into the dunes. It was high tide and to reach the crossing, I had to negotiate a length of beach exposed to the surging wash of the larger waves. Familiar with ways of the sea since childhood, I timed my crossing according to the rhythm of the set of the incoming waves. Taking advantage of a lull, I made my dash. I suddenly felt awake and alive and with senses heightened, raced across the beach ahead of the incoming rush of water. Reaching the terrace of sand, I scrambled up the terrace with youthful glee, successfully escaping the swirling sea.

'I've never seen you move so fast', laughed my amused walking companion.



Table 1. The Nyoongar Seasonal Cycle. As outlined by W Webb at the Wardan Centre, Wyadup, Margaret River area, Western Australia.

Twenty-four hours later, I am considering how to meaningfully present an understanding of how we learn and the cultivation of what in OH&S (Occupational Health and Safety) speak is referred to as risk management. I reflect on my experience in the wild weather. In crossing the open stretch of beach ahead of an incoming surge of seawater, I felt alive and challenged. I smiled to myself in the satisfaction of the knowledge that a simple calculated risk strategy learnt as a child still served me well. This was not knowledge derived from text books on the physics of wave movement or a mathematical calculation employing speed, distance and time; or from a book about water safety, but from knowledge hard won as a child, observing, experimenting and pitting my body as a moving object in space in relation to the phenomena of nature.

Along the beaches I always walk bare foot and I turn my thoughts to the children at the schools I have taught, who are allowed to play outdoors in bare feet. At Kormilda College in Darwin, I marveled at the Indigenous students who preferred to

play football without footwear. Out in the Top End settlements I was told how shoes only blinded and deafened you to what the earth was telling you and how earth knowledge rose up through your feet (Willie 1990, pers. comm. c. May). At Lorien Novalis, we were instructed to allow the children to play in the school grounds with bare feet. 'They will learn of the subtleties of the earth,' Doug told us, 'but make sure they wear indoor footwear, we don't want them exposed to the flat, abstraction of an artificial floor surface.'

At Shearwater, Milkwood Steiner School (Darwin) and at the Yallingup Steiner School, the children also enjoy the freedom of not wearing shoes. They are also permitted to climb trees.

As an educator, I reflect on the program of walks that the older primary school students at the Yallingup Steiner School are taking along the same Cape to Cape Track. Their teachers have scheduled this so that the entire one hundred and thirty five kilometers of the trek will have been negotiated over a three-year period. Walking up to fourteen-kilometer sections of the track on a regular basis, the children are experiencing the coastline (including its numerous limestone caves) in all its moods and in all seasons as understood by the wind-determined seasons of the Indigenous Nyoongar people. The program provides experiential learning in place, as part of an across-the-curriculum program incorporating geography, plant and animal studies, history and settlement (including agriculture), and illustration. Sections of the walk in Wardandi country are lead by local custodians of Indigenous culture. This form of place conscious learning plays an important educational role in Steiner education. As the Principal of the school, I support and encourage the implementation of the program.

Despite its success, getting the initial co-operation of some of the parents to allow the children to participate in the walks was not easy. Their



View from the Cape to Cape track at Wilyabrup, looking north.

emotional resistance almost sabotaged the walks. Even though the track is well marked, continually maintained and poses few obstacles, there were fears for the children's safety; and a lack of confidence in their ability to physically manage the walk. The closeting of children from what is seen as risky undertakings is a relatively recent and common phenomenon. Parental fears has threatened the use of scissors, knives, wood burning tools and outdoor activity in schools and has lead journalists to refer to these children as 'cotton wool kids' ('Cotton Wool Kids' 2008:4).



Children at home in the 'Grandfather Tree', Yallingup Steiner School

When detailed risk analysis planning forms were first introduced to schools in which I worked, perplexed members of staff, used to taking impromptu excursions with their classes during school hours, were initially bemused and then annoyed by the addition of yet more paperwork to the stack of administrative compliance required of them. What was demanded of me, was to document what in my perception appeared to be good common sense and sound educational reasons for the outing. This included a prior reconnaissance of the proposed destination, taking into consideration the

proposed activities; confidence in the one's own class room management practices and social cohesion of the class; and a good knowledge of the children's health and their associated needs. Of course we took a first aid kit. The only hindrance that I perceived was the possibility of zealous school leaders and anxious parents overriding the initiative of creative teachers.

These administrative demands stimulated me to reflect on my risk management skills and to discover that these hitherto taken for granted capacities had been developed in a natural way during my childhood. Being allowed to explore our home environment freely – with the only parental request being to come home before it was dark – led to very sound instincts of self-preservation. When rowing down the Gawler River in a homemade boat, one was naturally cautious. Who wanted to ride home in the cold with wet clothes, let alone drown? When crossing the abandoned railway bridge across the Leven River on your bike, who would be so reckless as to fall in and lose your precious means of transport and risk the wrath of your father? In traversing the bush, who would want to get lost? Common sense told us to follow fence lines and the direction of a flowing creek. And we were ever wary of joe blakes (Tasmanian rhyming slang for the black snakes and the tiger snakes).

But it was not only the bush skills that we learnt. There was the unspoken tutelage of the natural world that inspired interest, respect and veneration for life, and foremost a fierce feeling for independence and freedom. It inspired curiosity and a desire to know the world and what was in it. As an adult and educator, these processes give cause for reflection on the question of how we know and how we learn. This investigation in turn, leads to a questioning of abstract and centrally formulated and controlled curriculums that privilege sedentary classroom learning and hinder teacher initiative.

In this chapter, I am not so much concerned with a definition of knowledge but about the process of knowledge making, its implications for educating children and the role place plays in its production. During my forty years as an educator, I have been

continually made aware of the conflicting areas of learning – for teachers and children - where global knowledge is set against the self regulating and self directed intentions of a responsible individual. Is knowledge a warehouse of information or is it a pathway of individual knowing?

Aided by the rapid development of new technologies, the world is experiencing an overload of information. Through technological modes of control, global agendas threaten to populate and determine local life-styles and knowledge production. People as sovereign individuals are challenged to find ways of negotiating the overwhelming assault of information that would seek to create a homogenous and compliant society. Whether it is under the banner of accountability or creating ‘level playing fields’ giving all children equal access to learning, teachers have been assailed with prescriptive curriculums, timetables and lesson program submissions and reporting demands that are geared more to fulfilling administrative requirements than healthy educational outcomes. Steiner foresaw these problems when reflecting on the requirements placed on teachers in 1919 and what the consequences might be for the students:

... it is just when teachers are not permitted to determine their own functions that they tend to become impractical and remote from reality. As long as the so-called experts determine the terms of reference according to which they must function, they will never be able to turn out practical individuals who are equipped for life by their education (Steiner 1999:12).

As an individual with much of my life already lived, I still find myself striving to maintain an independent identity living in that narrow space, on a razor’s edge between the determining influences of my culture (including my family and my social history and circumstances, which includes the legal and governance expectations of the country I live in), my personal geography (where I was raised as a child and where I chose and choose to live) and my vocation, (including my studies and personal interests). Within this space is my inner or spiritual life, which at its most aware, attempts to live an existence free from those constrictive aspects of my past and the

intrusive invasions from the outer world that would prevent me from cultivating deeper consciousness. In this journey, I have taken nourishment and direction from the pathway created by Rudolf Steiner whereby an individual might find a certainty of knowing in that uncertain space between global knowledge and the restless quest for personal experience. To that inconclusive mind-body binary mentioned above, Steiner addresses and includes a spiritual world. This awareness has been largely lost and abandoned since Plato's acceptance of knowledge of self-evident truths as arising out of the mind's 'innate sources of knowledge'.

Departing from Plato's dependence on 'innate sources', Aristotle made sense perception his starting point from which knowledge could be derived. In wrestling with the age-old philosophical enquiry into the ultimate nature of reality, the question of how to gain knowledge of the spatial-temporal sense world, what constitutes genuine knowledge and how to achieve this, Aristotle employed reason, logical analysis and conceptual clarification derived from his own personal intellectual reasoning capacities, to build up a framework for genuine knowledge.

Using Aristotle's framework as a foundation, the medieval scholars, notably Albertus Magnus (1200-1280) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) sought to reintroduce the spiritual to philosophical investigation by bringing about a *rapprochement* between faith (Christian Revelation) and rational enquiry (Aristotelian logic) (Steiner 1956). They maintained that the subject matter of philosophy bears a likeness to the realities that are the objects of faith. Aquinas (1912) took this a step further by placing reason in service of faith.

Dependence on faith in regard to spiritual matters leads to the irresolvable abstract 'realist' versus 'nominalist' debate, which asks: - has the object in question been created out of the universal or has the universal been given to the object after its creation? Which has more reality – the universal names or the individual feature of the things referred to? (Steiner 1956)

Led by Kant, the epistemological concerns of the nominalists questioned the ability of humans to comprehend reality in the first place, shifting the philosophical focus question to what we can know and how can we justify any claim to knowledge (Steiner 1981). How reliable is our cognitive ability in determining what we know about the world? This questioning of the traditional role of philosophy as a study providing foundation structures of reality from which science could find its starting point, has turned into a question of whether reality can be represented at all. In his work *The Critique of Pure Reason* published in 1781, Kant argued for an absolute limit to knowledge.

Kant's mind-net of knowledge with its self-imposed limits, posed an imprisoning logical inevitability: one in which a scientific process to organize our experiences was the only one possible and one which rational beings had to accept. Trawling the sea of the mind, one would only catch those fish that could be caught within its mesh. As to larger or smaller fish ...? (Welburn 2004:233). In the nineteenth century, not concerned with whether they could know the metaphysical debate about 'things-in-themselves', scientists simply claimed Kant's position - that rationally ordered sensory knowledge was the only real knowledge possible (Steiner 1981).

In seeking to address the problem of the limits to knowledge, Steiner attempted to bridge the Scholastic divide between faith and enquiry by seeking to resolve the problem of detachment of the onlooker from the world. He saw human consciousness as '... the stage upon which concept and observation meet and become linked to one another' (Steiner 1979:42).

In directing our thinking to the myriad sense impressions we confront as observations, we have consciousness of objects. In directing our thinking towards ourselves and in contemplating our activity, we have consciousness of ourselves. 'Human consciousness must of necessity be at the same time self-consciousness because it is a consciousness which *thinks*' (Steiner 1979:42). It is thinking that determines subject and object and '...transcends both these concepts. My individual

subject lives by the grace of thinking.’ It is in the act of becoming conscious and knowing that we free ourselves and separate that we enter freely once more into connection.

We can also be engaged in thinking not drawn from the sense-world, in what Steiner called sense-free thinking or ‘pure thinking’. To know means to rediscover in the perceived world the spiritual content experienced in the soul. Here there is no longer ‘... any contradiction between knowledge of nature and knowledge of spirit. It becomes clear that knowledge of the second is only a metamorphosis of the first’ (Steiner 1979:131). We as the interpreter are part of the world we interpret. We find that the world process, which is responsible for our perception of the object in nature, is the same as the percept we find within ourselves. Our thought process is one of relationship, not of reproduction.

This understanding has profound implications for human freedom. Steiner offers us a way out from the alienation of the metaphysical wasteland and reassures us of our creative participation in the world by illuminating our awareness of our participation and belonging to it. Fired by a morality gleaned through intuition, the individual is able to find fulfillment through free self-expression.

He called his philosophy ‘ethical individualism’ (Steiner 1988:87). He wanted to show that the human being ...

could never become a free being unless its actions have their source in those ideas which are rooted in the intuitions of the single individual. This ethical individualism only recognized as the final goal of man’s moral development what is called the free spirit which struggles free of the constraint of natural laws and the constraint of all conventional moral norms... (Steiner 1976a:138).

Freedom is not meant as license for discarding rules and regulations, but as freedom of action born of insights found and gained out of one’s own experiences of

direct moral perceptions and a realisation of personal responsibility. Through this sense of belonging, society becomes a domain for individual action, no longer reliant on proclamations *ex cathedra*, whether handed down by the institutions of religion or by secular bureaucracy. Through conscious action a teacher is able to navigate the course of a self-initiated learning program.

The kernel of our humanity is found in our imperfection and in our endless struggle towards completeness and full consciousness. It is in this struggle that we find freedom. We are confronted with this struggle at every waking moment and fundamental to it is the struggle for self-consciousness. This is not something given from the beginning but is something that our consciousness must come to, through an understanding of itself.

The implications are liberating: this would see morality cast loose into the flux of history, and moral values ‘perilously dependent upon concrete and ungeneralisable acts’ (Welburn 2004:239). As did Nietzsche, Steiner was willing to historicize morality and set humanity on a creative, self-initiating pathway of freedom.

Steiner presented the process of knowledge as an ongoing, living and evolving relationship, in which the individual responds on one hand to nature and the given world; and on the other activates his/her thinking to the spiritual world of ideas and concepts. ‘Becoming aware of the Idea within reality is the true communion of man’ (Steiner 1951:121). In freedom, ideas may become ideals. Through our conscious engagement of thought we become responsible co-creators in the world process and no longer remain tragic victims of inexplicable circumstance.

The Practice of Contemplative Enquiry as an Inner Pathway of Knowing

γνωθι σεαυτον - Gnothi seauton - Human being, know yourself

– words attributed to Thales, inscribed on the walls of the Temple of Apollo in Delphi.

In his early philosophical works, Steiner sought ‘... to show that everything necessary to explain and account for the world is within the reach of our thinking’ (Steiner 1981:10). He saw the human being as a knowledge maker and truth, not as ‘... an ideal reflection of something real ...’ but as a product of the free human spirit.

With his *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity* (1979) and *Truth and Science* (1981) he did not set out to produce a self-contained philosophical edifice but a manual, a pathway, a process, leading by philosophical means to experiential sense-free thinking.

Again I sit here at my laptop and wrestle with these Gordian entanglements of philosophy. I look through the bay windows down towards Geographe Bay, which glistens silver-blue on this sunny ‘Birak’ (Nyoongar season covering December and January) day. True to expectation, hot easterly winds promise to have the temperatures soaring in the high thirties.

The call of the Twenty-eight Parrots, bring me back into place. They alert me to the problem of abstract discourse – place disappears, as does the possibility of spiritual experience. There is a problem in speaking about place through logic – about rationalising spirit. Being in place offers the possibility of a more connective, holistic practice. Much of great profundity has been written and spoken about Aboriginal connection to the place they were conceived, born and where they lived; places which were restricted and dangerous, places that were sacred, all created by ancestors who had passed by and left their mark in the Dreamtime. The word they use for place or home is ‘country’ and in Aboriginal English has come to denote land that has a spiritual as well as a geographical dimension (Mathews 2004). Country is a

communicative player in human affairs rather than a mere backdrop to the human drama. I recall reading the words of Aubrey Tigan, a Djawi tribal carver of pearl shell who lives near One Arm Point, on the Dampier Peninsula some two hundred kilometers north of Broome. He spoke of his connection to his craft and land:

These are things we have to do by the law. I'm just following in the footsteps, keeping the law alive. And when I make these old Djawi designs, I feel happy, it takes everything away from me – I'm like a free man, free inside, it goes right through me. I am back in my country (Quoted in Rothwell 2007:185).

To him, place and spirit are indivisible, a refreshing absence from the space-place dichotomy.

In his article, 'The Poetics of Space', Mark McKenna (2004) took time to examine some of the more public contributions of writing for a new constitutional preamble. The six contributions sponsored by the Australian Republican Movement were all prominent Australian authors: Peter Carey, Richard Flanagan, James Bradley, Delia Falconer, Dorothy Porter and Leah Purcell. Each draft '... tried to explain the depth of his or her attachment to Australia as country – as earth, sky, sea and light' (27). In every one of these submissions and the many others he was to read, he '... saw that the land was a constant theme – land as place, land as history, ("ancient" and "timeless"), land as a source of spirituality, land as something sacred, land as home. Affirming the land to be animated with spirit they draw on Indigenous notions of country they speak of the need to protect and respect, care and nurture this 'unique land' and of a duty and responsibility to future generations. All this in the face of the moral dilemma of taking '... the land without negotiation, treaty or consent from the Aboriginal people.'

David Gruenewald cites Rachel Carson and Aldo Leopold in proposing, ‘... learning about places and caring for them may depend on nurturing a sense of wonder, appreciation, connection, and even love for nonhuman life.’ He then adds:

If, as educators, we continue to keep ourselves and our students from these experiences, we will remain complicit in constructing our own impoverishment by contributing to perceptual, cultural, and biological extinctions that we may already lack the observational skills to notice (Gruenewald 2003:633).

Consideration for the aesthetic and veneration for life are the cornerstones of place-conscious Steiner Education. How do we go about cultivating love for place with all its phenomenological interconnections? In Australia, the cultivation of place-conscious education can learn a great deal from the beliefs and practices of Indigenous Australians. As an example, I offer an experience of a festival facilitated by the Milkwood Steiner School in Darwin, by one of its teachers, Di Lucas.

Manton Dam, Northern Territory - Yegge

A throng of children and their parents wade among a water-garden of lilies (an-dem), following and watching closely as Di Lucas, attired in broad-brimmed sun-hat, reaches down under the water, along the stem of a lily (an-bardmo) and recovers the green pod, which was once the old flower head.

‘This is a nice fat one’, and proceeds to open it up to display the contents to the thronging children.

‘Here are the seeds. My friends in Kakadu call them an-mim.’

She eats them.



Collecting lily pods (an-bardmo) from along the shore of Manton Dam.

'These are tasty, better than avocado. Try some.'

The children sample the oily seeds and agree they are good. I taste them; palatable enough.

'Now I want you to collect as many seeds as pods as you can so we can harvest the seeds and cook them with damper.'

The children spread out along one of the lily-laden shorelines of Manton Dam, diving for the hidden lily pods and depositing them into dilly-bags. They smell the fragrant scent of the lily blossoms and play with each other in the cooling waters of the dam under the clear blue skies that only the Top End dry-season offers. This is the time of 'Yegge', one of the six clearly defined seasons recognized by the 'Gundjeihmi-speaking' people of the 'Murrumbur' clan in Kakadu. This is place-

conscious learning at its best. Meanwhile, eight-year old Ian has spotted a python among the roots of the fig tree.



Milkwood children tending to the Olive Python

'Let me have a look at that!' piped up Cherie, a Milkwood parent and ISA teacher.

*Its an Olive Python, *Liasis olivaceus*, 'she said, calling it by its Scientific classification, 'and not a healthy one at that.'*

Don't worry, its not venomous', she reassured the gathering assembly of children.

Being a reptile enthusiast and snake breeder, Cherie picked it up

and allowed the three-meter long python to wrap around her.

'It's a bit skinny. It's in need of a feed. Look, it got ticks. Let's get them off. Jemma, could you please get the Betadine from my bag.' (Jemma was her capable ten-year-old daughter, already an adept snake handler. Cherie always carried an antiseptic in her bag for such emergencies.)



Extracting the lily seeds (an-mim).

After the successful first aid treatment, Cherie encourages the children to handle the python before releasing it back among the buttress roots of the figs where it was found.

In the meantime, Di has organized the parents and children to 'pod' the lily heads for their seeds, light the open fires and to prepare the damper. With the damper dough is added the lily seeds.

Finding sticks from under the trees, the children wrap the dough around them in the shape of a large BBQ sausage and gather around the fires to cook their an-mim damper.

Adding butter to their crusty loaf, they sit along the edge of the lagoon and enjoy the rewards of day, gathering an-bardmo on a beautiful Yegge afternoon.



Mixing the seeds in with the dough.

For many years, Di Lucas has been working with the children at the Milkwood Steiner School and early childhood parent groups in Darwin, sharing her knowledge of the Top End seasons on her guided walks through the bush and with festive activities such as the *Yegge* Festival at Manton Dam described above and the *Banggerreng* Festival (yam gathering) in April. The children love Di with her gentle, knowledgeable ways and look forward to her coming and in turn, she inspires a love of the bush. This appreciation of nature has become part of the culture at Milkwood with the children cultivating a rich store of experiential knowledge of the life in the place in they live.

In acquiring knowledge of the seasons, Di worked and lived with the Gundjeihmi-speaking people of the Murrumburr clan whose land lies in Kakadu. On holiday from Sydney, she visited Kakadu and formed a contact with members of the Murrumburr clan such as Jessie and Violet Alderson and was offered a teaching position at a recently built NT government school in Patonga, in the heart of the Kakadu wetlands (D Lucas, 2011 pers. comm., 14 March).

With the financial support of the Gagudju Association (which distributed money received from Ranger uranium mining royalties), she was provided with the assistance of the women of the community who helped with the development of a bi-lingual learning program and curriculum. Sympathetic to the cultural ways of the community, Di incorporated the traditional gathering activities of the women and children, which followed a cyclical rhythm. Working inclusively and collaboratively, the venue for learning shifted from the classroom to the bush. Di quickly realised that along with the children, she too could learn and that she had privileged access to a rich storehouse of applied knowledge and wisdom as she joined the outdoor excursions gathering food, learning and living. She discovered that there was six discernible seasons in the cycle of the year that subtly merged, one into the other and that these could be read and understood by conscious awareness of what was happening in the bush (Lucas & Campbell 2007).

Following two years of teaching, Diane worked on a research project documenting traditional resources on the South Alligator River floodplain and surrounds, in Kakadu. Matching Gundjeihmi language with traditional Linnaean classification, she was able to map an inclusive ecology that took into account the people who had for 40,000 years, lived as part of the silent ways of the bush (Lucas & Searle 2003).

This raises the question: what is the experience of place consciousness? Can this experience be abstractly defined? Can the spirit of place be experienced as a spiritual experience or would people prefer to refer to this as experience connectedness

of the whole? I would suggest that place conscious education does not want to be constrained or defined. It cannot be explained without immediately losing sense of place and the possibility of spiritual immediacy and, being unable to be adequately explained or affirmed, it must also be acknowledged that it cannot be denied. Counting the angels dancing on the head of a pin or embracing a global curriculum does not allow for place consciousness, for the spirit of place or acknowledgement of spiritual experience.

To Steiner's disappointment, his philosophical works, written towards the close of the nineteenth century, were largely ignored by academics of the day.

When addressing the call to action in 1919, Steiner did not rely on abstract philosophy, but instead employed a set of practices that would assist mindfulness and encourage initiative. As his thoughts about developing an understanding and an implementation of his three-fold social order went unheeded, he became involved in setting up a school in a specific location (Stuttgart) to work with specific community (the workers of the Waldorf Cigarette Factory). When asked about setting up a school based on the Free Waldorf School, he suggested that its practices be the model for all other schools.

Steiner himself delivered three intensive courses to the staff before the commencement of the Free Waldorf School in 1919. These courses have now become the cornerstone of Steiner education learning: *The Study of Man* (Steiner 1966) *Practical Advice to Teachers* (Steiner 1976a) and *Discussions With Teachers* (1967).

Each afternoon seminar session commenced with speech exercises, lead by Marie Steiner in order to cultivate speech - the foremost communication instrument of the teacher – and to awaken and enliven it to realise its dynamic and formative potential (Steiner 1967). As the school grew, he worked with the teachers on a regular basis, leading seventy conferences (Steiner 1986) and three science lecture cycles:

Warmth Course (1980), Light Course (2001b) and Astronomy and a lecture cycle on language entitled *The Genius Of Language* (1995c).

From the outset, as the Director of Teaching at Shearwater, I put in place a program of teacher learning. Courses in child development, curriculum development and the arts - sculpture, painting, eurythmy, speech and cultural studies were conducted regularly on a weekly basis throughout the term. At the core of this learning was the College of Teachers Meeting, which formed such an important part of the Free Waldorf School. Steiner hoped that the teachers' meeting would be a 'living university for the College of Teachers—a permanent training academy...' (Steiner 1972:208).

One of the important factors in developing meaningful learning practices is the nurture of the staff. As an educational leader, I have always maintained that the strength and quality of education in any school is dependent upon the quality of the individual teachers and their rapport with the children and students with whom they are immediately working. Quality development in this sense carries in it the assumption that there is always room for improvement. Rawson (1999:3) sees it as a natural extension of existing work '... the process of planning and review, research and reflection should be experienced as creative, fruitful and effective.' In this context ongoing teacher learning is critical to the health of a school practicing place conscious education.

Shearwater grew rapidly. It was an exciting and intense period of activity. At the height of its development, it was decided to conduct the School's major Teacher Learning Intensive (which was always held at the end of the summer holidays before the commencement of the new school year) away from the school. For our venue, we chose Couran Cove, an eco tourist resort on South Stradbroke Island. We could only reach the island by boat, a service provided by the resort. Its green ethos of sustainability - solar power, facilities built with sustainable timber, bicycle transport, self-contained sewerage treatment and worm farm composting - was in keeping with the school's own place-conscious ideals and staying together, isolated from the day-to-

day professional and domestic routines encouraged the possibility of social bonding and focused shared learning.

Administration staff as well as groundsman were asked to attend the teacher learning intensive, along with the teachers. Partners and families were also encouraged to join the stay over on the island. After working on the educational program, the staff shared with their families' enjoyment the many and varied resort facilities (swimming pools, tennis courts, gymnasium, volley ball courts, cross-country bicycle tracks, beaches, canoeing, and cafes and restaurants) all social in nature.

On returning to school, the commencement of the new school year brimmed with enthusiasm and purposeful intent.

This process is intriguing. It appears that we had to move away from place (school) in order to intensify our learning and contemplate in isolation how to work in place. There are the obvious parallels with nomadic cycles of the Indigenous people who populated Australia. The seasonal cycle of their songline journeys encompassed what they knew as country and with which they strongly identified. Staying in one place was not something that was done. This process of moving along the songlines also intersects with my own story. I have found myself living and working educationally in different places throughout Australia and in this process, I have had the opportunity to contemplate and understand more deeply the nature of place and place consciousness in relation to education.

To complement this quest to overcome the limits set to knowledge and push out the boundaries set by our embodied nature, Steiner wrote his *Knowledge of Higher Worlds and its Attainment* (1947). In it he outlined a form of meditative practice, which concerned itself with discovering the true nature of things. As with the laws of Euclidian geometry, which do not alter according to subjective preference, meditation

or contemplative practice seeks to transcend personal issues to ‘... confront the depths and heights, the moral and spiritual realities that underlie all things’ (Zajonc 2009:35).

Through this process and like conventional science, it seeks objectivity, but it differs however, in that it seeks to engage in direct experience and find deep connection with the object of enquiry. Whereas conventional science strives to disengage and distance itself from direct experience, contemplative enquiry considers the researcher as part of the process, valuing self-knowledge, what Goethe (1995:307) in his scientific writings referred to as ‘delicate empiricism’. Goethe was a considered and detailed observer of the phenomena of nature, drawing and recording his observations. He then contemplated his observations within his interior, subjective space, allowing the phenomena to reveal their deep underlying patterns. Here we find a process of breathing: ‘I look into the world, I look within’. When we look within, we discover a complementary pattern of breathing - what Zajonc (2009:39) describes as a ‘cognitive breathing’. Following a vivid concentration on the content of inner focus, we then allow it to be released, and ever present in creating a welcoming space, allow it to be filled with a delicate response within the stillness. This content may then become a focus for further attention and concentration and so on.

In this process the experiences are infinitely variable and uniquely associated with the individual ‘investigator’. Zajonc (2009) cites an inner illumination experienced by Ralph Waldo Emerson:

... my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space – all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal being circulate through me (Emerson, quoted in Zajonc 2009:39–40).

In this passage of writing, Emerson describes experiencing a living, dynamic world of unceasing movement that reaches beyond the confines of daily consciousness. Scharmer (2009) calls this process ‘presencing’, a blend of words

describing capacities that involve being ‘present’ and ‘sensing’. Steiner (1996) uses the term ‘etheric perception’ or perception of the life force. Having its origins within the life forces, which is a part of our organism (our rhythmic system - heart, lung circulation and the peristaltic role played in the metabolism) this form of perception unites us with the seamless flow of life that finds itself revealed in and through union with the unending rhythms of the cosmos and their seamless manifestation in the ever-changing world of nature.

Body, thought, and emotion are intimately bound together through intricate nerve networks and function as a whole unit to enrich our knowing.

Real learning—the kind of learning that establishes meaningful connections for the learner—is not complete until there is some output, some physical personal expression of thought. Speaking, writing, computing, drawing, art, playing music, singing, moving gracefully in dance and sports: the development of our knowledge goes hand in hand with the development of the skills that support and express that knowledge. (Hannaford 1996:12)

Research in the neurosciences is helping to explain how and why rich emotional development is essential for understanding relationships, rational thought, imaginations, creativity, and even health of the body (Doidge 2007; Le Doux 1996).

Employing an example from a contemporary perspective, Scharmer cites Bill Russell, the key player on the most successful basketball team ever - the Boston Celtics - who provides a description of this heightened experience:

It was almost as if we were playing in slow motion. During those spells, I could almost sense how the next play would develop and where the next shot would be taken. Even before the other team brought the ball inbounds, I could feel it so keenly that I’d want to shout to my teammates, ‘its coming there! - except that I knew everything would change if I did. My premonitions would be consistently correct, and I always felt then that I not only knew all the Celtics by heart, but also all the opposing players, and that they all knew me. I literally did not care who had won. If we lost, I’d still be as free and high as a sky hawk. (Quoted in Scharmer 2009:4)

On a more pragmatic level, Sauer's study (cited in McConnell Imbriotis 2004:30) of the work of miners, lead her to an awareness of a heightened sensory form knowledge that they had cultivated and which she termed 'pit sense'. This is an acquired sensitivity to the creaks and groans of the earth and to fluctuating air pressure. It is a heightened sensitivity born out of the claustrophobia of working underground and its ever-present dangers. McConnell Imbriotis identifies this developed form of risk management as a form of embodied knowledge. While having an embodied origin, I suggest this ability to 'read the language' of the pit to be another form of 'presencing'.

The social geographer, David Seamon (1980) understood the matrix of 'presencing' to be the collective life force patterns of human body movement, which includes acquired skills (walking, riding a bike), habits (a daily walk) and practices (work schedules). These routine capacities, when repeated rhythmically in place, and in harmony with others, produce a feeling of belonging, an 'existential insideness'. He calls this 'place-ballet'.

Anne Buttmer (1976) called this intermingled dance of rhythms, 'lifeworld'. Through lifeworld, she pondered about finding a more meaningful way of measuring experience:

Lifeworld experience could be described as the orchestration of various time-space rhythms: those of physiological and cultural dimensions of life, those of different work-styles, and those of our physical and functional environments. On a macro level one is dealing with the synchronization of movements of various scales, taking a sounding as it were, at a particular point where our own experience has prodded us to explore. (Buttimer 1976:289)

The work of Zohar and Marshall (2004) resonates with the Scharmer's notion of 'presencing:' being in conscious spiritual at-one-ment with the etheric world where all things are connected. Their work in developing the holistic awareness of working collaboratively and ethically in the corporate world, has embraced the understanding of the human being as a threefold entity, as a being of thinking feeling and willing.

All human beings are born with a potential for high SQ (spiritual intelligence) as distinct from IQ (rational intelligence) and EQ (emotional intelligence). Most children have a high potential for it. But our spiritually dumb culture and education system, and our often spiritually deadening work patterns and pressures, reduce our capacity to practice our SQ. Like EQ, SQ must be nurtured. It can be relearned, and it can be improved. (Marshall & Zohar 2004:75)

They believe that the environmental destruction of the planet and of each other can be avoided without abandoning the positive benefits of modern society.

It requires that we act from our highest motivation. It means that we transform ourselves as human beings. To achieve this new goal, we need some new *means*. For that we must look to the principles of transformation available to spiritual intelligence. (75)

Likewise, Scharmer (2009:7) believes that we need a set of practices that ‘... enable this kind of deep seeing—“sensing”—to happen collectively and across boundaries.’

On an artistic level, Steiner together with a number of movement artists developed a new art form, which was called Eurythmy. Through this art of movement, Steiner sought to give visible expression to the spoken word and to music, where inner soul mood finds resonance with corresponding outer movement and gesture. Steiner included Eurythmy as an important part of the curriculum of the Free Waldorf School.

He saw that the aesthetic experience of intentional movement developed a balance between cognitive abilities and capacities of will that cultivated in children agility, interest in the world and truthfulness. He saw in Eurythmy an art form that could do much to bring about in human beings, a sense of wholeness ‘... and not having the body on one hand and the soul and the spirit on the other.’ (Steiner, quoted



Opening Eurythmy performance of teachers and students, in Southern Mandala, *WAVE 2004*. (Photo: Shearwater archive)

in Leber 2012:1) He saw Eurythmy helping the children to feel comfortable in themselves, to make the body into a suitable and pleasant ‘house’ for their soul.

These new understandings have important implications for education, they bring into question what we deliver as the content of education and how we differentiate our teaching practice, taking into consideration who we educate (children, adolescents, adults), the purpose of our educational delivery (employment training or self-regulating and innovative individuals), how we educate (our teaching practices and how we facilitate learning) and most importantly, the way we consider the contribution and role of place in education.

While the focus of this discourse is directed on the conscious understanding and application of place to education, it is intimately woven into and bound to the

questions relating to knowledge of the world and to self-knowledge. Through the agency of thinking, knowledge of the world and self-knowledge find resolution in ever evolving human consciousness. Place provides an immediate experience of the world and stimulates and informs our quest for self-knowledge. I find that its educational role is not to be underestimated and lies at the heart of this discourse.

Because life and knowledge are in a continual state of becoming, any positivist categorisation of knowledge would make it difficult to accommodate new and emerging knowledge. It can however, provide a starting point and give orientation to an understanding of the role of place in making of knowledge.

Aristotle recognized three inter-related ways of knowing, categorising them as: *episteme* (a meta knowledge transcending and independent of its cultural context, sympathetic to the production of theory and scientific knowledge; *techne* (knowledge related to the production of objects, involving the cultivation of innate or acquired skills) and *pronesis* (knowledge of the way human beings relate/communicate and conduct themselves socially).

The very fact that Aristotle was able to order knowledge and its production through his capacity to generalize information into abstract categories implies a privileging of theoretical forms of knowledge over others. Is the innate knowledge of the sculptor Phidias, whose living intelligence was demonstrated in the skill of his hands, of any less value than the philosopher? Steiner indicated that our capacity to think and in turn, how we communicate, has its origins in the way we learnt to move as infants, which in turn determined the way we learnt how to speak. Juvenal's (2001:98) *mens sana in corpore sano* (healthy mind in a healthy body) adopted by many sporting clubs, military and educational institutions throughout the world, acknowledges the lasting influence of Greek gymnastics on education.



Place as a site of learning. In nature, the senses are fully engaged in a wholesome way, stimulating a healthy relationship the self and the world.

Recent studies in neurobiology have revealed new evidence that supports the relationship of movement with the process of knowledge making. Advances in new technologies such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) have allowed extensive brain research on healthy as well as ailing individuals (Landl 2005:2). In the decade of the 1990s research was focused on the later stages of embryonic development and on early childhood up until the third year. It was observed that the brain put into action two simple and effective processes in order to develop and adapt: overproduction and destruction of neural connections. Initially the brain is only partially formed. During the first eighteen months after birth, it has been noted that there is a marked increase of grey matter. Responding to formative building activity of the senses, particularly the senses of touch, sense of life, movement and balance – which are directly involved in

the movements of arms and legs in a child's first years – there is an exponential expansion of neuro-synaptic networking with up to thirty thousand connections per nerve cell. Overproduction here is followed by destruction. Applying the formative law of 'use it or lose it', only those neural connections that are reinforced by active stimulation and repetition are maintained, while those that are not used or little used are extinguished.

A research team led by Jay Giedd (2002) of the National Institute of Health, Maryland, USA, established that a similar process to that found in early childhood also occurred in pre-puberty. This renewed and potentially creative explosion of neuronal activity contributes to the adolescent's feeling of omnipotence and a corresponding mood of impotence. Because of this state of heightened learning activity, young people cannot draw on pre-learned behaviours. This often results in instinctive and irrational decision-making.

It is this investigation that led Professor Gerald Huther, a prominent German brain researcher, to question the wisdom of an information-saturated learning program that takes no account of human co-creation in the development of the brain:

We ... have a brain that to a certain degree programs itself according to how we use it (Huther, quoted in Godager 2010:1).

He continues by saying that if we decide not to attend to how and why we use it, the brain will respond automatically according to the stimulus it receives and the human being will become the prisoner of his/her inactivity, formed only by what it has allowed to be passively impressed on them. Huther continues by indicating that a child who is prematurely '... forced to agree with the convictions of his society...' and prevented from fully experiencing their 'mystical' phase,

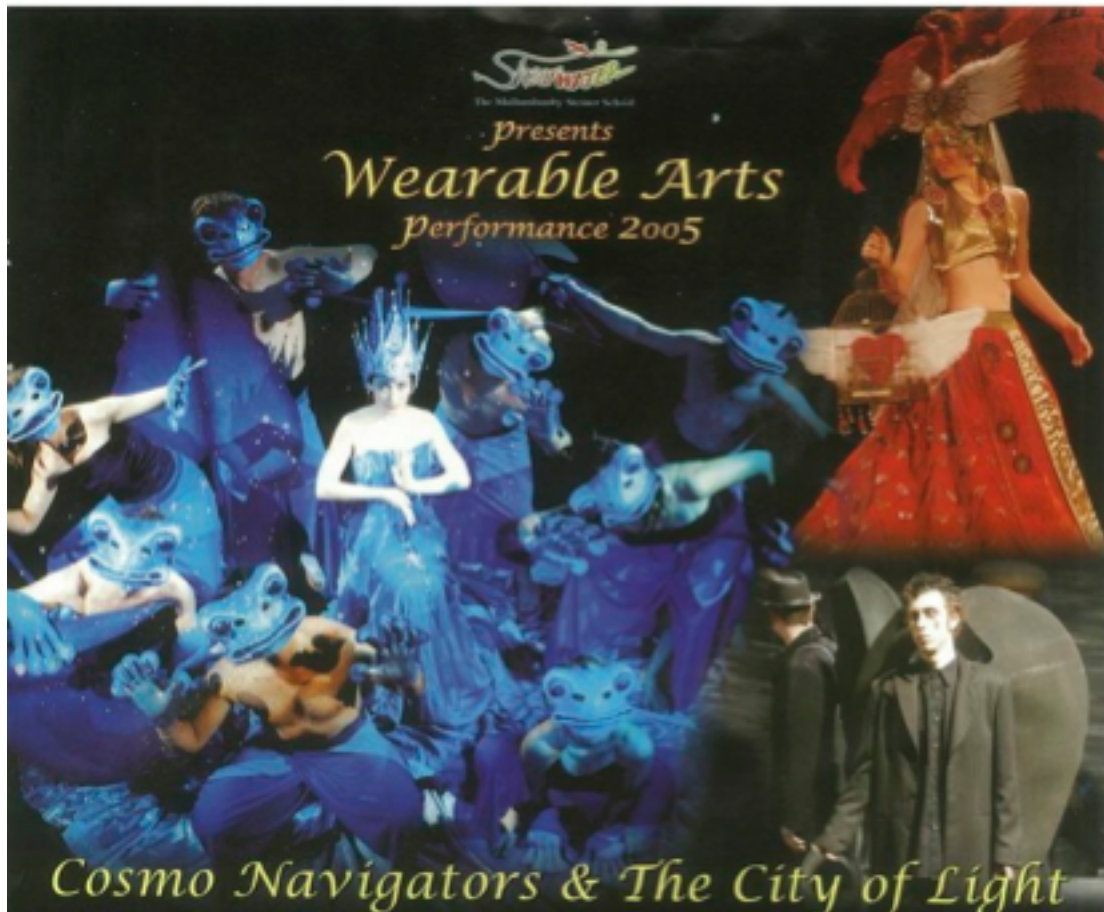
... will probably not succeed later in life in developing a reflective consciousness based upon his own convictions. Without a consciousness developed on his own, the child is trapped within mental images he has learned

from other people unconsciously and without reflection (Quoted in Godager 2010:1).

The implications for education are enormous.

I reflect on my own neuronal activity and how writing about ideas and other people's research, draws me away from place, as it must do you, the reader. I have been sitting in a darkened room, hunched over a keyboard, eyes squinting at the artificially illumined computer screen. Outside it is a bright, sunny day and I contemplate taking myself for a walk along the beach. I am back in Yallingup, Western Australia. It's Sunday and I have given over my weekend to continue the editing of this thesis. Inwardly I hear the voice of my supervisor, reminding me to provide space for the reader in my writing, amid the density of thought that has lost the immediacy of the present.

I return to reflect on childhood learning and the importance place and activity in place have in shaping the adult.



WAVE is an aesthetically imbued process of embodied learning. Cosmo Navigators and the City of Light, WAVE 2005. (Photo: Shearwater archive)

In Waldorf schools, following Steiner's indications, teaching and education are based on knowledge of human development and how these understandings need to be applied to every child. From the moment of conception and throughout the early years of life, the developing body is shaped and formed by the child's sense impressions that leave their imprint as indelible evidence of their origin.

Knowledge has become embodied and thus provides the foundation for secure identity and confidence, allowing the individual to participate freely in his or her life long dialogue with knowledge that is other, created by different people from different disciplines and different subjects of knowledge. As McConnell Imbriotis (2004) states:

... my body ... is always present but ... flickers in and out of focus, as it is constructed and re-constructed by different discourses, causing the conceptual boundaries to shift (36).

In negotiating the many different and conflicting forms of knowledge and ways of knowing, feminist theorists (Grosz 1998; Somerville 2010 & Davies 1997) among others place the body at the centre, disrupting the power structure of global centres where knowledge is gathered, coordinated and dispensed. Here knowledge is more about the embodied self in a process of becoming, in an interactive dialogue with the world in its temporal and spatial dimensions. This in turn, imprints its effects on the body, and those traces can be read and uncovered by others, and by ourselves. As adults, we can monitor this unceasing dialogue through the process of 'cognitive breathing' of contemplative reflection. As children we seek the protection and care of parents and teachers in providing an education and an environment that nurtures our journey through childhood. What are the sites of knowledge production, the places and the environments where learning and knowledge-making take place?

In creating a map of these learning environments, I will employ a model devised by McConnell Imbriotis (2004). It consists of three concentric circles of knowledge production: the body as a most local site; the immediate world in which we live; and the circle of the outer world or global knowledge, which is '... foregrounded through the means of abstraction, mapping and quantification' (40). In this map, the embodied self is in unceasing dialogue with itself; the immediate world and the people in it; and the world of global knowledge and its institutionalization as power. I will refer to the power of global thought as a horizontal structure. Its continual disruption of local knowledge and determination will be referred to as vertical.

It is in the innermost circle of immediate locality and experience that the embodied self, through the activity of knowing, begets consciousness and self-knowledge. This activity encompasses embodied learning, 'presencing', ways of knowing and methods of receiving and acquiring knowledge, which is inclusive and acknowledges an iterative process that is contextually dependent, intersubjective,

dynamic and pluralistic (Dall'alba & Sandberg 2006). It is in this space that understanding is allowed to continually unfold and transform through the practice of contemplative inquiry and critical reflection. It also allows for the creation of theoretical knowledge, innate or tacit knowledge and silently perceived social or behavioural knowledge.

It is in the immediate outer world of experience, the second circle that encompasses 'lifeworlds,' in which the embodied self is contextualized and shares place and space with others in a direct way. This involves immediate social engagement and communication, incorporating family, customs, language and behavioural patterns. It is in this circle that most educators and learners work. It is here that participants in a community can be engaged in an interactive learning process involving people, culture and environment and where collaborative creative learning can be implemented. Learning becomes a pathway of transformation and change, where learners are seen as prospective builders and creators of knowledge. It is in this circle that place plays an important role in knowledge making.

The greater circle is that of the world at large. It has always been a dangerous, unknown other, where the questing traveller leaving the security of his immediate home and what he knows and ventures forth to acquire new experiences and become a wiser person. Empires rose and fell in attempting to bring cohesiveness to difference. The Pax Romana, enforced by military might and a high level of organisational capacity, ensured cultural evenness and security. When bonded to Roman administrative power and Greek philosophy, the Christian message eventually spread throughout the world. Latin became the medium of a horizontal culture that still echoes throughout established knowledge. (In the study of medicine, most anatomical terms have a Graeco/Latin etymology). This was disrupted by the verticality of national languages and the nation state and separation from the Roman Catholic Church (Reformation).

With the rise of commercialism and new science and industrialisation, new empires rose (British, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch). In their quest for markets, exotic goods and raw material, they colonised lands, previously unknown to Europeans, creating a new horizontality. In the wake of the great twentieth century wars, a new vertical disruption of the post colonial occurred, that brought independence of a kind to new nations (Smith 1999). Despite the pressure to conform to the horizontality of globalisation (Chomsky 1999), a new vertical disruption of cultural change threatens to break the hold of the state on its citizens. Individuals now struggle for sovereignty, free of the constraints of religion, political conformity, institutionalised knowledge and economic bondage (Reus Smit 2011).

The greater circle is still a dangerous place. It has become more powerful and centralised. Through sensory technology and its application to information mapping, collection of quantifiable data, and the implementation of computer technology in statistical analysis and storage of data, knowledge has become disembodied, dehumanised, decontextualised and abstracted. Having at hand such a repository of data, great influence is exerted on and by the media, military, health and education (Foucault 1981). Knowledge, fuelled by ‘experts’, is distributed to the periphery (our local and immediate circles), where individuals are asked to inform and avail themselves of it, (‘unpackaging’ is the spin terminology). In education regulation takes the form of national curriculums, mandatory reporting, registration and certification and national testing and examinations.

How can we sufficiently fortify ourselves within the local and immediate circles of our lives against the incoming inundation of undifferentiated information that threatens to engulf us? In this thesis, I seek to posit place-consciousness in education as a way of preparing young people to become creative knowledge makers to meet the complexities facing the world, not just to survive it, but as a creative option in providing solutions for it.

By way of example, I offer songlines of my own learning journey and that of the schools that I have been involved in, with particular reference to Shearwater the Mullumbimby Steiner School.

In the process of writing this chapter about the way we perceive and learn and knowledge making, I encountered the alienating effect of abstraction in thought, where one can become lost in a labyrinth of associations that loses touch with who we are and where we live and with whom we live. I found that unless I sought to differentiate in a contextual way, in a way that is embodied and personally experienced, I not only find myself estranged, but also lose connection to the reader. I also understood that in keeping everything apart, knowledge of a living whole would also elude us. In an attempt to keep contact with the reader, I disrupted the discourse with stories of personal experience and the experience of others, journal entries (bringing the reader and myself back to the place and process of writing) and images. I seek, by way of association and the stirring of imagination, identification of the readers with the writing through their own experience.

Songlines of Learning

My Learning Places

3

Years as a Journeyman
Australia's Top End

In this folio I tell the story of my learning in the Northern Territory where I made contact with Australia's Indigenous people and culture, their deep affiliation with country and their living understanding of place. At Kormilda College I experienced the effects of dislocation where Aboriginal students were taken away from their place and expected to experience and adjust to Western ways of learning and living. I had heard of the 'two way' learning initiative set up at Yirrkala under the direction of Dr Yunupingu and Leon White (Winkler 2004) and as teacher/learner interested in educational place inclusion, I worked with a group of colleagues to create place conscious learning programs. We had moderate success, but the prevailing interest at Kormilda was to provide the mainstream western education model that left little room for conscious cultural exchange in the learning place. At least in home community schools, teaching was conducted in language, which encouraged school attendance (Beresford and Partington 2007).

Having returned to work in Darwin in 2009, I experienced first hand the dismay among community educators when the NT government ruled that the first four hours of education in all NT schools should be delivered in English, putting an end to 34 years of bilingual education in the Northern Territory and to the 9 remaining bilingual programs (Bilingual Education 2012).

Changing Places

But I'll know my song well before I start singin' [sic]. (Dylan 1988)

After leaving Lorien Novalis, we temporarily settled in Hobart. The city gave us an opportunity to regroup and re-orientate. Now I had no choice but to put to the test the skills that I had acquired at Lorien and learn others that it didn't provide. My years of apprenticeship were over and my days as a journeyman had commenced.

Places at the Top End

'Mercenaries, Missionaries Or Misfits'

The mocking and laconic categories that locals apply to newcomers to the Territory.

‘What the ...’

The impact of the humidity hit me like a slamming door. It was my first experience of the build-up in the tropics. Deirdre smiled knowingly at my reaction. She had already been initiated into the hothouse weather of the tropics during an extensive ‘tour of duty’ in Malaysia in ‘another life’.

Perspiration dripped onto my glasses and down my back before I had even reached the bottom of the mobile stairway. The heat shimmered off the asphalt tarmac as we struggled to the fan-cooled terminal where we were met by the gregarious and dapper - even in traditional white, short-sleeved shirt and grey slacks - Peter Harris.

Dr Peter Harris was the newly appointed Director of Kormilda College, a co-educational school, which sought to cater for the educational needs of Aboriginal students of the Far North. He had flown us up from Tasmania, following a phone call Deirdre took in response to the applications we had sent in for teaching positions at Kormilda. I was away at the time moonlighting on a second job. Deirdre was not known to talk to strangers easily, but this compelling man with an interest in people had appealed to her artistic sensibilities and need for adventure.

Attending an education conference held in Darwin in 1988, Peter was presented the opportunity of resurrecting Kormilda, a failed NT government hostel and boarding school for Aboriginal post primary students from the far-flung communities of the Top End.

The twenty-hectare property originally housed a World War II hospital, treating Australian soldiers and Japanese prisoners of war. Following the war, the site was converted to a Qantas transit centre accommodating aircrew and international passengers breaking their journey to Europe (Kormilda College 2003).

The NT government acquired the property in 1967 and transformed and constructed buildings to house the school. Kormilda is a word from an Indigenous language found in the Kakadu region meaning ‘tomorrow’ (Kormilda web page).

By 1988 Kormilda had fallen into decline and disrepair. With the support of a one-off NT government grant and reassured of ongoing Commonwealth recurrent and capital assistance, Peter, not one to shirk a challenge, embraced the task with confidence. Possessed of a charismatic flamboyance rare in educationists, Peter had an educational vision to match any of the dreams spawned in the Territory. Backed by his mercurial administrative and management skills he knew he had little time to get things moving, and was aware of the limited experience he had of the Aboriginal/ European political/cultural interface.

Adding Darwin to my Songline

Everything grew larger than life in the steamy hothouse of Darwin, and the people were no exception, exotic, hothouse blooms. (Goldsworthy 1989:11)

If there is any place on the continent where extensive settlement has been attempted, Australia’s Top End is the place that has least tolerated the Anglo-Celtic paradigm and toyed with whim, its very existence. Permanence is not to be taken for granted in the Territory, even with the advancement of modern technology that has made life possible and tolerable for people of European origin. Early settlements failed on a continual basis, names changed, Japanese bombing raids threatened, and cyclones did destroy Darwin in its brief history. It attracts free spirits, adventurous souls and the restless; also the lost, the displaced, the do-gooders, travelers, workers seeking quick money, including wealthy investors with the same intention. Most come and move on. Some settle and stay and would live nowhere else. Only the Australian Aboriginal Salt Water people with their long uninterrupted occupancy of the country appear to have an unquestionable and enduring place in the Top End.

Initially the history of the North was written (mainly by Anglo-Celts) as being settled from the South. This would give the place a mere history of 120 years or so!

Meeting the relentless push from the South is the story of the North. This finds itself reflected in the social and cultural life of the Territory's people. In 1898, A.B. (Banjo) Paterson visited the area briefly, commissioned to write a tourist guide. Brushed with the stain of racism prevalent of the day, he wrote distastefully of 'the vagrant and shifting population of all the Eastern races' that filled the town, then called Palmerston.

Here are gathered together Canton coolies, Japanese pearl divers, Malays, Manilamen, Portuguese from adjacent Timor, Cingalese, Zanzibar niggers looking for billets as stokers, frail (but not fair) damsels from Kobe; all sorts and conditions of men. (Paterson quoted in Falkiner 1991b:204)

A hundred years later, Australia has become a multicultural nation and Darwin's blended racial make-up is seen as cosmopolitan and desirable.

Among his other commitments Peter was the Director of *Billanook*, a well-established and successful independent school in Mooroolbark, Melbourne, Victoria. With a strong background in accounting and administration, he was a man of entrepreneurial energy and initiative. With *Billanook* running smoothly, the Kormilda project issued him with a new challenge. We were well acquainted with the adrenalin rush of pioneering new initiatives and appreciated his visionary enterprise.

In his search for staff, he threw out a wide net, taking out prominent advertising space in the Educational Employment Opportunities section of the national tabloid *The Australian*. We were among the 'exotic fish' that were attracted. Here we were, Steiner teachers without experience in the state system, with 'left-of-field' views and approaches to education, being considered middle management material! I believe we were taken seriously for our extensive experience in primary school education. The only exposure to western education that the Indigenous students had met with was in the local schools established in the communities that rarely extended to secondary levels. Not that the government didn't wish to provide it; they found difficulty keeping students interested following the onset of puberty, associated as it was with ceremonial rites of passage, euphemistically referred to as 'business.' There was also the cultural divide of a conservative, abstracted western schooling, where learning had become removed from life, focusing on books, sitting at desks in isolated classrooms and

exposed to content with little relevance to their immediate lives. With their European counterparts in the repressed urban and suburban areas of the cities struggling to deal with the same issues, but who at least had a cultural context, why was there the expectation that Aboriginal youth should have that most sophisticated capacity of straddling diverse worlds? (Jordan 2005)

Due to their wealth of cultural diversity, English was not their second language, but often their third or fourth.

Appreciating our artistic approach to teaching and primary school background, Peter saw the possibility through us of delivering a post primary education that might be palatable and appropriate to Aboriginal needs. He saw possibilities and backed his vision and we have always been grateful for his support.

At a later social gathering, we were asked to categorise ourselves as to our intentions with regard to moving to the Territory; ‘Are you a mercenary or a missionary? Are you here to gather experience for future promotion? Are you here for the lifestyle or are you running away from something? Or are you like many of us, misfits?’

I coughed up a hastily ‘Yes’ and before being questioned further, I added a rapid ‘because its there.’

During the night, we struggled to sleep in the cloying humidity. Breaking through the half sleep of chaotic dreams with the cool of the very early morning, the matrilineal ancestors came to me and without expectation or attachment, began show me things – it’s the only way I can describe it.

It was then that I realized that we were not here to teach anyone. We were the ones being taught.

Market Place

Mindil Beach

Thursday afternoon meant it was nearly the end of the teaching week at Kormilda and during the dry (the last Thursday in April to the last Thursday in October) we looked forward to going to the Mindil Beach Markets as a release from exposure to what Helen Garner calls 'Australia's deepest dilemma,' the interface of Yolgnu and Western culture.

Unloading our books back at our unit on East Point Road on the edge of the Reserve and taking in a shower and a cooling drink, we would set off along Fannie Bay to the markets in time to find a parking spot and catch the sunset. A large crowd would already have gathered with the market in full swing. Taking the palmed promenade along Mindil Beach with hundreds of other locals and visitors, we could already detect the enticing aroma and exotic fragrance the largely Asian food stalls, testament to the diverse and blended culture of the Territory. Here was the authentic cuisine and home cooking of Thailand, Malaya, Timor, Bali, Java, India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and China with Greek and South American thrown in as well. It was a gourmand's delight at affordable prices, you could have your choice of steaming seafood laksas, spring rolls, samosas, pakoras, tandoori chicken, curries, nasi goreng, mie goreng and souvlaki, together with tatzikis, hot chilli sambals, naan, green pawpaw salad and to finish off, black rice pudding with creamed coconut or a mango pudding.

Precariously balancing our selected feast, we would find a comfortable spot near the beach and enjoy watching, with hundreds of others, the spectacular Top End sunset. Without fail and with processional drama, the molten orb (accompanied with imagined kettle drum roll) would sink into the sea, 'trailing clouds of glory' as the sky lit up with a lavish palette of pinks reds and gold. As Deirdre remarked, 'the landscapes in the Territory are not found on the ground, but in the sky.' This painterly observation gained even greater credibility with the oncoming build-up and wet season thunderstorms.

Place As a Site of Learning

The basis of my involvement in education is that it is place centred: its about communication between people, about community sharing knowledge about place and people's place in the world and its requirements and future needs, about community recognising and supporting the individual's quest for identity and about individuals with creative options contributing back to community. These ideals are confronted by government education compliance requirements that are outcomes based and skills driven. A 'values' component is added as a fragmented afterthought rather than ideally integrated into every learning program.

In my observation of teachers during the course of over forty years of educational engagement I have found that the vast majority love what they do. It is too difficult a vocation to be dispassionately involved in and it's not something you do to make a fortune. Many such as Jenny P. are frustrated by over regulation:

I now spend more time on programing and administrative paperwork than creative lesson preparation. This wasn't the case when I first began teaching (Jenny P. 2011, pers. comm. 19 January).

When all these factors are met by Aboriginal culture, I find it to be naïve or ill-

informed to think the Western status quo can be maintained.

When we commenced teaching at Kormilda we were uninformed about Aboriginal culture and our experience of Aboriginal people was minimal. The teachers that Peter Harris assembled had been gathered from around Australia and had come from a wide range of educational teaching backgrounds and intentions.

At the beginning of term, the office, run by some very efficient women, was more like a travel agency. Students were arriving from all over the far-flung communities of the Top End, including enrolments from Borroloola on the Gulf in the east, Kununurra, Wyndham and Halls Creek and Derby in the west, Kalkarindji, Lajamanu in the south and the Alice Springs region in the Centre.

On arrival the students were issued with a standard, turquoise-blue uniform. I felt embarrassed for the older boys who were already initiated men, stepping into grey shorts, turquoise blue shirt and white sneakers. Some had already worked as stockmen. Shoes were also a problem, most preferring to walk barefoot as they did in the communities. Competitive Australian Rules football was played in bare feet.

The students were then taken to the dorms where they were appointed to a twin share room. The boys' dormitory was situated on the western side of the property and the girls' quarters were far away on the eastern side. Rooms were allocated and arranged according to place and community in order that the students could support each other.

The first thing that became patently obvious was the diversity of Aboriginal language and culture. Out on the back block of Darwin in Berrimah, Kormilda was a united nations of the Aboriginal people. How was it all going to work? Fortunately the students were friendly, polite and sensitive. In the absence of better words, they proved

to be some of the most pleasant and wonderful people I was to meet.

My initial contact was with the Tiwi boys who were confident and friendly and loved Australian Rules football. Most of the Tiwis came from Milakapati on Melville Island, the Bathurst students being catered for by the strong Catholic presence at Nguuu.

One of the ways we came to know the students better was through mandatory dorm duty. Staying behind at school after class, the dorm staff would organise and supervise activity groups, which staff would supervise. These would include the drafting of the school newsletter, watching videos, playing various forms of sport and participating in music, art and photography classes. We would join the students for dinner in the huge refectory. New students took to the provision of regular meals with gusto but as the novelty wore thin, became more choosy, eating the meat and invariably leaving the vegetables.

After dinner, we went to the dorms with the students and provided assistance with homework, much of it being 'journal writing'. The inherited double storey dormitories were a problem. Built around a quadrangle with iron gates that were locked at curfew, it resembled more a prison than a private school college. The students had come from communities where the cooler nights were a better time to be active than the heat of the day and rarely were their movements confined. There wasn't much for them to do in the dorms, a bit of footy in the quadrangle and as for homework?

At 7.00 p.m. all students were meant to retire to their rooms and study. Most students had received a rudimentary primary school education at their school in the communities. They could read a little and generally were able to write a lot less. As with all people, some were more skilled with western learning than others and successfully completed the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate. This

reflective time was difficult to enforce. It did, however give us plenty of opportunity to get to know the students and their communities. We learned pieces of language and shared details of our own lives.

The girls fared better than the boys. Being more reflective and interested in social matters, many enjoyed their journal writing.

The dorm staff didn't have it easy and there was a high turnover of personnel. Peter, a Tiwi man, lasted longer than most. He'd had experience with 'white-fella' ways and had deeper rapport with the boys, especially those from his home country.

Eventually, the new Kormilda administration had new co-ed dorms built with more user-friendly facilities that proved to be more successful, in allowing students to meet school expectations.

From the beginning it became obvious that only a minority of students would be able to perform at the expected academic level, although this was not a question of intelligence. We were expected to teach and the students were expected to perform the requirements of the curriculum determined by NT Department of Education. The cultural context was dominantly European and was too great a divide for most of our community students to bridge. According to personal recollection, student numbers still at Kormilda at the end of term were down forty percent from the numbers enrolled at the commencement of term.

The Department in the Territory was relatively small, which made it possible for staff to be approachable. I personally found them (as I did most Territorians), to be sympathetic, flexible and helpful.

So we looked for ways to meet the needs of the Aboriginal students. Our

differences were obvious. We decided to look for commonalities; the simple but potent forces in all our lives; family, community place and identity. If we were to have a sincere dialogue with the Aboriginal people, then meaningful communication would need to include a deeper understanding of place, which is all-important to them and to us.

For the students, place was intertwined with identity. Neither is place exclusive to any discipline of learning. With the co-operation of teachers of Social and Cultural Education (SACE), English, Science, Visual Art and Physical Education, we commenced to devise an integrated across-the-curriculum learning program with *place* as its focus.

Our idealistic ‘Global aim’, negotiated in the education speak that Tony was so capable of negotiating, claimed:

To develop in students those skills, understandings and knowledge which will contribute to their personal growth as participating and effective members of the community in which they live. (Edwards et al.1989:2)

In order to teach this program effectively, we had to learn as much as possible about the place that was the Top End.

World Heritage Place

Kakadu National Park, September 1988

‘Albert, when are you going to Oenpelli?’ enquired Peter as he dashed out of his office.

‘Tomorrow Peter, the Cessna’s booked for 10 a.m.’

‘Any room for Konrad and Deirdre?’

We held our breath.

'Plenty', responded Albert clutching a folder of prospective enrolments, 'I'm the only one booked. I'm waiting for the School car. Warren will drop us off at the airport.'

We couldn't believe our luck. I loved flying over the land and our cruising altitude would not be high. And not flying over any old land, this was Kakadu National Park, which came to prominence in the seventies with the Woodward Report and later the Ranger Uranium debate.

We were dropped off at the light aircraft terminal. Out on the tarmac we saw dozens of light planes and I recalled the newspaper photo of an aircraft precariously propped on its nose and wing, leaning against the frame of a hangar, stripped of its cladding. Like a bored child's plaything, it had been littered, randomly abandoned, by the fury of Cyclone Tracy.

'Light aircraft are the best and often the only form of modern transport in the Top End,' explained Albert as we taxied down the runway, waiting for an Ansett 737 to receive Air Traffic Control permission to depart.

'During the Wet, most of the Arnhem Land's communities are flooded in,' he continued.

'That didn't worry them too much before,' I thought.

'Every major community has an airstrip and that's how we get our students in. At the beginning and end of each term, hundreds of flights are organised and all of them need to be picked up at the airport. The Office is like a travel agency, six times a year. Then there's the mid term flights home for funerals, business and often, simple homesickness. Some students have never slept in a bed before and as for regular hours ...'

By this time my attention was drawn to a sea eagle's view of the Darwin coastline. As the Cessna climbed with its single engine roaring, the serpentine coils of the Adelaide River left me speechless. Its lazy meanders, laden with silt, switched back on themselves across the floodplain disgorging nutrients on to the coastal mangrove-rich environment. Like a pit of Dreamtime vipers, the equally impressive Mary, Wildman, West Alligator, South Alligator and East Alligator Rivers followed views of the Adelaide River. Up ahead over the nose of the Cessna loomed Mt Brockman and the edge of that ancient Arnhem Plateau escarpment. This place is too much to comprehend from a quick fly over. Albert, who must have seen it all before, continued his monologue.

'When we land at Oenpelli, the teacher will pick us up and give us a lift to the school with the mail and bread delivery. I'll talk to the head teacher and organise enrolments. Have a look around and talk to the students.'

Oenpelli, also known as Gunbalanya, was the one time home of Paddy Cahill who established a cattle station there in 1906 (Mulvaney 2004). He arrived in the region in the 1880s and gained larger- than- life status as a buffalo shooter. Buffaloes were introduced to the Territory with the aborted Port Essington settlement, but unlike its demoralised owners, thrived in the ideal wetland environment. They increased to such numbers that they lured in buffalo hunters who culled them for their tough hides. As did other hunters, Cahill involved the Gagadju in the harvest, payment consisting of clothes, sugar, tea and tobacco. Cahill liked the place and developed a good rapport with the Gagadju people, speaking their language fluently. He was also instrumental in assisting the pioneer anthropologist, Baldwin Spencer to record their culture, art and ceremonies. Spencer collected 200 bark paintings, which are housed in the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne. Cahill's Crossing over the East Alligator River near the Border Store is named after him.

Having loaded the station wagon with what appeared to be mainly bread deliveries and the mail, we were dropped off at the school. Some of the boys were kicking a football on the oval and I joined them. It was build-up weather and my shirt was soon soaked with perspiration. The boys were friendly, displaying uncanny ball skills and accelerated turns of speed. So this is where Maurice Rioli and Michael Maclean learnt their trade, I thought as a rangy kid out-marked me yet again.

'How'd you go Albert?' I enquired.

'I've enrolled a few students,' he replied. 'The State teachers are a bit touchy about Kormilda going private.'

We flew back to Darwin on sensory overload but I knew I was going to return.

NAMARRGON DREAMING

Nightcliff, 1988

Alighting in Launceston, Tasmania, we were welcomed by a chill westerly blowing off the Western Tiers that reminded us what difference to the weather 30 degrees of latitude makes. Peter wanted us to commence immediately, but we had to settle our affairs in Hobart before making the move to the Top End.

As the removals' truck pulled away from our Sandy Bay front door, we felt momentarily relieved of the drag of possessions. With suitcases and hand luggage, we drove out of the city to the airport and some seven hours later found ourselves back in Darwin.

Never being far from the sea, we liked the look of Nightcliff and found a fourth floor unit available in a recently built white condominium, diagonally opposite the

Nightcliff Swimming Pool. Passing the pool, residents walked along beside the rocky cliffs towards Rapid Creek. It was here on the cliffs that locals often gathered in the evenings with their fish and chips and picnics to watch the sunset.

We liked the idea of a fourth floor apartment, especially its spacious balcony overlooking the sea. The apartments were long and narrow, the bedrooms and bathrooms at the back, with an open kitchen leading into the large tiled living area. Sliding doors opened onto the balcony where we best loved to sit. Air conditioning in the bedroom made it possible to sleep at night. It was not until the wet season had passed that I realised why this most north-easterly unit was available; it caught all of the sun during the 'dry', turning the interior of our apartment into an oven.

Throughout the *Dhulludur* build-up of October and November the heat and humidity become trying. This is the 'Troppo' season. The dry weather blue dome of the sky becomes an endless theatre where immense cumulus clouds first mass on the horizon and proceed to billow up in dramatic display, dominating the 360 degree panoramic skyline.

For weeks the heat, a regular 33°C together with the high humidity and display of cumulus build up (which promised to deliver rain but never did), caused tension to mount. Only when the correct chemical formula of weather pressure, atmospheric sulphur, carbon and potassium nitrate are realised, does Namarrgon, the Lightning Man, strike with his fiercesome hammers. From his Dreaming home on the escarpment facing south of the Gunwardehwarde lookout in Kakadu, Namarrgon distinguishes Darwin as the city with the highest number of thunderstorms per year in the world (Breitner 1996: 72). We were to later see Nayambolmi's rock art painting of Namarrgon among the figures of the often photographed *Anbangbang Gallery* frieze at Nourlangie Rock, which was painted in 1964. Nayambolmi was one of the last of the great rock artists and died in 1967 (Chaloupka 1984).

From our balcony, we would sit for hours watching the dramatic light shows of lightning storms that would illuminate from within the vast galleries of ‘mountain landscapes’ of cumuli. The chain lightning would momentary light up the scenery of cumulus, in a colour range from intense flashing-white, golden yellow, red to the violet/indigo of the clouds, leaving one hoping to prolong the moment of illumination and capture it for closer scrutiny and enjoyment. During *Dulludur*, these spectacular scenes would only yield enough rain to turn the country green again.

It was not until the commencement of *Baerra’mirri* (season of growth) in December that the seriously heavy monsoonal rain began to fall and when it did, it came down in torrents. I remember driving towards Karama (a Darwin suburb) through a downpour and having to slow the Mazda to a crawl. The windscreen wipers could not cope with the deluge. Neither could I see a metre ahead of me. It was like attempting to drive through a waterfall.

Baerri’mirri is for the bulk of the European population, a time of exodus. Thousands, like salmon determined to reach the spawning grounds, stream through the terminals into extra scheduled airbuses, escaping to southbound destinations. Seeking the comfort of familiarity, family, festive feasts, fair weather, beaches and the cricket, they stay long enough to realise why they may have left in the first place, before returning to see out the end of the ‘Wet’.

During our first Wet, we extended our songline in the other direction and flew to the much closer destination of Bali.

Places Of Impermanence

The ‘Discovery’ and Settlement of the Northern Territory

Despite being one of the first areas of the Australian continent to be discovered,

it was one of the last to be successfully settled. In 1879 a Ming figurine of the God of Longevity was discovered buried in the roots of a banyan tree at Doctor's Gully suggesting that possibly Zheng He, the famous eunuch Admiral with his Ming fleet of commodious junks may have passed by during his far reaching explorations of the East Indies archipelago between 1405 and 1431. If they had, any written documentation mentioning the Australian continent, would have been destroyed along with his ten-masted junks after a radical shift in policy following the succession of a new Emperor, Zhu Gaozhi in 1424 (Menzies 2002). They certainly 'discovered' Timor.

The Portuguese also knew about Timor, settling there in 1516. A cannon discovered on Carronade Island in Napier Broome Bay in the Kimberley suggests a fleeting Portuguese presence and marked the presence of a South Land on their maps that they called *Jave La Grande* (McIntyre 1977:81).

By the seventeenth century, the Dutch had taken up residence in the Spice Islands with trading stations in the Celebes and Flores. The redoubtable moral fibre of the Dutch governors seriously pursued the investment interests of their Protestant sponsors in Amsterdam. Sending out their hardy sea captains in pinnaces of not more than eighty ton, they explored the north, west and some of the southern coastline of New Holland. Without the success they sought in trade for nutmeg, cloves, pepper, cooper, silver, gold, tin and lead. Jansz (1606), Carstenzoon (1623), Pieterszoon (1636) and the greatest explorer and cartographer of them all, Abel Tasman, sailed by the mountains of iron ore, the hidden gold deposits, unquantifiable deposits of bauxite and uranium, and found nothing to trade. These would have to wait for another 300 to 400 years for the appropriate technology to uncover and find a use for them. Peering from their portraits with their lace collars and their 'musketeer' style beards, these industrious burghers would not have been impressed with these dusky heathens and their nomadic life-style. They described them as 'wild, cruel barbarians' (quoted in Breitner 1996: 39). Their Protestant work ethic paradigm was too narrow a foundation from which to comprehend Aboriginal life and they regarded them with suspicion and as being of no interest to the East India Company. All they left behind them were a scattering of unimaginative names along the coastline: Van Diemen's Gulf, Groote

Eylandt, Arnhem Land and New Holland.

Trading Places

Yirrkala, Rarrandharr 2004

'Ready to go?' called Trevor as he brought the battered Land Cruiser to a halt in a cloud of red dust. The students, with whom I was staying at The Yirrkala School, piled into the back of the troop carrier, while I hopped in front with Trevor and his son Hugh. Trevor, a one time Yirrkala resident, had returned to produce the Garma web site. He was here with his wife Julie (a former teacher at the school) and their two children, Ella and Hugh.

'I'll take you down towards Wanawuy (Cape Arnhem) and the Makassan Beach where the Makassans used to camp and then down to Garanhan where we can take in a feed of rock oysters' he continued in a raised voice as the Land Cruiser rattled noisily over the corrugated bush track. It was another 'beautiful day in paradise' during Rarrandharr, the main dry season on the Gove Peninsula, the most northeasterly tip of Arnhem Land. The sun shone brightly as the east-southeast breeze blew off the clear aqua waters of the Gulf. The horizon was rhythmically punctuated with columns of smoke that marked the fires that had been lit to burn back the long grass and dried up growth.

One of the dances performed at Garma made use of coloured calico 'props' of what appeared to be maritime flags. I later discovered it was a revival of what was once a regularly performed dance that told the story of the seasonal arrival of the Makassan trepang gatherers in their praus. With Monsoon winds billowing out their great white sails, these dependable craft, often high at bow and stern, had been returning to the isolated North for the past 200 years. Staying on the coast for up to four or five months, they would return home on the

Southeasterly winds laden with their precious cargo. This dance had not been performed in years.

Wary and jealous of their newly founded settlements in the North, the South Australian government appointed customs officers to collect revenue from the trepang trade and eventually forbade the Makassans from returning in 1906. Custom records reveal the regularity with which the captains returned (Ganter 2005).

We turned off a sidetrack, parked the troop carrier near a protective gate and fence where a sign proclaimed the area as a former Makassan site. Walking a short distance from the fence, we came upon an outline of a Makassan prau, carefully marked by neatly arranged stones of equal size. It was a good 3 x 2 metres in size, a memorial to their once anticipated return. My thoughts turned to a rock art painting of a double-masted prau with an anchor and a trailing dinghy that I had seen in the Nanguluwur Gallery while visiting Kakadu National Park.

During his circumnavigation of the continent in 1803, Matthew Flinders encountered a fleet of sixty of the double-ruddered ships off the northeastern tip of Arnhem Land and estimated there were a thousand Makassans aboard. These visitors were from Makassar, an island Sultanate in the East Indies, now known as Sulawesi, part of the Indonesian Republic. These regular visitors gathered the edible *beche de mer* (class Holothuroidea), also known as trepang or sea cucumber, and traded it with the Chinese who prized it for its aphrodisiacal properties. Found in great quantity in the warm shallow waters of the *Marege* (Arnhem Land), they made camp on the beaches, dragging up the trepang, boiling and drying them ready for export (Ganter 2005).

They traded with the Yolgnu – hatchets, mirrors, tobacco, rice and calico for

labour and turtle shell, made alliances with their women, taking some of the locals with them to Makassar. Apart from the material goods that were exchanged and the tamarind trees they planted, Dr Tim Flannery also pointed out the ‘ ... hidden cargoes of genes and microbes ...’ that were introduced to the communities. As early as 1803, Francois Peron detected among the Aborigines of the North, people carrying Makassan genes (Flannery 2001:332-336). At Kormilda, Asian features were clearly evident in some of the students. Flannery noted that it wasn’t only one-way traffic, with Australoid features still being seen in the crowded streets of Ujung Pandang.

Although not clearly evident, smallpox, malaria, tuberculosis and leprosy may have been introduced by the Makassans. Long before Anglo settlement, a visiting British doctor noted in 1827, smallpox scars on the Indigenous Arnhem Landers. Flannery astutely conjectured that these diseases would have probably been introduced gradually, one at a time, over hundreds of years and that the Aboriginal population would had time to recover. This inoculation, together with disease resistant Makassan genes, proved to be a valuable asset of survival.

Exposure to the Makassans had provided the Arnhem Landers with the sophistication of cultural interchange and immune resistance to the European hidden weapon of disease that had radically diminished Indigenous populations of colonised communities around the globe.

‘No longer biologically or culturally naïve, they – of all Aboriginal groups – were in a strong position to contest ownership of the land with the invading Europeans.’ (Flannery 2001:335)

We walked over the gritty red bauxite-rich ground towards the extensive shoreline of the bay and imagined the temporary encampments with smoke from cooking fires and people busying themselves with the needs of everyday living. Out on the water, the bay would have been dotted with the double-masted praus, sails furled,

dredging heir quarry from shallow waters. Others would be drawn up on to the beach, beyond the high tide mark, under the soughing tamarind trees, providing shelter from the cool to mild evenings. Further along the beach would be the iron vats in which the trepang were boiled and dried. We could imagine the Yolgnu, having observed the campfires, coming to visit old friends to socialise, work and trade.

We also wondered what they felt, as they waited longingly for the arrival of the fleet that was never to return.