Chapter 1  20th Century Feminist Spirituality

Making and mobilizing new metaphors changes the logic, thereby changing perception and imagination and provoking new action; it is a way of changing the world.

Hoagland & Frye, 2000

At the turn of the 20th century in the West, the growing awareness of other cultures coincided with theatrical innovations, spiritual naturalism and the call for equal rights for women. With the gradual acceptance of women into universities and publication of women’s writing and research, a number of women were claiming independence from masculinist thought and some were rejecting traditional religion. They were looking for alternative beliefs, symbols, and modes of expression that would speak to their gender. Likewise, women performers were challenging traditional ballet and the feminine stereotype associated with it. Their choreography explored spiritual expression and social commentary, but did not yet go so far as to deconstruct the religious and social frameworks themselves. These early women are examined in Chapter 2.

Women performers who were exploring spirituality and looking at alternatives from Greece and the Orient, were basing their information on images and writing, without questioning the gender bias in these religions. Nor was there an awareness of such biases in the fields of archaeology and anthropology. However, the female images uncovered by archaeological scholars stood in marked contrast to the one-and-only female image of the Christian Mary, the virgin-mother-of-Christ. For example, Classical Greek and Minoan Crete iconography showed images of many women in all sorts of religious roles. The belief was that many of these images were goddesses, remnants of an early woman-centred or even a matriarchal culture. The ‘mother goddess’ revived a woman-nature connection which had emerged centuries before in ancient Greece, where ‘the earth’ was imaged female.
By the end of the 20th century, the questioning of social and cultural constructs was part of Western women’s cultural expression. This chapter examines that feminist critique, especially in relation to women’s experiences of Christianity and their traditional positioning as ‘other’, along with indigenous cultures, and the nonhuman environment.\(^3\) The discussion is drawn from the writing of selected radical feminists, feminist theologians and ecofeminists. The analysis follows what Mary Daly has termed, a journey of ‘exorcism and ecstasy’: one of identification and naming of the patriarchal paradigm, revealing how that paradigm functions to position women, indigenous cultures and nature, exorcising the paradigm, and re-naming or re-visioning. Performance-ritual engages in this process and *Centre of the Storm*, in particular, is the site for new namings. The implications of the differing standpoints of revolutionaries and reformists are presented, and criticism of essentialism in feminist spirituality and ecofeminism is addressed.

Feminism and ecofeminism began from Western grassroots experience and action. Over time the writing became more academic, theorising connections, and many streams of feminist thought emerged. This has led to a North-Western bias in feminist theory, although educated women from other non-Western cultures are now entering the debate.\(^4\) In her book about ‘feminist thought’, Rosemary Tong describes the contributions of liberal, radical, Marxist-socialist, psychoanalytic, existentialist, postmodern, multicultural, eco- and global feminisms.\(^5\) Tong does not place feminist theologians in a distinct category, but positions them within radical feminism and ecofeminism depending on the content of their writing. Moreover, Tong does not mention feminist performers at all. This chapter will assume that performance-ritual may also be treated as a text; standing at the intersection of radical feminist theology and ecofeminism.\(^6\)

**Feminist Spirituality and Nature**\(^7\)

The second wave of feminism in the late 1960’s coincided with the release of James Mellaart’s *Catal Huyuk* in 1967 and Marija Gimbutas’ *The Gods and Goddesses of Old
Europe in 1974. Both books supported the idea of an early pre-Neolithic ‘great Mother-Goddess’ and in 1982 Gimbutas re-emphasised that theory by republishing her book with the deities reversed: The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe. The speed with which the ‘goddess movement’ expanded during the 70’s, 80’s and 90’s is a testament to the need women had for a religion and religious symbolism that empowered them, rather than of the truth or fallacy of a ‘prehistoric universal goddess’; a ‘truth’ which is still being debated. In addition to the goddess material, Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring brought a growing awareness of the interdependence of the human and natural environments and of the disasters caused by ignorant Western scientific practices.

These co-incidences in Western scholarship led to a blossoming interest, by women, in the spirituality and rituals of indigenous cultures and to the formation of biophilic philosophies and rituals that honoured women as well as the natural environment. A number of women began to look critically at links between the marginalisation of women and ‘others’, colonisation, and the continuing destruction of life support systems. They identified the masculinist bias behind Western religion, philosophy and science, which encourages ‘hierarchies’, ‘separation from’, and ‘objectivity’, as the link. The result is that women have been placed in a position of powerlessness as far as the ‘things that matter’, that misuse of nature parallels the way women and other ‘others’ are still being resourced, that violence, especially male violence towards women, is endemic, and that the world exists in a perpetual state of war.

In contrast, radical feminist theologians and ecofeminists have called for a return to material embodiment in theory and practice; a return to the context of living as a woman, in this body, in this culture, and in relationship with nature. Radical feminist theologians speak of contextualised and embodied theologies and ritual practices. Other women have expressed these ideas in theory, fiction, poetry, as well as the performing and visual arts. Some American visual and performing artists exploring goddess imagery are discussed in Gadon’s The Once and Future Goddess. The genre of performance-ritual developed in
this thesis is part of this ongoing project, but it extends beyond the 'goddess' and other archetypical representations, to develop an exemplar for spirituality grounded in material reality.

**Source Material, Cause and Action**

Women's experience of the continuing misogyny in the Christian church offers the source material for radical feminist theological critique. Radical feminist theologians target the masculine and hierarchical bias of Christianity and other religions which colonise women, indigenous others, and nature. The aim of feminist theological action is to change the paradigm at its religious source. Generally, ecofeminist critique is secular, responding to socio-political impacts on communities, particularly women, and their environments. As ecofeminist Mary Mellor writes, 'ecofeminism is necessarily a materialist theory because of its stress on the immanence (embodiedness and embeddedness) of human existence' (Mellor, 1997:162). Ecofeminists target the global capitalist economic system colonising the world. The aim of ecofeminist action is to ensure the survival of the earth and its people from a long term, cross cultural and global perspective. Mellor identifies two streams within ecofeminism, a socialist feminist stream, and a cultural/spiritual stream (Mellor, 1997:6). In this scheme, Australian ecofeminist, Ariel Salleh is part of the socialist feminist stream and Americans Carol Adams and Rosemary Radford Ruether, are part of the cultural/spiritual stream. Writers from both streams of ecofeminism are included in this chapter.

Radical feminist theologians and ecofeminists broadly agree that patriarchal power relations are the cause of the twin crises of equality and sustainability. As Salleh writes, 'the global majority of women live out their lives right at the bottom of a hierarchy of oppressions, inhabiting the contradictory space where Women and Nature meet' (Salleh, 1997:x).
The Spiralling Journey of Exorcism and Ecstasy

Radical feminist theologian and philosopher, Daly, names the process of critique a 'journey of exorcism and ecstasy' and a 'journey of women becoming' (Daly, 1990:1).\(^{15}\) She envisages this spiritual journey as a spiral; a journey in which there is an ongoing need to identify, name and exorcise paradigms which negatively position women, while simultaneously beginning the task of re-naming. The spiralling is exemplified in *Quintessence*, where Daly returns to the 'war' against women and nature which was a focal argument in a previous publication, *Gyn/ecology*. She calls the writing of *Quintessence* 'a Desperate Act performed in a time of ultimate battles between principalities and powers. More than ever all sensate and spiritual life on this planet and anywhere within reach is threatened with extinction' (Daly, 1998:1).\(^{16}\) Daly is a radical feminist but is informed by an ecofeminist awareness of the links between the positioning of women and nature by colonising patriarchal systems.

Daly’s is one of the most inventive of theologies; one derived from a feminist standpoint that speaks beyond gender and beyond formal religion. The journey begins with the identification of the masculinist bias, including 'the sources of the ghostly gases that have seeped into the deep chambers of our minds' (Daly, 1990:3). 'Seeking out' is followed by naming the 'Male-Factors', understanding how they function, and making public how individual women, as well as women as a group, have been positioned and 'made invisible'. Daly adds to this an acknowledgment of the rage and disappointment felt by women as they face the truth of their history and the necessity for women to say, 'no more'. 'Our grief is for the Earth, our Sister, as well as for the Forecrones of our Race... Anger is unpotted and transformed into Rage/Fury when the vast network that constitutes our oppression is recognized' (Daly, 1984:258).\(^{17}\) Daly terms this 'Rage against the erasure', 'Female Fury' (Daly, 1984:5). The performance-rituals examined here follow Daly’s journey, and many of them face the truth of women's history and express this rage.
The process of ‘seeking out’ and naming is followed by the transforming task of women reclaiming and redefining words and images for themselves, and discovering ‘gynergy’: the ‘deep dynamics of female be-ing’ (Daly, 1990:13). This part of the journey is one of ‘dis-covery’ and ‘ecstasy’. The journey of ‘exorcism and ecstasy’ is based on ‘knowledge from the past’, ‘present experience’ and ‘hopes for the future’. It is a spiralling journey which continues throughout a woman’s lifetime. In Daly’s view women need to continually name, deconstruct and rename their world, as the patriarchal structure, and its positioning of women, has not yet changed significantly. The outcome of this journey is the entrance to an inner and outer ‘otherworld’, which Daly names ‘Hag-o-cracy’; ‘the realm of Hags and Crones’, the background of Self (Daly, 1990:1-3).

For women who are on the journey of radical be-ing, the lives of the witches, of the Great Hags of our hidden history are deeply intertwined with our own process. As we write/live our own story, we are uncovering their history, creating Hag-o-graphy and Hag-o-logy. Unlike the “saints” of christianity, who must, by definition, be dead, Hags live. Women travelling into feminist time/space are creating Hag-o-cracy, the place we govern. (Daly, 1990:15)

The journey, then, is one where past and future are held in the present, where Female Fury is released, where there is a ‘bringing forth into the world of New Being’, and there is a moving on (Daly, 1985a:139). Daly has taken her personal, spiritual journey as a woman, abstracted it, and travelled to the boundaries, which, for her, are/is also the centre, of life.18 Like the journey of performance-ritual, Daly’s journey is one of personal, political and theological action. A number of feminists whose work is examined here have followed this path.

**Identifying and Naming the Paradigm**

Radical feminists variously term the masculinist paradigm ‘a sexist patriarchy’, or ‘sexism’. Daly also describes it as misogynism, androcentrism, antisexuality, ‘The Most
Unholy Trinity: Rape, Genocide, and War’ and antifeminism (Daly, 1985b:179, 186 & 1985a:114 ff.). Explaining how the sexist patriarchal paradigm in the Judeo-Christian ethic underlies the broader Western culture, Daly writes:

This “beautiful Judeo-Christian ethic” of missions - missions to convert “pagans” over their dead bodies, missions to the moon, missions to drop hydrogen bombs and ultimately to end life on the planet - is the culmination of the masculine-feminine schizophrenia which is causing the race to rape itself to death. (Daly, 1985a:174)

Her deconstruction of the paradigm spans religion, philosophy, science, law, economics, psychoanalysis, literature and the media.

Ruether is another leading feminist theologian and ecofeminist. Her work, like Daly’s, publicly highlights misogyny in the Christian church: it’s symbolism, including hierarchical structure, iconography, focal metaphors, myths and ritual. Ruether broadens the debate to detail the paradigm’s interface with Freud, Jung, Neumann, contemporary socialism, anti-semitism, racism and nature, although she does not regard sexism as the only form of oppression. Feminist philosopher and linguist Luce Irigaray extends the radical feminist critique to Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Sophocles and Lacan. Ecofeminists, such as, Maria Mies, Vandana Shiva and Salleh focus more on the ‘activities of governments’ and international corporations.

How the Paradigm Functions

Patriarchal relations function by way of exclusion. The exclusion is justified culturally and by institutionalised processes, which feminists term variously as, hierarchies, dualisms, separations, disassociations, reversals, sado-masochism and homosexuality. Daly shows how the Christian church oppresses women by what is described as their ‘natural inferiority’ which positions them as socially subordinate to men (Daly,
Ruether defines this hierarchy as a dualistic model where Man = active/dominant versus Woman = passive/submissive; a model of sado-masochism (Ruether, 1995:Part 1). As Ruether explains, ‘The sexist model of activity and receptivity is sado-masochistic, inculcating domination of subordinates, dependency upon superiors...women are made to be specialists in self-abnegating, auxiliary modes of existence, while males monopolize the effective feedback from both forms of experience’ (Ruether, 1995:57).

Analysis of the hierarchical paradigm is extended by spiritual ecofeminist Elizabeth Dodson Gray to include ‘God/Man/Woman/Children/Nature’; one of descending order of value. (Dodson Gray, 1981:Chpt. 1). This hierarchical order is the one enshrined in Christianity, evolutionary theory and the new priesthods of science, technology and academia. In accord with Daly and Ruether, Dodson Gray defines the hierarchy as a linear view of relationships based on dualistic models of domination/submission, over/under, spirit/matter and mind/body. This, she suggests, allows the separation of ‘I’ from all that is ‘not I’ and therefore ‘less’ or ‘lower than’. Dodson Gray believes that it is this emotional and psychological separation which is leading the world to ecological disaster (Dodson Gray, 1981:7).

The theme of man’s separation from nature occurs also in the work of feminist poet Susan Griffin. She includes the masculine separation from emotion, body, death and anything which reminds him that he is human. Griffin writes:

He says that woman speaks with nature. That she hears voices from under the earth. That wind blows in her ears and trees whisper to her. That the dead sing through her mouth and the cries of infants are clear to her. But for him this dialogue is over. He says he is not part of this world, that he was set on this world as a stranger. He sets himself apart from woman and nature. (Griffin, 1984:1)
This masculinist separation from feeling has the result that many women are commodified, bought, sold, used and abused. Ecofeminist Adams terms the dualisms 'A or Not A'. She points out that the resulting politics/spirituality dualism ignores the relationship between the two, 'as though humans are not part of nature and politics is not integrally related to spirituality' (Adams, 1993:2). Other spiritual feminists have written of these links.

Another prominent voice is Starhawk, who also elaborates on the divisions between spirit and flesh, culture and nature, man and woman. She suggests that the underlying dualism is one of 'power over' versus 'power-from-within' which in theological terms is one of transcendence versus immanence (Starhawk, 1988:Chpt. 1). The view of a transcendent God who is over and outside of all, has historically been promoted by the Church in its symbols and dogma, in spite of internal debates about God-as-immanent. The belief in a transcendent God mirrors men's sense of being above women, 'others' and nonhuman nature. Daly adds to this an examination of the sacred/profane dichotomy in mythology and anthropology (Daly, 1990:49 ff.). Feminist theological writing, in contrast, explore spirit as immanent and embodied in humanity and nature.

In her deconstruction of Western philosophy and psychoanalytic theory, Irigaray compares the perspective of 'man' as subject, the 'I' seen by the 'eye' in the mirror, with 'woman' as the viewed object and 'lacking', because she 'does not have one', that is, the prized phallus (1985a, 1985b, 1986 & 1994). She goes on to deconstruct dualisms, such as look/touch, fixed/liquid singularity/multiplicity, 'god'/soul, active/passive, universal 'truth'/personal experience, 'neutral'/bias and the W=N paradigm. Salleh summarises these tendencies as an I/O mindset (Salleh, 1997:35 ff.). In this dualism she takes Irigaray's 'I' as man, subject and 'has one' and 'O' as 'not man', object, lacking and therefore non existent 'other', that is, 'woman', and extends the polarity to European thinking about indigenous cultures and the nonhuman environment (Salleh, 1997:Chpt. 4).
This I/O dualism appears to underlay all other dualisms in the West, such as, mind/body, rational/unpredictable, abstraction/materiality, order/chaos, clean/dirty, linear/circular, evolution/birth-death cycle, future/present, production/reproduction, technology/nature, visual/sensual and public/private. In each of these pairs one is privileged over the other. The feminist challenge to dualistic thought patterns stresses continuums, differences and variety. Salleh argues that the hierarchical ideological paradigm rests on a reversal of material reality.

The world of I/O relations rests on a shocking reversal of material reality. It is the capitalist patriarchal ego that experiences itself as void (O) and must constantly affirm itself by consuming the energy of the Other - native, woman, child. (Salleh, 1997:43)

Here Salleh is in agreement with Daly's identification of reversals which Daly links, rightly or wrongly, to reenactments of the original ‘goddess murder’(Daly, 1978a:95 ff. & 1990:Chpt. 2). Reversal is the means by which women, indigenous cultures and nature are systematically negated and made invisible. Shiva illustrates this process in relation to the poor:

From the viewpoint of governments, intergovernmental agencies, and power elites...the poor, the weak are a ‘surplus’ population, putting an unnecessary burden on the planet’s resources... [They] totally ignore the fact that the greatest pressure on the earth’s resources is not from large numbers of poor people but from a small number of the world’s ever-consuming elite... (in Mies and Shiva, 1993:86).

Reversals are present in the Creation stories of Judeo-Christian and Greek mythologies, where ‘woman’ is said to be birthed out of a man or a male god (Daly, 1990:Chpt. 2). Salleh links the reversals to the need for young boys and men to split from ‘mother’ ‘and
find their own power. ‘Moreover, since fathers are often absent the lack of a role model leads to insecure self-identification in men’. This can produce compensatory behaviour in ‘doing and making external things like objects, tools and buildings’ (Salleh, 2001 & 1997:38 ff.). Difficulties with the mother-son bond are also considered by Dodson Gray and Ruether. Dodson Gray examines the psycho-sexual parallel in the mother-boychild and wife-husband relationships. She also parallels Freud’s penis envy thesis by identifying uterus-envy, or the reproductive potential of women, as one cause of men’s need to find an alternative creative role (Dodson Gray, 1981:49). Salleh likewise points to this in her argument that ‘masculinity is an overdetermined phenomenon’ (Salleh, 2001). She is open to Gray’s suggestion that anatomical and hormonal differences may also influence the way men and women view and experience life.

Irigaray asks, ‘Is the visible privileged by men because it marks their emergence from life in the womb? His victory over maternal power and his possible mastery of the mother?’ (Irigaray, 1986:2). The idea that sexism is rooted in a ‘war against the mother’ is supported by Ruether (Ruether, 1995:25). Ruether uses Biblical history to explain how a false consciousness has been built up by social change, which led to the conquest, negation and sublimation of ‘the mother’ throughout Western history and religion. These ‘reasons’ remain hypothetical, however. What is undeniable is the apparent need for Western men to re-invent origin myths. As Jane Ellen Harrison suggests, and Daly agrees, images of the ‘three mothers’ of pre-Hellenic Greece gradually dissipated, only to re-emerge as the all-male Trinity of the Christian church.28

A ‘Christian neurosis’ is used by theologian Karen Armstrong to explain the problems in Western patriarchal culture (Armstrong, 1987:ix).29 According to her, this neurosis extends to a fear and repulsion men have of sex and erotic pleasure, which results in the social exclusion of women and other ‘Outsiders’ (Armstrong, 1987:ix, x). It creates an ‘unholy trinity’ of ‘woman-sex-sin’ (Armstrong, 1987:33). Armstrong uses Biblical and social history to illustrate the emergence of the Christian neurosis in the context of
particular socio-cultural changes, excesses and uncertainties. She traces the Church’s increasing push towards celibacy for all men and women and the separation of women away from public life. Further, she notes contradictory views towards marriage and childbirth, especially exacerbated in Protestantism and Fundamentalism. Armstrong sees the neurosis linked to the acts of violence which re-surface throughout Church history.

Daly, Irigaray and Salleh use the metaphor of M-M, or homosexuality, as another means of representing the way in which patriarchal relations function. The public face of traditional religion, business, academia, the military and most institutions is a fraternity; that is, of men functioning together with other men. Daly extends this, identifying an M-M-M homosexual bond in the Christian Trinity (Daly, 1990:37 ff.). As Irigaray acknowledges: ‘...He scarcely limits himself in himself, among his selves: he is father, son, spirit’ (Irigaray, 1986:4).\(^3\)

It is a small step from ‘reversals’, ‘neuroses’ and ‘war against the mother’, to scapegoating women for what goes wrong in society. Daly identifies the scapegoating syndrome in the Judeo-Christian Creation story, in which Eve is blamed for ‘sin’ (Daly, 1985a: 44-47, 60). Dodson Gray and Ruether agree with Daly that the Biblical Creation myth is a problem and needs to be revised (Dodson Gray, 1979:Chpt. 15 and Ruether, 1992: Part One). Armstrong extends this with her ‘woman-sex-sin’ trinity to illustrate the way in which the Church places women at fault for men’s sexual feelings, action and guilt (Armstrong, 1986:Chpts. 1 & 2). Both Armstrong and Daly find the scapegoating syndrome in the writing of the ‘church fathers’. In particular, the metaphor of the virgin-mother Mary is promoted as the ‘ideal woman’; a paradox that no woman can possibly live up to (Armstrong, 1986:73 ff. & Daly, 1985a:81 ff.) This image and symbol positions women as ‘always less than the ideal’ and forever on the brink of failure.\(^3\)

The woman prostitute, who is servicing a man’s sexual ‘need’, is a version of the same story. She is a scapegoat, vilified and blamed throughout history. In the West, it was,
until recently, the prostitute who was charged and convicted for servicing the man, not the client. In some cultures she still is killed; sometimes as punishment and sometimes as part of the sexual act itself. The concept of woman-as-scapegoat, blamed for and expected to clean up the mess after men’s mistakes, is taken up by ecofeminists as well. Shiva notes how so-called third world women are targeted as cause of the population explosion and ensuing stress on the environment (Shiva in Mies & Shiva, 1993:86, 17). It is they who are expected to change, not Western ‘over-consumers’. Salleh quotes Ivan Illich to illustrate that, as industry and corporate wealth increases, so does violence against women (Salleh, 1997:65). At the same time women’s land-based work and ‘reliant communal provisioning’ is decimated by Western globalisation under the euphemistic banner of ‘development’ (Salleh, 2001).

‘War’ and ‘violence’ are continuing presences in patriarchal societies. The metaphor of ‘war’ is used quite openly by men. Salleh reminds the reader that businessmen consider themselves to be at war (Salleh, 1997:87). Men’s sport is often presented as a war between two opposing warrior teams. Shiva illustrates the ethic of violence underlying science, technology, colonisation and capitalism (Mies & Shiva, 1993:22 ff.). Stories of war and conflict are an integral component of mythology and history. Violence is endemic in Christianity: ‘Christian attitudes to sex and to women are similarly irrational and inconsistent and have from time to time exploded violently. They continue to explode.’ (Armstrong, 1986:vii).

Daly adds ‘rape’, including incest, and ‘genocide’ to ‘war’ in her version of the Unholy Trinity which underlies Christianity and other Western mythologies (Daly, 1985a:114 ff.). Later, she adds ‘vampirism’: the slow death of women and environments as sexist men suck them dry (Daly, 1990:375). In Daly’s terms, the ‘Unholy Trinity’ makes for a sado-society which maintains itself with sado-rituals. Griffin examines rape, sadism and pornography, questioning the theory the men are ‘naturally violent’. Instead she suggests a process of education is needed to promote tenderness and vulnerability for both men.
and women (Griffin, 1982:39ff., 103 ff.). In her publication, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*, feminist philosopher Sara Ruddick examines the language of war, and illustrates how it relies on abstraction, reason and a separation from the material reality of body and ‘being’ (Ruddick, 1989:Chpt. 6).

In spite of the reality of endemic violence, war, environmental destruction, and gender and racial inequality, ‘Most people in the affluent societies live in a kind of schizophrenic or ‘double-think’ state.’ (Mies in Mies & Shiva, 1993:57). Schizophrenia is used by Mies, Shiva and Daly to explain the way in which the West is able to continue living under the social and ecological vampirism while knowing the reality of the destruction which it engenders (Daly, 1973:174 ff.). The I/O formula used by Salleh also support this concept. The Christian church is not immune. It has historically professed a doctrine of love while, at the same time, been involved in atrocities against others, including women, Muslims, Jews and other Christians (Armstrong, 1986:68, 69). The schizophrenia is enforced in science and technology, which rely on the decontextualisation of their experiments, and on the split of intellect from emotion, in the pursuit of objective research, a process that parallels that used in war (Mies in Mies and Shiva, 1993:50 and Ruddick, 1989:Chpt. 4). This dissociated way of living has infiltrated into the broader society in the West, as its leaders continue to ignore the reality of their actions and their growing debt to invisible others, especially women and nature. In contrast, ecofeminists like Salleh encourage ‘reciprocity and nurture rather than exploitation and control’ (Salleh, 1997:82).

Violence, rape, incest, war and genocide are a continuing presence in Western and other societies, but this is not a ‘modern’ problem. Rather, as archaeological and mythological records show, colonisation, conquest, inter-tribal warfare, human and animal torture-sacrifice, and unthinking land clearance has a very long history. These records suggest the possibility that there was never a ‘Garden of Eden’; that is, a time of peace, harmony and understanding between one human and another, and between humans and their
environment. If there were times of peaceful co-existence, it may have had more to do with small populations who had room to move on, than considered practices. However, this does not negate the impact of the current Western masculinist global economic and scientific programs on women, nature and indigenous people, and the violence associated with it; a program that still privileges overconsumption over reciprocity. This complexity is something that the research for the performance-rituals in *Centre of the Storm* revealed, and that *Centre of the Storm* needed to integrate.

**Exorcism**

Having named the problem of patriarchy, the next stage some feminist theologians, including Daly, Dodson Gray, Ruether and Starhawk, suggest is the *exorcism* of negative images and myths from religion, social relations and from the psychic unconscious of women. In Daly’s journey, women’s need of exorcism is a key concept. This is illustrated in four of her books: *Beyond God the Father, Gyn/Ecology, Pure Lust* and *Websters’ First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language*. In *Beyond God the Father* Daly identifies the need to exorcise ‘evil’ from Eve and ‘original sin’ from women. In *Gyn/Ecology* she identifies the need to exorcise ‘the internalized Godfather’, his ‘demons’ and the ‘seven deadly sins’ that ‘victimize women’, all of which hide ‘the eight deadly sins of Phallocracy’ (Daly, 1990:xvii, 2, 30). The focus of *Pure Lust* is on two of these ‘sins’, Aggression and Obsession which, she suggests, underlie the expression of Phallic lust.

The process of exorcism targets images such as, the 'eternal feminine' which has its contradictory expression in the virgin-mother Mary and in the ‘delicate, stay-at-home’ wife. Another target is the ‘fear’ women have of their bodies and of expressing their sexuality. The fear women have of expressing their sexuality, Armstrong suggests, internalises the fear men have of a woman’s body, its sexuality and eroticism. It is a fear which has been expressed in the myths of Creation and other stories about free, unmarried women. The dualism of the virgin/whore is an either/or dichotomy of good
versus evil, with no room for variability, choice or change and is accepted by women and men. As Armstrong says, ‘One of the things that women tend to be most intolerant about is the sexuality of other women’ (Armstrong, 1986:64).

Radical feminist theologians challenge this position and stress the need for women and men to reclaim ‘the erotic’ and to acknowledge the link between sexuality and spirituality,

A true transformation of our culture would require reclaiming the erotic as power-from-within, as empowerment...the erotic can confirm our uniqueness while affirming our deep oneness with all being. It is the realm in which the spiritual, the political and the personal come together. (Starhawk, 1988:138)

Griffin contrasts ‘eros’, an open, uniting, deep soul, with ‘pornography’, which is controlled by the ego and separates sexual expression from the body (Griffin:1981:251 ff.).

Archetypes that are used by men as stylised images of women or that ‘feminise’ or ‘womanise’ functions of things men ‘own’, create or name, such as countries, nations, transport and institutions like the Church, are exposed by Daly and exemplified in Fox’s work. Daly then moves on to exorcise the very words ‘archetype’ and ‘archimage’ themselves. Archetype she defines as an illusion, model or replica which is static and therefore inherently evil. On the other hand, she reclaims ‘archimage’ for women, one which stands for their ‘transformative power’, ‘the power of healing broken connections’ (Daly, 1984:90)

Daly's critique deals with two kinds of symbolic representations: language, myth and story on the one hand, and the enactment of the symbol in patriarchal social practice, especially religious, on the other. Hers is not a personal attack on individual men. Rather, it is an attack on the social structure which is the outward sign of an underlying
paradigm carried by men who enact the atrocities. In *Gyn/Ecology* she describes the object of her critique as 'the massive symbol system of patriarchal religion' and beyond, although she admits that 'this will of course be called an “anti-male” book. Even the most cautious and circumspect feminist writings are described in this way.' (Daly, 1990:xxiv, v, 27). In *Pure Lust* she describes the attitude underlying patriarchal systems as 'the life-hating lechery that rapes and kills the objects of its obsession/aggression.' (Daly, 1984:2).

Daly extends the journey of exorcism to include other concepts, such as, the 're-membering of women’s history' an area that Irigaray also considers important and one in which performance-ritual engages (Daly, 1984:vii). Once patriarchal systems are identified, named, deconstructed and exorcised from women’s psyches, alternative paradigms can be explored and political action suggested.

**Re-naming**

In 1968, while Daly was still part of the Catholic church, she identified a number of different areas that needed changing. A summary of these areas include:

- the gender bias of the whole institution and its symbolic representations;
- the concepts, images and definitions of and attitudes towards 'god';
- the concept of an unchanging, omnipotent, immortal God which encourages a static world view and the acceptance of the ‘status quo’;
- the theology of a once-and-only divine revelation versus individual experiences and understandings;
- the myth of the Fall;
- the Church’s views on incarnation, sexuality, marriage, birth control, abortion, the sacraments and the priesthood.

At this time Daly was searching for a new theological anthropology grounded in the dynamics of social relations and human personality (Daly, 1985b:179ff).
By 1973 Daly was already aware that attempting to feminise 'god' was not the answer to the misogyny of traditional religion. She had stepped outside the Church, been influenced by the women's movement and carried her initial critique a few steps further. She felt the answer for women would be found outside traditional religion and involve deep changes in their own be-ings and self images. Predating Irigaray and some feminist theologians, she believed this movement towards self-transcendence would have the potential to generate new words, new symbols, new models, including 'women's' own sense of space and time. The change would not only be individual but would mean a new way of viewing and relating to the cosmos, one of 'being with us, not for us'. She suggested calling the cosmos and all in it 'sister' for 'One does not rape a sister' (Daly, 1985a:178). This was a false hope for it is now clear that men do rape their wives, their sisters, their sister's babies, and even their grandmothers.

Like Gray, Irigaray, Carol Christ and Ruether, Daly's vision of 'other' implies movement; Be-ing is a verb. According to Daly, 'Be-ing' is 'Ultimate/Intimate Reality, the constantly Unfolding Verb of Verbs...from whom, in whom, and with whom all true movements move' (Daly, 1988:64). In a similar way to other feminist theologians, Daly speaks of ways of be-ing in the world which suggest movement, change, adaptation, wholeness, unity, interrelatedness, Thou-ness and kinship. She illustrates that there is no need to re-invent Creation myths, or religious doctrine, or symbology. Her theology illustrates that there is no need for 'formal' institutionalised religious paradigms or rituals. Daly leaves the Church and formal religion well behind. At the same time, she is ready and proud to pirate what is there. Daly's spiralling 'journey of exorcism and ecstasy' supports the concept that 'we do know how to live, how to be', how to 'exist' outside of the 'mad race into the future'. All that is needed is to stop, listen and open up to 'self' and all 'others', including nature. All that is needed is to live, and be happy to live, on the boundary; a boundary, as Salleh says, between 'human' and nature where most women and much of the non-Western world still resides (Salleh, 1997:x). Performance-ritual is part of this work.
This thesis, *Centre of the Storm*, is the site for new namings. But it is the process of re-naming where some feminists writing on spirituality begin to differ from each other in focus and interest. The two ‘camps’ are exemplified by reformists Ruether and Dodson Gray, who have remained inside the Christian church, versus revolutionaries Daly and Irigaray who perceive the need for a divinity outside of Christianity. As the project in *Centre of the Storm* is to revision a spirituality beyond the confines of Christianity, it is part of the latter group.

‘The Individual Woman’

The differing contexts from which feminist theologians write is reflected in their salvic projects. While not excluding the rest of the community, Christ’s, Daly’s and Irigaray’s writing is more directed towards women’s spiritual journeys, as individuals and as a group. As Irigaray says, ‘This is what we need to become: free, autonomous and sovereign...all women should imagine a God for themselves.’ (Irigaray, 1986:4 & 8)

For theologian Christ and the women she works with, the re-naming occurs through the telling of individual stories, a process in which performance-ritual also engages. ‘The dialectic between experiencing and shaping experience by storytelling has not been in our own hands...Finding our speech and opening our ears to hear,...we have gained the power to create new being’ (Christ in Christ & Plaskow, 1992:229). In this way women create their own thealogy; one which rejects the dualisms inherent in Christianity. Christ views ‘feminist spirituality and feminist thealogy’ as one in which women give up ‘the quest to ally ourselves with a transcendent source or power which is beyond change’ in contrast to the understanding ‘that we are part of a world which is constantly transforming and changing’. She describes the ‘process of remembering, sharing, healing, naming and creating rituals’ as deeply transformative and ‘a ritual of initiation into women’s spiritual quest’ (Christ, 1995:xiii, xiv & xv).
Irigaray’s critique centres on the symbol of the virgin Mother-of-God, whose only hope of divinity is through sex with ‘the spirit’ and birthing ‘the son’. This practical and physical impossibility becomes the only ‘divine’ image for women in Christianity. By extrapolation, women are positioned socially and relationally as wife and mother; a position that allows no autonomy. Irigaray encourages women to ‘divine’ themselves for themselves, rather than for others. She reverses the masculine-defined ‘I’ in the mirror by encouraging women to use the mirror for their own becoming, rather than for an ‘outside eye’. This new mirror becomes the means for work on beauty, redefined by her to mean ‘at least (if not more) to work on gestures in relation to space and other people’ (Irigaray, 1986:7). Movement and flexibility are implied. The mirror becomes a springboard for movement from ‘the envelope full of water which was our prenatal home’ and as a means of constructing ‘bit by bit, the envelope of air of our terrestrial space, air which is still free to breathe and sing, air where we deploy our appearances and our movements. We have been fish. We will have to become birds’ (Irigaray, 1986:7). According to Irigaray, a woman’s divinity will be a verb; one of movement and one that can be shared (Irigaray, 1986:11).

As illustrated, Daly’s journey of exorcism includes the need to highlight the reversals of patriarchy, the need to reverse those reversals, and the need to re-name women’s symbology and experience, and Daly’s ‘re-naming’ finds its epitome in ‘Websters’ First’. In this publication Daly reclaims, redefines and therefore redeems many words which have been used to disparage and disempower women. At the same time she continues her invention of new words begun in Beyond God the Father. Although Daly’s works are hard hitting they also contain a sense of ‘wickedary’ which allows for laughter. In all of this, Daly is claiming her right to do and say things that women ‘shouldn’t’ do and say. Laughter, the crossing of male-defined boundaries and breaking of male-defined rules, she suggests, are healing for women; and the need for healing is necessary when women learn of the history of their betrayal by a sexist patriarchal system.
This focus on an individual woman’s need for her own divinity is not found in theologians Ruether and Dodson Gray.

'The Human Community'

Ruether, by contrast, sees the need for all ‘the oppressed’, not just women, to exorcise demeaning self-images (Ruether, 1975:29). She begins with a more general ‘exorcism of the demonic spirit of sexism in the Church’ and within the doctrine of Mariology (Ruether, 1975:83). In Gaia & God she expands this to include a number of Christian narratives and their expression in social attitudes and action. The narratives do not specifically impact on women. The first is the ‘narrative of destruction’, which is illustrated in both the Old and New Testament, when they present natural and other disasters, such as drought, flood and war, as God’s punishment for sin. In the New Testament, ‘the apocalypse’ is a destructive narrative in which future total destruction of the world is inevitable. It is again presented as part of God’s plan to cleanse the world of evil, during which, the only ones to be saved will be God’s ‘chosen ones’, that is, those written in the Book of Life (Revelation, 20:12).

The second narrative, which Ruether identifies as needing to be exorcised from and by the Church, is the ‘narrative of sin’. This narrative begins in the story of The Fall, which places ‘humans’ at fault, and a perfect God outside of the real world, and separate to nature. 36 Ruether agrees with Dodson Gray that the Creation myth, where ‘sin’ and ‘evil’ emerge, are developed in theology into the doctrine of Original Sin. The Fall is also identified by Dodson Gray as the one needing reversal and remythologising in Christianity. Like other feminist theologians, Dodson Gray’s argument is that, through ‘the centuries the doctrine of the Fall and its concomitant, the doctrine of Original Sin, have functioned to pronounce the very worst side of the human self as eternal and inescapable, at least in this life...’ (Dodson Gray, 1979:157). Ruether suggests that this narrative has a parallel in what she describes as the 20th century ‘eco/feminist’ narrative of the Fall into patriarchy (Ruether, 1992:143 ff.). In this narrative women were initially
'pure' and living in peace-loving, matrifocal societies until the Bronze Age when they were conquered by northern war-loving patriarchal invaders.\textsuperscript{37}

These Biblical narratives are presented as ‘social issues’, not ‘feminist issues’. The need to maintain 'community', inside and outside of the Church, is Ruether's main concern. Therefore, she is more interested in exorcising narratives from the Church rather than the consciousness of individual women. Critiquing individualistic spiritualities Ruether sees the need for 'a new consciousness, a new symbolic culture and spirituality’ but not ‘new forms of privatized intrapsychic activity, divorced from social systems of power’ (Ruether, 1992:4). She also critiques Daly’s pro-woman and ‘anti-man’ stance (Ruether, 1992:147 ff.). However, this is a misreading of Daly, taking her writing as personal attacks on men, not on the system, a danger of which Daly was well aware. Instead of dismantling Christianity, Ruether’s aim is to redeem those parts which offer ‘transformative, biophilic relationships’ (Ruether, 1992:3).

Both Ruether and Dodson Gray can be described as reformists, as they remain in the Church and work for change from within. While maintaining a feminist critique, their focus moves outward from ‘woman’ to ‘human’, ‘others’ and the nonhuman environment, as does Ecofeminism.\textsuperscript{38} They see this focus as supporting, not conflicting with, the social justice and covenant traditions of Christianity.\textsuperscript{39} Both emphasise the Creation myth rather than, say, the maleness of God and the Trinity or the male-hero journey of Jesus. According to Australian theologian, Elaine Wainwright, Ruether retrieves and reinterprets the Jesus myth using its historical emergence from the Old Testaments ‘feminine’ Wisdom traditions, a practice followed Wainright herself, and critiqued by Pamela Foulkes.\textsuperscript{40} This emphasis is reflected in other eco-friendly re-interpretations of Christianity, including The Earth Bible series, which acknowledge Christianity’s patriarchal history and focal myth but prefer to concentrate on ecological reinterpretations of Christian Biblical text.\textsuperscript{41} Ruether and Dodson Gray are selective in their critique of the Church’s dogma and practice. In contrast, Irigaray’s and Daly’s
concern remains with individual women and women as a specific group, and the need for women to redefine themselves, in the belief that, at an existential level, if women change men will be forced to change as well.

Once the process of exorcising negative images from the psyche's of women and/or society has been accomplished, the next stage in the feminist journey is identifying particular areas for change, and exploring alternative images, stories and practices. The differing agendas of feminist theologians is also exemplified in the ways in which they approach this part of the journey.

**Individual and/or Community**

The process of 'women becoming' can be a communal, as well as an individual, journey. These are not mutually exclusive, although they can be. Iris Marion Young offers a considered discussion of the dangers in idealised notions about creating 'community'. The real danger in community living, she argues, is the potential suppression of ontological difference and the tendency to exclude and oppress those experienced as different. Young suggests, 'the ideal of community...[potentially] validates and reinforces the fear and aversion some social groups exhibit towards others' (Young, 1990:235). In terms of the Christian community’s standpoint, it is my experience that Christianity is often seen as the answer to the world's problems, an attitude exhibited at one stage by Ruether and more recently by Michael Trainor (Trainor in Habel, 2000:192 and Ruether, 1995:82,83).

On the other hand, Young argues that metropolitan life offers a 'being together of strangers' (Young, 1990:237). This is a different kind of community; one which Daly's writing and performance-ritual support. The paradox is that, from an ecofeminist perspective, capitalist city centres where difference is multiple, are the material origin of the same paradigm which is causing the ensuing environmental destruction and destruction of 'others'. There seems to be no answer to this paradox, as the
performance-rituals in *Centre of the Storm* illustrate. Perhaps Adams’, Rupp’s and Taylor’s use of ‘solidarity’, rather than ‘community’, is a more appropriate term for the gathering of like-minded but independent women who are working for equality and sustainability. ‘We are not talking about a unity with other women that would erase differences among us... We are talking about solidarity.’ (Adams, 1993:8). From the perspective of this thesis, differing individual spiritualities reflect a city where difference is multiple and culture is ‘multi’.

**Reformists In Search of Another Way**

By 1975, Ruether was developing parallel ideas to Daly’s earlier project, in attempting to change the gender bias of the Church. She was encouraging Church community members to talk and listen to each other and, especially, to women. She was arguing for the ordination of women, and for change in the Church’s masculine-biased hierarchy and ministerial training. In contrast to the prevailing ethos which privileged the clergy, she viewed the whole community as vital to the Church’s ministry and mission (Ruether, 1995:79, ff.).

Ruether was also arguing for ‘a new relationship of humanity to nature’ ... ‘to redeem our sister, the earth, from her bondage to destruction...’ (Ruether, 1995:83). As an ecofeminist as well as a theologian, Ruether saw the link between the domination of women and the domination of nature, and was promoting a combined revolution (Ruether, 1995:204). By 1978, Daly was also writing of these links. Whereas Daly maintained the need for individual women to name their own spiritual journeys, Ruether maintained that the ‘gospel of the Church must again come to be recognized as the social mandate of human history...’ and opposed ‘withdrawing into a private world of individual “salvation”’ (Ruether, 1995:82, 83).

Ten years after Daly’s *The Church and The Second Sex*, Dodson Gray too was arguing against the Church’s patriarchal hierarchy, for new images of God, and for a new
Genesis myth. She specifically identified the masculinist Nature=Woman assumption as one which needed re-interpretation. Dodson Gray urged a rewriting of the Creation story, using metaphors from the nonhuman environment and atomic physics (Dodson Gray, 1979:62 ff.). These included concepts such as, movement, dance, circle, whole body, interrelatedness, reclamation of sensuality, cyclical or natural rhythms of birth-death-birth and 'life as it is'; all of which appear in performance-ritual and Centre of the Storm. Dodson Gray also encouraged women to re-myth themselves. Yet, by 1988 she was focusing on 'making sacred', rather than challenging, traditional women's roles.\textsuperscript{45} The roles included giving birth, care giving and homemaking; the very roles that most feminists considered to be the source of women's oppression. The need to redeem traditional women's roles without falling back into their patriarchal definition is discussed fully by Raphael (1996).\textsuperscript{46}

In 1992 Ruether was arguing for alternative narratives to those of 'destruction' and 'sin' and, like Dodson Gray, for a new Creation myth. She offered new metaphors for 'creation' and 'god', such as, the cosmic egg, birth, self organisation, dynamic wholes, interrelatedness, dance and 'continuous dying and rebirth', kinship, God/dess, respect, thou-ness, unity of spirit-consciousness and materiality. (Ruether, 1989 and 1992:Chpt 9).\textsuperscript{47} In spite of her social stance, Ruether still acknowledged that the domination of women was a key to understanding the domination of earth, but increasingly she became more concerned with 'human' emancipation, and the need for a new planetary myth.

Taking up problem areas Daly had identified in 1968, Ruether and Gray offered alternative images for God and for the myths of Creation and the Fall. Ruether also tackled Church views on the ordination of women. The other areas, including sexuality, marriage, birth control, abortion and the sacraments, have also been addressed by Ruether and others, especially radical feminist theologians, but they all are still unresolved. Instead, reformists like Ruether have reclaimed the covenant and sacramental traditions from the Church, re-inventing them from an ecological perspective. However,
by 1995, Ruether, like Daly, was expressing her disappointment at the erasure of women's earlier writing, and that gender issues were no closer to being solved, except in a token manner. In addition, she had to admit that there had been a backlash (Ruether, 1995:xii-xix).

Revolutionaries In Search of Another Way

But some things have changed. Women have become more vocal; writing about, and arguing for their ideas and needs from within, as well as from outside their tradition. Some are even creating their own alternative religions, and Daly is among those at the forefront of this movement. Outside of traditional religion many women have turned to goddess-centred spirituality, neo-paganism, witchcraft, or spiritualities which draw their inspiration from indigenous cultures. Although for a while these alternatives were assumed to reach back to their ancient origins, it is now clear that this is not the case. Religions continually re-invent their traditions and practices, and the new ‘ancient’ spiritualities and religions are Western contemporary examples of this re-invention, but taken out of their traditional setting. What these new movements have in common, with each other, as well as with feminist reformists like Ruether and Dodson Gray, is a return to woman, body and nature. As Irigaray suggests, ‘it seems to me that we certainly have to incite a return to the cosmic...that we remember that we have to respect nature in its broad rhythms, cycles, its life and growth.’ (Irigaray, 1986:3) The seasonal cycles of Centre of the Storm are part of this project.

In The Resurgence of the Real, Charlene Spretnak describes how ‘the actual presence of body, nature, and place are now asserting themselves and poking large holes through modern ideologies of denial’ (Spretnak, 1999:4). Yet Spretnak does not include a particular focus on women in this publication, or on deconstructing the patriarchal skew of the paradigm underlying modernity. Her project here is not explicitly feminist, although she does state that ‘a gender correlation is not uncommon’ and ‘to be truly post-
modern is to be, among other things, *ecological and feminist* (Spretnak, 1999:70, 79, her italics). Other feminist writers on spirituality, however, do focus on women.

**Body**

‘Woman’ implies a body, but ‘woman’ also implies a gender carried by that body. As Moira Gatens writes, ‘Feminists have made women’s bodies a focal point around which many campaigns have been fought’ (Gatens in Caine, Grosz & Lepervanche, 1988:59). Feminists continue to debate ‘what makes ‘woman’ by examining the relative influences of genes, hormones and culture; that is, between biological determinism and social constructivism. Lesley Rogers adds to this a consideration of the bias in scientific research that looks for differences, and favours reductionism and dichotomies over complexity and continuums (Rogers in Caine et al., 1988:43-51). The difference between ‘female’ as a biological definition, and ‘woman’ as a learned and ‘acted’ social imposition, has been discussed at length (Conboy, Medina & Stanbury, 1997). Feminist, ecofeminist and spiritual feminist focus on women’s embodied experiences, has led to charges of essentialism from inside and outside of feminism. These charges concern biological determinism, ahistoricity, universalisation, and reification, and are continually being answered by feminist writers who prioritise women’s experience as basis of their politics.

Marxist and poststructuralist feminists have both deconstructed ‘second wave’ literature, including that of Daly, pointing out how this early work is essentialist. The main problem is that many earlier feminists, who were educated, white and middle class, wrote on women’s issues without a reflexive awareness that their own social experience was socially constructed and not universal to all women. Their point of view was perceived as ‘the norm’. The particularities of ‘axes of difference’, such as race, class, culture, ethnicity, period of history, religious background, sexual orientation, ableness, and age were ignored. In addition, there was sometimes an underlying inference in this work that women were biologically, or genetically, and therefore socially, ‘better’ than men.
The assumptions that 'being born woman' engendered shared experiences among women, and gifted special abilities for life, have been severely, and rightly, criticised.\textsuperscript{56} In a sense the critique of universalism was similar to that which second wave feminists were making about institutionalised social and power relations based on the masculine point of view.

Yet, from an anatomical perspective, in spite of variations on the continuum from, so called, 'woman' to 'man', in spite of cultural influences, in spite of individual choice, there are similarities in the way in which most women's bodies are structured and function. While both men's and women's bodies are built for reproduction, women have the capacity to carry, deliver and feed the next generation. This capacity has been used by feminist philosophers, such as Irigaray, and some feminist theologians, such as Raphael, to advance alternative theoretical standpoints and value systems. Dodson Gray and Penelope Washbourn reclaim women's reproductive processes. These processes include menstruation, pregnancy and birth, and the labour work of 'homemaking' and 'caregiving'; the very roles that other feminists have targeted as negatively positioning women. (Dodson Gray, 1988, Washbourn, 1974 and Washbourn in Christ & Plaskow, 1992:246-258).\textsuperscript{57} Monica Wittig, for example, criticizes the use of anatomical differences and metaphors to define 'woman', as playing into the hand of patriarchal ideology, and argues for the destruction of the category of sex (Wittig in Conboy et al., 1997:309-317).\textsuperscript{58}

The debate around these issues includes those who are arguing for a middle ground, such as Diana Fuss and Winnie Tomm.\textsuperscript{59} Fuss finds value in anatomical language with the understanding that apparent 'essentialist' constructs can be used strategically to challenge masculinist positioning of the 'essential woman'. However, Fuss stresses that, at the same time, it is important to recognise that this practice is conducted while simultaneously acknowledging that there is 'no real answer' to the question, 'What is woman?'. In this
way essentialist and anti-essentialist arguments can be used together, rather than falling into the patriarchal trap of the need for a dichotomous ‘either-or’ (Fuss, 1989:Chpt. 4).

A reconciliation between social constructionism and essentialism is sought by Tomm in her argument for feminist and religious views of the self. She asks ‘is it necessary or even desireable to reject all categories of identity in order to avoid the pitfalls of essentialism? Is there not more to life than socially and culturally constructed realities?’ Her answer is affirmative to this last question, and she argues for the need for the subjective agency of ‘women’, based on shared experiences of women in groups - ‘the mirroring of others’ (Tomm in Joy & Neumaier-Dargyay, 1995: 241, 242). Raphael adds that charges of ‘essentialism’, ‘conservatism’, and old notions of ‘patriarchal femininity’, are often unjustified. In her view, ‘spiritual feminism’ subverts and attacks patriarchal domination by the action of women renaming and representing themselves (Raphael, 1996:8, 67 ff.). The political work of feminism seems to require some degree of essentialism, and this is the position of this thesis.60

There is certainly an essentialist aspect present in the performance-rituals. They do focus on women’s experiences and, in Centre of the Storm particularly, concepts such as vagina, womb, birthing/being birthed are used as metaphors, as well as standing for themselves. The earlier work of Dark Fire, For Eve and Fallen Totems came from a growing awareness that patriarchal philosophies and structures victimise women, and the performance-rituals drew on a variety of women’s writing and experiences to support the argument. The positioning of the patriarchal philosophies and structures as ‘white, Anglo-European’ was not acknowledged, nor were the writers. On the other hand, the performer was obviously white and possibly middle class, speaking from her own understanding and experience. As well as sometimes using quotes from other writers, each performance-ritual was an individual statement. The performer’s positioning as an ex-Christian was clear, and European heritage was implied in the text, when text was used.61
By the time of *Centre of the Storm*, however, there is an awareness of the problem of generalisation and false universals. In *Centre of the Storm* attempts are made to limit essentialism. The context is explicitly familial and as historically accurate as possible. The statement becomes ‘this is my family heritage’, ‘this is my journey’. There is no conscious attempt to speak on behalf of other women or to define ‘woman’ in an ahistorical, universalist sense, or to highlight or try to name ‘feminine’ aspects of divinity. Nor is the aim to create a ‘goddess’. Rather, the spirituality is grounded in the personal, and in stories of events that did occur.

Metaphors like ‘vagina’ are drawn from experiences of erotic sexual response, and the similarities between sexual and spiritual response: an experience that individual women and men may or may not share in their own ways. Raphael goes further to suggests that the womb ‘is metaphorically and actually the central locus of female sacral power’ (Raphael, 1996:133). The link between spirituality, eroticism and generation was already noted by the early spiritual performers examined in Chapter 2. In *Centre of the Storm*, this woman’s womb is claimed as a sacred place, in the acknowledgment of it being, potentially, the place of conception and the passage for the journey to life. This finds a convergence with the work of other artists discussed by Elinor Gadon in *The Once and Future Goddess* (1989:Chpts. 14 & 15). On the other hand, ‘womb’ is not extended to ‘cosmic womb’ as in Raphael’s work (1996:Chpt. 7).

The concentration on the reality and sacredness of ‘mother’, or ‘mothering’, ‘birth’ or ‘birthing’ and the use of mothering or birthing goddesses as images and metaphors, or as metaphors for theoretical discussion, by many spiritual feminists and some ecofeminists, is irrelevant to those who do not share those experiences. I am not a ‘mother’ so ‘mother’ is not used as a metaphor in *Centre of the Storm*. Rather, ‘survival’ is, and ‘birth’ is taken from the experience of ‘being birthed’. ‘Being birthed’ and ‘surviving’ are the sacred acts. The use of these metaphors, however, is from personal experience and observation and does not assume that all women have these experiences or perceive
them in the same way. The danger of reifying ‘woman’ by the focus on women’s experience, stories and metaphors, which was a danger in all the performance-rituals, is confronted and absorbed into the text of Passage, the final performance-ritual in Centre of the Storm.

Some spiritual feminists, like Daly and Starhawk, consciously reverse patriarchal essentialism and its naturalisation of women. They reclaim masculine defined ‘negative’ images of 'being' and 'behaviour', such as, 'witch' and 'whore'. ‘Witch’ and ‘Witchcraft’ are reclaimed by Starhawk as the New Religion that honours the goddess in all (Starhawk in Spretnak, 1994:49 ff.). ‘Witch’ is re-defined by Daly beyond traditional Witchcraft to ‘an Elemental Soothsayer; one who is in harmony with the rhythms of the universe: Wise Woman Healer; one who exercises transformative powers: Shape-shifter; one who wields Labrys-like powers of aversion and attraction’ (Daly, 1988:180). ‘Whore’ is redeemed by women’s rediscovery and reclamation of the erotic (Starhawk, 1988 and LaChapelle in Plant, 1989:155-167).62

Feminist spirituality emerges from grassroots experiences of living, and being positioned, as women. But the focus on ‘woman’ does not necessarily mean that all women have the same experiences. Feminists like Adams, Christ, Daly, Irigaray, Mies, Raphael, Rupp, Salleh, Shiva and Taylor certainly allow for differences among women in their writing. They stress similarities in women’s experiences in the face of continuing destruction of the environment. The debate is complicated by Western women’s lifestyles, which are far removed from the material reality of subsistence living through agriculture and animal husbandry (Mies & Shiva, 1993:Chpts. 11 & 20). Yet those Western women who carry responsibility for the reproduction of daily life and sustenance of family share concerns with such women in less technologically developed regions. In performance-ritual it is the individual woman’s experience, and her response to that experience, which is important.
Women who need to re-define themselves, and re-define their religion, seem to need a
time of separatism. Irigaray suggests that separatism is an ‘indispensable stage’
whereupon women ‘keep themselves apart from men long enough to learn to defend their
desire’ (Irigaray, 1985b:33). As has been illustrated, these women tend to engage in this
work alone or in the company of other women. Christ, for example, leads women to
share their own experiences and stories (Christ, 1995). What is interesting in the light of
this, is the historical presence, in some indigenous cultures, of separate women’s rituals.
In some indigenous Australian traditional ritual practice, women and men have their own
secret ceremonies, as well as knowledge and ritual held in common. Performance-
ritual continues this project. At this stage it creates a sacred place where a woman’s,
experience, knowledge, research, stories, and ‘being’ become foreground and are
honoured.

Nature
The dangers of women consciously identifying themselves with nature are all too real.
However, some ecofeminist writing self-consciously adopts this historical positioning,
and privileges the insights which it gives to women. For example, ecofeminist Carolyn
Merchant writes, ‘women and nature have an age-old association - an affiliation that has
persisted throughout culture, language, and history’ (Merchant, 1980:xv). The
hierarchical positioning of men over women and nature in Western patriarchal culture is
examined from an historical perspective by Merchant and Val Plumwood. This is
another contentious issue, open to a number of critiques, including that of essentialism,
which are addressed by Mellor. Mellor supports the argument that women’s points of
view are important, as ‘standpoints are not just stories or perspectives, they are different
aspects of a material relation’ (Mellor, 1997:Chpt. 5). Plumwood clearly separates
‘feminist standpoint theory’ from essentialism, and Salleh, likewise, offers a materialist
model of ecofeminism that overcomes the charge of essentialism (Plumwood, 2002:111,
112 and Salleh, 1997).
The material links between the colonisation of, and violence to, women, nature and indigenous people in the global Western masculinist project of economic development cannot be ignored. Those links are the prime concern of ecofeminists such as Mies, Salleh and Shiva. The Western patriarchal project of increasing capitalist consumerism and dependence on technology does not encourage a relationship with natural processes. Ecofeminist, Shiva, illustrates how these links are a continuing presence. She writes that in spite of Western idealistic propaganda of potential ‘equality’ in a world with ‘no borders’, the reality has been that fundamentalism and violence increases, especially as small groups attempt to redefine ‘self’ and fight for ‘a slice of the Western pie’, and this then impacts on women (Shiva in Mies & Shiva, 1993:108ff.).

What ensues is a search for abstract, unattached, identities which reflect the actuality of life, and this is reflected in religion and religious practice. As Shiva illustrates, the natural world is no longer an ecological or spiritual home for the West, or for indigenous people displaced by the aftereffects of colonisation (Shiva in Mies & Shiva, 1993:98ff.). Physical and/or psychic homelessness follows colonisation and ‘development’. This is exemplified by the movement of religions, like Christianity, around the world. They have been detached from their historical context and reinvented in new contexts. The more abstract and dissociated these religions and their rituals are from nature and place, the easier the process of transference becomes.

Christ suggests that the West’s ongoing destructive project has a spiritual root, ‘I share the conviction that the crisis that threatens the destruction of the earth is not only social, political, economic, and technological, but is at root spiritual’ (Christ in Plaskow & Christ, 1989:314).67 This is where radical and ecofeminist spiritualities converge. Their theologies move away from oppositional categories and linear metaphors, and, rather, move towards ‘interconnectedness’, ‘holistic’, ‘I-thou”, Be-ingness, ‘one with’, ‘natural processes’ and new concepts of time and space, such as cyclical or Tidal time, or divergent, multi-directional space. Metaphors for journey and ritual are non-linear
metaphors, such as, circle, or spiral, or a process of moving out in many directions and returning, birth-death-birth. As Lesley Northup points out, ‘women ritualize horizontally - communally, bodily, earthily - rather than vertically and transcendently’ (Northup, 1993:148). She calls it ‘expanding the X axis. Daly extends this to the concept of multidimensionality. Ruddick and Salleh support this view and develop its practical implications through the concept of ‘holding’.

Some spiritual feminists explore alternative symbols which emerge from an ecofeminist consciousness (Willoughby in Adams, 1993:133-149). Some honour seasonal changes. Others include the knowledge of the history of the colonisation of, and associated violence to, women, nature and indigenous people (Ruether in Adams, 1993:13-24). Feminist spirituality encourages a return to nature in its theology and ritual practice but sometimes it suffers from the same fate. Although divinity is seen to be immanent in all of nature, not separate to it, nature is generalised, not place specific (Sanchez in Adams, 1993:207-229). Western spiritual ecofeminists do not necessarily need to know the specifics of the ecosystems that surround them for survival.

**Holding and Letting Go**

The concept of ‘holding’ is coined by feminist, Sara Ruddick, to describe mothering labour, as an activity which attempts to ‘minimize risk and to reconcile differences’ (Ruddick, 1989:78, 79). In Ruddick’s usage this may be expressed in practical ways, as well as in psychological negotiation. This is extended by Salleh to include ‘the ecological labour that many women do in mediating nature for self sufficiency’ (Salleh, 2002). Salleh’s ‘holding’ is grounded in an embodied, materialist perspective, where women labour to maintain ecological systems. In this labour, give and take are implied. The women Salleh refer to negotiate with nature; taking, and giving something back in return. Holding includes ‘self-managed Aboriginal provisioning’ based on knowledge of ‘creation and flow’ and it requires give, take, and ‘practical deferral’ (Salleh, 1997:144-147). In both cases ‘holding’ is not a static position; it is not ‘holding still’ as in the
patriarchally defined: to ‘keep in a particular position; grasp or keep so as to control...dominate...keep (a person) in a certain condition...’ (Ludowyk & Moore, 1996:388). The feminist use of holding implies an accompanying ‘letting go’. In performance-ritual ‘holding’ is adapted from this feminist perspective, but the action is both psychological and spiritual. Salleh’s sees the material relational aspect of holding having implications ‘beyond home and neighbourhood to politics at large’, as it also allows ‘consciousness’ and ‘field’ to shape each other (Salleh, 1997:147).

In one sense there are similarities between ‘holding’ and petitionary prayer in Christian liturgy. Petitionary prayer includes prayer in which the ‘dark side’ of the world is confronted and prayed for, while maintaining a belief in a ‘perfect God’ who loves His creation, and where the complex nature of events is recognised. There is an attempt to hold the image of a ‘perfect God’ and an ‘imperfect creation’ together, but ‘the answer’ is seen in the ‘perfect God’ and perfect future ‘heaven’, not the contradiction. The Christian perspective does not allow alternative viewpoints or possibilities, or assist in integration. In contrast, Feminist ‘holding’ integrates with the lived event, giving something back in a regenerative way, so that there is a communication occurring between the two. Integrative ‘holding’ requires negotiation, and so implies some degree of ‘letting go’. Performance-ritual names, and takes part in, the integration of the lived reality and spirit. This is examined in relation to performance-ritual in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

In addition, it is also important, at times, to allow a complete ‘letting go’. This letting go rids the psyche of unhelpful images, concepts, and other ‘trappings’ that hinder the journey. This is how the thesis interprets Salleh’s ‘practical deferral’. In Western society, where the collection of material goods and ideas is encouraged, this is an important concept. In performance-ritual this type of ‘letting go’ is an integral part of the ritual process. It assists in exorcism and healing, and also allows the event itself to be let go. From this moment the journeycer is free to continue. ‘Holding’ and ‘letting go’ are discussed further in relation to specific performance-rituals Chapters 4-6.
On the other hand, there are instances when ‘holding’, in the sense of ‘holding on’ is also important. This type of holding allows an individual to follow through to completion projects that have been instigated and seen by the instigator as important. In this way ‘holding on’ assists in the ‘letting go’ for, once the project is complete, the ‘letting go’ can also be complete. Both terms, ‘holding’ and ‘letting go’, are used in the thesis to clarify the different actions. But, in a similar way to other feminists concepts, those of ‘holding’ and ‘letting go’ are not static. They do not refer to only one type of action, but represent a continuum of changing actions, depending on the situation and what is needed in that context. The hoped for outcome of these actions in performance-ritual is to set up, and maintain, a relationship between the psyche, the changing lived reality, and an evolving spirituality.

**Place**

Another concept explored by Spretnak and ecofeminists, although omitted from most other Western feminist writing on spirituality, including Australian feminist theology, is the importance of place. Gadon (1989) is one of the few to note some artist’s use of ‘place’, in reference to ancient ‘sacred sites’ and women’s reproductive organs. This thesis goes further to interrogate ‘place’, and extend Gadon’s usage to address the Australian indigenous concepts of land and country, as well a personal and family journey. The omission of ‘place’ in other feminist writing is significant and a legacy of the colonising West. The need to create a spirituality embedded in place, and in relation to the land, as part of an Australian spirituality was an important motivating force for *Centre of the Storm.*

Discussion of Australian spirituality has mainly come from within the Christian church, and is exemplified by the writing of progressive Catholic thinkers like Veronica Brady and Eugene Stockton, and conferences such as *Creation Spirituality: A Celebration of the Australian Story* in which Brady and Stockton took part.  

Brady and Stockton identify a number of issues involved. One is the ‘sense of alienation’ many immigrant Australians
have to the Australian bush and desert. As Veronica Brady says, 'when I’m in the bush I still feel an outsider...being a non-Aboriginal Australian means being cut off from where we belong' (Brady in Cameron et al., 1997:42).  

Another area identified by both Brady and Stockton is the perceived close association of indigenous spirituality with the land, and the need for non-indigenous Australians to learn about, and from, both. Stockton, particularly, has taken this to heart with engagement in archaeological expeditions and writing on indigenous spirituality. As most writing on Australian indigenous spirituality is by non-indigenous researchers there are dangers of 'speaking for' and appropriation, dangers highlighted by Aileen Moreton-Robinson in relation to the white feminist's privileged voice.

On the other hand, indigenous voices are beginning to emerge from within as well as outside the Christian church. Eddie Kneebone describes 'Aboriginal spirituality' as 'the belief and feeling within yourself that allows you to become a part of the whole environment around you - not the built environment, but the natural environment'. A similar relationship between Aboriginal spirituality and the land, place or country, is expressed by Rosemary Bell. Moreton-Robinson remarks on differences between indigenous and white women's spirituality: 'Indigenous women perceive the world as organic and populated by spirits, which connect places and people...the spiritual world is immediately experienced because it is synonymous with the physiography of the land' (Moreton-Robinson, 2000:18, 19). Because of these difficulties this thesis has consciously attempted to discover a link to the Australian context, without appropriating indigenous spirituality.

There is also a difficulty with terminology which must be addressed in regard to these concepts. Centre of the Storm began with the need to establish a 'sense of place' and 'relationship to the land'. But during the course of the ensuing performance-rituals, the use of these terms became inadequate and problematic; as did alternatives such as
‘landscape’ or ‘country’. ‘Sense of place’ seems to refer to a felt response; that is, a feeling of ‘being at home’, in contrast to a feeling of alienation, and this was what was meant by the use of the term in the first video. John Cameron uses ‘sense of place’ to refer to ‘a depth of relationship between an individual or a community and their environment’ (Cameron, 1996:19). The environment to which ‘sense of place’ can refer, however, is not specific. ‘Sense of place’ can refer to nature, cityscape, a room, or the town in which you’ve grown up, or, as David Wright suggests, as part of a ‘special experience’ in performance, or an ‘experience of god, a cosmic consciousness’ or ‘in books, paintings, poems and other artworks’ (Wright in Cameron, 1996:335, 336). In Centre of the Storm there was a need to find a spiritual ‘sense of place’, or ‘belonging’. Salleh considers ‘holding labour’, that is, the practice of taking and giving back, as ‘the practice of a sense of place’ (Salleh, 1997:146). But, ‘sense of place’ indicates only part of what is addressed in Centre of the Storm.

‘Land’ was another term used in the initial video, in relation to a need to make connection with, and to develop a spirituality around, the uniqueness of the Australian environment. But, terms such as ‘land’ or ‘landscape’ are also unsatisfactory. ‘Land’ carries with it a sense of ownership or possession, exemplified by its use in such contexts as ‘land rights’, ‘land claims’ or ‘land sales’. There is an objectification associated with the term which positions the land as a ‘commodity’, and as such has ties to masculinist and colonial attitudes, which Centre of the Storm critiques. The way in which ‘land’ was designated as ‘wilderness’ or assumed into ‘productive economy’ by, and for the use of, colonial invaders has been investigated by Marcia Langton. Colonial appropriation involved ‘writing the continent into the British legal system, particularly under the system of land law’ and the ‘system of legal signs, which enabled its conquest consisted of titles, maps, boundaries and registries, all of which were institutions of power which shaped, named and categorised a largely imagined, at that time “Terra Australis Incognita”’ (Langton, 1996:23). Although there is the concept of ‘land’ as ‘a mother’s body’ or ‘land as mother’ in some indigenous Australian usage, one that echoes Shiva’s depiction
of the soil as ‘a sacred mother’ in India, the word is more attached to land rights in current usage in Australia (Goodhall in Brock, 2001:33 and Shiva in Mies & Shiva, ibid.:99).  

‘Landscape’ is also an objective term, one which refers back to the ‘eye’ of the viewer. As Deborah Bird Rose says, ‘‘landscape’ signals a distance between the place, feature, or monument and the person or society which considers its existence’ (Rose, 1996:10). In Western usage, landscape assumes separation, objectivity and control. In contrast, indigenous Australians, such as Langton and Michael Dodson, see land and culture as integrated.

There is another dimension that invests the land with meanings and significance - that transforms land and environment into landscape, and into “country”... That other dimension is culture. Culture is what enables us to conceive of land and environment in terms that are different to conventional European notions... To us indigenous peoples all landscapes are cultural. (Dodson, 1996:25)

The association of land with country, and the importance of country and respect for the land, are concepts examined by feminist anthropologists, Diane Bell, Catherine Ellis and Linda Barwick in their discussion of the traditional ceremonial practices of the Warlpiri and Antikirinja women of Central Australia. In the Warlpiri tradition, a woman's relation to land is an important part of her identification; as important as her family, personal life story, ceremonial status and kinship. In ritual, 'women emphasize their role as nurturers of people, land and relationships. Through their yawulyu (land-based ceremonies) they nurture land...' Warlpiri women 'grow up' people and land, and encourage harmonious relations between people and country. In this way country is maintained (Bell, 1993:21ff). Bell's involvement gave her an appreciation of what country means: the flora, fauna, seasonal changes and geography, as well as, foraging
and hunting grounds, stories of dreaming, ancestors and signs of ‘intent towards man’. All of this was sung, danced and transmitted in and through public and secret versions of women’s ritual.

Ellis, on the other hand, has documented secret women’s ceremonies of the Antikirinja. Antikirinja women’s knowledge and ceremony includes rights to land and relationship to country, transmitted through song series, or songlines. The songlines include stories of travels of ancestral beings through the country in Dreaming times. Like the Warlpiri, Antikirinja songs were usually performed in a ceremonial context, some versions of which required secret ceremonies, and other versions that did not. Ceremonies involve rhythm, text, designs and dances as well as song. As well as the importance of singing the land, Antikirinja women’s ceremonies include ‘power of body’ through healing and love magic.

The associated concept which emerges from writing on indigenous tradition, is one of ‘country’. According to Rose, country is perceived by Aboriginal people as ‘nourishing terrain’, a ‘place that gives and receives life’ (Rose, 1996:7). Country is ‘lived in and lived with’. It is a ‘living entity’, ‘like a person’, ‘with a consciousness and a will toward life’. It is ‘sung to, visited, worried about and longed for’. Country is not just the earth-land. It ‘consists of people, animals, plants, Dreamings; underground, earth, soils, minerals and waters, surface water, and air. There is ‘sea country and land country’ and in some places, ‘sky country’. It is specific to a people’s locale and from it the mythology emerges. Country is ‘named, sung, danced, painted, loved harvested and cared for’. The ‘ultimate origin of the life of country is the earth itself’ (Rose, 1996:8, 9). This term seems more relevant to what began to eventuate in Centre of the Storm. Unfortunately, its use in the West tends to refer to ‘a nation’, such as, Australia, or to rural, and therefore pastoralised areas. Both these Western usages still carry the legacy of colonisation and ownership. On the other hand, the use of terms like ‘land’ and ‘country’
by Westerners in an attempt to mirror or imitate indigenous usage, while assisting in understanding, easily becomes appropriation.

In her essay, ‘New World Tribal Communities: An Alternative Approach for Recreating Egalitarian Societies’ Carol Lee Sanchez argues for the importance for descendants of colonisers and other immigrant peoples to trace their ancestry in, and develop stories about, the new land. Centre of the Storm is part of this work. It traces the performer’s family’s arrival, and locates this story in relation to the Sydney basin, with the knowledge of ‘when’, ‘how’ and ‘where’, while at the same time learning the story of the consequences of their ‘arrival’. The process creates one family’s sacred stories and sacred sites. This is the same ‘sense of place’ that Sanchez talks about in relation to the beliefs of her people, the tribal people of America. It is more than just a feeling of being ‘at home’. It includes knowledge of people and place, and their histories, and has association with the importance of ‘respect for ‘place’ and others’ cultural beliefs and practices in that land.

In any case, there is a significant difference between my particular spiritual beliefs and practices and those of indigenous people and the way in which both relate to ‘land’, ‘place’ or ‘country’. The indigenous relationship with ‘country’ is based on a history of materially knowing how, and being able, to live off and with the land. It is from this materiality that the mythology and rituals are formed. Western culture, especially city-based culture, has lost these skills. The 18th century invaders never had these skills. They brought their own produce, seeds and animals and did not even attempt to engage with the land at that level. Because of this the return to, and respect for, ‘place’, ‘land’ or ‘country’ can only be partial.

In addition to all of this, from feminist and cultural perspectives, as Western culture has been defined by men for thousands of years, its women historically have no ‘place’. This alienation is much deeper than that of being born in another land to that of ancestors, or of
religions not fitting. As Mies expresses it, ‘women have no fatherland’, or as Sandra Glibert writes, ‘everywoman must inevitably find that she has no home, no where’ (Mies in Mies and Shiva, 1993:116, and Gilbert in Cixous & Clement, 1996:xvi). Women have been made invisible, and relegated to the background ‘home’ of culture. The irony from an ecofeminist perspective is that the material home of all ‘cultures’ is iolcos, or household. It is thus, perhaps, appropriate to begin to create a ‘new place’ from the boundary. Centre of the Storm is such a ‘place’ and, in spite of the difficulties, ‘place’ is used in this document as a general term inclusive of ‘sense of place’, ‘land’, and ‘country’. Centre of the Storm is the development of an individualistic spirituality for a woman, in light of her family history and tradition, with an attempt to come to terms with the specifics of place and the natural environment, while still existing on the boundary of Australian culture.

**Women’s Ritual and Boundary Living**

Feminist research has uncovered how women have always lived actively on the boundary of historical reality. Those like Daly reclaim this ‘background’ as women’s ‘foreground’ and ‘boundary living’ as women’s ‘centre’. Women have been actively involved in exploring their own creativity and religious expression for centuries. Even before the ‘second wave’ of feminism in the 1960’s, which led to a greater awareness of and challenge to women’s ‘invisibility’ in the Christian church, the Christian dance movement was already doing this. American performer and expresser of ‘spirit’, Ruth St. Denis’ influence in the inauguration of the American Sacred Dance Guild has been noted, as has Australian MaryJones’ influence on the development of the Christian Dance Fellowship of Australia. Both movements were established and promoted mainly by women and their influence is presented in detail in Chapter 2.

Within this context, women were claiming their own voices and modes of expression within the Church, taking on the role of ‘teacher’, worship and prayer leader, and ‘preacher’ with the Church’s consent. Dance and drama performances were part of the
Church’s ritual, and sometimes these women were able to design, in collaboration with
the minister or priest, the ritual itself. This included the selection of the content, including
themes, prayers, storytelling and hymns. Although the aim was to uplift the congregation
and remain within the Church’s particular theology, there was also room for themes
which related to social justice, racism and environmental concerns. On the other hand,
there were limits. Some subjects were ‘taboo’. Feminism, especially feminist theology
which questioned ‘the norm’, was not appropriate. Nor was ‘excessive’ displays of ‘the
body’ or ‘impure’ movements. Some churches did refuse this ‘performed’ worship, but
others saw its value and the Sacred and Christian dance movements flourished. Dance
and drama were also being used by these groups in workshops designed for healing.
Women had established their own ministry ‘on the boundaries’, without anyone publicly
acknowledging its similarity to the masculine-defined role of priest/pastor/minister, and
without being paid for it, except by donation.

This is not only a Christian phenomenon. As Caroline Humphrey, Carol Laderman and
Marina Roseman illustrate, in parallel with ‘official’ religions, such as Christianity and
Buddhism, women continue to perform their own priestessing and healing practices as
shamans.51 Even within ‘official’ religion women work in and around their traditions as
well as inventing traditions of their own.52 They are used to ignoring or adapting
masculinist ideas and structures to find an alternative that ‘fits’. This process was
exacerbated by the publication of 20th century feminist writing. As women began the
process of ‘re-naming’, the ‘re-naming’ had its expression in ritual. These rituals are not
the ‘repetitive’, ‘unchanging’ and ‘meaningless’ processions and rituals of patriarchal
tradition (Daly, 1990:37-42). Rather, they are ‘new’; invented and re-invented to suit
specific and changing contexts, needs, beliefs and experiences.92

Feminist theologians variously term this ritualised journey of ‘women becoming’, ‘rites
of passage’ ‘rituals of initiation’ and ‘dreaming the dark’ or ‘magic’, and view it as
‘sacred’ and ‘spiritual’, as well as emotional, intellectual, material and political (Christ,
1995:xv; Daly 1990:34; Starhawk 1988). 'Rite' and 'Ritual' are used in the context of 'religious action'; a context specificity that current theoretical debates on ritual, examined in Chapter 3, do not support.

Ritual is performed spiritual expression but in the late 19th and early 20th centuries Western women were already expressing 'spirit' through public performance. They were part of a broader upsurge of interest in all things spiritual in the West. These women are examined within this broader context in Chapter 2.
Notes


3 This chapter focuses on the Western experience of Christianity. Armstrong, K. *The Gospel According to Woman: Christianity's Creation of the Sex War in the West*. London, Pan Books, 1987 makes a point of highlighting differences between the Western and Eastern experiences of Christianity.


6 'Feminist theology' is used here as a general term for those women who are critiquing and redefining Christianity or defining their own system of belief. 'Theology' is only used when the writers defines themselves in this way, for reasons discussed in the Introduction. 'Spiritual feminism', 'feminist
spirituality', and 'eco-feminist spirituality' are variously used to cover all women writing on spirituality or divinity from a feminist or eco-feminist perspective.

7 Although from an ecological and eco-feminist perspective humans are viewed as part of nature, 'nature' here is used to refer to non-human nature. This is in line with other academic eco-feminist writing, such as Mellor, M. *Feminism & Ecology*. Cambridge, UK, Polity, 1997, p. 8.


13 Writings of some other spiritual ecofeminists can be found in Diamond, I. & Orenstein, G. F. (eds.) *Reweaving the World: The emergence of Ecofeminism*. San Francisco, The Sierra Club, 1990 and


16 Daly, M. *Quintessence...Realizing the Archaic Future*. Boston, Beacon, 1998.


18 For Daly, living on the boundaries implies also living in 'the centre' as the centre moves with the woman. It is participation in be-ing. In addition, as her journey is multi-directional, there are many boundaries at which women can live simultaneously.

Ruether aggressively critiques the 'women radicals' in the women's movement who are 'only concerned about sexism and no other form of oppression' such as racism and class (Ruether, 1995:125). She calls them a 'fairly atypical group of white, usually childless women, who belong, racially and socioeconomically, to the ruling class'. This attack is really quite out of line as feminists generally have always acknowledged and written about many forms of oppression, but target the perpetrator, as does Ruether herself, as the 'white male ethos' that is patriarchy. In fact, in this publication Ruether speaks on behalf of black Americans, a practice historically typical of the white ruling class and men especially. Finally, calling women who do not have children 'atypical' is dismissive of their many social and theoretical inputs. It also has implications in relation to a definition of 'typical' and where that definition fits into the Western feminist project of continuums and 'accepting difference', especially in relation to other cultures, white childless women, lesbians and other 'atypicals'.


Salleh (1997 & 2001) and Mies, M. & Shiva, V. Ecofeminism. Melbourne, Australia, Spinifex, 1993. Most, apart from radical feminists, however, avoid the concept of 'a rapist mentality'. Yet it is interesting to note that, recently, in Australia, in response to a series of pack rapes by men of young women, some men are accepting and publicly exploring the possibility that the 'mentality of rape' is endemic in the male psyche. They are encouraging men as individuals and as a group to take responsibility for these actions and to do something about them (ABCTV, Channel 2. Stateline, Friday, 31st August, 2001).


30 What is of interest in the light of this is that many businesses now use women as their promotion managers; their ‘public faces’. This female public face and person is used to promote the still male-directed company and its products, and to take the ‘flack’ when things go wrong. ‘Woman’ is being used as a scapegoat.
In recent times, this image of unattainable perfection has its reappearance in the modern 'superwoman'.


For example, Michael O’Connell, Michael Ryan and Alison Sheridan in Ryan, M. (ed.) *Irish Archaeology Illustrated*. Dublin, Country House, 1994, pp. 33, 44 ff. illustrate that in Ireland the clearing of forests began in a small way in the Mesolithic period and increased during the Neolithic. In Britain, bodies from the Neolithic period have been found with arrowheads embedded in them and it cannot be ignored that arrowheads found in Ireland may have been used for the same purposes. Pre-Christian mythological stories from North Western Europe, such as those contained in *Lebor Gabala Erenn* (Macalister, R. A. S. *Lebor Gabala Erenn, Parts I, II, III, IV, V*). Dublin, Irish Texts Society, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1956 and the Middle East, such as the Sumerian Myths and Epic Tales examined by Isaac Mendelssohn (Mendelssohn, I. (ed.) *Religions of the Ancient Near East, Sumero-Akkadian Religious Texts and Ugaritic Epics*. New York, Liberal Arts, 1950) as well as the stories contained in the Christian *Old Testament* include stories of conquest and inter-tribal warfare. Human and animal sacrifice-torture is attested to in a number of sources. Celtic and druidic practices are summarised in Miranda Green’s *Dictionary of Celtic Myth and Legend*. London, Thames & Hudson, 1992 and *Exploring the World of the Druids*. London, Thames & Hudson, 1997.


Ruether consistently uses human rather than women in *Gaia and God*, although she does continually remark how women are particularly oppressed. Yet, in the myth of The Fall, Eve is definitely held responsible for being the first to succumb to temptation, and for then tempting Adam; a series of events that led to human’s fall from grace.
37 Here Ruether is mistaking ecofeminism with the philosophy underlying the goddess movement. These movements are not identical and ecofeminism has different streams, as Mellor had argued. In any case, the debate on the historical evidence for a Bronze Age ‘fall into patriarchy’, is still not over.

38 In New Woman, New Earth, Ruether saw the relevance of continuing the push for the ordination of women and new approaches to the training of the clergy. By Gaia and God she was looking more from a social and global perspective. Dodson Gray (1979) examines the ‘problem’ from both the men’s and women’s perspective.

39 The covenant tradition refers to the Old Testament covenant God made with His People which bound God to look after His people if they, in turn, would worship only Him. It also made them caretakers of the earth, which required an attitude of justice in the use of the earth’s resources and their relationships with ‘others’. The first part of the covenant has been kept by the Judeo-Christian religion. The second part has not.


54 Although Marja Suohonen argues otherwise in respect to Daly (Sohonen, M. ‘Toward Biophilic Being: Mary Daly’s Feminist Metaethics and the Question of Essentialism in Hoagland & Frye, 2000: 112-131).

55 The point being that power relations work in other ways as well, defined by such differences as class and race.


60 Heyes accuses third wave feminists of ignoring the political importance of second wave writers, and not addressing actual political problems (Heyes, 1997: 160,161). Instead of the challenge being one of moving from practice to theory, as it was for second wave of feminist writers, now the challenge seems to be how to move from theory to practice.

61 There is no need, and it is usually not appropriate, to justify a performance in the same way as with academic writing.


73 Personal correspondence.


76 In this thesis, psychological does not assume ‘spiritual’.

78 Brady, V. ‘The Ambiguities of Place’ in Cameron, J., Mathews, F., San Roque, C. & Tracey, D. Sense of Place Colloquium II: The Interaction between Aboriginal and Western Sense of Place. UWS, Hawkesbury, August 1997, pp. 41-43.


89 Sanchez, C. L. ‘New World Tribal Communities: An Alternative Approach for Recreating Egalitarian Societies’ in Plaskow & Christ, 1989;344-356.

90 This does not imply that there were no sacred stories and sites before this arrival, or that the earlier stories and sites are irrelevant. Rather, it is hoped that the new stories and sites can be added to the body of Australian tradition and spirituality.


One of the outcomes of this re-invention is the international multi-religious group, Women-Church, which was established in Sydney, Australia, in 1985 and named in 1986. Women-Church ‘welcomes all feminist women interested in religion and exploring their own spirituality’. The group ‘provides a sacred space where women recognise the divine imaged in themselves’ and can ‘celebrate this awareness in female-centred rituals’ (Women-Church, Sydney brochure). Since then many other groups have formed within and outside of the established Church and many women continue more informally alone or with friends.
Chapter 2   An Earlier Search

I see a place of magical Beauty, that is and is not of this world that we know, a world created of familiar things, but arranged in a new and harmonious order. I see a life lived that bridges the two worlds, the inner and the outer, concept and expression, Nature and Art. I see groves of meditation, where Truth is learned and loved, and halls of Beauty, where the divine self is expressed.

Ruth St. Denis (1976-77:10)
By the beginning of the 20th century in the West there were numerous artists, writers and ‘seekers’ searching for something ‘more’ or ‘different’. It was a period when philosophic thought, including Christianity, was confronted by the increasingly materialist and technological focus of Western society. The writing of radical feminist theologians and ecofeminists continue this questioning into the 21st century, and the performance-rituals in *Centre of the Storm* are part of this project. This chapter examines the work of Western women performers who were part of this earlier epoch. It places them in context with other changes in cultural expression during the period, especially in the perceived relationship between spiritual and artistic expression.

American dancer, choreographer and teacher Ruth St. Denis, like many white European artists of her time, saw a relationship between artistic and religious expression. St. Denis named her trinity Art, Religion, and Love and though they were often in conflict in her own life, she knew that ‘...in the unseen realm these are one...’ (St. Denis, 1939:209). She viewed ‘the saint and the artist as two sons of the same mother’ (St. Denis, 1939:47). In the West, the relationship between art and spiritual expression is inextricably linked with the West’s tradition of Christianity and influences from the ‘Orient’. More recently, it has encountered feminist critiques of Christianity.

**A Christian Perspective**

Christianity, like all religions, has a history of using art, including performance, for religious expression. There are a number of Christian writers, such as, Evelyn Underhill and James Empeurer who acknowledge that there are similarities between religious and artistic expression. In Underhill’s case, there are even similarities with scholarly research, which she considers ‘selfless devotion to the interests of truth or of beauty...in essence a response to revelation’ (Underhill, 1985:12). On the whole, however, most Christian theologians, writers and artists distinguish between sacred and secular artists and their practice. The difference lies in whether the art form is grounded in human need
and is complete in and of itself, and therefore is ‘secular’, or whether it is grounded in, or directs attention to, ‘God’ and so can be used as part of the worship experience. As Christian art theorist H. R. Rookmaaker explains,

The Christian artist has to create in an open and positive relationship to the structure of the world in which he was created by God; he has to act, on the foundation of Christ as His Lord and Saviour, in love and freedom. (Rookmaaker, 1970:243).

This position is supported by Francis Schaeffer: ‘A Christian should use these arts to the glory of God, not just as tracts, mind you, but as things of beauty to the praise of God’ (Schaeffer quoted in Long, 1976:17). Dancers, such as Margaret Fisk Taylor, agree: ‘It is not an “art for art’s sake” but a Christian art that can assist Christians in the worship of God and in the understanding of their fellowmen’ (Taylor, 1976:1).

Outside the Church there is a growing body of literature that explores ritual as a form of theatrical performance and some of this is explored in Chapter 3. Within Christianity, however, there are a number of branches, such as the anti-catholic, anti-idolatry movements of Protestantism, which totally reject any suggestion that their ‘services’ are ‘performances’, or are associated in any way with artistic expression. The focus instead is on ‘the word’. Yet most still include some form of music, song and poetry (psalms, etc). In the words of Carolyn Deitering,

Worship is a fine art...There is no medium of expression in liturgy that is not artistic. Preaching falls under the art of public speaking, reading aloud of sacred scripture, under the art of oral interpretation. These along with dance, drama, music, sculpture, architecture, and other art forms are not optional elements in the church’s liturgical and devotional life; they are constitutive of it. (Deitering, 1980:3)
From the Christian perspective, art is to be used for the glory of God, and ‘God’ is the entity defined in, and by, the Bible. The difference between ‘secular’ artistic expression and ‘religious art’, and whether, in fact, a difference exists, is an area of continuing debate in academic circles. The debate is especially contentious in relation to current definitions of ‘ritual’. Chapter 3 will revisit this debate.

In the meantime, the 19th century saw a move to narrow the gap between artistic and religious expression outside the Church. Artists began to see and explore ‘the spiritual’ in and through art. In the words of choreographer, Gertrude Bodenwieser, who was born in Austria in 1890,

In the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century, all the artists, dramatists, musicians, sculptors and painters were striving to attain a greater internal truth and to rid themselves of the old forms of convention. A corresponding tendency was due also in the realm of dance. (Bodenwieser, undated:29)

At the same time, there were others, not primarily artists, using artistic expression in context of ‘esoteric’ spiritualities and their search for ‘true religion’.

This chapter explores how ‘art’ and ‘spirituality’ came together in 19th century Europe outside of traditional religious practice and especially in the art of women performers. The artists and writers examined here are still influential as their work informed the artistic and intellectual development of artists in the second half of the 20th century. Their use of words such as, ‘spirit’ and ‘soul’ related to ‘something’ deep inside that needed to be expressed and some associated this expression with religion. Sometimes there was a need to make contact with what Christians call ‘God’. Others wanted to claim some sort of ‘sacredness’ in relation to their artistic practice and expression. Often the search led them to other cultures.
Some of the performers involved in this process have been named as part of the ‘avant garde’. The ‘avant garde’ was a term used at the time to ‘describe[d] politically radical artists who believed they were prefiguring social change by revolutionising aesthetics’, and had an interest in religion and ritual (Innes, 1981:1). Some, however, have been excluded as most writing and performance included in this category are authored by men whose work was of a particular type. The implications of this are discussed in Chapter 3. In dance, however, women led the innovations. Women at the time were even exploring and developing new religious paradigms, but are only briefly mentioned in this chapter. This chapter places these women in the broader framework of other art forms and spiritual practices. Further research needs to be undertaken to find the women who were engaged in other areas of art and spirituality at the time.

Visible and Invisible Women

Women have always found a way to express their own ideas and beliefs and to challenge structures of power through writing, performance and intellectual debate, but little of this action has lasted the distance of time (Spender, 1988a & 1988b). Prehistoric records show women, albeit upper class women, active in politics, business, religion, ritual and literature. Women have probably been active in theatre as well, though records are scarce. During the Middle Ages there were women travelling players, poets and novelists. There were also numerous Christian women mystics and Abbesses who wrote and expressed their beliefs through writing, poetry, song, art and ritual. Dale Spender has identified a number of women playwrights and intellectuals from the 17th to the 20th century in Europe, America and Australia (1988a & 1988b). Playwrights such as, Aphra Behn, Mary Pix, Judith Sargeant Murray, Olympe de Gouges are examples of women who used their performances to question current religious and social paradigms.

During the 19th century, the so-called ‘first wave of feminism’ was exemplified by an ‘explosion’ of women’s writing and political action. Part of this took the form of performance and included playwrights and actresses, such as, Cicely Hamilton, Elizabeth
Robins, Eliza Winstanley, Ada Cambridge, Rosa Praed and Hellena Sumner Locke, some of whom were working and living in Australia (Spender, 1988a & 1988b). Writers on religion included such women as Mary Baker Eddy, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Matilda Joslyn Gage (Spender, 1988a). Dancers, such as, Loie Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Mary Wigman and Gertrude Bodenwieser were also part of this movement, as the ensuing discussion will illustrate. These performers were leading companies of their own and travelling widely, as were dancer Anna Pavlova and the actors Sarah Bernhardt and Ellenor Duse. One commentator at the time said,

The other evening... I had, as it were, a vision of a theatre of the future, something of the nature of a feministic theatre... Women are more and more taking men's places...Just watch and you will see woman growing in influence and power; and if, as in Gladstone's phrase, the nineteenth century was the working-man's century, the twentieth will be the women's century. (M. Clarete quoted in Fuller, 1913:282).14

Yet, somehow the involvement of women in artistic and intellectual life during the previous hundred years was forgotten. It was not until the 1960's and 1970's that Western women again took up the cause to make their ideas more universally visible and recognised. In relation to dance, the artists during the turn of the 19th-20th century were public and popular, but it was not until the 1930's that women began to structure, teach and record the 'method' of their art.

**Intersections at the Turn of the Century**

Already by the end of the 18th century there was a questioning of social, philosophical and religious paradigms in Europe, much of which being presented through the medium of theatre. Playwright, Fanny Burney, was part of the artistic and literary discussion in England. In Prussia, philosopher Immanuel Kant was questioning metaphysical and theological dogmatism. In America, playwright Judith Sargeant Murray dismantled
religion and questioned social mores in her plays. In Germany, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller were exploring the spiritual dimension. In France, Olympe de Gouges was doing the same, from a woman’s perspective, and was advocating a national theatre for women.¹⁵

During the 19th century the critique continued, but by this time alternative religious paradigms were being explored as well. Mary Baker Eddy developed a new ‘brand’ of Christian healing, called Christian Science. Madame Blavatsky visited the Orient and her experiences of ‘the mysterious’ became a foundation for Theosophy.¹⁶ In America, the Rev. Antoinette Brown Blackwell was critiquing theology and the theory of evolution, and eventually lost her faith and resigned her parish. Her peers, Matilda Joslyn Gage wrote Women, Church and State (1893) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote The Woman’s Bible (1898).¹⁷ François Delsarte analysed how emotions influenced the human body and developed his system of Applied Aesthetics around Christian metaphors.¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche explored the role of illusion, myth and religion in the way that human’s perceived life. Sigmund Freud explored dreams and the unconscious. All of these ideas and interests were being discussed in the intellectual and artistic circles which intermingled within European culture. The middle classes were avid travellers, so that ideas crossed city, state, country and cultural boundaries and many of these movements influenced the early modern dancers.

Then, as now, a number of Anglo-European artistic and educated people were seeking ‘a different way’. There was a conviction that some ‘ancient knowledge’ which held the ‘fundamental truth’ about life had been lost. The search took on different forms and had many outcomes. Some attempted to recover ‘ancient knowledge’ or ‘true spirituality’ by exploring their ‘inner self’; others by exploring the myths and rituals of other cultures. There were attempts to find traces of an Aryan root race in India. Many went on to create systems and set up schools or Institutes for music, movement and voice. ‘Utopian’
communities were established. There were numerous ‘prophets’ each with a version of ‘the perfect man’, the ‘superman’, ‘the one who knows’.\textsuperscript{19}

Academic circles, too, revealed a growing interest in ancient religion and connections between mythology and ritual. This had been spurred on by the increasing contact with non-Western cultures through colonisation, travel, archaeological discoveries and the new field of anthropology. Anthropological discussion on religion, myth and ritual was popularised by the writing of William Robertson Smith, James Frazer, Emile Durkheim and classicist Jane Ellen Harrison. By 1890 Harrison stood at the centre of the Cambridge Ritualists, a group of three scholars who ‘incorporated the new evidence of anthropology and its theoretical framework to study the ancient world. To varying degrees, their work rejected traditional Victorian interpretations of ancient Greek culture’ (Peacock, 1989:2).\textsuperscript{20}

Harrison’s area of research was Homeric and ancient Greece and her major works argued for a ritual origin for mythology, religion, theology and drama. This theory had been pioneered by Robertson Smith in 1889 and is still debated (Calder, 1991 and Segal, 1998).\textsuperscript{21} Harrison has had a major influence on 20th century women writers on spirituality, mythology and early religion. It underpins most feminist and goddess spirituality.\textsuperscript{22}

**The Search for ‘Soul’**

The 19th century movements which affected European art and performance seemed to emerge simultaneously in the major cities in France, Austria, Germany, Russia and America. One of the first American performers who became known for her innovations was Loie Fuller. Fuller’s background was as a ‘singer and actress’ (Fuller, 1913:35).\textsuperscript{23} On a tour in London in 1890, she became aware of, and responded to, the audience’s reaction to the unplanned effects of light on the material of her costume. She began to
work intuitively with this relationship, to devise a series of dances to explore the interplay of light, colour, movement and music.

Although Fuller saw the potential of this type of performance for the expression of feelings, ideas, religious sensations and of Life itself, her primary fascination was with the effects of light and colour. She toured through Europe and America from 1892 supporting herself, mother, and other artists, including two Japanese companies which featured two female artists: Sada Yacco and Hanako. It is even possible that Fuller was responsible for Isadora Duncan’s debut in Vienna in 1902. Although Duncan is not named, the description of ‘the dancer’s’ work and costume is detailed enough to support an ‘educated guess’ (Fuller, 1913:223 ff.).

Like others of her time, Fuller was interested in other cultures’ sacred dances. She was especially influenced by the ‘funeral dances, sacred dances, dances of death and the rest’ of the Hindus and the Egyptians, and the possibility of putting oneself ‘into the state of mind that prompted the dances in times past’ (Fuller, 1913:156). This is illustrated in one of her programs which includes dances of death, funeral dances and dances of ‘joy as well as grief’. Fuller was, according to Anatole France, ‘a soul somewhat inclined to mysticism, to philosophy, to religion... At all events she is profoundly religious, with a very acute spirit of inquiry and a perpetual anxiety about human destiny’ (Fuller, 1913:vii-x). Gab, another friend of Fuller’s, is reported to have described Fuller’s work as ‘Soul of the flowers, soul of the sky, soul of flame... She has created the soul of the dance, for until Loie Fuller came the dance was without soul!’ (Fuller, 1913:264).24

By the turn of the century, in Russia, actor and director Constantin Stanislavski was struggling to find ways to contact and express something he termed ‘the full spiritual revelation of the ‘soul’, ‘the truth’, ‘the unconscious self’ or ‘the superconscious’.25 He identified Sophocles and Dostoyevsky as two writers ‘whose whole meaning lies in the search for God’ (Stanislavski, 1980:71). In contrast, he viewed the new theatre and
playwrights such as Meierhold as portraying disembodied spiritual states (Stanislavski, 1980:434). Stanislavski stressed the importance of creativity, intuition and inspiration in the actor’s understanding and truthful portrayal of a role.

Stanislavski began a search for a training method which would ‘create the life of a human soul and render it in artistic form’ (Stanislavski, 1967:114). Through his experiments and exercises he attempted to find the ‘closest kind of direct bond between our physical and spiritual natures’ (Stanislavski, 1967:149). He believed that the dividing line between subconscious and conscious states was not fixed. Rather, a person’s physical actions and inner, or spiritual, motivation were linked, and continually affected each other. Some of the names he used for these processes reflect religion: such as, ‘faith’, ‘sense of truth’, ‘communion’. His ‘method’ relied on ‘psycho-technical’ exercises as well as ‘intuition’ or ‘nature’. Stanislavski’s main aim, however, was to be able to discover ‘the treasure’, ‘the soul’ or ‘the spirit’ of the character and the play, and through these, of the playwright. He believed that it was the ability of the actor to express ‘the spirit’ of the character and of the playwright which gave the performance its power.

In France, Antonin Artaud was reacting to the dead end road that he perceived theatre had entered. Artaud’s aim was to go beyond, and challenge, several of the theatre’s limitations. These included words, dialogue or script, plays where the emphasis was on great masters or psychological stories, and the snobbish chase of audiences after great names. His aim was to create a physical language, a physical poetry, a theatre with a language of its own, a ‘unique language somewhere in between gesture and thought’ (Artaud, 1985:68). This was to be a total theatre in which all elements had equal weight instead of being subservient to the word; a theatre with no separation between ‘body and mind, nor the senses from the intellect’ (Artaud, 1985:66).

Artaud wanted to ‘restore it [theatre] to a religious, metaphysical position, to reconcile it with the universe’ (Artaud, 1985:51). He desired to ‘return to ancient primal Myths’ and
bring ‘these ancient conflicts up to date’ so that theatre could be ‘able once more to sustain a religious concept’. Artaud’s hope was that theatre could ‘rediscover within us that energy which in the last analysis creates order and increases the value of life’. Themes of ‘Creation, Growth and Chaos’ would be used to ‘create a kind of thrilling equation between Man, Society, Nature and Objects’ (Artaud, 1985:60, 69 & 82). The theatre of Artaud’s vision was his ‘Theatre of Cruelty’; a ‘theatre that is difficult and cruel for myself first of all’ (Artaud, 1985:60). This theatre was one ‘where violent physical images pulverise, mesmerise the audience’s sensibilities, caught in the drama as if in a vortex of higher forces’ (Artaud, 1985:63). The result would be a theatre ‘inspiring us with fiery, magnetic imagery and finally reacting on us after the manner of unforgettable soul therapy’; a theatre of healing (Artaud, 1985:64, 65).

Another rebel, American dancer and choreographer Isadora Duncan, was rejecting the strictures of ballet and pantomime. Instead, Duncan was exploring ‘natural’ dance inspired by the natural environment, music and philosophy.27 She saw dance as a prayer ‘surrendering to the inspiration of the soul’ whose divine power ‘completely possesses the body’ converting it ‘into a luminous moving cloud and thus manifests itself in the whole of divinity’ (Duncan, 1969:51 & 57). She believed that dance was an expression of life; that ‘To dance is to live’ (Duncan, 1969:141). Her aim was to bring a renaissance of religion through the knowledge of the beauty and holiness of the body expressed through dance and she asserted that ‘art which is not religious is not art, is mere merchandise’ (Duncan, 1927:85). Dance was a religion with the artists as priests (Duncan, 1969:87). Her dream was that she would perform for free in a temple dedicated to art with an audience who would join in as they were moved (Duncan, 1969:123). She saw body movement and spiritual expression coming from the same source (Duncan, 1927:75).

As with St. Denis, Duncan also saw connecting points between religion, love and art. This was highlighted for her in two ways. One was by seeing the expression of what she
called ‘nature’ through movement as an expression of love, and the second was her experience of working and performing with those whom she loved (Duncan, 1969:127).

...it seemed as if we had created a spiritual entity quite apart from ourselves, and, as sound and gesture flowed up to the Infinite, another answer echoed from above...I believe that from the psychic force of this musical moment, when our two spirits were so attuned in the holy energy of love...Our audience felt the force of this combined power and often a curious psychosis existed in the theatre such as I had not known before. (Duncan, 1927:350)

St. Denis, who followed Duncan in time but not in style, was also inspired by the natural environment.28 She could not ‘remember a time when the rhythms of nature have not controlled my whole being’ and ‘felt a closer spiritual relationship to these natural things than to the cold barrenness of the little church’ (St. Denis, 1939:7, 220). Rather, she enjoyed the experience of performing in the open air. This was part of the allure of Denishawn, the first school she and her husband Ted Shawn established in Los Angeles in 1915 (St. Denis, 1939:169 ff.).

But St. Denis especially felt an affinity for ‘the Orient’ and her first choreographies reflect this interest.29 Beginning with Egypt, she moved to Japan and the Middle East, including India. Although she had not yet physically visited these places she steeped herself in them gaining as much information as she could from migrants she met as well as academic authorities and books.30 She aspired to become ‘a rhythmic and impersonal instrument of spiritual revelation’, ‘sensitive and responsive to Nature, Art and Religion’ and saw herself as ‘a kind of dancing ritualist’ (St. Denis, 1939:52, 57 and 1933:11).

In all her performances, St. Denis’ aim was to present the ‘soul’ of the country and people, and she felt she accomplished this best through her dance dramas around the goddesses Radha, Ishtar and Egypta. Her vision for dance was as ‘spiritual revelation’
(St. Denis, 1939:195). She believed that she was ‘delivering a wordless message of immortality; that life is harmonious without end; that my body is indeed the willing servant of the mind, and its geometric forms are the very patterns and designs of divinity - because without divinity I would not be living, or breathing, or dancing’ (St. Denis, 1939:242). She longed, as did Duncan, to perform her dances in a ‘Temple’ free-of-charge to the audience/congregation. St. Denis did explore other ‘abstract’ forms of choreography and for a while played with music visualisations she called ‘synchronic orchestras’ but her real interest was in dance as art-worship (St. Denis, 1939:213 ff.).

By the 1930’s, St. Denis was creating her own rituals using dance, music, poetry, philosophical thought and the traditions of various religions. The rituals varied from informal affairs in her own studio and home, her own ‘temples’, as well as more formally in the context of the Church and outdoor pageants. Eventually this led to an invitation as artist-in-residence at Adelphi College where she continued to develop her philosophy of ‘Divine Dance’, this time with more specificity in relation to Christian belief, tradition and ritual. Her motivation was that ‘We all need to be conscious of the eternal rhythm of Life, that rhythm of Spirit through which we may learn to move harmoniously and beautifully’ and she found that consciousness in The Divine Dance (St. Denis, 1933:1).

The Divine Dance is the rhythm of spiritual affirmation!...it is our intention through posture, rhythm and progression to symbolize and manifest our ascent in Spiritual Realization...We shall heal and bless rather than astonish.

(St. Denis, 1933:12)

St. Denis travelled through many stages with her interest in the differences and commonalities between all religions and philosophies. By 1960 she was ‘pushing into metaphysical dimensions of thought and action’ and ‘metachory’, described as ‘the rhythmic art of translating the abstract truth of being into the symbolic art forms of tone, color, rhythm and design’ (St. Denis, 1933:39, 40).
Visual artists at the turn of the century were also following similar religio-philosophical paths. Desiderius Orban, for example, had his beginnings in Hungary during the same period as Stanislavski, Fuller, Duncan and St. Denis. At twenty two he moved to Paris to continue his studies where ‘as far as art is concerned, the period from 1900 to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 was a very fertile time’ (Orban 1975: 74). This period saw the birth of Surrealism in Paris and the rise to popularity of Rodin, by whom Fuller, Duncan and St. Denis had all been entertained while visiting that city. Although Orban was self-taught, as was Fuller, Duncan and St. Denis, and did not feel part of any particular movement, he was one of many experimenting in the visual arts. His writing on art and ‘creativity’ again link artistic and spiritual expression, and influenced many younger Australian practitioners.

Orban believed that ‘Every work of art emanates a kind of spirituality’ and that it is this spiritual quality which makes the impression unforgettable (Orban, 1975:18, 80). He suggested that ‘visual creativeness and spirituality’ together are ‘the common denominator’ of art and that the spiritual rhythm can only be attained when ‘the artist forgets that it is he who is handling the brush’ (Orban, 1975:17, 18, 93). In his view, the natural environment stimulated the artist to see beyond physical structure to ‘form, colour and space’ (Orban, 1975:13). Orban urged artists to ‘return again from abstraction to nature, to work with the material of life’ (Orban, 1975:34). The link between ‘spirit’, nature and art, which Duncan and St. Denis also noted, is one which the performance-rituals in Centre of the Storm seek to embody.

20th Century Science of Dance

By 1910 Fuller, Duncan, St. Denis, and a number of other dancers had toured Europe, including London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna and Russia. In 1908, in Austria, Grete Wiesental, inspired by Duncan, had left the Vienna Court Ballet and began touring a performance version of the Viennese Waltz with her sisters. During this tour the Wiesental Sisters made an impression on German born Mary Wigman, nee Wiegmann.
This was the period in history when everything was being viewed from a ‘scientific’ perspective. One example of this was during St. Denis’ tour of Germany. After the performance a number of anatomy professors had come backstage to try and analyse how exactly her ‘arm ripple’ functioned anatomically (St. Denis, 1939:96, 97). In the dance and music world, this influence was expressed by dancer, Rudolf Laban and musician, Emile Jaques-Dalcroze who began analysing, teaching and writing about dance and music in terms of their elements, such as rhythm, spatial orientation, dynamics and effort. The view of dance as ‘spiritual expression’ was now tempered by an increasing interest in dance as an ‘art form’ worthy of serious study. An outcome of this research, was an emphasis on dance composition; that is, its outward form and structure.

In the same year that Mary Wigman attended the performances of the Wiesental Sisters, she saw a demonstration of a system of music visualisation through movement improvisation given by Jaques-Dalcroze. Dalcroze’s aim was to awaken and develop his student’s creativity and expression. He began using movement to ‘arouse and develop, by repeated exercises, the natural rhythms of the body’ (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1930:3). He devised exercises that coordinated stepping patterns with arm and torso movement around the use, and interconnectedness, of duration, space and energy/force (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1930:11). His aim was to connect the conscious mind with the subconscious and saw music as the most powerful vehicle for that purpose (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1930:7). Students began with simple exercises which gradually led into musical and dance improvisation and composition. He called his system Eurhythmics, ‘the rhythm method of gymnastics’ (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1930:3). When Dalcroze opened an institute in Hellerau near Dresden, Germany, Wigman joined him to study and later to teach.

Meanwhile Rudolf Laban, an Austro-Hungarian, was setting up a school in Munich to explore his movement system based on a series of spiralling swinging movements and their relation to space, time and effort. He also seems to have subscribed to the theory
of the ritual origin of movement and dance and included movement for worship and
healing purposes in his writing (Laban, 1980:5). Wigman attended his 1913 Summer
School at Monte Verita in the Swiss Alps and found greater freedom in Laban’s form of
improvisation than she had found with Dalcroze.37 When the summer school was over
she decided to follow Laban back to Munich to continue studying. During the World War
I the school moved permanently to Monte Verita and Wigman continued to work with
Laban to develop and refine his system of writing down movement called Labanotation.

In addition, Wigman performed in Laban’s works, one of these being the Sun Festival in
1917. The Sun Festival was an outdoor festival performed as part of the 1917
Nonnational Congress, a conference on the occult. Susan Manning suggests that this
gathering was a protest against the war. The performance began at sunset and ended
double hours later at sunrise and occurred in three different locations. The parts were
Dance of the Setting Sun, Demons of the Night and The Victorious Sun, a style of
performance as a ‘nature-based’ rite of passage, anticipating performance-ritual.
(Manning, 1997:73, 77).38 In between, Wigman continued her own choreographic
explorations alone and, possibly, with other artists. Monte Verita was an artists colony
attracting artists from all over Europe as well as musicians, dancers, ‘theosophists,
anthroposophists and other fanatic vegetarians...and a number of sick people’ (Wigman,
1975:44).39

Anthroposophy, one of the esoteric movements represented at Monte Verita, was also
exploring the relationship between science, spirituality and the arts. It’s founder was
another Austrian, Rudolf Steiner. Steiner was inspired by Goethe and had, for a short
time, explored Theosophy, but was more interested in devising his own ‘scientific base’
for the esoteric arts. In 1913 he began building his school, the Goetheanum, in Dornach,
Switzerland.40 The Goetheanum was Steiner’s School of Spiritual Science in which Fine
Arts, Speech, Music, Eurythmy, Drama, Medicine, Natural Science, Mathematics,
Astronomy and Humanity were taught as part of life long education.

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Steiner's Spiritual Science was based on the concept that the human body was made up of seven members: a physical body, an etheric body, an astral body, an ego, a spirit-self, a life-spirit and a spirit-man. These members interacted with each other in specific ways to create forty nine members in total. Each of the seven major members could be activated internally or externally to create their own art form: architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry and eurythmy and that art had the potential to unveil a spiritual world (Steiner, 1935:15 ff., 57 ff).\textsuperscript{41} The separations and divisions inherent in this theory is a perfect example of the interest in dissecting wholes into parts as part of the scientific tenor of the times.

Eurythmy was valued by Steiner and his followers as an art as well for its educational and therapeutic potential. It developed as a method of communication with many similarities to speech. It ‘is a natural, basic revelation of the being of man... A new art arose, when man attained such mastery over certain artistic media, that it was possible for him to reveal thereby his soul experiences within the world of the senses’, so that ‘as movement, eurythmy is speech, expression of the human soul.’ (Steiner, 1935:88, 94).

In its connection with the physical, the human soul will reach a development which, together with the worlds, to which the soul belongs, corresponds to the sounds of vowels and consonants streaming through the world as the “Word.” And this, in turn, is being transposed into the physical body’s visible movements. (Steiner in Schaumburg 1980:77)\textsuperscript{42}

Another leading figure to come from the Austrian artistic melee was Gertrude Bodenwieser, née Bondi. Bodenwieser was born into a wealthy Viennese family who would have been part of the city's artistic and intellectual life at the turn of the century. Even if she had not been able to attend, Bodenwieser would have been aware of the performances of Fuller, Duncan, St. Denis and the Wiesental sisters during their visits to Vienna. She later mentions the influence that Delsarte, Bess Mensendieck, Jaques-
Dalcroze and Laban had on the approach to and philosophy of movement at the time although there is not definitive proof that she took classes with them (Bodenwieser: undated). Marie Cuckson suggests that Bodenwieser did train ‘herself in every available style from the romantic stage waltz of the Wiesenthal sisters to the intellectualism of Rudolf Laban’ but she does not indicate how this was accomplished (Bodenwieser, undated:10).

Although these ‘influences guided her conscious thoughts about her art’, ‘a deeper stimulus came from the intoxicated cultural activity of the Vienna of her day; from the music, the intense activity of the artists and sculptors, the incessant talk about aesthetics and religion and from the new psychology of Sigmund Freud’, with whom there was a family relationship (Bodenwieser, undated: 8, 9). Bodenwieser would have been part of discussions in her family’s and, later, her husband’s social and theatrical circles, so would have known of the work of people like Nietzsche, Kant, Goethe. This stimulus was one of the things she sorely missed when she came to live in Sydney, Australia (Bodenwieser, undated: 14, 15 and MacTavish, 1987: 94 ff.).

Between 1905 and 1910 Bodenwieser and her sister took classes at the Viennese State Opera under the tutelage of the ballet master Carl Godlewski (MacTavish, 1987:4). Then in 1910 she changed her name from Bondi to Bodenwieser. Nine years later she gave her first recital at the Malarei Graphik Und Plastik in Vienna, an invitation only performance under the patronage of the painters F. A. Harta (full name not given) and Wolfgang Born. What had occurred in those nine years seems to be speculation. Obviously she had spent some of that time choreographing for herself as she was able to offer a program of six short dances (MacTavish, 1987: Chapter 2). The next year, 1920, she was teaching at the Vienna State Academy of Music and Dramatic Art and during that year met and married Friedrich Rosenthal a producer at the Burgtheater whose speciality was plays by Schiller, Goethe and Shakespeare. (MacTavish, 1987: Chapter 3 and Bodenwieser, undated:11).
In 1922 Bodenwieser opened her own studio and began the work of forming a dance group. Tanzgruppe Bodenwieser gave their first performance in 1923.

‘Real World’ Challenges ‘Spirit’

By this time Wigman had returned to Germany after a period of solitude in a religious community in Switzerland where she had worked outdoors on a program of dances ‘expressive of the joys, the sorrows, the conflicts of mankind’ (Wigman, 1975: 51). She had also begun teaching and performing, gradually devising her own dance system of rhythmic exercises called Tanz Gymnastik. During a tour in 1920 Wigman became stranded in Dresden and began teaching there in order to survive. The unrest in Europe was reflected in both of the artist’s work. Bodenwieser’s and Wigman’s choreographies explored the ‘dark’ as well as the ‘light’ and made social comment. Although they both acknowledged some relationship between their art and religious expression or ‘spirit’, this was not their main focus. Rather, they saw the two areas of spiritual expression and social comment working together as part of the same process, a similar fusion to that illustrated in performance-ritual.

Bodenwieser especially expresses this relationship and although ‘she could not be considered religious, her dance statements were always deeply spiritual’ revealing ‘the whole range of human feeling’ (MacTavish, 1987: 23). She saw these links in the ‘revolution in dance’ which was ‘part of man’s tireless struggle and search for spiritual freedom and truth’; anticipating the later feminist deconstruction of modernity (Bodenwieser, undated: 29). ‘A wonderful opportunity now opened for the dancer to convey experiences...the soaring spirit, the dynamic impulse; hope, degradation, yearning, the loneliness of unloved women, or the futility of the men on the top...’ (Bodenwieser, undated: 33). Like others of her time, Bodenwieser viewed ‘spirit’ as essential to theatre and art: ‘Every art means an expression of the spirit through form’ and ‘Everybody agrees that apart from the commercial theatre there ought to be a theatre
led by spiritual ideals’ (Bodenwieser, undated:89, 96). She also believed that this especially linked dance to its possible beginnings in religious ritual.

...down through the ages, dancing has meant the abandonment to ecstasy...

Modern Dance is more rooted in the past than any other form of the dance, as it links up with the primitive times when dancing meant religious service, and even with the still earlier times when the gods themselves were depicted as dancing, when dancing meant mourning and rejoicing, the song of songs, the tragedy and the glory of being alive. (Bodenwieser, undated:91)

Bodenwieser’s pre-World War II choreographies were reflecting these influences. She had been questioning the increasing mechanisation of work, how the process affected the workers, and exploring this theme choreographically. The early choreographies found their final form in *The Demon Machine* (1923) which won the ‘Concours Internationale de la Dance’ award in Paris in 1932. *Force and Counter Force* (1925) explored mysticism, mechanisation and decadence in terms of human existence and human suffering. *Rhythm Of The Subconscious Mind* explored dreams and nightmares, showing the influence of Freud’s ideas (MacTavish, 1987:Chpt. 6).

Mary Wigman was also questioning life and exploring these questions through her work.

There are so many moving and magnificent images, so many poetic and philosophical examples bearing witness to the eternal yearning of man for the expression of perfection. And we have never ceased to ask questions...And no man has yet found for his fellowmen an answer to the ultimate questions...Without the secret, what would all artistic creation be? (Wigman, 1966:15)\(^4\)
She viewed dance as a ‘living language which speaks of...man’s innermost emotions and need for communication... When the emotion of the dancing man frees the impulse to make the visible his yet invisible images...there is always the responsibility and obligation to make clear the universal, super-personal meaning’ (Wigman, 1966:10). The relationship between art and the origin of creativity was also noted. ‘Art grows out of the basic cause of existence. From there it draws its creative and constructive forces...And there only is it imperishable, eternal’ (Wigman, 1975:18). The ‘sense of the divine’ was experienced especially in relation to teaching.

I have attempted to open roads for my pupils leading deep within themselves and to bring them to the point where knowledge and divination become oneness, where experience and creativity penetrate each other... I have also experienced how a group of young people begins to glow from within and to emit a radiant power in which everything physical is suspended and gives way to a spiritualization which lifts the dance creation onto the level of enchantment and transfiguration. (Wigman, 1966:9, 110)

Like Bodenwieser, Wigman reflected the social conditions, her questions and her spiritual search in her choreographies.47 Some of Wigman’s dances also functioned as sacred dances, rituals or as rites of passage and therefore are ‘performance-rituals’, but whether she would have viewed them in this way is another matter.

Manning suggests that Ecstatic Dances which Wigman choreographed three months after Laban’s Sun Festival ‘seemed to compress and multiply’ the festival’s implied ‘spiritual self-transformation’ (Manning, 1993:79). Autumnal Dances, presented in 1937, coincided with ‘just at that time the autumn became a revelation to me: because this experience of nature coincided with the awareness that I myself was starting the autumn of my life’. It consisted initially of five parts including a salutation to the past, a thanksgiving for the blessings of the earth, a revisiting of life and ended with ‘Dance in
the Stillness'; ‘a tentative groping’ into the future (Wigman, 1966:79, 80). This form suggests a rite of passage. Other examples which possibly reflect this genre include Farewell and Thanksgiving (1942), which was her last solo performance, and Dance of Niobe (1942), created in response to the bombing raids and expressing ‘the sightless despair of the mothers during the war’. She felt that in Niobe ‘I sing of your pain and believe that the blood of my own heart streams out into this dance. For your grief is the grief of all of us, and it is holy to me’ (Wigman, 1966: 81, 82). Dance of Niobe suggests a rite of mourning and holding.

The time between the wars in Europe was one of social unease and vibrant artistic experimentation. Bodenwieser and Wigman were two of many who were responding to the time, intellectually and artistically. It was also the time of the Bauhaus in Germany, where Oskar Schlemmer explored mathematical forms in costume and movement. Laban and his students collaborated with another group, the Dadaist Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, Switzerland (Prevots, 1985:3-8). The entrepreneur, Serge Diaghilev, formed Les Ballet Russe, which began in Russia and later moved to Monte Carlo. Diaghilev encouraged collaboration with contemporary visual artists, such as, Bakst, Picasso and Matisse, and composers, such as, Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Satie (Robertson & Huteria, 1988:38, 39). Out of this political and artistic milieu, Dalcroze, Laban and, his student, Jooss ended up in England and, in 1939, Bodenwieser and Orban arrived in Sydney, Australia. Wigman remained in Germany.

Women Performing Body, Nature, Place, Spirit and Time
The women examined here were independent in thought and action. They ran companies and travelled widely, through Europe, Asia, America and, in Bodenwieser’s case, South America and Australia. They questioned, and in some cases rejected, the cultural, social, political and religious institutions of their times, including the social constraints of marriage. Duncan decided early she would not get married. St. Denis did not want to but bowed to social pressure against her better judgement. Wigman rejected a number of
suitors and remained single. Bodenwieser married but her husband was killed in an extermination camp. Even when married, however, Bodenwieser toured her company continually between 1923 and 1939. It was not all easy. These artists, like artists today, were always looking for sponsors and relied on those with money, that is, patrons or students, to support their work. Fuller, Duncan and St. Denis were also financial supporters of their parents and siblings. All the artists, in the end, had an extended ‘adopted’ family in their schools and performing companies.

Duncan and St. Denis read copiously, perhaps they all did. Duncan was especially interested in, and read, Greek history and mythology, Neitzsche and Kant. St. Denis travelled with Mary Baker Eddy’s *Science and Health with a Key to the Scriptures* as ‘bedtime reading’ and read sections to her students. She also read from the Bhagavidgita and Kant and explored other religions, including Buddhism and Theosophy. Later, she incorporated the writing of Pyotr Demianovitch Ouspensky and eventually ran esoteric groups of her own. All the women were part of the intellectual and artistic community and were well aware of intellectual and philosophical trends. Whereas the ‘intelligentsia’s’ process of questioning, researching and offering alternatives was expressed through the written word, these artists, although they also lectured and wrote about their work, primarily used the physicality of dance. Wigman describes it as ‘the language of dance’ (Wigman, 1966). Their text was embodied. However, like the rest of North-Western European culture at the time, the expression of these dance pioneers had a ‘white’ tinge.

Duncan and St. Denis viewed their work as expressing the American spirit, a white Anglo-Saxon American spirit. Martha Graham, one of St. Denis’ students at Denishawn, was initially steered to teach, rather than to perform, as ‘I was not blond and I did not have curly hair. These were the Denishawn ideals’ (Graham, 1991:66). Although St. Denis’ interest in ‘exotic’ cultures motivated her early work, she saw her school as part of the spiritual life of America. She viewed her later music visualisations as the true
American Dance, that owed nothing to Europe and Asia (St. Denis, 1939:177, 213). St. Denis’ dances did reflect ‘white’ American culture in the same way that Wigman’s ‘absolute dance’ expressed the ‘whiteness’ of the German culture at the time.

Choreographies responding to themes from other ‘exotic’ cultures were performed by St. Denis, Wigman and others, but, by and large, they were framed by idealised or hierarchical European notions and performed by white dancers for a white audience. There was a greater interest in creating a ‘truly American’ or ‘truly German’ modern dance form. The European bias was reflected in St. Denis’ shock at the material reality of India (St. Denis, 1939:285 ff.). It was also reflected by the artists’ choices of dancers, music and thematic material. The music that Dalcroze chose to transport the mind into the subconscious was most definitely not ‘the jolting, rioting rhythms of savage music’. Rather,

...the master of rhythmic movement must do more than use percussion instruments, like those of negroes or Indians. He will also have to become thoroughly acquainted with the elements of melody and harmony...a musician in the fullest sense of the word. (Jaques-Dalcroze, 1930:7, 8)

Eurocentrism affected the men and women equally and did not problematise their art. However gender differences did affect their approach. The first impulse of the women was to use dance as a form of subjective expression. Only later did they establish schools. On the other hand the men began to analyse the movement and composition and to teach ‘the method’. The men involved in drama did the same. Their approach was more objective. Similarly women tended to write biographical and explanatory accounts of their life and the meaning behind their work, while the men wrote of a ‘system’. This meant that during the later 20th century, Laban’s, Jaques-Dalcroze’s and Stanislavski’s systems were being taught in educational and private institutions all over the world. The
early women did teach, but it was the next generation of women who began to create systems which were taught internationally.53

Some of these women began as part of the ‘back to nature’ movements. Duncan and St. Denis were inspired spiritually and artistically by the natural environment, as were Laban, Steiner and Orban. These women viewed the nonhuman environment as the ‘real church’. Both women also situated their schools in places that would take full advantage of ‘natural’ settings. Although this may have been a romanticised view of ‘nature’ and ignorant of later ecofeminist understanding, it was still a challenge to the increasing industrialisation and urbanisation of the time. Bodenwieser, on the other hand, seemed to be more influenced by city life, and how humans functioned psychologically and relationally. Dalcroze’s school, part of Hellerau, a planned ‘utopian’ community, centred around a factory amidst open space, was an attempt to compromise between the two. In the end, however, the need to survive financially and the two world wars encroached on this nature-spirit connection and the nationalistic temper of the time began to influence their work.

These women also performed ‘place’, though not consciously in the beginning. Their country of origin affected more than surface thematic material. Wigman comments on the cultural and artistic differences she had noticed between her American and German students.

However, I remembered the type of American girls that came to my school in Dresden. They were different from the European girls who danced with such deadly seriousness and who analyzed their emotions, turned their minds so deeply inward that they lost spontaneity. The American students gave themselves to the dance freely, instinctively, yet not thoughtlessly. They had a spontaneous vitality which I adored. (Wigman, 1975:133)
The land of their birth affected their ‘being’. The European attitude to, and philosophy of, dance was not as ethereal as that of the Americans. Many reasons for the differences can be surmised. Whereas the Americans were more-or-less self taught and devised their own ways of moving, Bodenwieser and Wigman had the influence of the many systems of movement being taught in Europe and their constant exposure to the intellectual and philosophical debates at the time would have added to this difference. Manning suggests a difference in national characteristics, personalities and interests. From my perspective and experience the land and culture in which a person lives does affect their being, from personality to body ‘types’. ‘National characteristics’ may emerge from what is seen, heard, smelt, experienced, felt, absorbed through the skin, from the land, from the environment, from others, as well as the need to adapt to weather patterns and historical events. But this discussion is to illustrate that the American and European performers were different, not to develop a theory on the relationship between place and person. The difference in place-specificity between these performers became exaggerated prior to and during World War II.

Wigman’s choreographies reflected socio-political change and becoming increasingly nationalistic during the rise of German fascism, as did Laban’s until he fell out of favour with the Nazi regime.53 Even though she suffered from that fascism, Bodenwieser could never shake her Europeanness. In Australia, it was not until the 1950’s that Bodenwieser began to place her dances within the Australian context, a project that another Australian immigrant, Margaret Barr, fulfilled more completely at a later date.54 These facts, however, do not detract from their work. They are just reflections of the general attitude in Europe and America at the time. All these choreographers worked and created from, and through, their own eyes, experience and place-time specificity: one of being a white person in North-Western Europe at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries.
Duncan, St. Denis, Bodenwieser and Wigman recognised similarities between spiritual and artistic expression. The marrying of spirituality, art and love by Duncan and St. Denis, is a recurring theme in the late 19th century. It offered an alternative philosophy to Christian theology. Words such as ‘allowing’, ‘listening to’, ‘opening to’, ‘awareness’, ‘receiving and giving’, ‘being’, ‘penetration’, can just as easily refer to artistic processes, ‘being in’ or experiencing love, and experiencing ‘other’/‘spirit’/‘energy’. These words refer to the moment when the awareness of ‘something else’ which is ‘not us but part of us’ is at work and that this ‘something else’ links with (an)other so that connections are being made that are beyond ‘the ordinary’ and ‘the everyday’. The words support the suggestion that is the same energy at work in spiritual experience, love and the artistic process. Others included in this section hint at, or corroborate, this view in words or action. However, in spite of this commonality, especially between religion and art, there is a difference between performance and ritual in the modern West. The difference has been inferred already in this chapter, when specific performances have been described as ‘ritual’, ‘rites’ or ‘performance-ritual’ and others have not. The differences are important and will be the subject of Chapter 3.

**The Sacred-Secular Divide**

The changes in dance illustrated by Wigman and Bodenwieser during World War I and II were exacerbated by the inclusion of dance in educational institutions in the United States and, later, Australia. One of St. Denis’ pupils and American choreographer, Doris Humphrey, does not mention concepts like ‘spirit’, ‘soul’ or ‘god’ in her book, except in relation to Duncan, St. Denis and Shawn. Humphrey did choreograph dances motivated by nature and on religious themes, such as *Water Study* (1928), *The Shakers* (1931) and *Dionysiaques* (1932), a reenactment of an ancient Cretan rite, but her publication is about the ‘craft’ of the art, and her language and suggestions are very practical. In educational institutions, concepts such as ‘spirit’ tend to be relegated to ‘the religious’ not art itself. Art education emphasises ‘art history’, ‘technique’ or ‘form and structure’, with ‘religious art’ placed in a separate category, often within ‘art history’.
Margaret Barr, who arrived in Australia after Bodenwieser, also exemplified this trend away from ‘spiritual expression’. Barr was born in Bombay, grew up in America and arrived in Australia in 1949, after living and teaching in England and New Zealand. She was trained in the Denishawn style of modern dance and had also studied Stanislavski’s acting method. While in New York she had studied with Martha Graham and assisted in running the school. From 1930 to 1934 Barr was Director of the School of Dance-Mime and Head of the Dance Department at Dartington Hall in England. There she choreographed ‘satirical, psychological, abstract and symbolic’ and some political works (von Sturmer, 1993:17).

Her works concerned ‘social issues and the human condition, especially injustices’ and were called ‘dance-dramas’, although she preferred the term, ‘total theatre’ (von Sturmer, 1993:22, 144). In Australia, her themes began to reflect Australian life and history, including that of the indigenous Australians, colonial-indigenous conflict, and especially focussing on women. By 1959 Barr was tutoring at the recently opened National Institute of Dramatic Art and in 1978 established The Margaret Barr Dance-Drama Association. Her output was extraordinary considering the lack of funding, and she continued to present choreographies each year, including in 1990 the year before her death at eighty seven years of age.

While Humphrey and Barr were moving away from public performance as ‘spiritual expression’, this area of performance was being incorporated into the American Church. In 1956 the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Guild was established in New England. Two years later it was renamed the Sacred Dance Guild, with St. Denis and Shawn listed among those voted as honorary life members for their contributions to Sacred Dance and the shaping of the Guild. The guild’s aim was ‘to stimulate interest in dance as a religious art form, and to provide a means of communication and training for dance choirs’ (Article II of the By-Laws quoted in Reed, 1978:1).56
In 1971, Mary Jones, an Australian, arrived in Minnesota, heard about the Sacred Dance Guild and began to attend their workshops and conferences. She extended this interest by training in New York and at the University of Utah. By 1978 she had returned to Australia and was chairing the inaugural meeting of the Christian Dance Fellowship of Australia at the International Society for Education and the Arts in Adelaide. At the first conference of the Fellowship, Shona MacTavish, who had studied with Bodenwieser in Vienna, was instrumental in Bodenwieser gaining entry into Australia, and later authored her biography, was invited to teach.  

Since then, the Fellowship has expanded to each state in Australia as well as internationally, inspiring many performing groups, such as Prepare and Double Vision. By the end of the 1980’s a number of other organisations catered for the broader spectrum of the arts, such as, Christian Arts Resources Association, Willow Music, Willow Connection, International Institute for Creative Ministries, Creative Ministries International, the Institute for Theology and the Arts; some of which have folded while others continue to exist. In 1994, the Australian International Conference on Religion, Literature and the Arts was inaugurated and in July, 2000 the first Australian Christian academic dance journal, ‘Inspire’, was published. The circle was complete. Dance as spiritual expression, which began as public performance outside and in reaction to the Church, was returning to a direct association with formal religious expression. The sacred and secular arenas were, once again, being clearly defined and ‘spiritual naturalism’ was replaced by the Christian ‘God’.

Yet individuals, such as Jerzy Growtowski in Poland and Anna Halprin in San Francisco, continue to explore these connections outside of the Church’s theological boundaries and their work continues to influence many Australians.  

In Sydney, the explorations also continue in the work of some of Bodenwieser’s pupils and through the ritual performances of Anthroposophy, which arrived in New South Wales in the 1920’s. The work of those like Growtowski and Halprin explores the ritual aspects of
performance, and, in a similar way to the performers examined in this chapter, use embodied, subjective, contextualised, and process-oriented practices for this purpose. Some, like Halprin and Anthroposophy, have also worked within the natural environment. But not all cultural and performance theorists see a distinction between ritual and performance or link 'ritual' with 'spiritual expression'. Ritual has been removed from the spiritual realm in secular circles. This implications of this separation informs the discussion in Chapter 3.
Notes


7 Deitering, C. Actions, Gestures and Bodily attitudes. Saratoga, California, Resource, 1980. Dance, however, is still considered suspect. At an international Christian conference held in the United Kingdom in 1991, dance was not an accepted practice in the context of the conference liturgy although the 'use of all the arts' was being theoretically supported and advocated in every lecture.

8 Bodenwieser, G. The New Dance. Vaucluse, NSW, Marie Cuckson, undated.


16 Madame Blavatsky's (1831-1891) interest was in the occult; an interest which was continually renewed during various travels through the Middle East and the Orient. By 1875 she had founded the Theosophical Society in New York. This group became the centre for branches all over the world. According to a disciple, William Kingsland, 'theosophy was not a doctrine but a "living power in our lives"', based on "self-sacrifice" and the ability to 'dissociate...from all forms of doctrine and reach "Alaya's Self"' (italics are his) (Theosophical Society, In Memory of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. New York, 1891, p. 78-80). Also see, Butt, G. B. Madam Blavatsky. London, Rider, 1926 for the story of her life and work.


18 Francois Delsarte (1811-1871) had studied to be a singer and actor but his voice was ruined by incorrect training. He developed a classification of movement which analysed the links between emotion, speech and body position based on his Christian beliefs. That is, around the Law of Correspondence - the spirit-body functional relationship - and the Law of Trinity - the universal formula of 'three' by which man mirrors the godhead (Shaw, T. Every Little Movement. New York, Dance Horizons, 1954). In America, Ruth St. Denis's mother had discovered a book about Delsarte's relaxation and posture and would 'now and again' give lessons to her young daughter.

19 This was especially apparent in the Theosophical, Anthroposophical movements and the later work of G. I. Gurdjieff (full name not given). Gurdjieff has been variously called a 'guru', a 'comman', 'a Man of Power, seducer of women and exploiter of men' (Webb, J. The Harmonious Circle, The Lives and Work of G. I. Gurdjieff, P. D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers. London, Thames & Hudson, 1980, p. 19). He saw himself as 'the Man who Knows' or 'the Great Magician' and 'an actor' (Webb, 1980: 92). Gurdjieff's philosophy was that the world and 'man' are machines and that 'man' is therefore asleep and needs to wake up and create his own soul. His system included military like responses to orders, sensory
awareness, breathing, fasting, Eurhythmics, sacred dances and private interviews (Webb, 1980:239). He played with his follower’s lives, encouraging them to become actors themselves while knowing, but not baring, their own souls. After setting up in various cities, such as, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Essentuki, Constantinople, and moving on, in 1922 he opened ‘The Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man’ at Fontainebleau, France. Gurdjieff’s wrote a number of books which, according to Webb, are a mixture of fantasy and ‘truth’, and his philosophy continues to have influence in the same way as Theosophy and Anthroposophy.


24 Gab, whose full name is not given, wrote this response after first seeing Fuller’s performance at the age of fourteen.


27 Duncan, I. *My Life.* New York, Liveright, 1927; *The Art of the Dance* (edited by J. Cheney). New York, Theatre Art Books, 1969; Steegmuller, F. (ed.) *Your Isadora.* New York, Random, 1974. Duncan consistently denied the commonly held belief that her dancing was a copy of or a direct interpretation of Greek art and culture. Rather, she insisted that her dance was American and that ‘I naturally fall into Greek positions, for Greek positions are only earth positions (ed. that is, natural)’ (Duncan, 1969:58). ‘I have learned from them [Greek positions] how to study Nature’ and ‘I took off my clothes to dance because I felt the rhythm and freedom of my body better that way. In all ages when the dance was an art, the feet were left free as well as the rest of the body’ (Duncan, 1969:102, 129).


29 Triggered in the beginning by a cigarette advertisement featuring the Egyptian goddess Isis seated on her throne, St. Denis was sidetracked by a foray into the Hippodrome’s East Indian Village which had been brought over in its entirety. This led to a production based on East Indian life and belief using some of the inhabitants from the village as supporting performers.

30 St. Denis did eventually go on tour to the Orient in 1925, including to her beloved India where as well as magical experiences she confronted ‘a horrid dream, that God had forsaken this world, and nothing remained but horrible, broken bodies, and piteous eyes. If twenty years before I had seen any such sight there would have been no Radha, and perhaps no career.’ (St. Denis 1939:286). Yet she still felt at that time that India was her spiritual mother (St. Denis 1939:320).

31 Ruth’s husband, Ted Shawn had in 1917 created ‘an entire church service performed in rhythm’ and had danced in several churches in California (St. Denis 1939:221). Shawn had spent three years studying for the ministry before his dance career and continued this ‘true devotion to the religious life’ in his
choreographic themes (St. Denis 1939:159). They met when he joined St. Denis’ company as a dancer and it was his managerial skills and persistence that steered the establishment of the various Denishawn schools.


33 While in Paris in 1900 Fuller and Duncan were introduced. Fuller invited Duncan to join them in Berlin with the possibility of organising a tour with Duncan and Sada Yacco, whom Fuller managed. According to Fuller, Duncan ended up following the group to Berlin, Budapest and Vienna (Fuller, 1913:Chpt. XX). Duncan describes Fuller’s performance as turning ‘to many coloured, shining orchids, to a wavering, flowing sea flower, and at length to a spiral-like lily, all the magic of Merlin, the sorcery of light, colour, flowing form... She transformed herself into a thousand colourful images before the eyes of her audience.’ (Duncan 1927:95). As I have suggested, Fuller is not so flattering, if ‘the dancer’ she talks about in her book is Duncan. Fuller’s memory of the experience is ‘of being used’. St. Denis also saw Fuller perform at this time as part of the 1900 Paris Exposition and found her performance ‘astonishingly beautiful’. But St. Denis was more impressed with Sadi Yaco the Japanese dancer and actress who shared the same program. St. Denis was haunted by the austerity and subtlety of Sadi Yaco’s performance in contrast to ‘the flamboyant, overblown exuberance of our American acrobatics’ (St. Denis 1939:40). Fuller does not mention St. Denis so probably they did not meet.

34 Wigman was born in Hannover into an ‘upwardly mobile’ family. She had been brought up to be a ‘proper lady’ but, by this time, felt that ‘the bourgeois’ life and expectations were stifling her (Manning, S. A. *Ecstasy and the Demon, Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman*. California, University of California, 1993, pp. 49, 50)


37 Manning suggests that Wigman’s account of this particular period is skewed to omit the reality of events at the time (Manning, 1993:48). In any case Wigman left Dalcroze to work with Laban at Monte Verita from 1913 until 1919.

38 Manning, S. A. *Ecstasy and the Demon, Feminism and Nationalism in the Dances of Mary Wigman.* California, University of California, 1993.


40 On a personal note, my great uncle Francis Constant Ledeboer, who was my paternal grandmother’s favourite brother and my father’s namesake, was involved in designing the first Institute as well as designing, making and inserting its etched coloured glass windows. Although the first building burned down ten years after it had been built some of the windows were salvaged and are housed in the new Goetheanum in which courses are still being conducted. My great uncle’s ashes rest with those of Steiner and the others in the tomb nearby. My father’s information suggests that the first Goetheanum was burned down on New Year by the local inhabitants who believed that the Institute was a centre for witchcraft.


Delsarte, Jaques-Dalcroze and Laban have been mentioned previously. Bess Mensendieck was a woman’s doctor who developed a system of education and exercise designed specifically for women. The system included anatomy, relaxation, strength, deportment and attitudes to assist healthy living.


Dresden consequently became the base for her permanent school and performance group. During this period she, like Bodenwieser had done years before, altered her name from Wiegmann to Wigman.


Manning (1993) explores this aspect of Wigman’s work in detail.


Ouspensky was, for a time, a follower and supporter of G. I. Gurdjieff and *In Search of the Miraculous* has written about these experiences. Both Ouspensky and Gurdjieff were two of a number of seekers travelling through Central Asia during the turn of the century and both had ‘been through’ Theosophy and, in Ouspensky’s case, Anthroposophy. They met in Moscow in 1915 when Gurdjieff was on tour and was already attracting disciples. By 1922 Ouspensky had moved to London and was teaching himself.

The next generation included St. Denis' pupils, Martha Graham and Doris Humphrey. Wigman's pupils included Hanya Holm, who took her system to the United States. In Australia, Bodenwieser’s pupils moved and taught all over Australia. In Sydney, the influences of Bodenwieser dancers, such as Margaret Chapple, Coralie Hinkley, Ruth Galene and Anita Ardell are still being felt.

The nationalistic aspects of Wigman’s later dances are expertly documented by Manning (1993).


For example, both Helen Poyner and Ellin Krinsley, who have worked in Australia, have been influenced by Halprin as well as by Suprapto Suryodarma from Java, Indonesia. Other Australians working in similar areas include Elizabeth Cameron Dalman, who has established the Mirranu Creative Arts Centre, and Tess de Quincey, for whom Butoh is a major influence in her Body Weather workshops. The work is also carried forward by those who are inspired by ‘goddess’ spirituality. In *The Once and Future Goddess* (San Fransisco, Harper, 1989) Elinor Gadon discusses the work of a number of American women who come from this tradition.

Chapter 3  When Performance Becomes Ritual

...to some degree the saint does become the artist. But how far the artist becomes the saint is yet to be understood.

St. Denis, 1939:47

By the second half of the 20th century, dancer Martha Graham claimed that ‘it is said that the shamans, the holy men of the past, are the artists of today’ (Graham, 1991:223). This perspective is reflected by other performers and theorists who advocate that all theatrical performance is ritual, some of whom are examined in this chapter. Some of these theorists go further and suggest that all that living beings do, including speaking, writing and moving, is performative and therefore, ritualistic. In this usage, ‘ritual’ does not imply ‘spiritual’. However, among the writers examined here who study and developed theories of ritual, including archaeologists, historians, anthropologists, theologians, performers and cultural theorists, there is no consensus on what constitutes ‘ritual action’. As will be illustrated, definitions for words like ‘ritual’ and ‘rite’ are not clear-cut.

During the 20th century, in Western discourse, ‘ritual’ became a disembodied, decontextualised and universalised term. The practice of using ‘ritual’ out of context emerged from the West’s reliance on objective research which favours ‘the product’ rather than ‘the process’ and ‘the parts’ over ‘the whole’. Research and writing on ritual were also influenced by Western differentiation of ‘the secular’ from ‘the sacred’ and the separation of civic institutions and ceremonies from the religious arena. These differentiations biased the recording and analysis of other cultures’ practices.

This chapter examines this confusion and makes a case for a specific context for ritual; a religious, or cosmological context, in an attempt to differentiate ritual from performance and justify the dual term ‘performance-ritual’. Attempts to define ritual are undertaken continually by anthropologists and others interested in ‘ritual’. Two who have followed a
similar process to the one taken here, but from a socio-anthropological perspective, are Jack Goody and Ewa Wasilewska. Wasilewska and Goody have attempted to develop guidelines and definitions that assist in the interpretation of religion and ritual and part of this process is an exploration of the sacred-profane dichotomy, drawing on the work of anthropologist Emile Durkheim. Goody is particularly interested in the differences between the Western need to define and delimit concepts and activities, such as religion/magic, natural-supernatural, in comparison to other non-Western cultures, where these definitional boundaries are not so clear. The example he gives is the LoDagaa of Northern Ghana.

Some Western explanations of ritual given later in the chapter describe it as 'repetitive action' or 'transformation' or 'liminality', or rely on evolutionary theory. But these elements alone do not make 'a ritual'. Nor are events that 'model', or 'mirror', or 'represent', a theoretical framework developed by Don Handelman for differentiating between public events. These terms are not context specific and can be used to describe many different events. In this way, they define functional or structural aspects of the event, not the event itself or the sometimes intuitive, unnamed intentions behind the event. Ritual, however, is not just a product or structure nor does it necessarily have a pre-determined function. Rather, the performance of a ritual is essential for the internal processes of the performers or community, not for the 'outside eye' of 'an audience'. In some cases the ritual is also a rite of passage. When shamans are involved, shamans travel that passage with, or on behalf of, others. When they are not involved the individual performer and/or the group travels that passage for themselves.

This chapter argues from the position that ritual is the actioned or performed passage between two worlds, two realities: that of 'material reality' and that of 'spiritual reality'. From my perspective and experience, ritual involves a specific type of passage or transition. It is context specific. Ritual is dependent on intention and focus and fulfils specific needs or functions, which determine the series of actions that create the structure
and process. Ritual implies an intention as well as a context. The structure formed from the intention is complex and many-layered. Yet, none of these need necessarily be pre-planned or set. Ritual can be communal and/or individual. Ritual can allow the space-time setting for sorting and the maintenance of individual and/or collective harmony. Ritual is a special kind of event that requires the involvement of those who believe in the efficacy of the action, structure, process, function and the ‘spirit world’. But none of these alone make a ritual. The experience of ‘performance-ritual’ illustrates that it is the interplay of the many aspects of ritual performance that creates ritual’s ‘magic’.

However, as suggested in the last chapter, not all performed events are necessarily rituals. In response to Graham’s statement, therefore, this discussion presents the contrary view that not all artists, including creator-performers, are necessarily shamans.

What Is Ritual?

Ronald Hutton is an historian who is reluctant ‘to participate in debates over the true meaning of expressions such as ‘ritual’, ‘ceremony’...’ (Hutton, 1996b:ix). Instead he uses words such as ‘‘faith’, ‘cult’ and ‘religion’ in a looser manner, ‘a manner which may seem unsatisfactory to theologians and philosophers who prefer stricter definition and more precise application of these terms.’ (Hutton, 1991:vii). But he is not alone in wanting to avoid the need to define ‘ritual’. Fellow historian, Edward Muir, suggests that ‘because rituals conjure emotional responses, they are extremely difficult to define’ (Muir, 1997:2). He does later offer a definition, however, seeing ritual as ‘a social activity that is repetitive, standardized, a model or a mirror, and its meaning is inherently ambiguous.’ (Muir, 1997:6). This definition is broad enough to include both religious and non-religious events such as, private and public rituals, pilgrimages, parades and ceremonies.

This broad view of ritual is also found in Ritual, Performance, Media, a collection of papers presented at the 1996 Ritual, Performance, Media Conference of Social
Anthropologists. The editor’s introduction notes that ‘this book is not ‘about’ ritual, and its contributors do not have any interest in defining it in essential terms’ (Hughes-Freeland, 1998:1). Instead, the participants explore ritual ‘relationally to performance and/or media’ and ‘employ ritual heuristically and contingently, as an odd-job word or semi-descriptive term which is subordinate to the larger category of ‘situated social practice...’” (Hughes-Freeland, 1998:1). But surely, if a term is used there must be an agreement on the definition so that everyone knows what is being discussed.

*The Australian Oxford Paperback Dictionary* (1996) defines ritual as ‘the series of actions used in a religious or other ceremony’ including ‘a procedure’ such as ‘feeding the magpies’. Although dictionary definitions are not considered adequate by theorists, such as anthropologist Drid Williams, it is included here as a ‘common view’ of ritual and because the definition is broader still, including everyday habits and patterns of behaviour which are individual and group, private and public, planned and automatic and not necessarily religious (Williams, 1991:209). The question now becomes not the simple ‘what is ritual?’ but ‘does such a thing as ritual exist as a definable entity, does it need a context and if not, is it still ritual?’

*Belief* and *Context*

The existence of a ‘belief’ or ‘religious’ context for ritual is a repeated assumption made by a number of those who research the past, including archaeologists, historians, linguists and specialists in religion and mythology. Archaeologists at the Conference on Archaeology, Ritual and Religion stressed the importance of ‘rigorous contextual approaches to the study of ritual...and to the interpretation of the belief systems to which ritual practices referred and from which they took meaning.’ (Garwood, Jennings, Skeates & Toms, 1991:vii). For these archaeologists, ritual does exist as a separate activity which differs from ‘the everyday’ and is very much part of religio-philosophical expression.
As there is no written evidence available from pre-literate societies archaeologists rely on the material remains to make this differentiation, such as remains of pottery, tools, buildings, burial sites, food, and skeletons. They consider the spatial and relational distribution of the material evidence and ask questions about the possible significance, meaning and function of the evidence based on the contexts in which the evidence is found. The spatial and relational contexts of the material evidence are then used as indicators of a possible religious context. In this way archaeologists are viewing the material evidence as a 'system of signification' constituting a 'field of discourse' and ritual as 'narrative text' (Barrett and Thomas in Garwood et al., op.cit.:2 ff. and 33 ff and Thomas, 1991:9 ff.).

This approach is used by others who research the past, such as Marija Gimbutas, Nanno Marinatos, Tivka Frymer-Kensky and Miranda Green. Indicators they use include the actual or pictured presence of altars, possible 'goddess' or 'goddess representatives' to whom offerings are made, the presence of libation activity or ritual containers, the presence of a sacrificial animal or its remains, the use of special costumes such as a crown of horns, pictorial indications of a shaved or partially-shaved head, or body paint or written prayers and ritual descriptions. Their interpretations begin to separate ritual activity from 'the everyday', by associating it with a religious belief system.

Green, especially, is careful in her use of 'ritual'. In Exploring the World of the Druids, 'ritual' is used in relation to public religious or sacred events such as sacrifice, votive offerings, prayer and funerary rites which could have been presided over by the Druids or other religious officials (Green, 1997:36). She includes those events which Westerners, from the Christian tradition, are accustomed to experience in the context of formal religious practice. That is, those events which allow communication and passage between two worlds: the world of materiality and the world of the goddesses and the gods. Other public events where the religious components were only part, and not the whole, of the events, Green terms ceremonies, festivals and assemblies. These public
events include administrative ceremonies, which show a concern for social stability, and
seasonal festivals, which show a concern for abundance and fertility, especially of nature.
The ceremonies and festivals probably would have included, and some did include,
rituals within the larger frame, especially seasonal celebrations which had mythological
associations.

Underlying Green's, Frymer-Kensky's, Gimbutas', Marinatos' and archaeologists'
interpretations is the assumption that a culture or group does have a ritual practice, which
is an expression of their religious beliefs. It is also assumed that it is possible to read the
symbolic properties of the evidence and make educated guesses about the nature of the
beliefs and the types of ritual enacted. In spite of this process, archaeologists' abilities to
interpret any event as ritual from this 'distance' are now being questioned. Some at the
Conference on Archaeology, Ritual and Religion were beginning to suggest that there is a
basic confusion 'about the definition of the subject', its material identification and its
nature as a social practice (Garwood et al., 1991:vii). In other words, in spite of the
many different theoretical approaches that archaeologists use, the difficulty of
interpretation still remains, and it 'does seem that the hope of identifying single
unconditional 'meanings' in material symbolism in prehistoric contexts must at best be
doubtful' (Garwood et al.:ix).

In the examples given so far, the difficulties around 'ritual' are starting to emerge. All
these writers have associated some sort of ceremonial practice with religious symbology,
such as, objects, action, story, and religion. The symbology used for this interpretation
includes temple-like structures, altars, offerings, libation, songs, prayers, sacrifice,
figures, stories of goddesses and gods and special make-up or clothing.15 All of these
identifiers set the imagined action 'apart' from the everyday life of the cultures being
examined. In addition, in the ancient Mesopotamian and celtic cultures, at least, in spite
of the different pantheons and mythological stories behind the religions, one of the aims
of ritual seems to have been 'control'. In these cultures 'control' was negotiated by
asking the appropriate deity for her/his favour. The negotiation was enacted from this world to ‘the other’. The events, in these instances, were the formalised actions that created, opened up, allowed or encouraged the passage between the two worlds; the world of ‘material reality’ and that of ‘spirit’. This is not the stance taken by historians, such as, Hutton and Muir, and in current anthropological discourse. It is here that all these terms begin to be decontextualised and merge into one another to mean whatever the user wants them to mean.

**Broadening the Context**

Anthropologists, such as Arnold van Gennep and Durkheim, who were working at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, also assumed a magico-religious belief system in the cultures they studied, and used ‘ritual’ and ‘rite’ within that context. However, it was soon realised that, in contrast to the modern West, other cultures did not have clear boundaries between ‘natural’ and ‘supernatural’ or ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ and ‘efforts to isolate specifically religious experiences in this way have proven of little value’ (Goody, 1961:144). The difficulties inherent in definitions of words like ‘religion’, ‘ritual’ and ‘sacred’ were becoming apparent. Early anthropologists, such as van Gennep, had recognised that there were limits to objective, ‘outsider’ research and attempts at universality, but did not fully appreciate the implications of this Eurocentric bias (van Gennep, 1960:Introduction).

The implications are examined by Goody, who states that ‘the observer’ ‘is forced to develop analytical tools out of own folk-categories...and can never get outside the conceptual apparatus of his own society’ (Goody, 1961:156). Westerners were interpreting events as ‘ritual’ from their own experience of Christianity. Recognising these limitations, anthropologists began to redefine ‘ritual’ to make the term more universally applicable. In the process, however, ‘ritual’ became decontextualised from any association with the special nature of the event it was once used to describe. Other disciplines that research ritual have been influenced by this trend.
Historian, Hutton, is an example. As already illustrated, Hutton is not interested in trying to define or limit what a ritual is. In spite of this, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles*, which covers pre-Christian ‘religious beliefs and practices’ (Hutton, 1991:vii), seems to assume a religious context. However, in two subsequent publications (1996a and 1996b), which discuss rituals and ceremonies in the Middle Ages and from ‘the earliest recorded time until the present’ respectively, the time-span and definition of ritual broadens (Hutton, 1996a:viii). Although both of the latter books are about the ‘ritual year’ in Britain, Hutton uses the term, ‘ritual’, to refer to a variety of major public events, including festivals, pastimes, secular entertainments as well as religious ritual. He is more interested in using such terms ‘in a crude fashion sufficient (I hope) to carry the arguments and convey the information at stake.’ (Hutton, 1996a:2). Perhaps this change reflects the increasing divide between ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ arenas in the West during this period. The next stage of the argument is the need, therefore, for different words to refer to the different contexts of civic and religious practices. This is where the language did not keep up with the changes in society, hence the difficulties now. So, Hutton has broadened his definition of ‘ritual’ so it can apply to sacred and secular events. But Hutton’s expanding context of ‘ritual’ does not go as far as Muir.

Muir views ritual as a social rather than a sacred event. He has been influenced by anthropologists, such as, Durkheim, Max Gluckman, Victor Turner, David Kertzer, van Gennep, Clifford Geertz, Handlerman and Claude Levi-Strauss. He arrives at his definition at the end of series of discussions beginning with his early experiences of being a teenage priest in the lay hierarchy of the Mormon church. The sense of ‘awe’ and ‘fear of the sacred’ that this experience engendered are discussed. But Muir analyses ritual in terms of ‘repetition of everyday gestures in the confines of a special place and time’, ‘emotional evocation’, ‘awareness of touch and sound’, ‘transience’, ‘having great power’ and ‘a united performance with one part leading to another’. He does not use words that express the meaning and experience of the ritual in relation to a religious or cosmological belief system, even though it was in this context that his experience of ritual
was initially formed. He comes close to including ‘the sacred’ when he uses Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of ritual as expressing deeply held beliefs and assumptions to service the formation and reformation of ‘all social life’, but that is all (Muir, 1997:6).

For Muir, ritual is a social activity which transgresses boundaries between ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ which allows him to include all sorts of behaviours in his analysis. Behaviours he includes cross contexts such as, Christian liturgies of baptism, confirmation, sex/marriage and dying/death; seasonal celebrations; violence, shame and rape; dining and courtship manners; the Jewish progoms and witch hunts; civic and royal parades; and the Reformation process itself. In these contexts the role of the ‘priest’ or leader of the ritual is whoever decides to initiate or organise the event, and, even then, the leadership can change at any point if someone else decides to instigate a new action. The event becomes open ended and open to destructive, violent and sadistic behaviour, which sometimes occurs. The space in which the event is held is highlighted or is ‘special’ by nature of the activities enacted there but no longer is or remains ‘sacred’, in the sense of ‘having respect for’. Muir’s definition of ‘ritual’ is one of creating a theoretical model, or a framework, that favours similarities not difference, and which therefore can be universalised to accommodate a number of different events and contexts.

The Anthropologists Dilemma

By the 1990’s there had been an enormous amount written about ritual, emanating from departments of anthropology, cultural and performance studies and the social sciences: ‘ritual is now one of the most fertile fields of anthropology’ (de Coppel, 1992:front page).18 Ritual was being viewed in a broader context and questions were being asked which required alternative ways of viewing and explaining ritual action in, as well as out of, a religious context. According to Felicia Hughes-Freeland, members at the 1996 Ritual, Performance and Media Conference had no interest in defining ritual in ‘essentialist terms’ but they did attempt to do so using other sorts of language (Hughes-Freeland, 1988:1). Hughes-Freeland’s suggestion is that ritual ‘generally refers to
human experience and perception in forms which are complicated by the imagination, making reality more complex and unnatural than more mundane instrumental spheres of human experience assume. Ritual in these terms is part of distinct situations’ (Hughes-Freeland, 1998: 2).

This definition, however, illustrates the contradiction inherent at this conference and in anthropology generally. The definition talks about ‘distinct situations’ but could be applied to any human activity, and therefore is not limited to ‘distinct situations’. For example, ‘complication by the imagination’ does not set ritual apart from other performing arts or ‘the everyday’. Even ‘mundane’ human experience can be complicated by the imagination because imagination is not necessarily controlled. In fact, the doing of ‘mundane’, repetitive tasks gives the imagination freedom to explore all sorts of creative alternatives. The definition also assumes that some activities in which humans engage create an ‘unnatural’ reality, while other activities take place in a ‘natural’ realm, a concept that can also be debated. However, members at the conference did comment on and discuss that the duality of ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ realities was illustrative of the Western bias in discussions about ‘reality’, one which Goody also highlighted (Goody, 1961:151).

The underlying contradiction at the conference seems to have been the need to view ‘ritual-in-action’ as a special event: ‘ritual imbues social action and makes it more than the everyday’ and the need to view ‘ritual-as-a-descriptive-term’ as ‘the everyday’: ‘a body of work which has extended the sense of ritual from the sacred to the secular’ (Hughes-Freeland, 1998:2, 5). The term, ‘ritual’ is used in a contradictory manner. Susanna Rostas illustrates this confusion when she states ‘that we do not need to make a distinction between ritual and performance...they are not distinct’, but then goes on to say ‘while the dance is perhaps more of performance than a ritual, although during a dance there are periods of ritualization’, when she is speaking of a particular practice of the Concheros of Mexico (Rostas in Hughes-Freeland, 1998:85-103). Rostas also adds that
it is her analytical need to make distinctions which is the problem as the Concheros
themselves do not.

Part of Rostas' reason for the distinction is her need to argue that another group, the
Mexicas, veer more towards performativity than ritualization when compared to the
Concheros. Rather, the event could be viewed as one long ritual which is performed with
a mixture of conscious and habitual actions which do not necessarily need to be separated
from each other, except to describe. What she is, in fact, noticing is a difference in
intention. The difficulty of dividing the one event into its 'performance' and 'ritual'
aspects is one inherent in this chapter's attempt to define and-or describe 'performance-
ritual' and to differentiate it from Theatrical performance. In addition, whereas Rostas
views 'ritual' as unconscious, habitual action, and 'performance' as an additional
element, this thesis argues that 'ritual' is a special type of performed event.

Frameworks that participants at the conference use to describe and explain ritual events
and processes include intentionality, production of self, production of action, the
participatory model, the communication model and different framings of relationships
between reality and illusion. There is no framework available which differentiates ritual
from other performance or which acknowledges the experiences behind religion or 'the
sacred', although traditional religious events are termed 'religious rituals'. Except for
Rostas, members at this conference prefer the use of frameworks which favour
similarities, rather than identify differences, that is, frameworks which could be
universalised across boundaries and which, as we have seen, are also preferred by Muir.
It was seen to be more in line with current trends with 'margins and border-crossings as
the proper objects of our current concerns. To place ritual in a relation with performance
and media is to address the effects of the rapidly changing intellectual geographies we
inhabit' (Hughes-Freeland:1998:2).
This is very interesting for it seems that, in current anthropological discussion there is another paradox; one which performance theorists also exhibit. The context of ‘religion’ or ‘spirit’ in relation to ‘ritual’ is not assumed and not important, yet there seems to be a fascination with ‘ritual’ and its use as a term assumes some sort of differentiation. So, what actually is it describing? There also seems to be a lack of comfort with those in the field and some practitioners who do see something ‘out of the ordinary’ in what they would like to identify as specific ‘ritual’ activity. As one participant in another publication said, ‘When a mystery is totally exposed to the light there is no more mystery and it dissolves into the ether. That’s what the trouble is. I’m half white with the white point of view; we have to expose everything to the light....and something else new grows. There’s value in that, the something new growing.’ (Valencia in Schechner & Appel, 1990:102).

What has been lost in the process is the uniqueness of ritual as a special type of performed event. The abstracting, universalising and decontextualisation of ‘ritual’ is part of the postmodern trend in analysis. This trend is in contrast to the project of performance-ritual, where ‘ritual’ is used in the context of a religious, or sacred, event or action. The contextualisation is part of a subjective-woman, Christian heritage. Although Goody and others insist that not all ritual practices have an obvious religious or cosmological or supernatural association, there is something about that association, even if it is not marked, which creates ‘special’. The contradiction in anthropology, that is, the fascination with, yet erosion of, ‘the sacred’, the decontextualisation and universalisation of terms like ‘ritual’ and ‘the sacred’, and the claiming of these terms for all activities on the one hand, yet the need to differentiate on the other, suggests that some sense of ‘specialness’ is perceived or desired. These contradictions are mirrored by some members of the theatrical community as well.
Theatre Performance and Ritual

Most of the writing on ritual by theatre practitioners and theorists began in relation to the 'avant garde'. However, as has been already stated in Chapter 2 not all of the experiments were termed 'ritual' by the creator-performers at that time. Actor-director Constantin Stanislavski struggled to find ways to contact and express something he termed 'the full spiritual revelation of the 'soul''.21 Although at times he used religious terminology, such as, 'faith', 'sense of truth' and 'communion', he did not term his practice or his performances 'ritual.' Similarly, dancer-choreographer Isadora Duncan saw dance as a prayer 'surrendering to the inspiration of the soul' whose divine power 'completely possesses the body' (Duncan, 1928:51).22 By naming her performances 'prayer', Duncan seemed to be more interested in the inner expression, or intention, of her work rather than commenting on the function, structure or form.

Antonin Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty', on the other hand, was directly influenced by traditional ritual, particularly that of the Balinese.23 His theatre was no longer just religious expression. Rather, it began to incorporate the elements, structure and function of traditional ritual, or at least, a Western interpretation of Asian ritual tradition. Another who was inspired by the rituals as well as the religions of the Orient and Middle East, as Chapter 2 illustrates, was Ruth St. Denis.24 She specifically named herself 'a kind of dancing ritualist' (St. Denis, 1939:57). By the 1930's St. Denis was creating her own rituals using dance, music, poetry, philosophical thought, and the traditions of various religions. She presented them at her home, as well as in more formal contexts. St. Denis viewed these performances as rituals and, from the perspective of this thesis, they would be termed 'performance-rituals'.

There seems to be a difference here between the work of Stanislavski and Duncan, who saw their work in more general terms, as 'search for soul' or spiritual expression, and that of Artaud and St. Denis, who attempted, in addition, to come to grips with the 'essence' and structure of ritual. 'Ritual' assumes both intention and form. This
distinction is highlighted by Christopher Innes in his analysis of the avant garde and its proponents. Innes includes those from the turn of the 19th to 20th centuries, such as Antonin Artaud, Rudolf von Laban and Mary Wigman, as well as others from later in the 20th century, such as, Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, Anna Halprin, Eugenio Barba and Richard Schechner. Like other analyses of the avant garde, Innes' work is biased more towards avant garde theatre, rather than dance, and more towards the male practitioners of the avant garde, rather than the female practitioners.

For his purposes, Innes promotes a more, rather than less, specific definition of 'ritual', identifying the problem of decontextualisation.

A wider problem, of course, has been where to draw the boundaries. In one sense, if ritual is taken to have its roots in social activity, all theatre could be described as ritualistic. And unfortunately such syllogistic thinking is far too commonly accepted, so that terms like 'ritual' have become almost meaningless as critical cliches describing anything and everything non-naturalistic. (Innes, 1984:4)

Interestingly, in spite of the above assertion, Innes does not actually define ritual. Rather he gives characteristics of the avant garde which he uses to select the performances he discusses; characteristics which have the 'sense' of traditional ritual. Perhaps these characteristics define 'ritual' for him.

Practitioners are included by Innes because their performances are quasi-religious plays or psychodramas and/or present archetypes or dreams and/or use ritualistic structures and/or substitute visual symbols and sound patterns for words and/or rely on extreme audience participation to evoke subliminal responses and tap the unconscious and/or are focussed on the emotional and physical disturbance inherent in a rite of passage (Innes, 1984:1 ff.). Innes separates ritual theatre into dance dramas or shamanistic performances.
using examples from Balinese and Siberian tradition and this linking of the avant garde to traditional ritual suits the needs of his study. He acknowledges that he has excluded others working at the same time fuelled by the same motivating forces (Innes, 1984:5). In general terms, the characteristics of the avant garde identified by Innes, focus on the ritual-like structure, content and function of avant garde performances, and their association, in some way, with religion and/or the unconscious.

Ritual and The Avant Garde

Innes’ earlier statement, suggests that, perhaps, there is a distinction between the use of ritual elements in theatrical and other practices and ‘ritual’ itself. It also suggests that the use of ‘trappings’ of an event does not necessarily ‘make’ the event. These are important distinctions because there are significant differences in the way ritual was used in the avant garde and the way in which ritual occurs within particular communities. The avant garde was the outcome of creator-performers in the West who were looking for a ‘more authentic’ theatre. This period was a time of discarding old forms and searching for something new and had its outworking through the interrelating cultural expressions of dance, drama and spiritual expression.

Most, except for St. Denis who returned to Christianity in her later years, ignored or worked in reaction to their own Christian tradition and reused, or reinvented, it in the context of their changing beliefs and theatrical experiments. Others turned to ‘the exotic’ and their search focussed on the Orient and ‘primitive’ cultures. This led to a number of difficulties and inconsistencies in relation to the way in which the avant garde used ritual. The Western interest in ‘primitivism’ was, from this distance, another expression of the ‘white colonialist’s’ lack of respect. The lack of respect is exemplified by the Western practice of taking indigenous and other non European cultures’ outward expressions for their own use, without any real understanding of the meaning underlying the expression or its historical and contextual development; a practice which is still continuing. At least,
now, the practice is being questioned and discussed more fully, as the writing of Indian theatre director Rustom Bharucha, exemplifies.\textsuperscript{26}

Ritual is culturally specific. It emerges from, supports and has meaning in its culture. In the avant garde there was the need to reject Western culture and its traditional values, religion, religious expression and social mores. Christianity, the culture’s dominant religion, and its focal symbols, were used out of context and reused, or reinvented, or ignored altogether. The avant garde also used elements from the traditional rituals of other cultures out-of-context and reinvented them in a contemporary setting. According to Innes, the avant garde was interested in finding ‘universals’ in an effort to be culturally non-specific. ‘Universals’ included archetypal myths and characters, symbols and a language which tends towards movement, gesture, sound and disassociated and unintelligible words, rather than traditional dialogue. This, of course, is not possible. The attempt at ‘universality’ is a typically Western project; one which Bharucha critiques in relation to Schechner (Bharucha, 1992:38). The outcome is, and was, culturally specific; a culturally specific Western theatre whose language is not necessarily understood by its own culture or the traditional culture from which the symbols and content had been taken.

There was a tendency in the avant garde to use ‘the profane’, that is, images of extreme violence, conflict and orgiastic bacchanals; an area that Schechner views as central to ritual and theatre (Schechner, 1993:231).\textsuperscript{27} This was seen as part of the quest for ‘authenticity’ and ‘primitivism’. This is, however, probably due to the masculine gender of the practitioners as well as of writing about the avant garde. Gender bias was also present in the records of the traditional ritual practices of other cultures, which were used by the avant garde as source material. Women practitioners mentioned by Innes, such as Wigman and Halprin, Schechner’s example of Felicitas D. Goodman and other women discussed in Chapter 2, do not seem to use these themes in their work (Schechner, 1993:240). Their interest is more on processing, or reacting to, emerging events and
contradictions. Innes tends to stress the ‘spasmodic violence’ of Wigman’s work and the ‘mythic material and the return to the primitive through ritual’ aspects of Halprin (Innes, 1984:53, 251). Yet the women themselves do not write about their work in this way (Halprin, 1995 and Wigman, 1966 & 1975). Nor are all traditional rituals ‘violent’, or ‘orgiastic’ as van Gennep’s analysis of rites of passage illustrates.

There are other differences that need to be mentioned between traditional ritual and the ‘avant garde’. Traditional communal rituals have specific forms, which are known by all involved, and, although improvisation is sometimes allowed, the rituals do not usually vary significantly from those forms. One of the marks of the avant garde was the experiments with improvisation to find and express an ‘authentic self’. This sometimes led to events that were out of control, or excessive, and where the audience or participants were abused and/or placed in danger. In a traditional setting, rituals should not, or, at least, should not aim to, get ‘out of control’, or be abusive or dangerous. From the outside it sometimes may seem that way but there is always a limit placed on the event and someone(s) there to keep an eye on things to make sure that the focus remains on what needs to be done, so keeping events from ‘going too far’.

As Rostas illustrates, in the rituals of the Concheros and Mexicas, it is important that ‘chaos’ be controlled so that the event ‘works’ and fulfils its aim. If a ritual does get out of control it is not good for the individuals concerned or for the community as a whole. She exemplifies this by contrasting two versions of the same ritual; one version performed by the Concheros, and the other by the Mexicas. In the more traditional ritual of the Concheros, the stress is on conformity and group harmony, with the result of an ensuing transcendence. In contrast, in the more modern version of the ritual, performed by the Mexicas, the stress is on individuality, competitiveness and high energy with the result that they often end up fighting with each other during or after the ritual (Rostas, in Hughes-Freeland, 1998:85-103). Hutton also comments on ritual disharmony in Stations of the Sun, where the focus is Britain. He makes the point that in many cases, once
events begin to get out of control they are eventually stopped by community ‘officials’ (Hutton, 1996b:420). It was also obvious to him that ‘ritual [or, ritualisation] was employed to enhance status and defuse tension’ (Hutton, 1996b:412, 413). Traditional rituals do ‘keep the world, and the community in order’ as Rostas, Colin Turnbull and Victor Turner, among others, discuss.\textsuperscript{29} The ‘excesses’ engaged in by the avant garde did not seem to encourage this sense of ‘harmony’.

The avant garde did attempt to achieve ‘translumination’ and ‘transfiguration’ by this focus on ‘the profane’. It was assumed that this was the outcome of ‘trance’ or ‘ecstatic’ practices of other cultures and the outcome of Christ’s passion on the cross.\textsuperscript{30} It was also assumed that this experience would eventuate in self-healing and ‘communion’ of ‘self’ and ‘collective soul’, which would engender audience healing as well. According to Innes, this was one of the areas that the avant garde was not able to achieve satisfactorily. It was found that the emotional extremes experienced and expressed by the actors had the effect of distancing, not involving, the audience.

In the light of the dissatisfaction with the limits of theatre as an instrument for community healing, that is, the healing of the performers, the audience and, perhaps, the broader society, it is interesting to note that ‘theatre’ has not remained the focus of some of those interested in the healing aspects. Grotowski has moved out of the context of theatrical performance and into more of a ritual workshop genre, an area where Halprin has concentrated her work. Theatre director, James Roose-Evans, who had an interest in theatre, therapy and religion, is now ordained as a non-stipendiary priest of the Anglican church.\textsuperscript{31} These examples suggest that there are limits in theatre, in relation to a true ritual experience.

These examples highlight a number of similarities and differences between the avant garde and traditional ritual. The differences lie in the Western colonial bias of the avant garde which decontextualised traditional cultures’ ritual, so stripping it of its specific
cultural meaning and purpose. In this sense, it was no longer ‘ritual’. In spite of this, there is an underlying assumption in the avant garde and its offshoots which it shares with at least one aspect of some traditional ritual. It is, that it is possible to contact ‘god’/‘energy’/‘soul’/‘spirit’/‘mystery’, express ‘religious’ beliefs, contact the unconscious ‘other world’ or engender psycho-social healing, using the elements of theatre and ritual. Although all of Innes’ ‘characteristics’ do not make a performance ‘a ritual’, its proponents envisaged themselves as ‘shamans’ with the aim of creating ‘holy’ or ‘sacred’ theatre. The avant garde’s interest in exploring ritual and religious concepts and expression is one of the things that separated, and continues to separate, it from the rest of the theatrical world and performance-ritual shares this position.

But this is not the understanding of those who assert that all art, and therefore all theatre, is ritual. In spite of Innes’ insistence that there is a difference between the avant garde and other theatrical performance, there are writers in performance and cultural studies who tend towards the point of view that ‘all theatre is ritual’. Performance theorists have been influenced by anthropology and argue their point in a similar way to anthropologists. Theatre director, Schechner, particularly, worked closely with anthropologist, Turner. Like anthropologists, performance theorists look for similarities and universals, not differences, and apply them in multiple contexts, without really considering the totality of the context in which the element is placed. The need for context specificity has been emphasised by Bharucha (1992:Chpt. 1). Among the concepts used in relation to, and which decontextualise, ritual are ‘the invisible made visible’, ‘liminality’ and explanations of ritual in terms of hierarchies or evolutions.

‘The Invisible-Made-Visible’

Jamake Highwater is a Native American dancer who has written about dance in terms of ritual. Like Graham, he views the artist as the ‘modern incarnation of the shaman’ (Highwater, 1992:14). Highwater suggests that dance and all art, like ritual, gives people an access to the ‘the unspeakable, the ineffable made visible, made audible, made
experiential' (Highwater, 1992:33, 169). This phrase, or a version of it, has been used many times for different purposes in relation to theatrical practice. It is used by Wigman in relation to the language and communicative power of dance: ‘When the emotion of the dancing man frees the impulse to make visible his yet invisible images then it is through bodily movement that these images manifest themselves in their first stages’ (Wigman, 1966:10). Whereas Highwater is talking about this communication process as ritual, Wigman is talking about the process of communication as movement and dance.

On the other hand, Artaud wrote,

We must believe in a sense of life renewed by the theater, a sense of life in which man fearlessly makes himself master of what does not yet exist, and brings it into being. ...when we speak the word “life”, it must be understood we are not referring to life as we know it from its surface of fact, but to that fragile, fluctuating center which forms never reach. (Artaud, 1958:13)

Here, Artaud is referring to the possibility that theatre might express the innermost life of a human being, that is, what is not seen, and he uses ritual processes to try and attain this more fully. It is difficult, however, in this quote to pinpoint exactly how Artaud views this ‘center’ and whether it has a spiritual association or not.

Theatre director, Peter Brook continues this argument by terming the theatre that is ‘the true dream behind the debased ideals of the Deadly Theatre’, ‘Holy Theatre’, or ‘The Theatre of the Invisible-Made-Visible’, and the stage as ‘a place where the invisible can appear’ (Brook, 1968:47 ff.). But Brook’s use of ‘invisible’, like Artaud’s ‘centre’, does not necessarily refer to the same ‘invisible world’ understood in a religious context or in traditional rituals, although it is assumed to be the same.
Brook is searching for a theatrical experience which responds ‘to a hunger’ and which
‘transforms’ and he finds it in pop music, dance parties and some theatre, including
Shakespeare’s plays. These are secular events which are not planned to include an
honouring of the ‘invisible world’. He wants a theatre which has the magic of what he
imagines traditional ritual has, where the invisible gods possess and become visible
through the man, the actor. This suggests that the ‘invisible gods’ are positioned outside
of, or separate to, ‘the man’, as in historical Christianity, yet his experience of traditional
Christian ritual has not fulfilled this need. His use of ‘gods’ and concept of what they
might be is different to that in religion. Brook’s use of words and concepts such as,
‘sacred’, ‘holy’, ‘transformed by an art of possession’ and ‘ritual’, like ‘invisible world’
seems not to be in reference to a religion or religious belief system, although a religious
sense is inferred by their use.

Rather, his use of the terms is to explain an ideal theatre. The referent is different. In
contrast, when Yaya Diallo speaks of the ‘invisible world’ in relation to the traditions of
his people, the Minianka from Fresnu, Mali, he is using ‘invisible’ in a religious sense.
For Diallo, ‘invisible’ refers to a belief in ‘other beings and forces’, such as, spirits and
ancestors (Diallo & Hall, 1989:15, 16). Brook’s usage, therefore, is part of the
decontextualisation of ritual and other religious terminology, which is seen in some
anthropological discussions. In fact, Brook’s The Empty Space, especially the chapter
on ‘The Holy Theatre’ and the ‘invisible-made-visible’ phrase, is quoted repeatedly by a
number of those involved in discussions on theatrical performance, especially in relation
to ritual. There is a slippage occurring in this practice.

‘Making the invisible visible’ is too general a phrase, which can be applied to many
different activities. It can be applied to such differing activities as ‘walking across the
road’, which makes visible the intention of getting to the other side, or sewing and some
art and craft, where an imagined image is made visible, or drama, dance, music and
visual art, where feelings and/or emotions are enacted and/or expressed and made visible,
or writing, where thoughts and feelings are made visible through various associations of disparate written symbols. These processes do not necessarily create rituals although some parts of the processes may be similar. It depends on the context, and what ‘invisible’ means in that context. The concepts of ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ also limit the experience to just one of the senses, the ‘eye’. The Western masculine bias of the ‘I’-‘eye’, and its use to position women, indigenous others and the nonhuman environment, has been critiqued by feminists. In contrast, the world of ‘spirit’ may not necessarily be seen, but may be sensed, felt, or experienced. It is the interpretation, naming and honouring of this experience as ‘spiritual’, with the accompanying belief in that ‘other world’, that positions the experience as ‘religious’, and the associated event, as ‘ritual’.

**Liminality**

Liminality is another term which is used to highlight the ritual and sacred aspects of theatre. Kirsten Hastrup, in a similar vein to Brook, analyses theatre in ritualistic or religious terms as well as using anthropology (Hughes-Freeland, 1998:29-45). Using the concept of liminality she describes theatre as a site of passage and society’s spiritual double. She also describes the stage as sacred space, invoked by the actor’s self sacrifice which allows an act of possession. She suggests that the reflexive nature of acting places the actor in this liminal place and invokes inner stillness, an inner sacred space, which gives rise to sacred theatre. ‘Sacred’ and ‘possession’ are not used in relation to a ‘religious belief’, or a belief in the ‘spiritual realm’. In this discussion, however, she ignores the aim of the performance. Hastrup views the actions of the actors and the stage space in a generalised manner and as independent entities and momentary events without the context of what the playwright is trying to say and the play-event is trying to do. The actions have been decontextualised. The only time she confronts the religious association carried by the words she uses and the possible differences between theatre and ritual is when she contrasts ritual as a context marker and possibly meaningless in itself, with theatre, which provides its own context so that the frame is part of the event. Yet ritual is
not meaningless, especially in a religious context. In this instance, the significance and particularity of the specific event is not explored.

When ‘liminality’ is used by anthropologist, van Gennep it refers to ‘threshold’ rites, or ‘rites of transition’ (van Gennep, 1960:18, 21, 52). It is a symbolic, and sometimes psychic, or physical and spatial, ‘in between’ state in which the participant waits before the rite of passage is complete. Although it is viewed as part of a larger magico-religious event the word itself does not necessarily carry that inference. Anthropologist, Turner’s 1982 definition of liminality, however, does.36 At this time, Turner tied ‘liminality’ to ritual, in an effort to differentiate between ‘ritual’ and ‘theatre’.

In Turner’s view, liminal experiences tend to be ‘collective, concerned with calendrical, biological, social-structural rhythms or with crises in social processes’. They are ‘centrally integrated into the total social processes’ with ‘symbols having a common intellectual and emotional meaning for all the members of the group’. In tribal and early agrarian societies, they are usually considered as ‘work’, and therefore are compulsory and cooperative in nature. It is also still possible to find this type of experience ‘in the activities of churches, sects, and movements, in the initiation rites of clubs fraternities, masonic orders, and other secret societies’ (Turner, 1982:54, 55). This early definition suggests that ‘liminality’ is a term used for ritual-like events which are not necessarily religious, but do not include theatre.

Theatre, on the other hand, is categorised by Turner at this stage, as ‘liminoid’. Liminoid experiences are mostly individual products, although some may be collective, which are continuously generated and considered ‘leisure’. This means that involvement is voluntary and usually ‘developed’ apart from the central economic and political processes, along the margins’ (Turner, 1982:54). They are ‘plural, fragmentary, and experimental in character’ focussing on the personal-psychological, rather than the social, and are more like a commodity, selected and paid for, and therefore competitive.
Yet these two categories do not, alone, illustrate differences between ritual and other events. Rituals can be individual, personal-psychological, voluntary, experimental, plural and marginal events as well as communal and cooperative. Liminality, alone, does not constitute ‘a ritual’. This was recognised by Turner, as by the second half of the 1980’s he was using liminality more universally: ‘both ritual and theatre crucially involve liminal events and processes’ (Turner in Schechner & Appel, 1990:11, 12).

**Evolutions and Hierarchies**

Another argument used to support the theatre=ritual debate is that of the evolutionary development of theatre from ritual, or the evolution of theatre and ritual from animal behaviour. Both perspectives view 'ritual' as a beginning and 'theatre' as an offshoot. Dancer and writer, Highwater, suggests that ‘primal’ cultures’ use ritual as the format in which to artistically express their experiences and understandings of life as a group, and that this practice gradually became individualised, secularised and professionalised in the West and was renamed ‘art’. Some of this performed art developed into entertainment and some developed into new forms of individualised rituals. By taking this stance, Highwater does suggest that only some ‘art’ is ‘ritual’. This means that there are two kinds of ritual, one being

an unself-conscious act without deliberate “aesthetic” concerns, arriving from anonymous tribal influences over many generations and epitomizing the group’s fundamental value system. The second form of ritual is new: it is the creation of an exceptional individual who transforms his or her experience into a metaphoric idiom known as “art”. (Highwater, 1992:14)

In this new form of ritual ‘artists are attempting to create rites of their own to compensate for the lack of rituals in their societies’ building a ‘mysterious self’ which is ‘an appearance - an apparition...a virtual image...’ (Highwater, 1992:169). It is dancers and artists like these, here he is exemplifying dancer Meredith Monk, where ‘the body is
indistinct from the soul', where the body overcomes ‘its inherent materiality’, where the ordinary is transformed into the extraordinary so that ‘ordinary gesture’ changes ‘into powerful ritual’ (Highwater, 1992:218).

But Highwater seems to be basing his analysis on his own observations, not on interviews with, or writing by, the artists themselves. In addition, the words he uses, such as ‘mysterious self’ or ‘virtual image’ do not necessarily mean an event is a ritual. It may be just a performance. Performers do lose themselves in the performance and create an illusion for the audience, but it still is a performance. Also, traditionally, ritual can be self conscious, individual and have deliberate aesthetic concerns. There are differences and similarities between ritual and performance. It does not mean, however, that they are synonymous. Ritual is special type of performance.

From an anthropological perspective, Turner views ritual's beginnings in a similar way: ‘when ritual perishes as a dominant genre, it dies...giving birth to ritualized progeny including the many performative arts.’ (Turner, 1982:79). This is the perspective of other ritual theorists who promote a ritual origin for theatre; a theory which is still being debated. The evolutionary theory of ritual is not completely supported by theatre director Brook either. Whereas Brook takes a secular view and agrees that the West’s early rituals have been lost or are in decay and that ‘sacred art’ and ‘the holy’ have been destroyed, he does not assume that these rituals were necessarily the beginnings of theatre.

Another who does not agree with the ‘ritual-to-art’ theory is theatre director and performance theorist, Schechner. Rather, his theory is that theatre and ritual developed from animal behaviour and uses ethnological explanations to support his claim (Schechner, 1993:228 ff.). He adds to this an exploration of genetics, psychology, neurological explanations and ritual-theatre practitioners in an attempt to discover what ritual is. Even so, the evolutionary theory underlies the discussion. Schechner suggests a
hierarchical development of ritualisation, from genetically fixed behaviour in insects and fish to human ritualised behaviour divided into social, religious and aesthetic rituals.

Concepts such as condensation, exaggeration, repetition and rhythm are used by Schechner to describe the outward form, and hierarchical ordering, territorial establishment, sexuality/mating are used to describe the underlying purpose or objective. This description equates the purpose and function of animal rituals, with human rituals, so excluding any religious association. His opening argument, that all rhythmic, condensed, exaggerated and repeated events are ritual, include characteristics which can apply to performances or unconscious, habitual activity. This is an argument that Muir and others support and this thesis challenges. Schechner finishes his argument by suggesting that when the creative and/or subversive function of ritual dominates, or spills over, 'the ritual' of religion becomes 'the ritual' of art. Yet, even here, his 'ritual of religion' does not acknowledge what 'religion' is all about. The contexts and inner motivating forces of both are missing.

Chapter 1 illustrates how the use of evolutionary and hierarchical explanations has been critiqued by a number of feminists as an example of the history of Western, colonial, masculine bias in theory which has supported separation from materiality. Part of this bias has its historical expression in 'objective research' and 'universalisation' which prefers the structure above the inner relationships, 'parts' above 'wholes', and 'similarities' above 'differences'. Another difficulty with the 'evolutionary' or 'developmental' view of art is a suspicion that there has always been art-just-for-entertainment as well as art-for-ritual, and that animals may engage in similar, multipurpose events and displays, but are unable to name them, at least in human terms. As anthropologist Williams argues, the search for origins, and hierarchical, or evolutionary, explanations of dance and ritual are responding to the wrong questions (Williams, 1991:52, 55, 56, 239 & Chpt. 10).
There is also a need to challenge the clear dividing line between group and individual processes identified by Turner and Highwater. Ritual is not only group action and invention and, as Goody and Green have illustrated, individual private rituals have probably always been in existence as well. There are often individuals, including shamans, priests and priestesses, controlling ritual 'on behalf of the group'. In addition, an individual performer's heritage, interest and expertise are also important aspects of the selection process for key performers in rituals, such as shamans, musicians and dancers just as in the theatrical world. However these similarities do not make 'art' 'ritual'.

The previous examples illustrate some of the ways in which words and concepts that describe similar aspects of ritual and theatre have been used to argue that 'all theatre is ritual', without referring to the special nature of the contexts involved. This is one of the recurring problems in current performance theory and anthropological theory. The problem is the need to decontextualise and universalise words and concepts, so that they are seen just as concepts without really acknowledging the context specificity or totality of the event. Although this process may be helpful for furthering discussion, as David Wright suggests, the process encourages all events to be viewed through the same lens, and so diminishes the uniqueness of specific events (Wright in Cameron, 1996:336). In fact, in his attempts to interpret girls' nubility rites in Ashanti, using anthropological theories, Peter Sarpong did not find them completely adequate, especially in relation to 'certain expressive behaviour' and in relation to the 'full nubility celebration' (Sarpong, 1977:74 ff.).

Individual words and phrases do not tell the whole story. 'Making the invisible, visible' is not enough. Nor is 'liminality'. Nor is 'transcendence', 'transformation', 'penetration', 'model', 'mirror', 'reflexivity', 'communitas', nor the other terms which anthropologists, theatre practitioners and others use when speaking about performed events. Some rituals may have some or all of these attributes, but so do other performed events, so these terms may refer only to the performance aspects of ritual, not to ritual
itself, or they may not refer to anything more than themselves. Even as Turner uses these terms to describe other forms of cultural performance, he questions this blurring (Turner, 1988:48, 49). They are, after all, Western defined attributes and attitudes, which Bharucha calls ‘postmodern categories of thought’; categories which decontextualise “ritual actions” from their larger structures (and thereby, neutralizing their meanings)” (Bharucha, 1992:4).

Seeing a Difference

The distinction between ritual and other forms of performed activity, which is being argued here, is supported by anthropologist, Turner’s earlier (1982) work, in spite of his own inconsistencies in writing about the ‘ritual-theatre’ relationship. Even when he uses an evolutionary perspective, such as in From Ritual to Theatre, where he describes ritual as ‘a matrix from which several other genres of cultural performance...have been derived’, he still sees a difference (Turner, 1982:81). The difference comes when he associates ritual with religious beliefs, in the broad sense of the word. Turner defines ritual as ‘prescribed formal behaviour for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in invisible beings or powers regarded as the first and final causes of all effects’ (Turner, 1982:79). He discusses ‘transformative power’ and ‘liminality’ and ‘transition’ in relation to a cosmic as well as a social order. It is this type of transformation, Turner suggests, that distinguishes ritual from ‘ceremony’, formality, secular ritual and other forms of cultural performance (Turner, 1982:80).

Turnbull is another anthropologist who agrees with this view of ritual, especially in relation to his experiences of participating in the rituals, or molimo, of the Mbuti people in the Ituri forest in Africa (Turnbull in Schechner & Appel, 1990:50 ff.). Although he sees a connection between ritual, drama and entertainment and acknowledges theatre’s use of similar concepts, such as, ‘transformation’, ‘penetration’ and ‘making visible that which is invisible’, he is more interested in the ‘spiritual’ aspects. The molimo ‘was spiritually fulfilling to a degree I had seldom experienced’ (Schechner & Appel, 1990:57) and
'seemed to incorporate...whatever is implied by such equally ambivalent terms (as seen by some) as God and Spirit.' (Schechner & Appel, 1990:58). Turnbull's suggestion to other anthropologists is that 'we need to deal with the concept of Spirit, the failure to do so has been one of the greatest weaknesses of contemporary anthropology' (Schechner & Appel, 1990:58). This point of view is supported by Bharucha, in his critique of Schechner, who 'tends to emphasize the environmental, structural and performative aspects of these festivals (ed. such as, Ramlila) at the expense of the spiritual' (Bharucha, 1992:35).

In spite of the above critique, and his support of the concept that theatre=ritual, Schechner also senses that there may be a difference between the two. At the same time as suggesting a hierarchical development of ritualisation, he still writes of theatre and ritual (Schechner, 1993:228 ff.). So he is still using the terms separately in some instances, reflecting the contradictions already seen in anthropology. When discussing Goodman's ritual-dance workshops he says, 'It is not anything like going to the theatre or performing in an ordinary play or dance' (Schechner, 1993:245).

Schechner exhibits an unease with acknowledging a 'spiritual realm'. He expresses discomfort with the pseudo-shamanic workshops and practices advertised in esoteric journals and magazines. Goodman and Grotowski's explorations of religious phenomenon and ritual performance are reduced by comments like, it is 'only Christian on its surface', and 'but these are used to approach a universal or archetypal reality that Grotowski believes underlies specific rituals' (Schechner, 1993:251, 253). But what is underneath? That is the intriguing question and it is this question that Schechner dismisses by terming it 'the same universal ocean of spiritual stuff' (Schechner, 1993:254). His seeming lack of respect for this area is exhibited by his conversion to Hinduism so that he could 'inspect and study the kuttampalams' and see the performances in the interiors of the temples (Schechner, 1993:2 ff.). This lack of respect for other cultures beliefs and practices is typical of the West. It is a practice which Bharucha
critiques in relation to a number of Western directors, including Brook and Schechner, especially regarding appropriation of indigenous material. The 'lack of respect' and need to 'inspect and study' is part of the ongoing Western project of colonisation; one which claims objectivity and therefore separation from body, place and spirit; one which women have been drawn in to; and one which feminists and indigenous writers are now critiquing.  

Schechner, like some other performance theorists and anthropologists, is in two minds about what ritual really is. There seems to be, in this contradiction, a sense that in theatrical and anthropological circles there is a need to claim 'deep and meaningful' words for even mundane, everyday, events. The continuing need to decontextualise words like 'sacred' and 'ritual' are an example of this process. Is it that the 'secular' West is feeling that something is missing in its theatre and other celebratory events? Is it that, like Brook, there is a hunger not being satisfied? So, is it reasonable to suggest that this 'hunger' is, in some way, associated with what was lost when religion became irrelevant and that, therefore, 'ritual' is being used nominally to give an event greater import or significance?

'ritual' has been used by speakers of the English language for many other events where certain aspects of ritualistic practice can be seen in the action, such as the mating 'rituals' of animals and 'the ritual' which is sport. But that does not mean that 'ritual' means the same in these contexts as it does in rituals associated with religious practice. The etymology of ritual is synonymous with rite, or the Latin 'ritus', meaning 'religious custom, usage, ceremony'. So the word, at that stage of history, did have associations with religious practice. It has been used by Western anthropologists to describe the practices of 'exotic' cultures and other actions that remind them of, but distinguish them from, aspects of their own distant Christian religious ceremonies. But, in contrast to the West where 'the secular' has been removed from 'the sacred', in the cultures studied these worlds intermingled and the differentiation was not clear. As anthropologist, S. J.
Tambiah states, 'we cannot in any absolute way separate ritual from non-ritual in the societies we study...just relatively (Tambiah, 1979:116). This chapter suggests that when 'ritual' was then used to refer back to similar Western events, some of which had become 'secular', the term lost its original religious association.

The practice of decontextualising and universalising ritual continues in theatrical circles, where the creative process, exemplified in choreography, writing and performance, or the performed event, is equated with ritual. There is a difference. Whereas all ritual is performance, is performative, not all choreography, writing, directing, rehearsing or performance is ritual, or at least ritual cannot be assumed. There may be similarities in processes, or it may be that artists and writers are searching for the same experience, the same answers, the same 'truth' that other people look for in formal religion, yet there is a difference between the creation and performance of a 'work of art' and that of 'a ritual'.

**The Performance-Ritual Intersection**

The difference between performance in the context of a ritual, and performance for a paying public was recognised by some of the early dancers. Duncan and St. Denis expressed their conflict between the need to perform to a paying public and their desire for another sort of expression, a spiritual expression, performed in a temple and in which the public could join in. As Duncan expressed it,

I have always deplored the fact that I was forced to dance in a theatre where people paid for their seats... I have dreamed of a more complete dance expression on the part of the audience... Something of this must have existed in the ancient cults of Apollo and Dionysus. Something of this still exists in the rituals of the Catholic church and also in the Greek church.... (Duncan, 1928:123)
St. Denis 'never solved the spiritual problem where to perform these dances... Neither *Radha* (her italics) nor any of the other temple dances belonged in the theatre' (St. Denis, 1939:72). The suggestion has been made that some of the performances from this period could be termed 'performance-rituals'. Like the avant garde, 'performance-ritual' attempts to sit in between 'ritual' and 'performance' and there is a reason for this.

'Performance' allows some things and requires some things that are not usually required or allowed in ritual, and vice versa. The following discussion is an attempt to differentiate between performance and ritual, and illustrate the implications of both in the term, 'performance-ritual'.

The first area to be considered is the presence of an audience, and, therefore, the associated monetary value of the 'product' to be 'consumed'. The fact that there is an audience for theatrical performance and performance-ritual means that audience members need to be addressed in some way as an audience. There is greater effort required in theatrical performance, when compared to performance-ritual and ritual, however. In theatrical performance, because the audience, usually, has paid and is therefore expecting to be entertained, the performers need to engage the audience and carry them along with the evolving 'story' and judgement is made on the skill of the actors and production. In ritual judgement is made on the effectiveness of the ritual, and the performance skill in that context. In ritual and performance-ritual the focus is on the ritual process, and it is more important that the ritual takes place and comes to its 'natural' conclusion, than the audience be 'entertained', although entertainment may play a part. Similar skills are involved, but they work on different levels with different aims. In rituals where a shaman is involved, the aim is to draw the participants into the action so that healing will take place. This is not the primary objective of theatre or performance-ritual, although, in performance-ritual, it is hoped that the audience will engage with the event on some level.
Even though performance-ritual is an individual and personal journey, it is performed with, and in the presence of, 'others'. These 'others' may include 'spirits', 'ancestors', 'life force' and also the material reality of 'audience' or other performers. Although it is not expected, when the journeys of performers and members of the audience connect, the performers and audience members may be touched by the event as a ritual. In fact, at the end of a 1994 performance-ritual, *Dark Fire*, one of the audience members began to dance. His later comment was that 'it reminded him of home', the Philippines, where he would perform a special part in similar ritual events.

Another area in relation to the audience is in the area of 'assumed commonality of belief'. In performance there is no expectation that the audience members and performers all 'believe' in the same way. Similarly, in 'performance-ritual', 'performance' allows the expectation that the audience will experience the event with different understandings, in contrast to the assumed commonality of belief in a Christian or other traditional belief systems. Traditional religion and ritual are often prescriptive. For example, within the Christian tradition, the roles, the script, the symbols and their meanings, as well as the outcomes, are usually known and explained or taught. There is no room for other interpretations or alternatives, except after long debates by synod, or by the congregations themselves. Expectations on both sides, the congregation-audience and the liturgists-actors, are met. Although there may be variations between traditions or sects, there are usually no surprises and no misunderstandings or other interpretations. This need to ensure that there is 'correct' understanding of meaning and purpose is not an essential component of theatre. In contrast, theatre encourages alternative readings and meanings so that different interpretations 'give life' to different productions, even of the same script. In the same way, performance-ritual is not prescriptive. It allows the audience to interpret the event in any way it pleases.

Then, there are symbolic representations of being and behaviour. In all cultural performance, especially in theatrical performance and ritual, the agreed meanings of a
culture's symbols are used to advantage. The symbols are consciously chosen, chosen with intent, even when the intention is not consciously identified. They tell the actors and the audience who is who and this allows the audience to position and make assumptions about the characters and their interactions with each other, with their environment, or set, or setting, and with the audience itself. In theatrical performance, however, it is possible to challenge these expectations. It is possible to be 'out of place', 'out of time', 'out of context', 'out of character', to do the unexpected, to break those unconscious rules the audience members carry in their heads about appropriate or expected behaviours for themselves, for others or for the performers. Words, language, actions, dress or undress which would not be accepted in 'normal' circumstances can usually, but not always, be accepted in the context of a theatrical event.

In contrast, it is not so easy to break these unconscious rules in rituals which are associated with particular religions, traditions or belief systems, unless the ritual is designed to allow these 'reversals'. For example, 'reversals' where behaviour and dress, which is not appropriate in the culture generally, are permitted and appropriate in the context of ritual. This can be seen in the Christian tradition where the priests and assistants wear robes which are derived from another culture and another time; or, the priests and congregation enact a sacrificial meal during which the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ, which means, if they really believe, they are engaging in cannibalism; or, a preacher will present a 'fire and brimstone' sermon, almost yelling at their congregation and accusing them of all evil, which in other circumstances would be considered harassment; or, in some denominations the people 'speak in tongues', or glossolalia, which in everyday life would be considered a symptom of some sort of mental illness.

Other cultures also allow similar 'abnormalities' of behaviour in the context of ritual, even when these behaviours are not condoned in everyday life; such things as animal and human torture or sacrifice, the taking of drugs or drinking of spirits, spirit possession,
glossolalia, cross dressing, the entering of ‘taboo’ areas and anti-social behaviour such as, verbal abuse and stealing. These ‘transgressions’ are allowed because of the special nature of ritual. But the deviations are known, limited to those which are expected and acceptable, limited to certain contexts and are carefully controlled. The whole community knows the rules and what to expect, and deviations from these ‘deviations’ are not tolerated. In theatre, although boundaries exist, they are not as strictly defined. The context of ‘performance’ presents an opportunity for performers to question and challenge these boundaries and taboos and make their own decisions about ‘limits’, ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ being and behaviour. The ‘performance’ in performance-ritual allows the freedom to make similar choices.

The need for conformity and predictability also informs the content, structure and function of traditional ritual. In some traditions like the Anglican tradition little or no improvisation is allowed or encouraged. The appropriate responses, poems, songs and action for the specific rituals at various times in the year are written down. Performers, such as the clergy and lay assistants, are trained to enact them and the congregation is taught to respond as written. Everyone knows their place in relation to the Church’s spatial, hierarchical and spiritual environment. They know how, when and where they have to move, speak or sing. In other traditions, like the Pentecostal church, the emphasis is on ‘being led by the Spirit’ and there is the appearance of greater freedom but this is not necessarily the case. The freedom is just an illusion and the same conditions apply here as with the more traditional forms of Christianity: everyone does know their place and the appropriate time for ‘spirit-led’ praise, prophecy or prayer and the appropriate time when it is over.

Some theatre performances, on the other hand, are totally improvised and rely on the relative skills and interests of the individuals concerned to make immediate and instinctive decisions about the performance content, meaning, duration and structure. Although, in some ways, performance-ritual mirrors the structure and function of traditional ritual, it
allows for improvisation and individual interpretation and timing. This allowance is part of both the performance and ritual aspects. From the ritual aspect, it is part of ‘listening to’ spirit, and where this energy is taking the event. Performance-ritual, however, is not repetitive or necessarily predictable like some traditional ritual. Like feminist ritual, without eliminating ‘returns’, it continually evolves.

One of the aims of ritual is to maintain harmony, or to reorder or sort so that harmony is regained. It is therefore difficult for those ‘inside’ to question the paradigm underlying their own culture’s, or society’s, religious and civic functioning. To do so would create disorder and, probably, the ritual leader would be sacked or excommunicated, as Turner illustrates. Turner also examines this process when ‘social dramas’ are not resolved (Turner, 1988, pp. 36 & 39). The danger is not so immediate in the case of theatre. Theatre allows the space for questions regarding religious and societal functioning and ‘norms’, that is, the symbols of being and behaviour. The possibility that some people might be offended by the questions, or might disagree with political dialogue does not matter in the same way that it does with ritual. In ritual, offence is avoided. In performance and performance-ritual offence is sometimes planned and provoked. However, by the end of performance-ritual, all contradictions and conflicts have been integrated, and harmony is restored.

‘Performance’ gives permission for performance-ritual to challenge the audience’s expectations. It warns the audience that there may be multiple meanings and interpretations. It allows the content to be self-reflexive and self-critical, especially in relation to social and religious ‘norms’. It gives permission for the event to be ‘abnormal’; to challenge boundaries, taboos and limits. It also gives the opportunity for the event to be partly improvised and to change with each performance. ‘Performance’ gives permission to the actors to make comments that might offend and gives permission to the audience to disagree and walk out, without anyone’s ‘basis for living’ being threatened. The audience can just shrug it off.
In spite of these allowances the focal process in, and motivation for, 'performance-ritual' is the one involved with ritual; that of acknowledging, and opening up to, the spiritual realm. In performance-ritual the setting or theatre is approached as 'sacred space' or becomes sacred during the progress of the performance, in a spiritual sense. The 'passage' or 'transition' is between the world of materiality and the world of 'spirit', 'god-dess', 'ancestors' or 'life force'. 'Performance-ritual' is context specific.

This means that the ritual aspects of performance-ritual have something to do with the intention and focus, or attention, of the participants. That is, that the participants want to engage in a ritual and their inner and outer focus, or attention, is directed to this objective. The focus on 'the spiritual realm' allows a different sense of space and time; a sense of unboundedness, multidimensionality and one of respect.

Performance-ritual has specific functions, depending on what is needed and the time of the year. It 'sorts out' individual questions, problems or illness, or marks natural changes in people and the nonhuman environment. Like ritual, 'performance-ritual' may function as a site for emotional and/or physical healing. It deals with the material reality of living in the world.

'Ritual' defines the function, which defines the structure and process. The performance-ritual that ensues is a series of actions, which generate, or respond to, what is needed. It may be a rite of passage, a rite of exorcism, a rite of holding, a rite of remembering, a rite of letting go or a rite that honours the seasons or other natural occurrences.

The function, structure and process determine the content and selection of symbolic representations, which are similar to those used as identifiers by archaeologists and researchers into pre-history. The use of objects, such as altars, cups, symbols of women and men, ancestor totems, trance, enactment, stories, songs, music, dance and anything
else that may ease the passage between the two worlds becomes 'sacred' by being involved with this process.

The process includes opening up and sitting or moving in, a passage or transition. The transition may be in a physical and spatial sense as in a rite of passage, but may also include the movement from 'this world' to 'the other'. In this way, 'what is needed' is completed at the 'other level' and the 'other level' is reached by the actions undertaken. This is why the process is more important than the product, or the 'look'. It is a specific type of liminal experience; one in which 'the invisible' may not necessarily be made 'visible', but, rather, experienced, 'sensed' or 'felt'. The occurrence of synchronistic events are interpreted as potential 'signs' of human connection with the cosmos, and the possibility arises that some sort of 'conversation' may be able to be engaged in.44

Ritual is performed by, or on behalf of, the participant(s) and the performers are those who believe in the efficacy of the action, structure, process, function and the 'spirit world'. In this way, ritual is not just one thing and nor is performance-ritual. Performance-ritual is, as is ritual, the outcome of many interrelating aspects and is not just any performed event or activity. There is a difference in performing in religious rituals compared to theatrical performance for an audience.45 Performance-ritual is subjective, embodied and context specific. ‘Performance’ allows some things that ‘ritual’ does not, and ‘ritual’ requires other things that ‘performance’ does not; hence, ‘performance-ritual’.

Performer, Graham claimed ‘shaman’ for herself, just as the avant garde practitioners claimed ‘shaman’ for themselves. It is their right. This is the way they perceived their own artistic and- or performance process and they cannot be disputed. Certainly they saw their practice very much associated with ‘the religious’, even when they were questioning the religion of their own culture, a perspective that 'performance-ritual' shares. The
religious association, and their ‘shamanic role’ was a consciousness that they carried with them in the development of their work.

**Rituals, Rites, and Definitions**

In this thesis, therefore, ‘ritual’ is used in a similar way to van Gennep, as a general term to describe the series of actions which take place within a ‘magico-religious context’ (van Gennep, 1960:13). This reflects the usage of ‘ritual’ in spiritual feminism. Spiritual feminists such as Zsuzsanna Budapest, Carol Christ, Elizabeth Dodson Gray, Starhawk and Barbara Walker do not seem to need to theorise ritual. They just use it as a term for actions performed within a spiritual context. Similarly in performance-ritual. As ‘ritual’, performance-ritual has the intention of creating these actions in the context of the material reality of life and questions of, in feminist theologian Mary Daly’s terms, Be-ing and be-ing (Daly, 1988:64). It is the outward sign and confirmation of an inner spiritual journey and is performed with respect for ‘mystery’. The performance-rituals given as examples in Chapters 4 and 5 function variously as a rites of passage, seasonal rites, rites of initiation, rites of remembering, rites of honouring, rites of naming, rites of holding, rites of letting go, rites of exorcism, rites of celebration and rites of healing. Whereas ‘ritual’ embraces all of these events, ‘rite’ refers to a particular type of ritual, or a particular aspect of a ritual. Therefore, ‘rite’ refers, here, to the structural and functional aspects of ritual. ‘Rite of passage’ views ritual structurally and functionally. Rites of ‘exorcism’, ‘initiation’, ‘holding’, ‘letting go’ and seasonal rites refer to functional aspects. Chapters 4 and 5 analyse performance-rituals structurally and functionally, from the aspect of the rites they incorporate, and with the assumed intention of honouring, or communicating with, ‘spirit’.

According to van Gennep, ‘rite of passage’ assumes a social and/or psychic transition which may also, but not necessarily, incorporate a cosmic and spatial transition (van Gennep, 1960). The function determines the structure. A rite of passage begins with ‘rites of separation’, during which the participants are removed from their social group.
and everyday life. It continues with ‘rites of transition’ which involve a ‘liminal’, or in-between period. The rite of passage is then completed with ‘rites of incorporation’, during which the participants are incorporated back into the group, but in a different social position (van Gennep, 1960:10, 11). However, van Gennep insists that boundaries are not sharply defined and that these terms do not assume universality for all similar events (van Gennep, 1960:11, 192, 193). This structure can apply equally to theatrical events, from the standpoint of performer or audience. However, in the ‘performance’ context, there is no assumed ‘magico-religious’ association, nor is there any assumed change in the social or psychic position of participants. Walker examines the occurrence of rites of passage in women’s lives and in the goddess religion (Walker, 1990:185 ff.)

‘Seasonal’ or ‘cosmic’ rites are those which relate in some way to natural changes, such as the phases of the moon, sun and stars, or which celebrate the elements earth, water, fire, rain, wind, or which relate to the movement of animals, appearance of particular fruits or nuts, or which bring in the New Year. These are addressed by van Gennep, Starhawk and Walker (van Gennep, 1960:178 ff., Starhawk, 1989:Chpts. 11 & 12 and Walker, 1990:102 ff.)

‘Rites of initiation’ are entrance ceremonies into special groups, such as, age groups, secret societies, or religious orders (van Gennep, 1960:65 ff. and Starhawk, 1989:Chpt. 10). Christ talks about her work in terms of ‘a ritual of initiation’ (Christ, 1995:xv) Similar rites are enacted when participants exit from these groups. Van Gennep terms these ‘rites of banishment, expulsion, and excommunication’, or ‘rites of separation and de-sanctification’ (van Gennep, 1960:113). In this thesis, because the exit is one of choice, the term ‘rite of initiation’ is kept to acknowledge the potential carried in the movement ‘out’; one of a possible movement ‘into’ something new to be realised in the future.
‘Rites of mourning’ are similar to van Gennep’s ‘funerary rites’ (van Gennep, 1960:146 ff.), but are used, in this document, to include the process of mourning the loss of women’s potential, through their placement as ‘invisible’, and abuse, by patriarchal action, in the history of the West.

Other rites used in performance-ritual, which engage with a feminist understanding and are not discussed by van Gennep or other ritual theorists addressed in this chapter, include rites of remembering and naming, rites of honouring, rites of exorcism, rites of holding and rites of letting go.

‘Rites of celebration’ speak for themselves. They are events which are high energy expressions of the enjoyment of life, or of shared experiences, and may accompany or precede other rites. Walker gives examples of rites ‘celebrating trees’ or ‘celebrating heroines’ (Walker, 1990:39-41 and 65-68).

‘Rites of remembering, naming, and honouring’ in performance-ritual are those rites which honour a woman’s body as sacred, or which establish a line of ancestors; a heritage of women who need to be remembered and honoured. These rites also name the way in which the patriarchal West has historically silenced and positioned women, as individuals and as a group, as ‘other’ and ‘victim’. ‘Remembering’ and ‘naming’ are important parts of Christ’s ‘ritual of initiation into women’s spiritual quest’ (Christ, 1995:xv). In my work these rites are the first stage in the ‘journey of exorcism and ecstasy’ and are revisited during each spiral.

The ‘rites of exorcism’, which interest feminist theologian, Daly and medical anthropologists, Carol Laderman and Marina Roseman, are not mentioned by van Gennep or the spiritual feminists covered here. The Australian Oxford Paperback Dictionary defines ‘exorcise’ as to ‘drive out (a supposed evil spirit) by religious rituals’ and the word is used in anthropology in association with healing (Heinze in Kim &
Hoppal, 1995:201, Laderman in Laderman & Roseman, 1996:127 and Ludowyk & Moore, 1996:227). 51 ‘Exorcism’ refers to the action of ‘driving out’, and ‘healing’ is the result of this action. Feminists use ‘exorcism’ to refer to the driving out of patriarchally-defined images, stories and structures which are implanted in women’s psyches and which objectify ‘woman’ and position her as ‘other’ or ‘less than’, as the following chapter illustrates. ‘Rites of exorcism’ are rituals which engage in these actions. In performance-ritual, ‘rites of exorcism’ are associated with rites of mourning, rites of healing and female fury. This is the next stage in the ‘journey of exorcism and ecstasy’: the need to exorcise negative images from the psyche, express rage at the discovery of women’s betrayal, mourn the loss of ‘self’ to ‘self’, and ‘women’ to the world, and heal, assisted by the process of rediscovery and reclamation.

‘Rites of holding’ is used to refer to the action of ‘holding together’ contradictory and sometimes seemingly opposite points of view, or views on life, especially in relation to the ‘dream’, the ‘illusion of perfection’, and the material reality of historical women’s experiences of life. It is a time of confronting difficulties, and allowing them to sort, so needs to be accompanied by ‘letting go’.

‘Rites of letting go’ are actions which allow contradictions and paradoxes to communicate. The concept of ‘letting go’ is common in Christian church circles, and Matthew Fox mentions this action in Original Blessing (Fox, 1983: 132 ff.). 52 The catchcry of ‘let go, let God’ in Christian circles tends to encourage an accompanying ‘letting go’ of responsibility. Fox’s ‘letting go’ is one of emptying the self, being one with the silence and nothingness, and experiencing God as absence. This is not the way ‘letting go’ is used here. In performance-ritual the aim is to be able to engage with the complexities of the material world and see this as part of the sacredness of life. In this sense, ‘letting go’ integrates dualities and complexities. ‘Letting go’ accompanies ‘holding’. These rites also allow these difficulties be ‘handed over’ to the realisation that ‘this is what Life is’, or allow space for future action; Salleh’s ‘practical deferral’.
this way the ‘letting go’ may also function as a ‘rite of healing’ or ‘rite of exorcism’. States of being, personal histories, or contradictions in life, which cannot be immediately materially resolved are ‘let go’, so that life can go on, but are not necessarily forgotten. They are not hidden away. Rather they are acknowledged and confronted, and then let go. They may be revisited at a later date. But there is a recognition that ‘all that can be done, has been done’, for the moment, and the decision is made to focus the energies elsewhere until another more appropriate opportunity for resolution, or alternative opportunities, present themselves.

What feminist rituals have in common with performance-ritual is a return to, and respect for, women’s bodies, nature, and spirit. *Centre of the Storm* expands these concepts to include a redefined ‘place’. Performance-ritual also introduces the ritual actions of ‘holding’ and ‘letting go’. Performance-ritual is the outward expression of one woman’s spiritual journey of a ‘woman becoming’; the spiralling ‘journey of exorcism and ecstasy’. The various rites in this journey are examined in the following chapters.
Notes


15 Goody also notes similar signifiers of ‘ritual’ in James Frazer’s definition of religious acts (Goody, 1961:157).


19 Hughes-Freeland makes a similar point where she discusses ritual as a concept and an analytical tool, that is, as an event as well as an aspect of all action, as well as a particular aspect of some action (Hughes-Freeland, F. & Crain, M. M. (eds.) Recasting Ritual - Performance, media, identity. London, Routledge, 1998, p. 2).


29 Turnbull explores this aspect of the rituals he describes (in Schechner & Appel, 1990:50-81). Turner suggests that this process seems to be a 'natural' tendency of groups in everyday life where ritualised processes are used to restore order after conflict, in what he terms the 'redressive phase' of social drama. (Turner, V. *The Anthropology of Performance.* New York, PAJ Publications, 1988, pp. 36 & 39). Muir, however, as has been illustrated, includes disharmonious and violent events in his categorisation of rituals.

30 It is interesting to note that in spite of the avant garde's anti-Christian ethos, the symbol of 'the suffering Christ' and concept of 'sacrifice' were central and repeated motifs.


39 This critique of Schechner's lack of respect cannot be made without also acknowledging this performer's own complicity by actions undertaken during visits to Asian temples and in performances which address other cultures' perceived biases against women. Feminists are now more aware of their Western colonist attitudes and attempt to acknowledge or avoid.


43 Turner gives an example of the removal of the ritual leader due to unresolved disorder, in relation to an Umbanda, an Afro-Brazilian cultic ritual (Turner, 1988:33 ff.).

44 In performance-ritual synchronicities are noted and honoured, while at the same time maintaining cynical distance. The opposing stances of 'belief' and 'disbelief' are held together simultaneously.
Diallo also highlights these differences when he compares his experiences of growing up and drumming as part of the traditional rituals in his village with the changing attitudes of the younger musicians, due to the influence of commercialism and ‘entertainment’ (Diallo & Hall, 1989: 196, 197).


It needs to be noted at the outset that this analysis is ‘after the fact’ and that none of these categories or processes, nor any of the following categories or processes, were in any way a consideration at the time. The whole motivation for ‘performance-ritual’ has been one of following ‘intuition’, or ‘inner voice’ and a conscious working against any need to analyse or pinpoint.

van Gennep uses ‘cosmic’ in the sense of relating to the ‘phases of the moon’ or ‘the seasons’ or ‘the great rhythms of the universe’ (van Gennep, 1960: 194). ‘Spatial’ is used in the sense of ‘territorial’, ‘such as, the entrance into a village or a house, the movement from one room to another, or the crossing of streets and squares’ (van Gennep, 1960:192).


32 Fox, M. *Original Blessing*. Santa Fe, Bear & Co., 1983
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning the following pages. The best possible results have been obtained.
Chapter 4  The Spiralling Journey of Exorcism and Ecstasy

Our acts of exorcising are Rites of Passage, by which we win the rights of passage.

Daly, 1990:34¹

In feminist theologian, Mary Daly's terms, performance-ritual is the outward expression of a 'woman becoming'; an inner spiralling journey of exorcism and ecstasy. Although exorcism and ecstasy occur in tandem, there are times when one process dominates. Exorcism involves the process of confronting women's history and placement as 'other', along with indigenous people and nature, by patriarchal institutions and mythology. This process of confrontation is exemplified in the early performance-rituals, Dark Fire, For Eve, Fallen Totems and Leavetaking. These performance-rituals comprise the first four spirals of my journey of exorcism and ecstasy, and are examined in this chapter. Ecstasy, which begins in earnest in Centre of the Storm, is the fifth spiral and the beginning of the process of renaming and reinventing a spirituality that honours body, nature, place and family. Centre of the Storm is examined in Chapters 5 and 6.

Performance-ritual functions to give significance and meaning to moments in an individual's life which cannot adequately be accomplished by other institutionalised secular or religious means. As performance-rituals, they ritualise this process while simultaneously functioning at other levels to create many different rites within the broader categories of rites of passage. Although Jamake Highwater suggests that other creator-performers have likewise created performances which are based on their own life experiences and which have similar functions, Chapter 3 argues that these other performed events, with similar structural elements to ritual, are not necessarily rituals (Highwater, 1992:14).² Where performance-ritual differs from other performed events is in its attempt to honour, incorporate, invite, or be open to 'the sacred', variously termed Life Force, 'spirit', 'other', 'god/dess' or 'mystery', and this intention affects the whole
event. In this, it reflects the intention of the earlier performers, Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis. Where it differs from their work is in its feminist and ecofeminist understanding and content. The performance-rituals examined in this chapter, however, do not yet exhibit an ecofeminist consciousness.

This chapter begins with an introduction to, and description of, the performance-rituals to be examined. It continues with an analysis of the performance-rituals from a structural and functional perspective as an examination of particular rites under the overarching title of ‘rites of passage’. The analysis is followed by other aspects illustrative of ritual. The chapter concludes with an examination of the series from the perspective of feminist spirituality. It needs to be stressed again, that this is one woman’s journey and is examined ‘after the fact’. None of these concepts were even vaguely considered before, or during, the events and there is no guarantee that other performers in the events would see them the same way. The concepts discussed here were not considered then, and therefore, were not part of the discussion that emerged during the creative process. A lot of the time no-one really knew what was ‘going on’, least of all me.

**Introduction to the Performance-Rituals**

First Spiral: *Dark Fire* (1994)

In three parts: *Dark Fire: Descent*
*Dark Fire: Initiation*
*Dark Fire: Dark Fire*


Third Spiral: *Fallen Totems* (1997)

Description of the Performance-Rituals

Dark Fire

The spiralling journey of exorcism and ecstasy and the emergence of performance-ritual began with Dark Fire (1994). This was a performance trilogy funded as part of the Newtown Festival. It took place in three locations over nine days. Installations were created by visual artist Irene Kindness. Performers included Sylvia de Angelis, Larissa Deak, Annette (Rups) Eyland, Helen Kindness, Ellin Krinsley, Lisa Schouw, Kelly Van Sebille, and a number of unnamed women drummers who arrived on the night led by Di Johnstone.

Part one, Descent, takes place at Victoria Park Pool, Broadway. It is morning. A number of women enter the pool enclosure looking forward to a relaxing day in the sun. They are loaded with sunhats, bags, towels, and a body cast. They deposit these carefully and begin to unload their bags. One discovers a pair of flippers and begins to explore the flipper’s potential. Others join in, until all are creating their own nonsense ‘flipper dance’. A return to childhood and playtime has begun. Playtime continues through various sites around the pool, as the women make fun of, and celebrate, themselves, their bodies, their experiences, and life generally. At a certain stage they decide to go for a swim, but the water promises more than just surface fun. The women are not so sure about their decision, and attempt to escape. Eventually, one by one, they confront their fears, honour their body, the sun, and life, and dive in and swim to the end. After completing the task, they collect their casts and turn to face the pool, holding their casts in front of them. When ready they collect the rest of their belongings and exit the area.

Part two, Initiation, takes place in Newtown Square. It is midday. A group of women enter the area, carrying each other in a bedraggled heap. They unpeal and move towards a heap of body casts. Each takes one and begins the task of trying fit the cast, and then themselves, on the sculptured forms in the square. In the end they give up, collect their
casts, take them to the dirt area, and begin to abuse the casts by tossing them in the air, swinging them, and beating them against the earth. After a period of removal and observation, they return and begin to create a design on the earth for their casts. When the design is complete they collect the casts and find a way of placing themselves and their casts on or near the design. When ready, the women move from the area, lay the casts on tripods, and begin a slow journey down the street, through the traffic lights, until they disappear from sight.

Part three, Dark Fire, takes place at Sydney Park, St. Peters. It is just before sunset. One woman calls from the top of one of the kilns, and the drumming begins. At the call and sound of the drums, a group of women appear on the horizon of the hill, carrying casts, and led by banners. They walk through the passage created by the drummers, into the initiation area, and place the casts on the tripods. Two of the women take off their tops and lay down between the tripods, ready for marking by the other two. When the marking is complete, they all charge out of the area, abseil up the nearby kiln, collect a flag, and begin to circuit the area. The wind has taken control, it is all they can do to maintain balance. At the end they stop and salute the setting sun. Then they return to the initiation area and collect and light firesticks, with which they begin to dance. When the dance is complete they file outside the area and weave up the hill, gradually putting out the firesticks. At the top of the hill, they turn once again to face the setting sun and enter a dance of celebration, until the darkness takes them from sight, and the drumming fades.

Dark Fire is primarily a rite of initiation and first spiral of the journey of exorcism and ecstasy. It is an example of the intuitive, personal and embodied knowing of performance-ritual. Dark Fire was the outcome of a growing awareness of the history of forgotten women's subordination, abuse, and self-abuse. The process of creating Dark Fire was the first step outside the Western religious paradigm. It was a movement to the boundaries. From this boundary position it becomes possible to expose the positioning of women, more fully.
DARK FIRE

A PERFORMANCE TRILOGY
Annette Eyland
Direction
Irene Kindness
Installation

DESCENT
SATURDAY 29TH, SUNDAY 30TH, OCTOBER 2PM.
VICTORIA PARK POOL - $2 ENTRY

INITIATION
TUESDAY 1ST, THURSDAY 3RD NOVEMBER 1PM
NEWTOWN SQUARE

DARK FIRE
SUNDAY 6TH NOVEMBER 7.30PM.
SYDNEY PARK
Whereas *Dark Fire* is a movement-based, group performance-ritual, the process of exposé needs a specificity that ‘movement’ alone cannot give. Thus, the need for the particularity that words allow, and the consciousness of the individual nature of the journey, leads to the monologue style and solo nature of the performance-rituals, *For Eve* and *Fallen Totems*.

*For Eve*

*For Eve* (1995) was the second spiral of the journey of exorcism and ecstasy. As well as functioning as a rite of exorcism, it is also a rite of remembering, naming and honouring. It was performed as part of the School of Women's Artists Network's Bluebeard exhibition in the year following *Dark Fire*. The exhibition was organised thematically around the story of ‘Bluebeard’; a story in which women are betrayed. The performance-ritual was devised in response to a series of canvases by Irene Kindness, and dedicated to the memory of fourteen young women students murdered for being ‘feminists’ in Montreal on December 6th, 1989. *For Eve* examines misogyny.

Stories of everyday experiences, images used in Church reliefs, the story of Eve, the masculinity of God and Christ, and the feminine stereotypes of virgin, whore and wife are visited. ‘Women as scapegoat’ and ‘violence to women’ are recurring themes. The figure of a sacrificial male-Jesus on the cross is brought into question and compared to many women’s lives, where ‘submission’ and ‘sacrifice’ is actuality promoted by the Church. A sense of betrayal permeates the performance-ritual. The stories are woven around the symbol of ‘the rose’ as a metaphor for ‘beauty’, and the memory of the slain women. Fourteen roses each carry the name of a woman shot.

Once the remembering and naming is complete it is exorcised from the performer’s psyche, beginning with the expression of Female Fury. The ‘rebirth’ after this exorcism is into the awareness that the character’s spirituality could not be found in Christianity, but only in her ‘beingness’; that of being a woman. This transformation is psychic not
social. On stage, it is also spatial, in the sense that different areas of space become the
focus for different parts of the performed journey. At the end, the spatial transformation
leads ‘outside’, into the ‘real’ world and into the wonder of life itself, in contrast to the
dark, sheltered enclosure of the Theatre/Church. Another part of the motivation for the
performance-ritual is the continuing need to honour other women’s writing and artwork,
which form part of the visual and spoken text.³

*Fallen Totems*

The third spiral of the journey of exorcism is *Fallen Totems* (1997), with masks and
installation by Irene Kindness. It was first performed as a ‘work in progress’ at the
Sydney, Sydney Fringe Festival, 18th - 20th January, 1997. This was followed by two
more performance opportunities. One was as part of the Songs of the Wind Festival, on
22nd March, 1997 in Katoomba. The second was a short season at Belvoir St. Theatre,

*Fallen Totems* involves an historical search for alternatives to Christianity and masculinist
values. In the words of the performer, ‘I want to know,...I want to remember...’
(*Fallen Totems*, 1997). It is also motivated by the growing awareness of the seasonal
misplacement of Christian ritual in an Australian context.

*Fallen Totems* names ‘who was responsible’ for negating women in Western history,
philosophy, mythology, and religion. The themes that emerge include indications of
colonisation of women, their beliefs and knowledge, by men in patriarchal societies.
Another theme is the endemic violence, rape and war in these societies, especially against
women and children. A third is the continuing need, in Western societies, for ‘power’,
for ‘greed’ and the need to ‘rule the world’. These themes are revisited and questioned in
the light of Western present and ‘future promise’.

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school of women artists network

presents

performance and exhibition exposing the
bluebeards within and without

saturday 8th & sunday 9th
april 1995

FOR EVE Performer: Annette Eyland
Installation: Irene Kindness

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Set and Masks: Irene Kindness

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The image of the Birdwoman is used to symbolise a woman’s autonomy, spiritual knowledge and power, and the risks she takes as she ‘dared to dream, dared to fly too high’ (*Fallen Totems*, 1997).

*Leavetaking*

The fourth major spiral of the journey of exorcism and ecstasy is *Leavetaking* (1997), a movement performance to recorded text and a lone drummer. It was performed as part of the Open 97 program of new work at The Performance Space, Sydney, 16th July, 1997. *Leavetaking* was undertaken to mark the fiftieth year of the performer’s life on earth. It uses the perspective of an aging woman to make a more generalised comment on the technological focus of contemporary Western society, and an increasing sense of ‘not fitting’ and ‘no longer keeping up or wanting to keep up’.

*Script*

When I was young...

Once when...

I remember...

When I was young I remember once...

I am an aging woman
A woman of my age

I know my age, not only in my body
   skin thinning, separating from bone
but in my attitudes, expectations, biases, fears

I fear my increasing vulnerability
My body once so sure, secure
is no longer

My body once had the energy of...
now it tries, but it knows better

I fear my mind is separating from my head
No longer content with the present, the mundane
it yearns for something more
reaching for....return?
Return to what?

My mind and body are aging together
acknowledging scars, memories...of an ordinary life
putting them to rest
preparing...

Yet my heart...spirit...
it still dreams, hopes, yearns
for life!

In my 50th year I am entering my leavetaking
That period where the world is moving too fast
changing too quickly
I can no longer keep up
I no longer want to keep up

I see the same play, different players
the circle goes round and round
And though my white skin reminds me of the sins of my fathers
I see those same sins in all peoples, all colours, all ages
And I am beginning to wonder what it means to be human.

I now know why those further along than me
sit and watch in bewilderment
or withdraw
it’s not that they don’t understand
they understand too well...
and why they and I are increasingly drawn to young children or nature
to imagine...
to touch...
a time before, a time when...

I no longer want to see the world of mass images that lie and confront and hold
promises that can never be fulfilled,
so that I am never content,
and in the end no longer trust, or feel, or hope.
I want something more.

But I am an aging woman
in her 50th year

In my 50th year,
I want to be whole.

In my 50th year,
I want...

**Performance-Ritual as Rites of Passage**

These performance-rituals have structural and functional aspects as rituals. They function, structurally and functionally, as rites of passage, rites of exorcism, rites of initiation, rites of holding, rites of letting go, and rites of celebration, naming, remembering, mourning, and honouring; definitions for which can be found in Chapter 3. Attempts to distinguish between these rites becomes artificial for each occurs in tandem with other rites. However, it is interesting, for the sake of discussion to identify the different ways in
which the same series of actions can fulfil a variety of functions within the context of ritual. In the following analysis the rites are examined under the broader category, 'rites of passage', which forms the overall structure for each performance ritual.

The term, rite of passage, defines the structural and functional aspects of a ritual. From a structural perspective, rites of passage follow the three stages described by Arnold van Gennep and introduced in Chapter 3: rites of separation, rites of transition and rites of incorporation (van Gennep:1960). These stages are not clear cut and, like the rites themselves, can occur at different stages in the event, depending on what is needed, as well as the referent or objective stance. For example, because performance-rituals are both performances and rituals, each event can be viewed from the perspective of performance as well as ritual; that is, from a secular or religious stance. In addition, a performance-ritual comprising of a number of parts, such as *Dark Fire*, rite of passage can be examined in relation to the overall event, or in relation to each part.

As well as the three stage structure, rite of passage implies a functional aspect: the movement from one social, or psychic, state to another. The performance-rituals in this chapter are social and/or psychic rites of passage. Yet each event may have a specific purpose, so, while remaining a rite of passage, it may also function as a rite of exorcism, a rite of initiation, or any of the rites previously mentioned. These other rites are examined within the second stage of the rite of passage: the rite of transition. It is in this stage where the necessary preparation, learning, and understanding takes place, and where the other rites usually engage in specific action in relation to the preparation. A number of smaller rites are grouped together for ease of analysis.

The procedure for the analysis is:

- Rites of Separation
- Rites of Transition
- Rites of Remembering, Naming, and Honouring
Rites of Exorcism, Female Fury, Mourning, and Healing
Rites of Holding
Rites of Letting Go
Rites of Initiation
Rites of Incorporation

Rites of Separation

Rites of separation are the actions by which participants are removed physically, and psychically, from their social group and everyday life.

Dark Fire

Dark Fire incorporated three separate performances and, therefore, can be viewed as one long event as well as three separate performance-rituals. In relation to the overall event, the first section of Dark Fire: Descent, functions ritually as a ‘rite of separation’. It is the first stage of the three-part ‘rite of passage’ and at the end of this stage there is a sense of ‘unfinished business’. The conscious moment of ‘separation’ for the series in a ‘ritual’ sense, is when the performers dive into the pool. The water is the marker of the transition from ‘everyday’ to sacred. van Gennep notes how doors, portals, gates and lintels often function as markers of spatial or territorial passage, rites of separation and rites of incorporation, with some marking ‘magic’ or ‘sacred’ areas off from everyday life (van Gennep, 1960:19 ff.). The action of diving into the pool is preceded by a rite of celebration, where the ‘innocent’ women enjoy and make fun of the sensuousness of their bodies, their experience of being a ‘woman’, and each other’s company, before making the decision to remove their outer clothing and ‘take the plunge’.

From the ‘performance’ aspect, however, there is another ‘rite of separation’ and this occurs in every section. It is when the performers dress for the event. In Dark Fire: Descent, the performers are aware that even though the beginning of the event is presented as ‘normal life’, it is still a performance, so they cannot help but begin to
Rite of Separation

Dark Fire: Descent
experience a separation. The audience members, too, are aware that a performance is about to begin, and so experience their own ‘separation’ as the performers enter, although the moment of separation may differ between each audience member. In each subsequent section in the series, and in theatrical performance generally, a similar separation occurs for the performers before the beginning of each event, and for the audience when they first enter the performing area, or notice the performers, and engage with the event. This is however, in a secular sense. In ritual, the presence of, and engagement with, ‘spirit’ as part of this process adds another dimension.

For Eve

In For Eve the rite of separation occurs, again, at different times for the audience and performer. The rite of separation, from the performance aspect, begins for the performer when she puts on the costume and make up. For the audience, the rite begins when they realise that the performer’s ‘late’ entrance into the performing area, which is a simulation of being part of the everyday life of the audience at that point, is actually part of the play. The moment is more difficult to identify than in Dark Fire. In fact one audience member said something like, ‘it’s all right, there’s no rush, we’re not seated yet’. This was not said in a sarcastic manner. Rather, it was an attempt to calm the performer down, and to stop her apologising and feeling guilty.

The separation is completed, in both the performance and ritual aspects, when the performer enters ‘another world’. This is a world of memory and question, triggered by the remembered scent of roses. It occurs as the performer disappears behind a screen and reappears ‘in memory’, and becomes a transition for the performer and audience into ‘performance’, ‘other world’, and ‘ritual’. The transition is marked by the movement behind, and out from, the screen, preceded by, as in Dark Fire, the discarding of outer clothes and shoes, the symbols of everyday wear and the ‘public face’ of ‘feminine woman’. The screen is the marker of transition from ‘everyday’ to ‘sacred’.

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Fallen Totems and Leavetaking

Fallen Totems and Leavetaking, on the other hand, begin in the liminal state. The rite of separation, in both the performance and ritual senses, has already taken place and the journey begun before the audience and performers enter the area, and before the performed action. The performers’ rites of separation begin, as in the other performance-rituals, in the dressing room while dressing, making up and tuning the instruments. The audience’s rite of separation begins on entering the theatre. These rites are completed, for the performers, by a spatial transition as they pass through the door that separates the dressing rooms from the performance area. In Fallen Totems, the door marks the transition from ‘everyday’ to ‘sacred’. In Leavetaking the rite of separation is completed by the action of the performer sitting on the chair before the lights come up.

On the other hand, for the audience in Fallen Totems, the rite of separation occurs as they enter through the door separating the theatre from the foyer, and pass through a passage before taking their seats. Again, the door marks the transition. The scene is set and the musicians have already begun. In Leavetaking, the rite of separation is completed with the initial blackout between items followed by the lights coming up on a new ‘set’/’scene’: the performer, sitting on a chair and ‘remembering’. The act of ‘remembering’ parallels that used in the previous performance-rituals as one which accompanies the ritual aspects of the rite of transition. The entire play, in both cases, is then performed as a rite of transition. At the end of both these performance-rituals, the performer is still on the journey as she exits the space.

Rites of Transition

The rite of transition is a liminal, in between, period during which participants learn what is needed for their new social, or psychic, position in the group. It also may be a time of confronting challenges and contradictions. In performance-ritual this period includes the enactment of other rites.
Dark Fire

From the ritual aspect the ‘transitional phase’, which begins in Dark Fire: Descent when the performers dive into the pool, continues into the third section, Dark Fire: Dark Fire. This means that the second section, Dark Fire: Initiation, is only part of the total rite of transition. During this second section, the performers confront the realisation that their bodies do not ‘fit’ in the structure defined by Western patriarchal society, and that this has had its outworking in others’ abuse and self abuse. There is also the understanding that this has been the experience of other women. At the end of this section the performers’ exits direct attention to ‘unfinished business’ to be completed at the next site. The rite of transition continues at the next site, Dark Fire: Dark Fire, where two of the participants are symbolically marked in preparation for initiation. The rite continues with their claiming of fire, symbol of gynergy, which they carry up the hill. It ends with the extinguishing of the fire.

For Eve

The rite of transition in For Eve begins as the performer disappears behind the screen. Events unfold which identify and name the patriarchal paradigm, and illustrate how it functions through Christianity and the daily experiences of women, especially through the gendering of ‘feminine woman’, and masculinist scapegoating and betrayal.

Fallen Totems and Leavetaking

Fallen Totems and Leavetaking, on the other hand, begin and end in the liminal state, so that the whole performance-ritual is performed as a rite of transition. In both cases the journey begins as the performer ‘enters’, and is continued as the performer exits, the space. In Fallen Totems the performer unravels the story of the colonisation of women by patriarchal institutionalised knowledge, and there is a quest for an alternative. In Leavetaking, whereas there is a coming to terms with the knowledge gained during the three previous spirals, the quest for something ‘more’ remains.
Within the transitional phase of these performance-rituals, the process of learning, and coming to terms with the new knowledge, parallels the feminist spiritual ‘journey of exorcism and ecstasy’ examined in Chapter 1, especially the first part of the journey. It is a journey on which the 19th-20th century dance pioneers did not embark. In performance-ritual, these stages are expressed in the form of rites. The rites include rites of remembering, naming, and honouring; rites of exorcism, female fury, mourning, and healing; rites of holding, and rites of letting go.

**Rites of Remembering, Naming, and Honouring**

One of the series of rites which are repeated during this phase are rites of remembering, naming, and honouring. As illustrated in Chapter 1, the feminist spiritual journey of unveiling women’s past and present stories, and their positioning as ‘other’ by patriarchally defined society, is one of identifying and naming the paradigm. This is ritualised, in performance-ritual, when the stories are publicly expressed. Yet the naming also remembers and honours those women whose stories have been uncovered. In performance-ritual, the process is conducted as a series of rites, and, often, the one series of actions has multiple functions and purposes.

**Dark Fire**

For example, in *Dark Fire* the first part of *Dark Fire: Descent* functions as a rite of celebration. At the same time, although it is a movement-based performance-ritual and cannot properly function as a rite of naming, *Dark Fire* is performed in the memory and presence of all other women, past, present and future. Therefore, the whole series also functions as a rite of remembering and honouring ‘ancestral women’, symbolised in the installations, and the casts carried in by the performers and placed in the set.

**For Eve**

The installation in *For Eve* also functions in this way. But this time the stories are told and, with the performance of women’s poetry, the presence of the casts, the artwork, the
Dark Fire: Initiation

Dark Fire: Dark Fire

Rites of Remembering, Naming, and Honouring
roses, the acknowledgment of the fourteen women, and the poets listed in the program notes, the whole event becomes a rite of naming, remembering, and honouring.

*Fallen Totems*

In a similar vein, the rite of passage in *Fallen Totems* is a rite of remembering, naming, honouring, and unveiling the ‘truth’. At the beginning of the performance, the set is a simulated archaeological site with material remains scattered all over the ground. One by one, as the performance progresses, the ‘remains’ are discovered, their story told, and the objects placed in the appropriate place, so that by the end, a ‘temple of remembrance’ is complete. During this performance-ritual, candles are used to light the path and honour the stories of women. Near the end, a particular rite of honouring and remembering acknowledges all past, present and future ‘incarnations of the Birdwoman’, and a candle is raised in a moment of stillness and silence.

*Leavetaking*

The rite of passage in *Leavetaking* is a rite of honours the aging body and the passage of time, accomplished by undressing and washing the body with love and care. The body’s aging state is named and honoured, as is the history it carries.

*Rites of Exorcism, Female Fury, Mourning, and Healing*

The other series of rites which reappear in all the performance-rituals are those to do with exorcism and healing. The need for exorcism, and the expression of Female Fury as part of women’s healing, has been illustrated in Chapter 1. In each of the performance-rituals, except for *Leavetaking*, Female Fury is expressed at some stage in response to the growing awareness of institutionalised misogynist attitudes, and their impact on women. Although exorcism is a key rite in all the performance-rituals, except *Leavetaking*, the rites associated with this function, again, take place in the transitional phase of the rite of passage.
Dark Fire

Female Fury is the first action of the rite of exorcism in *Dark Fire: Initiation*, as the women performers beat body casts against the earth. It continues through a rite of mourning for lost ‘self love’, which becomes a rite of healing, when the casts are cared for, and reincorporated into the body with love. Exorcism is completed once ‘the fire’, ‘power of self’, or ‘gynergy’ is claimed. The process of the rite exorcises those patriarchally defined negative bodily images which some women take upon themselves. This allows healing to take place. It also exorcises the need for patriarchally defined institutionalised religion. Rather, a woman’s body is claimed as her spiritual ‘home’, and a source of knowledge and power.

For Eve

Although exorcism underlies the whole performance, the specific rite of exorcism begins, as in *Dark Fire*, with the expression of Female Fury, when the performer hurlsthe vase of roses as she recounts the reason for the young women’s murders. It continues in a rite of mourning for the loss of innocence when ‘a woman knows’, or becomes aware of, the potential danger for herself and for her children. The rite of exorcism is completed as the performer moves through the artwork, honouring women’s bodies and lives, and reaffirming the need to ‘speak out’. This action simultaneously becomes a ‘rite of rebirth’, which claims a woman’s body as the site for spiritual knowledge and power.

Fallen Totems

Like *For Eve*, *Fallen Totems* is a rite of exorcism. It begins with the knowledge that even ‘strong’, independent women are abused by men in positions of power, by word and deed, and at some stage positioned as ‘victim’. Female Fury is expressed in reaction to this knowledge, and for the way in which women internalise the abuse. The story is embodied in the character of Rhiannon, as she turns into a giant mare and splinters the thigh of the hunter who betrayed and raped her. It is also embodied in the character of the ‘modern woman’ who reenacts Rhiannon’s response after, once more, being made
Female Fury

Rite of Mourning

Dark Fire: Initiation
Claiming Gynergy

Dark Fire:Dark Fire
invisible. The rite of exorcism is completed by calling up ancient images of Birdwoman. The Birdwoman’s presence in every woman is honoured, so completing the rite. *Fallen Totems* also mourns women’s lost autonomy and potential, as part of the last rite of remembering and honouring.

Where is she now, this Birdwoman? *(Lifting candle)* She is here. In every woman who has dared to be different, dared to risk, to stand alone. In women who have dared to question, ask ‘why?’. In women who have dared to dream, dared to fly too high. In those women who have fallen, been broken...burned. And in those whose gentle spirits could not survive the realities of this world. She is here. *(Fallen Totems, 1997)*

These performance-rituals parallel the feminist journey of exorcism and ecstasy presented in Chapter 1. The patriarchal paradigm is identified and named, the betrayal of women is pinpointed, Female Fury is expressed, and the power and knowledge of women is honoured and reclaimed. The performance-rituals present this experience from an individual woman’s point of view, in the light of other women who have had similar experiences. It does not attempt to generalise this experience to ‘all women’. Rather, it highlights recurring stories and images that speak of those other women who have experienced similar oppression.

**Rites of Holding**

Other rites that form part of the transitional phase include rites of holding and letting go. As has been illustrated in Chapter 1, ‘holding’ is a term coined by feminists, such as Sara Ruddick and Ariel Salleh, to describe the material and psychological negotiations that occur within family life, and in relation to human interaction with nature. In performance-ritual, however, it refers to psychological and spiritual action which maintains inner harmony. ‘Holding’ is not a static position; it is not ‘holding still’. ‘Holding’ is flexible and adaptable. Movement, give and take, are implied.
In one sense, an act of intentional ‘holding’ is present in all the performance-rituals, as there needs to be a simultaneous awareness of ‘what you are doing’, ‘what others performers are doing’, ‘what the audience is doing’ and ‘how the energy of the play is going’, and adjustments need to be made accordingly. There is give and take. However, each performance-ritual may use specific rites of holding to integrate an evolving spirituality with the material reality of life.

**Dark Fire**

In part two of *Dark Fire, Initiation* functions as a ‘rite of holding together’ the knowledge of the historical abuse of many women’s bodies with a present need for respect, love and care. No words are used. The act of holding is symbolised in the way the casts are handled and honoured. In part three, the rite continues as the casts are brought in and placed in the set.

**For Eve**

In *For Eve*, the ‘rite of holding’ begins with the stories, poems, and artwork, which articulate the dualism virgin/whore and the violence done to women and children by individual men and masculinist institutions. The ideal of equality and respect is challenged by the lived reality of many women. The rite continues with the roses, thrown in anger at the ‘uselessness and unfairness of it all’ and the spoken text, ‘A woman knows...in the depth of her being she knows...life...death...truth...fear...Spirit. She sees the world as it is...and knows the journey must be made’ (For Eve, 1995). The spoken text encapsulates the paradox, and the awareness that women subconsciously have of their need to negotiate their way through life and relationships. Here, the rite of holding becomes one with the rites examined in the previous two sections - rites of remembering and rites of mourning. The rite of holding is completed when the roses are handed to fourteen women in the audience, accompanied by a blessing honouring women’s bodies and lives. This is conducted as a woman’s sacrament, using the images of a woman’s body given and blood shed so that the child of a man may live. The
potential which is present in all women is honoured and ‘held’ in the knowledge of the lived reality.

*Fallen Totems*

The sense of ‘holding’ contradictions, paradoxes and opposites also underlies *Fallen Totems*. This tension becomes apparent in the dialogue between ‘the crone’, who has ‘seen it all before’, and ‘the modern woman’, who believes she has ‘choice’, ‘equality’ and ‘power’. The former knows women’s history and the everpresent danger for women. The latter is more focussed on ‘present possibilities’, ‘future promise’, and is sure ‘it could never happen to her’.

The holding together reemerges in the tradition of ‘Birdwoman Trinity’. One of the trinity is ‘the knower of life’, the other, ‘the knower of death and destruction’, and the third, ‘the knower of afterlife’. The knowledge of ‘the all’ requires the holding action of seeing the contradictions between the three aspects of the trinity, while still maintaining the relationship.

The initial and final embodiment of this action is the ‘topaz bird’, the name for which was taken from Carole Maso’s novel, *Ghost Dance*, acknowledged in the program. In the novel, the presence of the ‘topaz bird’ confronts the ‘one who sees’ with the greatest beauty as well as the greatest horror. The ‘topaz bird’ opens and closes the performance-ritual. At the end of the performance-ritual the knowledge and paradox of life, especially as it relates to women, is again honoured, in a similar way to *For Eve*, so that harmony is maintained and life can continue.

*Leavetaking*

The ‘rite of holding’ together the ‘love for life’ with the ‘call of death’ is embodied, in *Leavetaking*, in a ‘dance of being’ which circles the ‘death mask’ and then takes the
performer from the space. The dance also holds the contradictions articulated in the meditation poem which accompanies the performance-ritual.

In all of these rites of holding, situations and contradictions are viewed from more than one perspective. The unevenness and imperfection of life is acknowledged. The negotiation that takes place within the extremes of destruction and life potential, is recognised and accepted, so that harmony is maintained. This acceptance, and need for harmony, requires a ‘letting go’.

**Rites of Letting Go**

As well as being especially present with rites of holding, rites of letting go can operate in tandem with other rites, such as exorcism or incorporation. In a secular sense, they can be as simple as the performer consciously or unconsciously ‘letting the performance go’ after it is complete. In a ritual sense they can incorporate a more complicated conscious series of symbolic actions.

**Dark Fire**

In *Dark Fire: Descent*, the rite of letting go begins with the performers picking up their casts and turning to face the pool. It is completed when, after a moment of contemplation, the performers turn and walk out. The rite of letting go in *Dark Fire:* *Dark Fire* is a slow process of ‘disappearing from view’, assisted by the transition from light to darkness as the sun sets.

**For Eve**

The rite of letting go in *For Eve* is contained in the words, ‘Come, the play is over...’ *(For Eve, 1995).*
Topaz Bird

*Fallen Totems*

(Mask, Irene Kindness)
Rite of Letting Go

Dark Fire: Descent
**Fallen Totems**

In *Fallen Totems* ‘letting go’ is accomplished by the performer re-entering and handing out Easter eggs.

**Leavetaking**

The rite of letting go in *Leavetaking* is private, in the dressing room, as the performer changes clothes into ‘everyday wear’.

**Rites of Initiation**

In *Dark Fire* and *Leavetaking*, the rites of passage also function as rites of initiation. Like the other rites, such as, naming, holding and letting go, the initiatory aspects are accomplished during the transitional phase.

**Dark Fire**

*Dark Fire* marks the initiation out of a patriarchally defined society and its institutions, especially the Christian church. It is a movement to the boundaries. The rite of initiation in *Dark Fire* is designed around the symbols of a woman’s body and the themes of water, earth and fire. In part one, *Dark Fire: Descent*, the theme of ‘water’ is used to revisit the freedom of innocence. In turn, it gives rise to the enjoyment of the body and life, and so becomes a rite of celebration. But, this enjoyment is tempered by awareness of the many rules which limit ‘freedom’, especially in relation to the confines of the pool and surrounds. During the performance the call for change is heard, and the first stage of preparation for initiation is embodied by a rite of cleansing and separation, symbolised by entering the water and swimming to the end.

The next stage of the rite of initiation is one of preparation and learning. Part two, *Dark Fire: Initiation*, fulfils that task. Formatted around the theme of ‘earth’, this performance-ritual is a time of confrontation with women’s history of abuse, and the consequent love-hate relationship with her body. There is a recognition that this body is gendered by
Western patriarchal society as ‘the problem’ and ‘not fitting’. As has been illustrated, the anger that results from this awareness, Female Fury, is taken out on the body, symbolised as the performers beat the plaster casts against the earth.

Following this, the performers create a small healing ritual and reincorporate the body substitutes with love and care. At the end of this section the casts are added to symbols of women throughout history, who have been crucified physically or psychologically for their gender. The reincorporation becomes a rite of mourning and a rite of reconciliation. This awareness and the ability to love the body in spite of abuse, becomes a rite of remembering, a rite of honouring, a rite of holding, and a rite of healing.

The last part of the rite of initiation, contained in the third section, *Dark Fire: Dark Fire*, is one of physically marking the change. It is the time to claim ‘self-power’ or, in Daly’s terms ‘Spiritual Elemental Powers’ and ‘gynergy’? This power is the actuality of deciding to listen to ‘inner life force’ without the need for any ‘guru’ or formal religion. The change is marked by body paint, flags and ‘fire’; the symbols used for ‘gynergy’ in this performance-ritual.

*Dark Fire* is a movement based performance-ritual and a rite of initiation. It is a rite which leads to the boundaries of ‘normal’ life, one which formally initiates two of the participants into a change in social standing and a ways of believing. Apart from using themes which relate to the elements of water, earth and fire, the changes in the status of the initiates are shown in a number of other ways. For instance, each performance-ritual takes place at a different site, gradually moving from one end of King Street, Newtown, to the other.

The change in status is also marked by ‘shaving hair’. This action is used in many cultures to signify special events and rites of passage (van Gennep, 1960:166). Hair carries memories of past experiences and during *Dark Fire*, as this is essentially the
Rite of Initiation

Dark Fire: Dark Fire
creator-performer’s journey, a section of her hair is shaved off after each performance, marking the transition between each stage of the journey. At the end of the series her shaven head symbolises the completion of her initiation. Hair is also, for women, a significant symbol of Western patriarchally-defined ‘feminine womanhood’, where long hair is used to allure a man. *Dark Fire* challenges this ‘norm’.

The transitions in *Dark Fire* are further emphasised by costuming. In the first part the performers wear long white pants and top, which are discarded before entering the pool; signifying that change is immanent. Later, the costumes reappear, tattered and dirty, symbolising the period of ‘liminality’ and spiritual confrontation with ‘the dark’. Finally, the tattered pants are discarded, and two performers also remove their tops, signifying their readiness for the body markings and the completion of the initiation.⁸

*Leavetaking*

The other rite of initiation is *Leavetaking*. *Leavetaking* marks the change from ‘growth’ and ‘maturity’, to ‘decay’ and ‘encroaching death’. It has a similar function to Mary Wigman’s *Autumnal Dances* which were performed at a time when she was entering ‘the autumn of my life’ (Wigman, 1966:79,80).⁹ In *Leavetaking*, the call of death is symbolised by an ever present mask on a chair, revealed when the performer stands and moves away. It marks the social transition into an ‘aging state’. The transition is physicalised, in a similar way to *Dark Fire*, by shaving the hair, undressing, washing/preparing the body and by words of the poem. The words indicate a sense of ‘no longer keeping up’ and therefore ‘fitting in’ less to the modern world. By these actions, *Leavetaking* also engages in rites of honouring, cleansing and remembering. As the performer exits the space, the mask is left behind, the suggestion being, death is there, but not yet ready to be embraced.
Rites of Incorporation

Once the knowledge needed for an anticipated change in social or psychic position has been understood, the participants are reincorporated into the group in their new social, or psychic, relationship.

Dark Fire

The action of walking towards the top of the hill, and extinguishing the fires, at the end of Dark Fire: Dark Fire, is the beginning of the rite of incorporation. The rite is completed by the dance of celebration on the hill, and the simultaneous fading images of the performers in the growing darkness. The rite of passage and rite of initiation has been complete. The participants are now ready to move on.

For Eve

The beginning of the rite of incorporation occurs in For Eve when the performer moves to the back door and opens it. This action allows the noise of the traffic to enter the performing area as the performer says, 'come...the play is over...' (For Eve, 1995). The rite of incorporation is completed with a 'rite of moving on with hope'; a rite which is embedded in the dialogue that follows, ‘...and it’s a beautiful night out here...’, or something similarly appropriate, as the performer exits the space (For Eve, 1995). Both she and the audience are back in the material world. The door serves as the marker of the transition and, once exited, the performer returns to everyday life.

Fallen Totems and Leavetaking

The rite of incorporation in Fallen Totems and Leavetaking occurs, for the performer, as she exits through the door after the final dance. For the audience and musicians in Fallen Totems, however, the rite of incorporation occurs after the play has finished and during the applause. It is confirmed by the performers bowing and throwing Easter eggs into the audience, bringing the context to the present and ‘daily life’. The theatre space is transformed into an informal area as the ‘barrier’ between ‘performers’ and ‘audience’ is
broken, and everyone is free to mingle on the stage or around the seating. In
Leavetaking, the rite of incorporation is accomplished by the blackout. Leavetaking was
not rehearsed and was performed only once so, like Dark Fire, was a rite of passage in
the true sense of the word.\textsuperscript{10}

*Fallen Totems* and *Leavetaking* do not offer answers or a resolution. Rather, they
function as the next stage of a longer journey, a longer rite of passage. There is a sense,
at the end of them both, of waiting for the next stage. In *Fallen Totems* the performer
says, ‘And sometimes I wonder about my ancestors - the real story - how they survived,
what they dreamed, and which of them tried to touch the sun, look through the window
to eternity, take the flight of the Birdwoman’ (*Fallen Totems*, 1997). The final words in
*Leavetaking* are, ‘In my 50th year I want to be whole. In my 50th year I want...’
(Leavetaking, 1997). The next stage is *Centre of the Storm*.

These performance-rituals follow a similar process. In each, the rite of passage marks a
different stage in the performer’s life. In each, the rite of transition, within the rite of
passage, is a period of learning and sorting so that the performer emerges ready for the
next stage. In some, the rite of transition also involves a rite of exorcism, and in *For Eve*
and *Fallen Totems*, especially, the whole event has exorcism as its aim. In others, such
as *Dark Fire* and *Leavetaking*, the rite of passage also functions as a rite of initiation. In
this way, *Dark Fire* and *Leavetaking* are rites of passage into a new social standing. The
changes in *For Eve* and *Fallen Totems*, on the other hand, are psychic.

**When Performance Becomes Ritual**

These events are more than just performances. They engage the realm of ancestors and
‘spirit’ by leaving room for, and allowing, connection. These, and other aspects that
separate these events from performances, are introduced here.
The ‘Performers’

The examples given so far, illustrate the differences between ‘performance’ and ‘performance-ritual’ in a number of ways. In the group performance-rituals the performers are not necessarily ‘auditioned’ in the theatrical use of the term. This means there is a mix of backgrounds, experience, and ‘skill’. What draws the group together is the opportunity to perform, and an interest in the journey to be taken. As it is not a paid performance, performers engage with it because of their own interest and motivation, not because it is ‘a job’. Those who are not on a similar journey tend to disappear after the first few rehearsals, and others drop out along the way as the journey deepens or changes direction.

This is exemplified in *Dark Fire*. The three parts of the series are only completed fully by two of the performers. Seven performers begin the journey. Four confront the questions in part two and although these four continue to part three, only two choose to be ‘initiated’. Some of the reasons for the reduction in numbers are individual circumstances and some are due to individual choice.

This is where ‘performance-ritual’ becomes ‘ritual’. It is an internal as well as a ‘performed’ journey and not all performers are on the same journey, at the same stage of the journey, or want to identify completely with what is being addressed. It is not only ‘acted out’, or ‘reenacted’, it is an outward expression of a lived reality. Similarly, the creative process becomes increasingly more directed as the series continues. It begins as a group process in *Dark Fire: Descent*, with each person having the opportunity for input. By the time of *Dark Fire: Dark Fire*, because of the nature of the evening, and the increasing individualistic nature of the journey, it becomes ‘just follow me’, and therefore one particular individual’s rite of passage, and rite of initiation, in which other performers chose to take part and support.
Subjectivity

Another difference between performance and performance-ritual is to do with content and symbolic action. The content is the outcome of one individual’s intuitive journey of questioning, and is formed by the need to make sense of, and ritualise, the information being uncovered. The journey is a ‘real-life’ one and the symbols used, such as ‘water’, ‘earth’, fire’, and actions undertaken, mark that journey. It is a subjective, embodied journey, not one invented, and then projected into imagined characters in an imagined life. The performance-ritual parallels the here and now and uses characterisations, and historical characters’ imagined life, to make sense of the story ‘here and now’. Once the journey has been made, there is no need to re-perform the event. Like life, it is left behind as change occurs.

This is highlighted in the differences between Dark Fire and Leavetaking, on the one hand, and For Eve and Fallen Totems on the other. Even though For Eve was an embodied ritual, it was fully rehearsed, and the period of rehearsal required some distancing: a change from ‘my’ ritual to ‘the character’s’ ritual. It was important, for the sake of the performance aspects, to create a ‘performed character’ who takes the journey. There was a need to clarify ‘why’ she says the words in the monologue, and engage the audience with the words. Whereas the creation of the piece was intuitive, the rehearsal period required the performer to change the internal focus from one of ‘listening’ as the journey unfolds, to one of ‘telling the story’, and ‘becoming the person on the journey’. This process recurred in Fallen Totems. Yet the journey was still undertaken as a ritual, with an openness to engage ‘spirit’, and to work with change if, and when, it occurred.

Both For Eve and Fallen Totems were performance-rituals designed for a theatre. Even though they were designed as personal rituals they had a strong awareness of ‘an audience’. This awareness created a need for characterisation and, in Fallen Totems the ‘distancing’ increased. For Eve’s audience was composed mainly of women who had come to see the exhibition, so they were approached as co-journeymers. In Fallen Totems,
however, because of the number of different performances, the length of the main
season, and the ‘unknown’ audiences, the performance-ritual gradually became more of a
‘recreation’ of the journey rather than the embodiment of the journey itself. This
‘recreation’ has similarities to the repetitive ritual of traditional Christianity. So, on the
ritual-performance scale, For Eve and Fallen Totems veer more towards performances.
Dark Fire, Leavetaking and Centre of the Storm, on the other hand, veer more to the
rituals.

Synchronicities

Then, there is the conscious recognition of synchronicities, which Daly terms, ‘syn-
Crone-icities: “coincidences” experienced and recognized by Crones as Strangely
significant’ (Daly, 1988:170). The creation of Dark Fire paralleled the life journey
undertaken at the time. Part of the journey was an increasing need to ‘listen’ and ‘take
life as it comes’ in honour of a more encompassing, open-ended, nature-based spiritual
philosophy than that offered by Christianity. The opportunity to engage in this journey,
and simultaneously perform it through performance-ritual, came at the ‘perfect’ time. In
addition, although the first two parts of the series were well rehearsed, the third part was
a problem. Each time the performers met for rehearsal in the space, something stopped
the proceedings; either, there was a storm, or the performers were unavailable, or
someone else was using the space, or... On the actual night the four key performers and
the installation artist arrived early to get ‘at least something happening’, but there was yet
another storm. It was impossible to rehearse or to erect the installation where it had been
planned.

So, the decision was made to ‘wait and see’ if anyone dared to come out in such weather,
in the expectation that the event would be cancelled. Yet the drummers, a singer and an
audience arrived. So, in panic, there was a quick consultation with all the performers
about possible ‘order’ and ‘thematic changes’, a re-setting of the installation, a co-opting
of some audience members into taking part in the ‘entry’, and the performance-ritual
began. It ended up being one of those ‘magic’ experiences; one in which the timing, setting and accompaniment was ‘perfect’, and all the elements, human and nonhuman, worked together to create ‘special’. It was the human and natural embodiment of the journey that had to be taken at that stage; one of trusting and ‘going with the flow’. The ritual aspect of this part of the series was highlighted by its once-only performance. It could not have been performed again; a point also made by van Gennep in relation to ‘true’ rites of passage (van Gennep, 1960:175).

Synchronicities are important for the timing of the performance-rituals. The events need to be performed at the time when the journey is needing to be undertaken, and in a situation which supports the enterprise. In For Eve, the Bluebeard Exhibition was the ‘perfect’ time-place. The nature-human-spirit questions of Fallen Totems were supported by the synchronistic offering, by Songs of the Wind Festival and Belvoir Street Theatre, of performance times over Easter, which highlighted the question about the misplacement of this Christian event in an Australian context. The earlier performances at Sydney Fringe Festival were arranged to function as ‘rehearsals’ for the main event. From one perspective, they are just opportunities for performance. From another perspective, however, the fact that the context supports the themes of the performance-rituals creates greater significance. These synchronistic connections are continued in Centre of the Storm.

Performance-Ritual as Feminist Spirituality

The examination now turns to the feminist content of these performance-rituals. The content of performance-ritual is influenced by a growing grassroots feminist approach to spirituality. It begins, in Dark Fire, with a radical feminist perspective. There is a need to exorcise negative images associated with ‘a woman’s body’. By the time of Leavetaking, however, the content broadens to include present day issues of modernity and Western society.
The following analysis will utilise the categories,

Body
Nature
Place
Spirit

The first three categories are those identified in Chapter 1.

**Body**

The performance-rituals used as examples begin with a need to interrogate the body of a woman in relation to patriarchal definitions and positioning. Underneath this is the desire to honour and respect this body as holder of knowledge and spiritual revelation.

**Dark Fire**

The return to, and respect for, body begins in a general way in *Dark Fire*. On a personal and individual level, this performance-ritual is a time of deciding to listen to the body, in contrast to a history of sublimation. At the same time, it moves beyond the personal by recognising that body sublimation and abuse has been the historical reality for many women. It links the love-hate relationship between some women and their bodies, to the abuse done to the body by ‘self’ and others. In *Dark Fire: Descent*, which is a time of innocence, the women enjoy the sensuality of the body, and the feeling of the sun on the skin, before entering the pool. This is quickly cut, and the women turn, run, and seem to be attempting to get away from this moment, but also from what is to come.

In *Dark Fire: Initiation*, the women continue to explore their love-hate relationship with the body, but in the company of other abused women throughout history. They move to different areas in the site, and try and find a place where their body ‘fits’. ‘Female Fury’ is taken out on the body and the women become their own abusers. Then, like all abusive situations, they attempt to ‘patch up’ and befriend their body, creating a rite of healing and love. At the end, they leave their body substitutes with the symbols of other women,
past, present, and future, who have had similar experiences. At the start of the third section, Dark Fire: Dark Fire, the body substitutes are brought into the site and placed with all other women symbols. In this way, although this is an individual journey, all other women past, present and future are symbolically present and ‘gynergy’ is claimed on behalf of all, as well as for ‘self’. ‘The community of women’ is symbolised by the casts in the installation. This use of casts is repeated in For Eve and Fallen Totems. By the end, however, Dark Fire:DarkFire becomes a celebration of ‘a woman’s body’.

For Eve

This performance-ritual explores how Christian stereotypes, situates in relationship, and scapegoats, ‘woman’. ‘Wife’, the dualism of ‘virgin/prostitute, the image of barbie, the ‘eternal feminine’, and the story of Eve, as instigator of ‘original sin’, are deconstructed.

In For Eve, the emphasis shifts to an examination of the way in which ‘woman’ is gendered and socialised.

(Straightens, fixes clothes, turns slowly to audience, talking to self) 
Smile...noone will like you unless you smile...smile... (to audience) Would you like a cup of tea? Some sugar? Is there enough milk? Perhaps a biscuit?
I have some in the cupboard.

And later,

(Begins fiddling with clothes again). I hope you don’t mind me dressed like this...I’m not too fat am I? I’ve been trying to be careful...but, you know how it is...I know I can get a bit pudgy around the knees (pulling down hem of petticoat)...but... Is that better? (Begins turning in a circle, pulling at hem, and gradually increasing in speed) Do you like me? (To self) Smile...noone will like you if you frown. Smile... Sit with your legs together, girls don’t sit like that... Don’t pout... You’re too loud, intelligent,
fat, short, tall, boisterous, temperamental, quiet..... If you want people to
like you you have to look interested in what they say. If you want boys to
like you you have to be interested in what they say, do, are... (to audience)
Do you love me? (Looking) Do you love me? Do you love me? (For Eve,
1995)

Stories which explore the relationship between power and violence are presented around
the symbol of a sword/cross, and in the presence of the shrouded artwork, and then
questioned, "Makes you think they put the wrong body on the cross, doesn’t it? Maybe
not. Maybe men crucify each other just as much. But I know who gets it in the end"
(For Eve, 1995).13 The final story of the murder of the fourteen women students, bring
these elements together. They were killed for being ‘feminists’, and part of the reason
was that the young man did not get accepted into university.

During this performance-ritual the ‘veil’ is a repeated motif, ‘worn’ by the casts, artwork,
and performer. It symbolises the patriarchally ‘blinded’, silenced, and positioned
woman. Although Melissa Raphael explores the ambivalence of the veil and the many
meanings that can be attached to its presence, in For Eve ‘veiling’ accompanies ignorance
and invisibility (Raphael, 1996:153 ff.).14 ‘Unveiling’ accompanies the emerging story
of women’s growing awareness of her positioning by patriarchal institutions and
practices, including religion and marriage, which has tended to keep many women
submissive, hidden, ignorant, and lacking autonomy. This association is repeated in
Fallen Totems and Centre of the Storm. The links are reinforced, in For Eve, by the
unveiling of the artwork which symbolises, in another medium, the various ways in
which women’s bodies have been abused by those in power. The ‘woman’s
communion’ at the end of the performance-ritual reclaims women’s body as sacred. The
underlying project in For Eve is the identification and naming of the paradigm, the first
part of the journey of exorcism and ecstasy undertaken by the feminist theologians
examined in Chapter 1.
Fallen Totems

The journey taken in For Eve is developed in Fallen Totems beyond Christianity to include other Western mythology, stories and history. It examines how patriarchally defined religion and knowledge has positioned women as individuals, and as a group. The journey travels back through time, using examples of how ‘knowledgable men’ have objectified, and diminished, a woman’s body and sexuality, placing women hierarchically in positions of ‘lower than’. Fallen Totems moves from the project of ‘identifying and naming the paradigm’, to concentrate more on ‘how the paradigm functions’, and has functioned historically. This is the next stage of the journey of exorcism and ecstasy examined in Chapter 1. The journey in Fallen Totems ends at an imagined time of womanist religion, mythology and symbol; the time of goddess spirituality’s pre-patriarchal matriarchy.

Before Sumer...Silence, of a sort. Just images...figures. Figures of women and men. Figures of women abstracted, exaggerated. Women skinny and sticklike, women with large breasts, buttocks and vulvas, women giving birth, women and animals - bear, deer, snake, fish, cat, bird. Women who were half animals and half women - cowwoman, lionwoman...birdwoman. (Fallen Totems, 1997)

The story is ‘unveiled’ piece by piece, as each part of the set is discovered and its story revealed. The exploration is presented through the characterisation and naming of so-called, independent women of history and mythology, such as, Lilith, Inanna, Hypatia, Boudicca, Joan of Arc, and Rhiannon. Boudicca reappears in Centre of the Storm, with greater historical specificity. The stories of other independent women, such as the crone and ‘modern woman’ are also explored. At then end of this performance-ritual women’s autonomy is honoured.
The shift in emphasis, which occurs through the three performance-rituals, is from a ‘body’ focus in *Dark Fire*, to a ‘gendered and positioned woman’ focus in *For Eve* and *Fallen Totems*.

**Leavetaking**

*Leavetaking* returns to ‘the body’; an ageing body. By this stage all else has been exorcised. It is enough just to honour it. The return to, and respect for, the body has been accomplished. But there is no alternative exemplar offered for a spiritual belief in relation to the body. That exemplar evolves in *Centre of the Storm*.

**Nature**

These performance-rituals more specifically concentrate on the reclamation of this woman’s body as the site for autonomous spiritual knowledge and expression. However, the need to return to, and respect, nature also becomes part of the action.

**Dark Fire**

The need to acknowledge nature is first expressed in *Dark Fire*. The performance-ritual ‘setting’ is outdoors with each part thematically influenced by water, earth and fire. But the outdoor setting is still ‘cityscape’, with performance-rituals taking place in ‘man-made’ containers of the elements: swimming pool, town square and the man-made hills of the old brickworks at St. Peters. In *Dark Fire: Descent*, water is used initially to symbolise a time of innocence and playfulness. Then, it represents a medium of change, and the performers dive into the pool. As well as marking the moment of decision, the water also functions as a medium of cleansing. In *Dark Fire: Initiation*, the earth in the town square marks the time of confrontation. The performers create a design in the dirt, and then lie on it with their casts, as part of a rite of healing and love. In a sense, the need for reincorporation, or rebirth, is enacted by this fusion. In the last section, *Dark Fire: Dark Fire*, fire symbolises gynergy, and is celebrated. In addition to these actions, there is a specific rite of honouring of the elements in the last section. After the
performers climb to the top of the kiln with their flags, they turn to face the setting sun and honour ‘origin’ and all the elements, including the wind, or air, which has become an integral part of the event.

For Eve
Although the following two performance-rituals, For Eve and Fallen Totems, are indoor theatre pieces, there is still a need to address the natural elements. At the end of For Eve, the door to ‘outside’ is opened and a comment made about the weather. As simple as this may seem, there is an inference that the ‘real world’ is ‘out there’ with the elements and that they, like ‘a woman’s body’, need to be ‘listened to’.

Fallen Totems
In Fallen Totems the need to listen to nature is extended, and carried, in the stories and images of the sun, birds and tree/cross/totem which permeate the whole piece. The contrast is made between early nature based religion and myth, and the modern Christian consumer mentality where power, control, and greed rule over any consideration of nature.

Leavetaking
Growing dissatisfaction with the Western project reappears in Leavetaking, and the need for an alternative is expressed: ‘But I am an aging woman. In my 50th year, I want to be whole. In my 50th year, I want...’ (Leavetaking, 1997).

Yet, ‘nature’ in these performance-rituals, is usually generalised, except for one or two instances. None of the performance-rituals prior to Centre of the Storm are proper seasonal rites. Although Dark Fire uses the elements of water, earth and fire, they are explored as symbols, not respected with the acknowledgment of human dependency on nature for survival. Dark Fire is a woman-centred story and the elements are used to support the woman’s journey. Only once is there a sense of the need to be in ‘awe’ of
nature, or to respect it, and that is in the third part, when a ‘salute to the elements’ is performed towards the setting sun, with the howling wind becoming part of the performance. This action, however, does not signify anything specifically Australian. At the end of *For Eve* there is a similar acknowledgment, when the door is opened and a comment made about the weather. The comment directs attention to ‘nature’ outside, but does not completely address the performer’s relationship to it. There is an expectation, however, in both of these instances, that nature may ‘talk back’ and the possibility of communication, or a give-take relationship, is a potentiality.

A similar relationship arises in *Fallen Totems*, but an Australian context also begins to emerge. This performance-ritual begins to address the seasons, using symbols associated with Easter, such as, ‘the cross’, or ‘totem’, ‘the Sun/Son’ and ‘the egg’, which is extended to include ‘bird’ and ‘Birdwoman’, none of which are specifically Australian. However, its coincidence is with Australian Autumn, which engenders questions about the misplacement of a Christian Easter evolving from Spring rituals, in the Australian Autumn. There is a quest for an alternative. It does, however, begin to incorporate mythological and real stories of birds in the monologue, some of which are drawn from stories of my experience of Kookaburras and Currawongs. There is an emerging relationship with nature but nature and the human=nature connection has not been interrogated. That relationship is developed further in *Centre of the Storm*.

**Place**

Although ‘not fitting’, and the search for a ‘place’, has begun, it is not conscious, and the concept of place is not fully developed in these performance-rituals.

*Dark Fire, For Eve, Fallen Totems and Leavetaking*

The early performance-rituals use a ‘sense of place’ in relation to a ‘sacred place’, which is positioned within the body of a woman, and in the areas where the performance-rituals take place. *Dark Fire* examines the concept of ‘not fitting’ and is the time when a
woman's body as 'sacred place' is claimed, but it is an amorphous, non specific, place. In *For Eve*, these bodily 'sacred places' become more defined. By the time of *Fallen Totems*, however, a sense of 'not fitting' re-emerges when the character looks for more appropriate images of 'women' and 'spirituality' in the past and discovers that these 'sacred places' are historically not seen to be 'sacred' by her culture. This sense of 'not fitting' continues in *Leavetaking* and relates specifically to a more general lack of 'sense of place' in relation to Western culture; a relationship which is extended further in the initial video of *Centre of the Storm*.

**Spirit**

Like the writing of other spiritual feminists, all the performance-rituals begin to place 'the sacred', or 'spirit' immanent, or in the material world, rather than transcendent, or outside of, it. 'Spirit' is conceptualised in a similar way to Daly's 'Be-ing'. It is that which originates, holds together, and links all that is. In this way, everything is a reflection, and speaks, of Be-ing and marks the beginning of a material ground for spiritual belief. In *Dark Fire, For Eve, Fallen Totems* and *Leavetaking*, the bodies and lives of women, and nature, are viewed as the 'carriers of Be-ing'. These carriers are more specifically defined and examined in *Centre of the Storm*, the analysis of which is the subject of Chapters 5 and 6.
Notes


4 There are not visual records of this performance. It is included for its significance as the fourth spiral of the spiritual journey.

5 van Gennep, A. The Rites of Passage. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1960.

6 Maso, C. Ghost Dance. New York, Perennial Library, 1987. The mask had already been created and the writing of the text well underway when I realised that Maso’s ‘topaz bird’ encapsulated the bird in the production.

7 Daly, M. Gyn/Ecology. Boston, Beacon, 1990, Pure Lust., Elemental Feminist Philosophy. London, Woman’s Press, 1984 and Websters First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language. London, Women’s Press, 1988. Daly defines ‘Elemental’ as ‘characterized by stark simplicity, naturalness, or unrestrained or undisciplined vigor or force...CRUDE, PRIMITIVE, FUNDAMENTAL, BASIC EARTHY’ and is associated with nature/natural. ‘Gynergy’ is ‘the female energy which both comprehends and creates who we are; that impulse in ourselves that has never been possessed by the patriarchy nor by any male; women-identified be-ing’ or ‘psychic force field’ (Daly, 1988:72, 77 and 1990:395n).
The difficulty with ‘whether or not to wear clothes at all’ has been debated continually in this work. While, theoretically, nudity should be as acceptable as ‘being clothed’ in our society, the reality is, that it is not. The difficulty of ‘nudity’ as an option is exacerbated by performing in public spaces where the rest of the community has free access, and therefore their differing ‘ethical codes’ have to be considered. It is also exacerbated by the daily work of the participants, their perceived position of ‘respect’, the vulnerability associated with exposing the body with no barriers, and the fear of real problems eventuating if ‘clients’ or co-workers are confronted by it. In the end, in each case, the decision was made to err on the side of caution, so that the performance-ritual had the potential of being a positive experience for all involved.


van Gennep’s perspective is that ‘true’ rites of passage are ‘first time’ events which are performed in full ‘at the time of the first transition from one social category or one situation to another’ (van Gennep, 1960:175).

Again, the category, ‘woman’, refers to ‘women who have similar experiences’ and not to all women. The performance-ritual was also the outcome of a series of workshops for women, led by the performer during the preceding year. The workshops were organised for the performer’s own journey, and opened up to other interested women. The interest generated by these workshops illustrated that many other women had similar, but not the same, experiences, stories and needs.

One of the casts brought in was from one of the women at the workshops. It had been a traumatic moment for her and, because of her living situation, she was not able to take the cast home. She was not forgotten.

The series of canvas paintings, which formed part of the set for this performance were by Irene Kindness. In the series a cross, which repeatedly dismembered a woman’s body, was a repeated motif, as
was a broken rose. Here, as in the performance-ritual, the rose was in memory of the fourteen women killed. At the beginning of the performance-ritual the artwork is hidden under black cloths, which are later pulled away to accompany the song, 'Onward Christian Soldiers'.

14 Raphael, M. *Theology and Embodiment: The Post-Patriarchal Reconstruction of Female Sacrality*. Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1996. However, it cannot be assumed that other Christian women, or women from other religions, such as Islam, perceive the veil in the same way. In some ancient traditions the veiled woman was the seer or prophetess, with the veil a symbol of special power and respect.
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning the following pages. The best possible results have been obtained.
Chapter 5  Centre of the Storm as Rite of Passage

Fifth Spiral:  Centre of the Storm (1998-2000)

The Spiralling Journey of Exorcism and Ecstasy

Centre of the Storm is the fifth spiral in the 'journey of exorcism and ecstasy'. It is the next stage in the feminist spiritual journey of this ‘woman becoming’: that of intuitively developing a ground for spiritual belief which suits an emerging ecofeminist consciousness, through performance-ritual. The series functions to create a new ‘theology’; one based on family tradition and heritage, with the particular perspective of feminist and ecofeminist theological understanding. The new theology emerges as a return to body, nature and place. The spiritual feminist aspects of Centre of the Storm are examined in Chapter 6. This chapter examines Centre of the Storm from the standpoint of the structural and functional aspects of performance-ritual.

The series, Centre of the Storm (1998-2000), continues the overall journey begun in Dark Fire (1994) and takes a similar path to that in Fallen Totems (1997), but this time with more specificity in relation to ancestral history. While continuing the spiralling journey of the previous performance-rituals, Centre of the Storm is also the first spiral which veers more towards ecstasy. It is the beginning of the process of re-creating and re-naming one woman’s spirituality. Yet, it still contains the need to exorcise the reality of patriarchal colonisation and violence. Female Fury is expressed through the character of Boudicca, in response to her abuse, and her daughters rapes, by the Roman occupational forces. This action becomes an ‘imagined expression’ of an experience shared by all indigenous people under colonisation. So too, in the face of Australia’s colonisation by the British.
Introduction to the Performance-Rituals

Centre of the Storm (1998-2000) comprises five performance-rituals:

Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis (1998)

Beginnings (1999)

Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival (1999)

The Fire of the Sun (2000)

Passage (2000)

The research for, and enactment of, Centre of the Storm took almost two years to complete. The initial video, Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis (1998), identified the concerns to be addressed, and the direction to be taken. From July 1999 until May 2000 the ensuing four seasonal performance-rituals, Beginnings (1999), Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival (1999), The Fire of the Sun (2000), and Passage (2000), fulfilled the task of bringing the North-Western European tradition ‘home’ to Australia, in an effort to engender a spirituality, and ‘sense of place’, or ‘belonging’, that ‘fits’. Again, this is an ‘after the fact’ analysis of a personal, intuitive, embodied journey.

Description of the Performance-Rituals

Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis

The first performance-ritual in the series is titled Centre of the Storm, which became the umbrella title for the whole series. Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis (1998) was written, filmed, and edited from the end of July to mid September, 1998. The story begins with a contemporary, white Australian working woman visiting an art exhibition. The images at the exhibition trigger an inner dialogue which overtakes her consciousness. She interprets the images in the artwork as women in, or on, the Australian landscape. The video traces the inner dialogue the images have triggered. A feeling of alienation emerges. She decides to take ‘time out’ in a park, revisiting the artwork and imagining herself part of the artwork itself, vicariously becoming one with the land. The hypothesis underlying the video is that, if ancestral tradition and story were to be brought into
conversation with the Australian context, the process would create a ‘sense of place’, or
‘belonging’, and a spirituality that ‘fits’ with her Australianness.

Script

Women and the Land
Women on the Land
Women in the Land

Tread softly dear heart
Each step a mark.....an imprint

Know where you step
Be sure how and where you go

How to be sure?
How to know?

Time...too much...too little...
Shhhoo.....shhhooo.....shhhooo.....

I must...I need...
It is important....

I’m sorry I don’t have time right now....
Where did that time go?...It’s gone already...I don’t believe it...What happened?....I’ve missed it! What did you say? Sometimes I feel I don’t even
have time to breathe.

How can I hold...hold on to it?

I am a displaced woman
Living in a strange land,
not mine by right
But claimed by my recent past

My people came from the North
What is it about the North that gives ‘right of possession?’
The right to see a land
and a people
and say
and feel
that it is O.K. to take possession
That we are more civilised
and will benefit those already on that land
That we will bring a better morality
a better understanding of life
a better experience of life
That we have the answers.

The vanity.....the foolishness.....

Yet we bring in all the trappings of an alien life
and suffocate what is already there
alien food
alien clothes
alien morality
alien spirituality
alien lifestyle
Nothing...not one thing
interacts

So we fight...and fight...
to survive
Fight the land
Fight the people of the land
We do not listen
We do not see
We do not respond
until we have created a space...an environment
that is our own
Then and only then do we feel
a sense of place

But it is an alien place in this land
It sits on top...
over...
covering...
hiding...
    ignoring...
    all that is here
All that makes this land itself.

And what of our spirituality?
Those religions which came with us from the North?
from elsewhere?
They also sit on top
uneasy in their new location
Imposing their rituals
their beliefs
their festivals
their seasons
on a place that does not connect...communicate

Their place...their heart...
like the people who worship them
is not here.
It is in another land
where their people make pilgrimage
away...
    always away...
    never here...

never here

How then can we aliens feel a sense of place
of belonging
of home
of spiritual home
when we ignore and are ignorant of all that is here...
that was here from the beginning?

Can we recover what was lost...
connect with what was ignored...
or is it already too late
    too late to make a beginning
    to take the first step
    to take time to make the first step?

Women and the Land
Women on the Land
Women in the Land

Tread softly dear heart
Each step a mark.....an imprint

Know where you step
Be sure how and where you go

Be sure...secure...
    listen...
    feel...
    breathe...

The series of performance-rituals that followed comprised four seasonal rites of passage.
The seasonal nature of these events is briefly addressed here and examined more fully in
Chapter 6.

Beginnings

Beginnings (1999) was the first seasonal performance-ritual and was performed at PCL
Exhibitionists Gallery, Sydney on 10th July, 1999: Midwinter. Performers included
Kylie Bonaccorso, Sue Booker, Carly Hayman, Helen Kindness, Irene Kindness and
Annette Rups-Eyland. Costumes and masks by Irene Kindness. Exhibiting artists were
Peter Bastaja, Izette Felthun, Lisa Hunt, Irene Kindness, and Maritsa Micos. Beginnings
evolved from the questions asked, and statements made, in Centre of the Storm: the
videoed hypothesis, and the ensuing search to trace mythological, historical and ritual
ancestry. It was the first step.

Beginnings contains the earliest known stories and ritual practice from ancestral lands and
of pre-Christian heritage, and is performed in the tradition of travelling entertainers and
storytellers who were part of the celebration and ritual. It is a celebration of human,
ecological, and cosmic 'conception'.
Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival

Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival (1999) was the second seasonal performance-ritual. It was performed at Ecopolitics XII: 'Grounding Green Politics' on 8th October, 1999, at 9 a.m.: Spring. Performers included Sue Booker, Rani Brown, Jane Flower, Lynne Hudson, Ruby Hudson, Irene Kindness, Sean O'Keefe, Annette Rups-Eyland and Kelly Van Sebille.

Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival celebrates and questions 'birth'. It continues the tradition of 'travelling players', and is performed in the form of ancestral pilgrimages to 'sacred sites'. It is performed in memory of the history of human arrival, and establishment of 'place' and 'belonging' through settlement and agriculture, especially from the Neolithic period onwards. The story moves between a general story of arrival, a particular story of Elizabeth Pulley's arrival, and 'today's' perspective. The movement from 'past' to 'present' is marked spatially as the group moves deeper into the bush, the audience meeting up with the performers along the way. The pilgrimage is completed deep in the bush, on the top of a hill overlooking Megalong valley. In relation to family, the performance-ritual presents the arrivals, in Australia, of Elizabeth Pulley, Eliza Ann(e) Miller and Francois Constant Rups. These are accompanied by the arrival of other symbols of Western culture: its Greco-Roman and Christian heritage. The colonisation of nature is addressed.

The Fire of the Sun

The Fire of the Sun (2000) was the third in the series of seasonal performance-rituals which traced ancestors, stories, myths and dreaming from Northern Europe to Australia. It was a private performance-ritual which took place for the video camera from 6th February, 2000 in Sydney and surrounds: Summer. The needs of the performance in terms of sites (indoor and outdoor), images and characters made a single venue an impossible option.
BEGINNINGS
BY ARNETTE RUPS-EYLAND

supported by: kylie bonaccorso
sue booker, carly hayman, helen kindness
set & costume design: irene kindness

"...the first step on an epic journey through
northern europe to the antipodes, tracing
ancestors, stories, myths and dreamings ..."

PERFORMANCE: ONE NIGHT ONLY
SATURDAY 10TH JULY 1999 6PM
entry by donation

EXHIBITIONISTS
613 Elizabeth Street, Strawberry Hills NSW 2016 Tel: 0310 1277 Fax: 0310 1176
Gallery Hours: Mon-Fri 10am - 7pm; Sat 10am - 4pm

presented as part of phd thesis for university of western sydney, hawkesbury
Program

IN MEMORY OF
ELIZABETH PULLEY
the first of my ancestors to arrive in Australia
and the thousands of original inhabitants who died in the
years following

MARIJA GIMBUTAS
archaeologist and visionary
and Eastern Europe/the Balkans,
the lands where she conducted her research and developed
theories of a peaceful and matrilineal pre-historic civilization

AND
BAUBO
the down-to-earth, no nonsense bushwoman and survivor
who knows it all and still taunts the ‘rules’

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

a special thank you to

PCL EXHIBITIONISTS GALLERY

Insurance through DANCESPACE, a network of independent
performance artists

BEGINNINGS

BY
ANNETTE RUPS EYLAND
WITH
KYLIE BONACORSO
SUE BOOKER
CARLY HAYMAN
HELEN KINDNESS
IRENE KINDNESS

SET AND COSTUME DESIGN  IRENE KINDNESS

ONE NIGHT ONLY
SATURDAY 10TH JULY 1999 6PM

STORIES

Adaptations of

"Cessair" - an Irish cosmogonic tale
Lebor Gabala Erenn, Part II
translated by R.A.S. Macalister

"Voluspa" - a Norse mythological poem
The Poetic Edda
translated by A. H. Bellows

Assyrian/Babylonian text - Creation story
Religions of the Ancient Near East
translated by E.A. Speiser
edited by Isaac Miethe

The story of conception
The Seed Bearers, Part I, 'The Egg'
written by Irene Coates
used with permission from the author.

Aboriginal tradition
Blue Mountains Dreaming
written by Eugene Stockton
Performed as part of Ecopolitics XII, *Grounding Green Politics*

FRIDAY 8TH OCTOBER 1999, 9 a.m.
KARUNA CONFERENCE CENTRE, EXPLORERS TREE ROAD
KATOOMBA

**INVITATION**

**SENSE OF PLACE. SACRED SPACE**

**'ARRIVAL'**

performed by annette rups-eyland

and

friends

The second in a series of seasonal performances which trace ancestors, stories, myths and dreamings from Northern Europe to Australia presented as part of Phd thesis for the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury.

'Arrival' explores our ambivalent relationship with the environment and our experience of sense of place and sacred space in the context of Spring.

Annette is a freelance performer and creator of works. She has been part of the Sydney scene for many years and continues to explore the meeting points of theatre, dance, story and meaning. Her more recent works include, ‘Into the Dark’ (1993), ‘Dark Fire’ (1994), ‘For Eve’ (1995), ‘Fallen Totems’ (1997) and ‘Beginnings’ (1999).

 Masks used in this performance are by ’Irene Kindness.
Program

SENSE OF PLACE, SACRED SPACE

‘ARRIVAL’

by annette runs-eyland

The second in a series of seasonal performances which trace ancestors, stories, myths and
dreamings from Northern Europe to Australia presented as part of PhD thesis for the
University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury.

There are many arrivals, many bithnings, each one a catalyst for change. ‘Arrival’
explodes this as well as the story of our ambivalent relationship to nature and our
experience of sense of place and sacred space in the context of Spring.

Annette is a freelance performer and creator of works. She has been part of the Sydney
scene for many years and continues to explore the meeting points of theatre, dance, story
and meaning. Her more recent works include, ‘Into the Dark’ (1993), ‘Dark Fire’ (1994),

Masks used in this performance are by Irene Kindness.

Performers

Sue Booker, Rani Brown, Jac Flower, Lynne Hudson,
Ruby Hudson, Irene Kindness, Sean O’Keefe, Annette Runs-Eyland, Kelly Van Sebille

‘ARRIVALS’

1788
Elizabeth Pulley (1761 - 1837)
Anthony Rope (1758 - 1843)
Convicts
From Norfolk, East Anglia, England

1841
Eliza Ann(e) Mill-r (1815 - 1910)
Farm servant
From County Tyrone, Ireland

1945
François Constant Rups
Born in Huisen, The Netherlands, 1918.
From Java (Indonesia)

Also in memory of

GEOFFREY GEORGE ROPE
born 31st January 1920
died 26th September, 1999.

HILDEGARD VON BINGEN
1098 - 1179
abbess, writer, poet, artist, composer, healer, visionary

BRIDGIT
Pagan Irish goddess of childbirth, healing, craft, poetry, divination and
prophecy
who became Christian patron saint of Spring


Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival
The Fire of the Sun

(Mask: Irene Kindness)
6-8 pm  
Tuesday 11th April, 2000

PCL EXHIBITIONISTS  
613 Elizabeth Street, Strawberry Hills 2016  
Ph. (02) 9310 1176

I have been invited to open the above art exhibition and am using this as the fourth and final performance in the four part series I have been devising as partial requirements for Phd. at the University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury. Although the series has seasonal and thematic continuity each performance is discrete and can be viewed and experienced independently of the other three. The performance will be presented as a series of short items during the evening.

PASSAGE
by Annette Rups-Eyland and friends
This performance-ritual is really a series of parallel performances artificially fused into a continuous story recorded on video. The story is centred around selected ancestral figures from the Bronze Age to 18th century from East Anglia, the region of Elizabeth Pulley’s origin. These are Boudicca, Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, as well as Pulley. Thematically, *The Fire of the Sun* explores ‘growth’, ‘adulthood’, and ‘survival’ as individuals, as ‘a people’, and as an evolving world. It layers concepts such as ‘fire’, ‘sun’, ‘love’, ‘war’, and ‘spirit’ over the story of colonisation and its affects on women, and indigenous inhabitants. It specifically interrogates the Roman colonisation of Britain and the British colonisation of Australia from this perspective. In this way it moves from the human-nature-place interface of *Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival*, to include human-human, and human-spirit.

Pulley’s journey is traced as a pilgrimage and becomes ‘sacred’ and a ritual, when fused and completed, or viewed in parallel, with the other stories, and with questions about life.  

*Passage*

*Passage* (2000) was the last in the series of seasonal performance-rituals. It was performed as part of the Opening night at PCL Exhibitionists Gallery, Sydney, on 11th April, 2000; Autumn. Performers included Sue Booker, Helen Kindness, Annette Rups-Eyland and Kellie Van Sebille. Visual artists, whose work was being exhibited, were Lyndal Campbell, Maritsa Micos, and Irene Kindness.

Although still influenced by ancestral traditions, the historical time-frame of this performance-ritual is ‘the present’. It is a time to revisit and ‘let go’. Thematically, *Passage* centres on ‘maturity’, ‘aging’, ‘holding’, and ‘return’.
Centre of the Storm as a Rite of Passage

Like the other performance-rituals, Centre of the Storm (1998-2000) is a rite of passage involving rites of separation, transition and incorporation. The whole event can either be viewed as one five-part rite of passage, or as five independent performance-rituals, each with its own rite of passage. As illustrated in Chapter 4, this means that, within the broader frame, each performance-ritual can contain its own rites of separation, transition and incorporation.

Centre of the Storm (1998-2000), like Dark Fire and Leavetaking, veers more towards the ‘ritual’ side of ‘performance-ritual’. This is supported, in Centre of the Storm, by its seasonal, or cosmic, nature, by the awareness of synchronicities, by the lack of rehearsal and, therefore, limited opportunities for objectivity, by the ensuing need to ‘rely on the energies’, and by each event being performed only once. ‘Great performances’ they were not: rituals they were.  

The following analysis follows a similar process to that in Chapter 4. The rite of passage is examined as:

- Rites of Separation
- Rites of Transition
  - Rites of Celebration, Remembering, Naming, and Honouring
  - Rites of Exorcism, Female Fury, Mourning, and Healing
  - Rites of Holding
  - Rites of Letting Go
  - Rites of Initiation
  - Seasonal rites
- Rites of Incorporation

Short examples of some of these rites are given on the videotape in Appendix C, the order for which is written in the appendix. It may be easier to read the relevant section, then view the excerpt. The category of each rite is named in the videotape before the relevant
section. The list of rites and concepts in Appendix C is sequenced in the order they appear on the videotape, and are discussed in the written text. This sequence is not necessarily followed in practice, as Chapters 4-6 make clear, and many occur simultaneously. They are taken out of context for the purpose of discussion. To view the rites in the context of each complete performance-ritual, view the appropriate videotape in Appendix D.

During the process of the rite of passage, these smaller rites assist in engendering, and/or confirming, the psychic, spatial and cosmic changes needed for the passage to be complete.

**Rites of Separation**

When *Centre of the Storm* is viewed as a whole, the first performance-ritual, *Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis*, is a rite of separation (Appendix C:1). The rite of separation is the performer’s visit to an art exhibition reenacted in the video. The images in the artwork trigger a feeling of being ‘a displaced woman... living in a strange land’ and the need to examine ancestral history to find out why (*Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis*, 1998). The questions which arise include,

What is it about the North that gives ‘right of possession’?

And what of our spirituality?

Those religions that came with us from the North?

from elsewhere?

How can we aliens feel a sense of place

of belonging

of home

of spiritual home...?
Can we recover what was lost...? *(Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis, 1998)*

These questions form the base for the ensuing performance-rituals.

When viewed as five separate rites of passage, however, each performance-ritual has its own rite of separation. The rites of separation in *Beginnings* and *Arrival* are accomplished by the entrance of travelling players and their greeting of the audience. This begins, for the performers, as they remove everyday wear, put on costume and make up, and warm up, in the same way as the performance-rituals examined in Chapter 4. Similarly, in *Beginnings*, the door between the back room and the exhibition area spatially marks the moment of separation. The separation in *Arrival* is gradual. It begins, for the performers, with ‘dressing up’ and forming the procession. For the audience, it begins when they hear the drummer and first notice the approaching flags. In both cases, the area where the audience waits and moves is transformed into a performance and sacred ritual area, as the performers move into the space.

In *Fire of the Sun* the rite of separation becomes part of the research and performed enactment, which occur concurrently. It is personal and private. For *Passage* the rite of separation is made by the performers when, again, they put on costumes and make up, warm up, move through the back door, and place themselves in the performing area before the art patrons arrive. For the art patrons, the rite of separation occurs when they enter the front door and realise that the performance is already underway. As there are three separate short performances in this performance-ritual, the rites of separation for the shorter sections occur in the same way for the performers and audience: when the performers enter the exhibition area through the back door.
Rites of Transition

When viewed as one long rite of passage, the ensuing four performance-rituals which evolve out of the initial video, and which attempt to test the hypothesis, are part of the transitional phase. This means that the rite of transition for Centre of the Storm contains the four seasonal rites of passage: Beginnings, Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival, The Fire of the Sun, and Passage. This phase is one of learning about, and expressing through performance, ancestral history and tradition, especially in relation to Western colonisation of women, nature and indigenous people. This means that even though each performance-ritual has its own rite of separation, it is performed in the ‘liminal’ state, so that the journey is continuous from Beginnings to Passage. In this way each performance-ritual is part of the one, long rite of transition; a time of learning and understanding.

The transitional phase is where the purpose of each performance-ritual is made clear through the identification of what needs to be learnt, understood, and sorted. The process involves the enactment of smaller rites, such as, rites of remembering, holding, mourning, honouring, celebrating and re-naming.

Rites of Celebration, Remembering, Naming, and Honouring

As illustrated in Chapter 4, a number of rites are enacted during the transitional phase. Although all the performance-rituals are seasonal rites of celebration, the first performance-ritual, Beginnings, particularly illustrates this rite (Appendix C: 2.1).

Beginnings

Beginnings is a rite of celebration of ‘conception’ and the magic that is life. This is particularly expressed in the first dances and stories, which are presented in a lighthearted manner, involving laughter, audience participation, and high energy. The celebration is accompanied by rites of remembering past stories and cosmogonic traditions of ‘beginnings’ and ‘conception’: ‘Many years ago in Egypt...’ (Beginnings, 1999). Rites
of honouring a woman’s womb, where conception occurs, recur: ‘It is said a woman’s egg hold the life force, the cell of life’ (Beginnings, 1999). A rite of naming the reality of violence, war and rape also intrudes as part of the cosmogonic story of the Norns, as the performers enact the giantesses watching over their ‘perfect creation’ as it begins to get out of control and self-destruct.

**Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival**

On the other hand, Arrival is a rite of remembering and naming Western tradition and history of ‘arrival’, and the ensuing destructive impact on the natural environment (Appendix C: 2.2). It moves from the realm of cosmogony and mythology to history: ‘I want to tell you a story, a story of my people...’ (Narrator in Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival, 1999). Immigrant ancestors are honoured and their misplacement named, as the pilgrimage follows their arrival and ‘disappearance’ into the bush: ‘Where are yo’? C’m on out now. I can ‘ear yo’ back there. Yo’ can’t ‘ide from me. Don’ think I’m frightened of you’, I aint, yo’ ‘ear me...’ (Pulley in Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival, 1999). At the end of the performance-ritual, nature is honoured, enacted through movement and sound, in a rite of honouring, mourning, petition, and hope for continuance on the top of a hill. There is a desire to respect and honour the beauty and uniqueness of ‘nature’ and join with it in be-ing.

**The Fire of the Sun**

The Fire of the Sun also includes rites of remembering, naming and honouring of ancestors, particularly Boudicca, Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, and Elizabeth Pulley. The story follows Boudicca’s and Pulley’s journey during the process of colonisation, in an attempt to imagine the story from both sides. In Pulley’s case, the story becomes a pilgrimage to ‘sacred sites’. The Fire of the Sun names the reality of the destruction of indigenous people during colonisation, while at the same time, honouring indigenous and coloniser’s lives, and the complex nature of survival: ‘This week Caesar landed in Britain...The resistance to Roman rule in Britain has resurfaced...(and, later)
the city streets have turned into rivers of blood’ and ‘It ‘aint right what ‘appened’ (Newsreader, and Pulley in The Fire of the Sun, 2000) (Appendix C:2.3).

Passage

Passage is a time of remembering and honouring. In Passage, the memories are carried and honoured in the first two sections by the actions, body decorations, and dance with the masks. The first rite of remembering is one of coming to terms with the year just passed, signified by each performer creating their own way of interpreting the idea. At the same time the year, and their journey is honoured (Appendix C:2.4). The end of this rite is marked by painting a decoration on the body. The second rite of remembering is that of revisiting Fallen Totems, the masks for which just happened to be on display. Fallen Totems was where the quest began to find ‘a time when...’, a time of peace and perfection. It was also the time when the need for a spirituality that fits into the Australian seasonal context was identified (Fallen Totems, 1997). This part of the rite of remembering and honouring is marked by speaking the first few lines of the performance poem, and moving with the masks: ‘Once I had a dream, a dream of Nirvana...’ (Passage, 2000).

Rites of Exorcism, Female Fury, Mourning, and Healing (Appendix C: 2.5, 2.6)

Centre of the Storm (1998-2000) is more concerned with the ecstasy of renaming, so rites of exorcism figure less prominently when compared to the earlier performance-rituals. Nor is Female Fury so dominant. Yet, because life is complex and contradictory, the need for exorcism remains.

In Beginnings, the Norns watch their ‘perfect’ creation break down and attempt to try and stop the ‘carnage’. They enact a rite of mourning, healing, and rebirth for their damaged creation, and move on. Female Fury becomes mourning. There seems to be a
growing acceptance, and the complexities are partly exorcised, through the process of mourning.

_Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival_ continues this gentler response. There is a confrontation with Western history of colonisation of nature, but the furied response is not there. Again, ‘Fury’ becomes ‘mourning’. The sense of _mourning_ is held in the words, ‘But in the recreating, and the ignorance of their recreating, they changed forever, more quickly, more permanently, this Eden’, and ‘What I see I love and mourn it passing with passion. What I do not see, have never seen, have never heard, never experienced, I do not miss at all. And that is the reality’ (Narrator, _Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival_, 1999). The rite of mourning continues in the final dance on the hill, but is combined with the rites of honouring, petition, and hope. In this way the contradictions are, again, partly exorcised through this action.

In _The Fire of the Sun_, however, _Female Fury_ makes its presence felt in the character of Boudicca, as she responds to the rape of her daughters. Western history of colonisation of ‘others’ is confronted, from an imagined experience of ‘the colonised’, and held together with the story of one of the colonisers. Here Fury is present in full force and exorcised in Boudicca’s leaping attack on ‘all’ aggressors. Female Fury is followed by a rite of _mourning_, expressed through superimposing the figure of Margery Kempe over the words of Julian of Norwich: ‘And at once I saw the red blood trickling down from under the garland, hot, fresh, and plentiful...’ (Julian of Norwich, _The Fire of the Sun_, 2000). In the words, the image of a ‘perfect’ God of Love is held together with the story of the dying Christ, His sacrificed Son.

Although each performance-ritual has its own rite of exorcism, the rite of _exorcism_ for the whole series is completed in the final performance-ritual, _Passage_. In the third section of this performance-ritual, the rite of mourning is for the loss of ‘the dream’ of Nirvana, accentuated by the movement and the accompanying poem. The contradictions and
complexities held in the previous events are finally exorcised and partially let go, through the medium of dance and the words: ‘Once I had a dream, a dream of Nirvana...’ (Passage, 2000). Yet the exorcism is still only partial. Instead, the action of ‘holding together’, as well as ‘letting go’, these complexities has taken over the need to exorcise completely. There seems to be a growing acceptance of paradox.

**Rites of Holding**

Rites of holding together contradictions and paradoxes are continuous with many of the rites examined in the previous section.

**Beginnings**

In *Beginnings* the rite of holding is combined with a rite of honouring and mourning, when the Norns sing over, care for, and re-incorporate those who have suffered. As well as a physical symbol of Sara Ruddick’s (1989) interpretation of ‘holding’, as a ‘characterological protectiveness’ ‘toward the vulnerable’, it becomes a rite of holding ‘the ideal’ together with ‘the reality’, and of acknowledging the birth-death-rebirth cycle of life contained in the stories and action. From *Beginnings* on, each performance-ritual in the rest of the series functions as a rite of holding ‘the ideal’ together with ‘the reality’.

**Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival**

This performance-ritual is a rite of holding the contradiction between the reality of separation from nature following colonisation, the ideal of being one with nature, and the resulting unease. The contradiction is expressed in words as well as action.

“They say it’s evolution,
   progress,
   the future,
change for the better,
   change for our survival...our immortality.

That is the dream.

But where do we come from, we who dream,
and what is the future we are dreaming of?
For if the dream becomes the reality,
what is the place we have come to out of our dreaming?'

(Narrator, *Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival*, 1999)

The contradiction is called, danced out, and let go in the final movement sequence on the hill.

*The Fire of the Sun* (Appendix C: 2.7)

The rite of *holding* together becomes the key rite in *The Fire of the Sun*, when the tension between ‘the real’ and ‘the ideal’ in the emerging themes reaches breaking point. The materiality of living and attempting to complete the research, and ‘a performance’ which seemed to have no place to be, mirrored the conflicts from the past. The ritual is ‘lived’ as it is ‘performed’. Rites of *remembering and naming* of ancestors, particularly Pulley who arrived on the First Fleet, which was to be the main purpose of this performance-ritual, does take place, but is tempered with the ‘guilt’ associated with learning of the destruction of the indigenous Australians at the time. In the light of this, there is a need to ‘hold together’ the two sides of the story and be able to still honour ancestor’s lives, without losing the horror of the destruction.

The knowledge of other stories from an earlier ancestral past, that of Boudicca, Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich, gives a continuity to this life-death-rebirth metaphor and the process of colonisation. The paradox inherent in such stories of ‘survival’ are expressed by the visual presence of the masks, the ‘wandering woman’, and the words of Julian of Norwich: ‘For I saw that God in fact does everything, however little that thing may be. Indeed nothing happens by luck or chance, but all is through the foresight and wisdom of God’ (*Julian of Norwich, The Fire of the Sun*, 2000).

The stories illustrate the interlocking and conflicting themes underlying human ‘survival’; themes such as ‘Summer’, ‘sun’, ‘fire’, ‘sexual pleasure’, ‘spiritual desire’, ‘love’, ‘hate’, and ‘war’. They also illustrate that one of the outcomes of this expression is the rape of women and children during war, invasion, and other conflicts involving power.
It is through Boudicca that Female Fury is expressed in reaction to this realisation. The rite of holding is continued through the visual images and the words of Julian of Norwich.

**Passage**

In *Passage*, the need to hold together ‘the reality’ and ‘the ideal’, or ‘dream’, is accompanied by the need to let go, so will be discussed under the latter rite.

During each performance-ritual there is an additional action of ‘holding together’; one of holding together ‘spirit’, ‘self’, other performers and audience. The need to ‘listen’ to all of these energies requires that the event be somewhat open-ended and flexible. In other words, it needs to be simultaneously ‘let go’. The openendedness is tempered by a strong ‘grip’ on material reality, so that the event does not get out of control. There is a balance needed and, in the process, inner harmony is maintained or regained.

**Rites of Letting Go**

Rites of letting go accompany, or follow, other rites and, in ritual as well as performance, the event itself needs to be let go at some stage.

**Beginnings**

In *Beginnings*, the rites of letting go include the Norns action of letting go for rebirth of the ‘damaged’. A second rite of letting go the ‘newly made’ for birth, is enacted by the storyteller at the end of the adaptation of the Assyrian/Babylonian myth of Mummu-Tiamat. She moulds the clay into human form, lets them go, and encourages their entry into life.

The rite of letting go for the event itself begins when the drum and flute begin to play after the final story, the lights come up, and the audience is invited to join in a dance of
celebration. The letting go is complete, and joins with the rite of incorporation, when the
performers exit the performing area.

_Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival_ (Appendix C: 2.8)

In _Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival_, the rite of _letting go_ of both the contradictions
held, and the event itself, occurs at the end, on the hill. It is sung and danced out by the
performers, and then completed as the performers turn and exit. Like _Beginnings_, this
moment fuses with the rite of incorporation.

_The Fire of the Sun_

There is no rite of _letting go_ in _The Fire of the Sun_. Rather, the contradictions held in the
stories and images remain. These contradictions are finally let go in the following
performance-ritual, _Passage_. At the time of _The Fire of the Sun_, as it was a video, not a
live performance and, as the video had not been satisfactorily edited, the performance-
ritual itself also remained incomplete. It was finally let go 6th March, 2002 when the
video was finally edited.

_Passage_

_Passage_ is a rite of _letting go_. The ‘letting go’ begins with shaving the hair in the first
section. It continues, and is completed with the incorporation of the Aboriginal flag and
other designs into the body decoration after the second section, and the movement
sequence in the third section. The third section of _Passage_ is the time and place where the
year, the quest for Nirvana, the ‘guilt’ associated with the knowledge of the colonising
ancestral past, and the whole performance-ritual project is ‘let go’. Yet ‘nothing is
forgotten’ and the moving on is accomplished with the full story being acknowledged. In
this way, while let go, the contradictions and paradoxes are not forgotten, but held
together with the letting go, in the unconscious. In this rite, the shaving of hair becomes
part of the rite of letting go, as well as the rites of mourning and initiation.
Rite of Initiation

Centre of the Storm (1998-2000) is a rite of initiation, but the intention of, and knowledge required for, this initiation is different to the examples given in Chapter 4. The earlier rites of initiation are movements out. They are rites which mark the participant’s increasing distance from society’s foreground, or centre. In Centre of the Storm, however, while there is still movement to an increasing boundary position, the rite of initiation is also into something: into a new way of believing and being. The intention is to establish a new spiritual ground, and this affects the process. The preparation for initiation is the research, rehearsal, and enactment; the time of learning, thinking, and sorting. The performance-rituals become the process of initiation. That is, the initiation takes place through the performance of the stories.

This has similarities to the oral bardic tradition where initiation took place through the telling, or singing, of stories using verse. It was the knowledge of ancestral history, mythology, tradition and law, and the way in which the storyteller, or singer/musician, was able to put the stories together, which qualified the performer as a Bard (Walker, 1971:Bff.). Centre of the Storm is an extension of this tradition using dance, drama and ritual, as well as verse, story and music, to create a new spirituality. The links are continued by the costuming and ‘setting’ of the performance-rituals. They are performances presented by travelling players.

In the final performance-ritual, Passage, the shaving of hair and application of body decoration symbolises that the initiation into a new way of being and believing is complete (Appendix C: 2.9).

Seasonal Rites

The series of four performance-rituals also function as seasonal rites. The first, Beginnings, is in Midwinter and celebrates conception. Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival is performed during Spring and celebrates birth. The Fire of the
Sun is performed in Summer and struggles with survival. Passage, timed for Autumn, is the time of return. In this way the circular birth-death-rebirth cycle of life is acknowledged and becomes part of the emerging spirituality. Chapter 6 continues the examination of the spiritual aspects of the series.

Rites of Incorporation

Rites of incorporation occur in each performance-ritual. In Beginnings the rite occurs when the players thank the audience for coming, and leave the performing area through the door from which they entered. In Arrival, it is a staggered individual process for each of the performers and audience members. As there is no ‘official’ ending, all the participants are left contemplating the view, therefore needing to create their own way of ‘letting go’ the event and returning to ‘everyday’. The Fire of the Sun was not ‘let go’ at the time of performance. It was still unresolved and incomplete, although it was partially ‘let go’ in Passage. The lack of ‘closure’ was due, in part, to the inability to create an adequate videotaped record of this performance-ritual, and the need for a supporting visual record was important for a sense of completion of the rite and for the purposes of this document. It could also be partly due to a lack of understanding of, and respect for, ‘fire’, which was the associated metaphor. This lack of understanding was addressed by the experiences of the bushfires in January, 2002, when I faced the real possibility of losing ‘all worldly possessions’ to fire. The videotape was finally completed and ‘let go’ two months later, in March, 2002.

The incorporation for Passage occurs when the performers leave the performing area, each time through the back door, and the audience resumes being ‘art patrons’ and focus on the artwork. As well as being part of the transitional phase, the final performance-ritual, Passage, also functions as a rite of incorporation for the whole series. The learning has been accomplished and it is time for the participants to be incorporated back into society with this new knowledge. Passage is performed with the understanding that, even though some things are not answered or resolved, or, perhaps, ever will be, there is
a need to 'let go' so that the journey can continue (Appendix C: 3). As Passage is the last seasonal rite in the series, the cycle ends on the readiness to 'let go', as a preparation for 'death' and/or 'rebirth'.

**When Performance Becomes Ritual**

The differences between performance and performance-ritual, that are identified in Chapter 4, continue with *Centre of the Storm* in relation to the performers and subjectivity and there is nothing new to add. The apparent synchronicities that occurred added to the ecstasy experienced during the journey.

**Synchronicities**

The series, *Centre of the Storm*, is the outcome of questions, and the journey is one of stepping out without answers. The answers are revealed along the way. The process was assisted by synchronistic events which were not planned. The timing and site for each seasonal rite depended on invitation and opportunity. All ended up being situated at a time and in a place that was 'perfect' and in some, synchronous occurrences during the performance added to the themes being addressed. ‘Mistakes’ became ‘moments of revelation’. Opportunities for rehearsal, if they happened at all, were rare, interrupted, and incomplete. So, the performers relied on their own intuition and a trust in the energy of the event itself. They were not let down.

**Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis**

Prior to visiting the art exhibition which began this series, another project was underway, but it seemed to be blocked at every turn. After six months of dissatisfaction, a visit to an art exhibition triggered a text, the text became a video, and the journey had begun. This new direction answered more completely the unidentified questions which motivated the first project.
Beginnings

PCL Exhibitionists gallery offered their space for the performance of *Beginnings* at a time which coincided with Kindness’s exhibition.\textsuperscript{9} It happened to be the appropriate space, indoors, and time of the year for the themes of conception and Midwinter.

Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival

This performance-ritual became part of Ecopolitics XII, being held at the right time of the year for the theme of ‘Spring’. Although it had been raining all week, the morning was perfect weather for the presentation, allowing the full outdoor pilgrimage to take place. The setting was also perfect for the content. At an appropriate time during proceedings, an aeroplane flew overhead drowning out the dialogue of ‘the narrator’ who was questioning ‘progress’ and stumbling over the words. The juxtaposition said it all. Later, while on the hill enjoying the silence and sounds of the birds, a telephone began to ring in the valley below, disturbing the peace. It was a perfect coincidence. At the very end during the final dance, a breeze seemed to join in with the movement of the dancers.

The Fire of the Sun

*The Fire of the Sun* had no place to be. It was a time of confusion and chaos when there was no time left to organise anything, and nothing presented itself. This ‘lack of connection’ accentuated the themes of ‘survival’ and ‘conflict’. The most exciting coincidence was that the filming date for Elizabeth Pulley’s story was cancelled by the technician and ended up being on 6th February, the same date she first set foot on Australian soil. This coincidence continued two years later, when the re-editing of her videoed journey began on 6th February, 2002.

Passage

For *Passage*, PCL Exhibitionists, once again, offered their gallery to the performers to coincide with one of Kindness’s exhibitions, and the artwork seemed to support the themes, even though it had been motivated by a different context.\textsuperscript{10} At this stage there
was a need to return ‘inside’, so the indoor space was appropriate. The senses of ‘return’ and ‘revisiting’ were also supported by the masks on display and the fact that it was an exhibition at PCL’s which triggered the initial video and hypothesis.

As has been illustrated, it is difficult to pinpoint ‘the one thing’ that creates ‘ritual’. Rather, it is the interplay of life and ‘spirit’, which determines intention, which then determines the structure and function, which then shapes the event. The intention insures that the performing area is approached as ‘sacred space’ which carries with it an attitude of respect. It determines what needs to be addressed and whether the event will be a rite of passage, a rite of initiation, a rite of exorcism, a seasonal rite, and what other rites will be included. This is not a conscious decision. Rather, an inner dialogue takes place between ‘the self’, the ‘material world’, and the world of the ‘spirit’. Synchronicities then take on greater significance. The transitions which occur also include a transition between material and spiritual realities. In ‘performance-ritual’ they are triggered by memories, a ‘need to know’, and a ‘need to listen’. Questions are asked about life of ‘Life Force’, with a sense of the specialness, and therefore the importance, of honouring, life.

Ideally, the event cannot be completely pre-planned or rehearsed. If it is held too tightly and is too controlled, it ‘dies’. In the final analysis, rituals are once-only events for the participants, or are performed at a particular time. This gives them significance. If they do their job, the participants are able to move on with a feeling of ‘being complete’. Performance-ritual, in general, and Centre of the Storm, in particular, fulfils these identifiers for this creator-performer. In addition to form, structure, and function, this series in particular, has similar content to traditional Christian ritual. It uses stories and action to honour ‘spirit’, and spirit within ancestral lives. Where it differs from most traditional religions is that it accomplishes this through a return to body, nature and place. These concepts are examined in Chapter 6.
Notes

1 Videotaped records of these performance-rituals are in Appendix D.

2 Scripts for the performance-rituals are in Appendix A.


4 Pulley’s story is in Appendix B.

5 This does not mean that they do not hold the potential to become ‘great performances’. Rather, the aim was to complete the spiritual journey, not present a ‘perfect product’.

6 The first lines of this poem were written, and used purposely, in full awareness of Rev. Martin Luther King.


Chapter 6  Centre of the Storm as Feminist Spirituality

Once upon a time in a land
some call Mesopotamia
there was a beautiful garden
untouched by human hands

Once upon a time in a land
we now call Australia
  Africa
  Ireland
  Thailand
  Netherlands
  Finland
  India
  Indonesia…
there was a beautiful garden
  desert
  lake
  sea
  mountain
  river
  forest
untouched by human hands

And from the earth
  water
  air
  fire
in that sacred place
emerged a woman and a man

The woman became She who birthed the beginnings of all the nations of the world
  including the nation of my birth

Some say she was a supernatural being
  a goddess

Some say she was the daughter of a supernatural father
  and gave birth to his son
  who became Lord of the earth

I say if this is the case
  it is incest
  perhaps rape
and I refuse to accept this
as the story
  of the beginnings of Life
  or the beginnings of my life
  or the life of my people

Better she be a goddess in her own right
The Mother of The Nations
equal in power to the man
  whose seed fertilised her egg
for it was her egg that chose to accept
and not reject
his sperm
and it was she who chose to accept
and not reject
the man

...at least
that is the myth I choose to believe

For I am a woman of my time
My attitudes are set
by the experiences
understandings
knowledge
of being a woman
in this place
at this time

*Centre of the Storm* is the first step in the process of 'renaming' and reforming spiritual belief, and as such moves towards 'ecstasy' in the journey of exorcism and ecstasy. It extends the embodied spiritual expression of 19th-20th century performers, by beginning to establish a new spiritual tradition through performance-ritual. This chapter examines this journey from the perspective of an emerging ecofeminist theology.¹

*Centre of the Storm* is performed ritual and, as this thesis argues, 'ritual' assumes a magico-religious context. The Christian religion has its own sacred stories, 'housed' in the Christian Bible. The stories are of a 'people chosen by God' and, in the New Testament, stories of one particular person 'chosen by God'. The Biblical stories, however, have been selected by 'elders' who were men and, as feminist theologians and others illustrate, are stories which suited masculine needs in a given patriarchal society. They are stories about men being, doing and believing, and of women being placed 'in relationship' to them. Feminist theologians also illustrate how the rituals that accompany these religious beliefs are quintessentially masculine.

In this study, performance-ritual has emerged from the notion of a growing awareness of this bias and the need to discover a spirituality that relates to an individual woman's experience and gives hope. This is the work of much feminist theological writing, and performance-ritual is part of this work. The work began in earlier performance-rituals,
Dark Fire (1994), For Eve (1995), Fallen Totems (1997) and Leavetaking (1997), but these performance-rituals function more as ‘journeys of exorcism’ and the re-naming was only partial. Centre of the Storm is the first step in the spiralling journey of the ecstasy of re-naming.

In Search of a New Spirituality

The performance-ritual, Fallen Totems (1997), involved a search for an alternative ‘way of being’ in traditional stories of women, most of whom, at some stage, were betrayed and victimised. As has been argued, this mythology was written by men, to be read by men, and ‘symbolic women’ were used to position or disparage women as a group. In Fallen Totems the reasons for the betrayal and victimisation becomes clear. The question arises, then, ‘what can serve as an alternative?’.

Although Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis (1998) questions the relevance of Christianity to contemporary Australia, the ensuing series of performance-rituals developed a similar tradition and content to that housed in the Christian Bible. The Biblical Old Testament is a story of ‘a people’s’ beginnings, arrival and survival in a new land called Israel. The New Testament is the story of one young man’s arrival, birth and journey in that land. The stories place these two versions of the one faith in a particular land, a holy land, to which all the faithful make pilgrimage. The performance-rituals in Centre of the Storm (1998-2000) are created from stories of a particular family’s journey to, arrival, and survival, in Australia. They also contain the story of one ancestor, Elizabeth Pulley who, although not born here, journeyed through, and learned how to survive (Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival, 1999 and The Fire of the Sun, 2000). The performance-rituals that trace this journey, also interrogate and re-present it through the skein of feminist spirituality. Like the Christian liturgy, Centre of the Storm encapsulates the whole story with selected examples in ritual form, which honour ancestral lives and journeys while acknowledging ‘the mystery’ underlying it all. Some of the performance-rituals also become pilgrimages to ‘sacred sites’.
In contrast to Christianity, however, this spirituality is based on the premise that life itself is ‘the magic’ and needs no outside ‘God’. It links ancestral lives with the present, as part of an ongoing ‘sacred’ story that gives a sense of continuity. The contradictions in, and paradoxes of, life are confronted. Whereas in Christianity ‘the dark’ is placed ‘outside of and in opposition to God’, in Centre of the Storm, it is perceived as part of ‘who we are’ and therefore part of the ‘balance’, and contradiction, of life. Centre of the Storm also differs in that it takes into account the specialness of the Australian context; its natural history, its long history of indigenous occupation, and short history of European colonisation.

The differences continue with Centre of the Storm coming from this woman’s perspective, and focusing on stories of women. Centre of the Storm may be only one individual woman’s story but this does not preclude other women having similar stories. There is no ‘universal woman’, as feminists have argued. Rather, there are only similarities between individual women’s experiences. In Centre of the Storm some similarities between women’s experiences become part of the story. This begins with a return to ‘body’; a woman’s body.

The developing spiritual matrix then moves from ‘body’ to ‘nature’ and ‘place’, inclusive of ‘family’. Although the whole series explores the themes ‘body’, ‘nature’ and ‘place’, each performance-ritual concentrates more particularly on one aspect. Beginning’s main emphasis is ‘body’, Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival’s is ‘nature’, The Fire of the Sun’s is ‘place’, and Passage’s is a return to ‘body’, ‘holding’, and ‘letting go’. The other difference between the performance-rituals is that Beginnings is a celebration of the body. There is no sense of being separate to it. By contrast, Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival and The Fire of the Sun interrogates Western separation from nature and place. In Passage, there is a reintegration, with ‘body’, as site of ‘holding’ and ‘letting go’.

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The following analysis follows the same thematic structure used in Chapter 4.

Body
Nature
Place
Spirit

Short examples of these are given on the accompanying videotape in Appendix C. The order is as is on the list. Again, it is suggested that the relevant section is read before viewing the videotape.

**Body**

The need to find the 'magic' in life, from this woman's perspective, and the need to tie it to the Australian cycle of seasonal change, leads automatically to an examination of 'conception', and the way in which it occurs in the body of a woman, and in relation to nature. For spiritual feminists, such as Melissa Raphael, it is part of 'resituating the body in...feminist sacred space' (Raphael, 1996:226). What the focus on 'site of conception' as 'sacred space' does, is return attention to a woman's womb as the site where the action of 'mystery' is most closely experienced for many women. The womb is the place where the potential for life is realised. The general problem of essentialising 'woman', and using anatomical and physiological images, has already been addressed in Chapter 1. Not all women have children, some women do not have a womb, and for others, the sexual organ is a site of trauma. Yet, for many women, conception and giving birth are a reality, and birthing is a process which has brought the world, and 'we who live in it', into being. *Centre of the Storm* celebrates this potentiality. Juxtaposed with this is the understanding that 'spirit' is immanent in every cell, and that there are many other ways of experiencing, expressing, and metaphoring this connection. In any case the thematic content of *Centre of the Storm*, the way it evolved, and its focus on ancestors led the
series back to the concept of a woman’s womb as a sacred site, and, therefore, one needing to be honoured.

*Centre of the Storm* returns to the metaphors explored at the end of *For Eve*, which view this woman’s body from the perspective of reproductive anatomy. In *Beginnings*, ‘conception’ is ‘the miracle’ which is Life. As it is ‘the beginning moment’ it is sacred. Where it occurs becomes ‘sacred place’ and how it occurs becomes ‘sacred story’. The sex act is celebrated, not hidden or ignored. The concept is extended to include other invisible ‘new beginnings’, such as those occurring in nature during Midwinter. All the performance-rituals in *Centre of the Storm* explore their themes in similar ways, embodying them with the assistance of stories, dances, masks, costumes, theatrical and spatial structuring, and setting.

*Beginnings*

In *Beginnings*, visual symbols, cosmogonic stories from Ireland, Northern Europe and Sumeria, stories of sacred sites, traditional dances and abstract movement are used to celebrate, and honour, the body of a woman, the sex act, and conception. While the stories are presented from a woman’s point of view they also acknowledge that conception needs two; elements that humans have named, ‘female’ and ‘male’. The concept of conception is extended to include the beginnings of all life. The celebration is conducted while ‘holding’ it together with two aspects which conflict with this. The first is that this ‘sacred site’ is often ‘desacralised’ by the reality of rape. The second is that, in recent times, women are in danger of losing ‘ownership’ and control of this sacred site and moment to the Petrie dish of in vitro fertilisation and genetic manipulation. From the particularity of this woman’s body, *Beginnings* expands the concept to include a celebration of the mystery and magic of the beginning of ‘The Beginning of Life’.
After the welcome and gathering dances, the first cosmogonic story and traditional dance, which celebrates the sex act in a lighthearted and subtle way, introduces the theme. The story is an ancient Irish cosmogonic myth.

A. Many years ago in Egypt there were rumours of a great Flood that would wipe away the world. A man named Noe,...

K. (interrupting) Noah!

A. (persisting) began to build a huge boat for his family in preparation for the Flood. He had a granddaughter called Cessair. (jumps on box. She is an older woman and the others boo her off)

H, K & S. Granddaughter??!

A. (stepping down. S. takes her place) One day she asked Noe for room on the ark for herself, her father and two others...

K. (interrupting again) Noe considered them to be robbers and thieves and would not let them on board.

A. So Cessair, who was also known as Daughter of the Universe, gathered together a group of fifty women who were called the Mothers of all the nations of the world, and three men,...

K. one of whom was her father Bith which means ‘Life’,

H. a second called Ladora the pilot

A. and a third called Fintan the Ocean (grabs cloth in glee and makes sea, getting carried away with being the centre of attention again)

H, K & S. Just get on with the story...etc.

A. (pleased with her own interruption)... and they built three ships of their own and set sail. She had heard of an island where no-one had ever been and where no evil or sin had been committed so she headed there thinking she would be safe from the flood. For many nights and days they travelled. (Others set out on journey)

First North from the Nile River in Egypt and across the Caspian Sea, then from the Caspian Sea across the Cimmerian Sea, from the Cimmerian Sea across the Torrian Sea, and then through the Alps to Spain.

From there Cessair, Daughter of the Universe and the others who were with her continued North until they reached Ireland the farthest point of the world. Two of their ships were shipwrecked but the third landed on the hill Dun na mBaur, the Fortress of the Ships.

They began exploring the island but one by one the men began to die. (during this section the others enact the story dramatically egging each other on)

Fintan fled in fear and hid lest he should die too (hides behind pillar). When Cessair heard that her father had died she let out such a cry it could be heard for days. Some say it broke her heart and that she died as well.
So it was that Cessair was the first woman to arrive in Ireland and that is why Cuile Cessrach in Connachta is named after her and Ireland was known as the land of women.

K. That doesn’t sound like a creation story

H. She’s right. Its as bad as the others, the sea was there already, and...

A. Yes it is... Look (placing the others in the space, and highlighting symbolism)
Cessair was Daughter of the Universe...The fifty women were the Mothers of all the Nations of the World...Fintan was the Ocean...Ladra was a good pilot...and...Bith was Life! (They pull up ocean, laughing, and move straight into dance - a version of Waves of Tory).³

(Beginnings, 1999)

The ensuing dance’s wave-like action simulates the rippling action of a woman’s womb during orgasm (Appendix C: 4).

As the performance-ritual progresses so does the particularity of the body and the sacred moment of conception. This moment is announced by the ‘dance of the mask’ and an ‘imagined’ secret woman’s ceremony, ‘somewhere when...’⁴. The ‘dance of the mask’ can be interpreted in many ways. The cloth used in the dance is the one used in the first story to symbolise ‘water’ or ‘fluid’, so the ‘dance of the mask’ could be a ‘dance of the water spirit’ or ‘cleansing’ or ‘healing’. There was certainly a need for cleansing and/or healing and a new beginning after the previous section, which was where the Norns mourned over the loss of their ‘Nirvana’. The length of the cloth could also indicate a ‘dance of the serpent’. Alternatively, it could be just a ‘dance of announcement’ for the next ceremony, in which the association with water is continued. In a sense, it does not matter how the dance is interpreted, as all of the above are relevant.

By this time the set has changed, and the ‘secret ceremony’ is separated from the audience by a cave-like barrier with only a small entrance.⁵ In the ‘secret ceremony’ the ‘miracle’ of human conception is expressed in story, interspersed with movement which celebrates this moment. The ceremony begins with the cosmogonic story of Mummu-Tiamat and
Aspu, using a mixture of Assyrian and Babylonian text and then moves on to a modern-day version of the miracle of conception.

It is said a woman’s egg holds the life force, the cell of life. Each month it is released awaiting the right time. It emits a pheromone that attracts the male. When the male penetrates the membrane the cell’s hairs stand on end and then wrap around him drawing him into the collapsing cell. Both lose something of themselves as they commingle as a single body.

**DANCE CONTINUES**

It is said that in Aboriginal tradition the child spirit waits until the mother dreams who it is who will be reborn and that place of dreaming is a special, secret and sacred place.

**DANCE CONTINUES**

The beginning of life  
The beginning of the magic of life  
The magic of the beginning of life

When did we fool ourselves that we knew the story of the beginning?

In the beginning...

Do we even think about it now  
have time to think about it now  
need to think about it now?

What is the story of our beginning?  
What is the story of our beginning  
our conception  
our place of conception?

That magic place where egg received sperm and became a new being  
where soul became present and said ‘yes’ to life

Do we even know that magic place  
Let alone the magic place of the beginning of all things?

*(During the last section the set has been returned to the way it was, the candle is blown out, it is dark.)*

*(Beginnings, 1999)*

Once the ceremony is over, all lights are extinguished and the set changes again so that the audience and performers are all within the cave-womb. It is here, in the darkness, that the final Midwinter story is told. It is the story of Newgrange. The spatial structuring of the performance-ritual assists the theme.
A. (continues) There is a building, a monument, a tomb, on a hill overlooking a river in Ireland...

Once surrounded by smaller domestic buildings, shelters, hearths, pits, signs of life over 4,000 years ago.

The door has been sealed shut with heavy stone slaps

In front a large stone decorated with spirals in two’s and three’s and a mark indicating the direction of the door

   Behind another
   Beside another

Above the door a small slit-like opening in the roof, hidden, protected.

(During the next section a spotlight begins to shine into the space lighting up the area, and then retreats)

At midwinter, on the shortest day of the year, at sunrise, the first rays of the sun hit this secret place and a pencil thin beam of light makes it’s way slowly down the passageway to the very centre.

For seventeen minutes this beam lights up the darkness and then retreats the way it came

Once a year, for three days, it makes this journey at the day’s beginning then disappears altogether for another year.

Once a year, at midwinter

   Midwinter

   The time of magic

   The time of conception
   That hidden unseen, unnoticed change when life begins
   and the potential to be...is

   (Beginnings, 1999)

The Midwinter celebration is held indoors, at PCL Exhibitionists gallery. Already there is a sense of being separated and protected from the outside world. As the performance-r ritual progresses the audience moves from a sense of ‘audience’ to one of being part of the ritual, entombed/enwombed with the performers at the moment of conception.

**Sense of Place, Sacred Space-Arrival**

In *Sense of Place, Sacred Space-Arrival*, the womb and vagina become the passage for the newly born to emerge into the world. The metaphor of ‘birth’, or ‘being born’, is superimposed over the human history of migration and ‘arrival’ in a new land. In this
performance-ritual the concept of ‘sacred place’ extends from womb to include the Australian bush. The dual metaphor of birth-arrival is continued in the association with water, or fluid, which accompanies that journey and the ‘vessels’ in which the ‘preborn’ are carried. This is announced in the entry to this performance-ritual, where the ‘new arrivals’ are led by the same mask and ‘water’ cloth from the previous performance-ritual. The ‘new arrivals’ are all covered and transported in a tunnel-like cloth. The perspective then moves to view the experience from that of the ‘newborn’. In this performance-ritual, Pulley makes her first physical appearance. She particularly embodies ‘woman’ and ‘newly born’. Through her, the patriarchal duality of ‘virgin’/‘whore’ is examined. Her ‘being’ and behaviour place her outside the ‘norm’ of 18th century ‘acceptable woman’. Her experience of being born into an alien environment is explored through her reactions. She is ‘newborn and not altogether happy with’ her arrival in the new land of Australia.

Pulley is accompanied by other new arrivals, which include performers symbolising ancestral traditions and influences from Greece, Rome and Christianity, as well as familial ‘firsts’. The story traces the journeys of the ‘newly born’ as they discover, and react to, the alien environment of their new land; one outside the familiarity of the known environment, or ‘womb’. The change in environment is enhanced by the change in setting: outdoors in the Australian bush. The reaction is taken as immediate, like a child’s first response to strange new experiences. It is enacted as a pageant and pilgrimage, which takes the players and audience further into the ‘wild’.

The Fire of the Sun

The Fire of the Sun is the time of growth to adulthood, a gradual separation from mother and family, a need to find ‘identity’ and a way to survive. From the perspective of the child-woman, it is a time of awakening to erotic pleasure and becoming aware of the challenges of, and complexities in, life. Love, sex, eroticism, war, rape, and violence are held together as expressions of the same Life Force. The underlying assumption in this
performance-ritual is that the site from which these contradictory expressions of Life
Force originate is, in fact, the site of the reproductive organs. The womb also becomes a
contested site, and place of contradiction, and conflict. In this performance-ritual the
embodied ‘sacred site’ remains the womb, as in Beginnings and Arrival, but now this site
needs to include the historical reality of conflict, contradiction, and desacralisation.

The paradox is contained in four stories. The first is of Pulley as she finds ‘love’ and
learns a way to survive in Australia. The story of Pulley is enhanced by ‘her character’
physically tracing, and remembering stories about those places where she and her
growing family lived, established their own lives, and died. The remembering includes
the effect of colonial presence, action on indigenous Australians, and the reprisals. The
second story is that of Boudicca, her abuse and her daughters’ rapes at the hands of the
Roman colonists. Boudicca’s story is presented as images supported by a ‘newsreader’s’
commentary on events. The Fire of the Sun holds the two sides of this eternal story
together in an attempt to acknowledge that the history of ‘new arrivals’ is one of abuse of
indigenous, or older, inhabitants, while at the same time being one of opportunity and
hope for others.

The third and fourth stories are those of two women on a spiritual search, who lived and
met in the 14th century. Both were confronted by, and wrote of, contradictions between
the ‘idealism’ presented by Christian church theology and orthodoxy, and their personal
experiences of, and thoughts about, living as a woman at the time. One was Julian of
Norwich, who wrote as a recluse officially ‘sanctioned’ by the Church, and the other was
Margery Kempe, a mother whose ambivalent attitude toward sexual pleasure and
continual pilgrimages were searches for ‘the answer’. Kempe’s story is told through the
image of a ‘wandering veiled woman’ and Julian’s story through her words, which
underscore the images in the final section of this performance-ritual. The ‘veiled woman’
returns in the performance-ritual as a symbol of the ignorance, and lack of autonomy,
many women experience under patriarchally defined belief systems.
These women, like Boudicca, were from around Norwich, in East Anglia, the region of Pulley’s origin. In The Fire of the Storm ‘the ideal’ and the Christian God are confronted with the ‘material reality’ of life. The conflict is spatially supported by ‘the lack of a ‘place’ for the performance, with the result that Pulley’s story is told outdoors at a number of sites, and the other side of the story, and questioning, is performed indoors for the camera, that is, ‘in the mind’. Whereas the previous performance-ritual explores the human-environment-place interface, this performance-ritual extends the interface to include that of human-human, human-place, and human-spirit, with greater specificity in regard to place. ‘Sacred site’ broadens from ‘womb’ to include specific sites of story. The need to acknowledge contradictions at these sacred sites is continued.

Passage

The final performance-ritual in the series, Passage, is thematically influenced by ‘the aging woman’ and ‘the aging body’. It moves from a concern with the ‘outside’ body which is exhibited in Leavetaking (1997), to a consideration of inner changes. These include the loss of reproductive capacity and, sometimes, loss of reproductive organs through surgery. The process is complicated by the Western quest for, and promise of, immortality and ‘eternal youth’. This quest is a reflection of early pre-Christian and Christian mythology where the ‘land of the immortality’, ‘the Land of Women’, ‘Heaven’, and ‘eternal life’ are yearned for, in contrast to the material reality of life. These are Western masculine-authored desires that are offered to, and accepted by, women in the guise of religion and have their outcome in cosmetic surgery, HRT therapy and the removal of troublesome and/or unwanted reproductive organs. Women are encouraged to remain ‘eternally youthful’, which may not necessarily be for themselves, but for the ‘eye’ of the male. The situation is further complicated by the reproductive organs being sites for life threatening diseases, such as cancer.

Passage is a time of seeing more clearly these complexities and being able to ‘let go’, without losing hope. This means that the dream is still held, while simultaneously being
let go. The complexities are extended to include present and future dreams and ideals, such as, ‘freedom’, ‘equality’, ‘peace’, ‘justice’, and ‘autonomy for women’ which are challenged by the reality of ‘little change’. In Passage, the contradictions are addressed and held together in regard to women, the environment, and indigenous Australians. The holding is accompanied by the ‘letting go’, and is expressed as a return ‘within’; one of taking ‘the dream’ back to wait for ‘the right time’ and the next rebirth. Once again, ‘womb’ is a sacred site, and a place where contradictions and paradoxes are held together. The theme of ‘return to the womb’ is enhanced by the performance-ritual being held indoors at PCL Exhibitionists, where the series began.

The re-naming project of the journey of exorcism and ecstasy has begun, with the focus on ‘the womb’, and a woman’s life story, as the carriers and illustrators of ‘spirit’. This is extended with the consideration of ‘nature’.

**Nature**

In the videoed hypothesis, the importance developing a relationship with the Australian landscape, as part of an evolving spirituality, was already identified. As in For Eve, the character expresses the need to move outside the enclosure of ‘the church’ and other buildings. This work began in the seasonal organisation of the ensuing performance-rituals around the Australian cycle of seasonal change.

The series of performance-rituals in Centre of the Storm are seasonal rites of passage. This is the first step in a ‘return to nature’. The seasonal metaphors parallel the research for, content of and place-time setting of each performance-ritual. However, the growing awareness of ‘separation from’, which began in the earlier performance-rituals, is named in Centre of the Storm. Centre of the Storm directly addresses ‘separation’, and looks for reasons why. It also supports the 19th-20th century performer’s awareness of the links between artistic expression, ‘spirit’, and nature. It extends this awareness to include an ecofeminist understanding of the patriarchal Western project of the colonisation of
women, indigenous people and nature. *Centre of the Storm* begins to address and redress this by layering a women’s life cycle, with the cycles in nonhuman nature.

**Beginnings**

*Beginnings* initiates the return to focus on the Australian cycle of seasonal changes, and coincides with Midwinter. The seasonal theme directed the research, which included archaeological and topographical estimates of beginnings in ancestral lands and Australia and Western Midwinter traditions. The season worked hand in hand with the women-centred themes in the performance-ritual. In nature, Midwinter is the time of conception, of hidden ‘new beginnings’, a coincidence especially celebrated in the final story of Midwinter at Newgrange. Although ‘body’ is emphasised in the performance-ritual, Midwinter, therefore nature, is also celebrated.

During the period of preparation for this performance-ritual a text emerged, which did not, in the end, become part of the script.

There was a time when women’s bodies were a mystery
seen to be one with the magic of this life
with the sacredness of this life

What happened to make the change?

Who told us that our bodies were no longer perfect
not sacred at all
that they were too fat
too skinny
too old
that they were not fit to be seen as they are?

Who told us we were no longer good enough
that we needed to change our form
make it better
more perfect
Opened up, cut up, covered up, hidden,
moulded to suit a dream
an imagined reality?

The beauty of the natural is no more.

There was a time when the land was a mystery
seen to be one with the magic of this life
with the sacredness of this life
seen to be one with who we are
or so they say.

What happened to make the change?
Why are we now never satisfied?

Who told us that the land was no longer perfect
not sacred at all
that it is too messy
too dirty
too out of control
that it is not fit to be seen as it is?

Who told us that it was no longer good enough
that we needed to change its form
make it better
more perfect
Opened up, cut up, covered up, hidden,
moulded to suit a dream,
an imagined reality?

The beauty of the natural is not more.

There was a time.....

I have seen figures of women....

Who told us
How did we discover...decide
otherwise
and agree that the (mis)use of
abuse of
by others
by ourselves
of our body, our land
our sacred body, our sacred land
was acceptable
was ‘natural’
was the only way to live.

This text conflates women and nature, using an ecofeminist perspective of the abuse of both. The theme reemerges in the next performance-ritual and becomes part of the action.

Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival

The performance-ritual which especially addresses nature more specifically, its colonisation, and the human-nature engagement, is Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival (Appendix C: 5). This performance-ritual coincides with Spring, the time of ‘birth’ in nature, when the changes taking place become visible. The Australian natural environment is more specifically addressed by the performance-ritual being held as an
outdoor pilgrimage in the Australian bush at Katoomba. \(^{10}\) Performers and audience were able to walk through, experience, hear, see, smell and 'sense' the bush in this area. The Australian bush becomes a sacred site. Links are made with traditional Spring rituals, and historical writing about Spring and Birth are acknowledged in the action and program notes. The acknowledgment includes one to the 12th century abbess, Hildegard von Bingen, whose poetry links spirituality, women, nature, 'fecundity' and 'birth'.

Oh greenest branch, hail,  
who have sprung forth  
in the light breeze of invocation  
from holy beings.

When the time has come  
that you have flowered on your branch,  
a hail, a hail there will be to you,  
because the heat of the sun  
has moistened you  
like the fragrance of balsam.

For within you the beautiful flower  
has blossomed,  
which gave its perfume to all the spices  
which were dried,  
And all those have appeared  
in their abundant greenness.

When the heavens have rained dew  
upon the grass  
and the whole earth was made joyful,  
because her womb* has brought forth corn  
and the winged creatures of heaven  
have their dwelling places in  
it.

Thereupon a feast was prepared for  
mankind  
and (there was) delight in those  
partaking.  
When, oh sweet virgin,  
no one delight in you is found wanting.  
All these things Eve valued as little.  
Now, nevertheless, let there be praise  
to the highest. \(^{11}\)
Spring implies movement and growth and this is supported by the pilgrimage, by the narrator's story of 'first peoples', the story of colonisation and by the embodiment of first ancestors' arrivals in Australia.

I want to tell you a story
   a story of my people

Many years ago in the lands of my ancestors,
   Ireland...England...The Netherlands,
in the time before,
   the time before the one land became three,
there was a mighty freeze,
   a long, cold Winter.

Then imperceptibly,
   gradually,
   the ice began to melt
and on this barren land
   life
       a different kind of life
       appeared.

A Garden of Eden.

And into this Eden arrived a people.
Small groups
   two or three families together
   living off the land
       and the gifts this land had prepared.

An equal relationship,
   taking
       and if needed moving on,
       allowing for regrowth.

At the same time
   on the other side of the world
       was another land not yet on its own.
Its story also was of a long, cold Winter,
   one of flood and storm,
   freeze and thaw
   erosion.

It too had a people
   in small groups,
   living on what the land had to offer,
       moving on,
       allowing for regrowth.
For more than forty thousand years
   it seemed,
       in most cases,
       an equal relationship.

Then my ancestors arrived
to this land  
on the other side of the world.

They had changed.

They had learned new ways,  
 new ways of controlling the land  
 and all it had to offer.  
No need anymore to listen  
to see  
to learn  
to understand

They came  
and recreated this new land to suit themselves.  
‘This is what we know’, they said.  
‘This is what we need to survive.’  
‘This is what we need for ourselves.’

But in the recreating  
and the ignorance of their recreating  
they changed forever  
more quickly  
more permanently  
this Eden.

_Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival_ (1999)

This knowledge is also held in the story of Pulley, which continues into _The Fire of the Sun_. When the First Fleet arrived in Australia in 1788, many were city people, and the Fleet carried its own produce, including seeds, plants, cattle, goats, chickens, vermin, weeds, and disease. The plan was to re-create British agriculture, animal husbandry, and market economy on this alien soil. The Australian soil was not like that of Britain, nor was its climate, and the new arrivals’ attempts at establishing a self-supporting colony based on the British model were initially unsuccessful. In spite of indigenous presence and some intermixing, very few ‘native’ products were used by the colony. The land was not ‘listened to’, and rationing of produce sent from overseas was the reality. The new arrivals never really came to terms with their new land nor how to survive in, and with, the environment. Indigenous nature, like the indigenous people, was to be controlled rather than ‘listened to’ or ‘worked with’.

This attitude has continued with, and been the attitude of, all new arrivals since that time. It is reflected in the religious traditions and celebrations that accompany the people. Most
traditions, including Christianity, do not even acknowledge Australian seasonal changes. They emerge from, and draw on, other natural and cultural environments from other parts of the world. This is in marked contrast to the traditions of the indigenous Australians, which emerge from their need to live in, and with, the Australian natural environment. The Western culture’s reliance on technology, as well as market driven and virtual economies, continues this separation. As well as celebrating nature, *Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival* addresses this continuing separation.

The duplex theme of ‘birth’ and ‘arrival’ is held together with the contradiction that with each new arrival an adjustment needs to be made by the environment into which ‘it’ is born. This is especially addressed in the second section, where the ‘newly born’ begin to explore and move into the bush, or, as in Pulley’s case, begin to realise their alienation. In this section, ‘bush spirits’, embodied in the masks and performers, react to the ‘newborn’, and eventually withdraw and disappear. Pulley, on the other hand, comes from a town environment which is undergoing industrialisation and does not want to deal with it at all. She begins to miss ‘home’ and vocally expresses her dissatisfaction and sense of alienation.

**Convict Woman** Where are yo’? C’m on out now. I can ‘eer yo’ back there. Yo’ can’t ‘ide from me. Don’ think I’m frightened of yo’, I aint, you ‘ear me. I’m no’ fright’ned. I’ll get yo’ little buggers if I see yo’, yo’ see if I don’...etc.

and later...

Not feel’n too good lately. Tha’ first night...don’t remember much abou’ it. Oi but it was fun. ‘N you know that man I was tellin’ you about? ‘e might be all right, that one. But not been well since, sick every mornin’. Hope I have’n got that dysentery that’s goin’ about. Not so sure about it ‘ere tho’. *(Looking around at ground and bush)* Strange noises. Don’ know wots there. ‘don’ like it much. ‘N at night all these ants and spiders crawlin’ all over yo’. Can’t wait to get off the ground. ‘N those natives. Yo’ don’ see ‘em. They just creep up on yo’ and then disappear in them trees. No, I don’ think I like it much. *(Getting down off tree)* I miss me ‘ome. Wer’nt much there, ‘n prison ‘n that, but I just wanna go ‘ome. *(Moving off)* I wanna go ‘ome.

*Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival* (1999)
Pulley becomes a symbol for many other new arrivals. The contradictions of the human-nature interface are addressed in the narrator’s final story, and by the synchronistic action of her stumbling over the words as a plane flies overhead, drowning them out.

They say it is dying
the earth

They say with each arrival
the difference disappears
all becomes the same.

Sameness is another kind of death.

They say with each small change
the balance is tilted
the whole is affected and begins to readjust.

They say it’s evolution
progress
the future
change for the better
change for our survival...our immortality

That is the dream.

But where have we come from, we who dream,
and what is the future we are dreaming of?
For if the dream becomes the reality,
what is the reality of the place we have come to out of our dreaming?

Do I like what I see
of the present,
of the past,
of the future dream?

Do I want to stand still
hold on to what I know,
what I understand?

Do I want to go back
is it possible,
desirable?

Or do I want to move
allow change
adapt?
And can I agree to only part
without taking the whole?

If I hold on to what is,
or go back,
I am left behind,
irrelevant.
And if I let go,
accept change,
what is the future we are dreaming for ourselves
and our children?

What I see I love
and mourn its passing with passion.

What I do not see,
have never seen,
  have never heard,
never experienced,
I do not miss at all

And that is the reality.

*Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival* (1999)

The sacred site now includes stories of contradiction and paradox.

In the final section of this performance-ritual, the ‘rite of honouring and letting go’ is addressed to, and with, the natural environment. By this time, the pilgrimage has moved to an escarpment on a hill, overlooking Megalong Valley. It is a time of meditation on what has just passed, and of the view. It begins with a call which honours nature, and apologises and mourns for past mistakes in this land. The call is followed by a movement sequence motivated by the natural setting. The four performers individually listen, and respond in movement, to the natural setting, interpreting it in their own way. During the movement sequence, a light wind begins to move the shrubs so that it seems, or is imagined, that the natural environment joins in the moment. At the end the ritual is ‘let go’ by a second series of calls. Part of the ‘letting go’ is an acknowledgment of the continuing destruction to the natural environment, in which humans have engaged since their time on earth.

*The Fire of the Sun*

Summer is the season in which *The Fire of the Sun* is encased. Summer, in Australia, is the time of the long holiday, especially for students, who spend a lot of the time outdoors and, for coast dwellers, on the beach. It is the time for exploring the ‘fullness’ of life and high energy. It is also the time of extremes of weather, including bushfires and their
destructive potential to the natural environment and to people. Summer, in Boudicca’s time-place, is the time for war. In Pulley’s story, Summer is the time when she first sets foot on Australian soil and the heat of the Australian sun becomes part of her story of survival. This story is told with the awareness that her arrival not only affects the natural environment, as the newcomers cut down trees to make room for ‘alien’ agriculture, but is also the death knell for thousands of indigenous Australians. The Fire of the Sun is a story of colonisation and indigenous displacement, and the cutting of ties to land as ‘sacred’.

**Passage**

Passage coincides with Autumn and is influenced by the changes occurring in the natural environment, as the leaves of ‘alien’ trees turn orange and the bark of some indigenous gums begin to peel. These images are carried in the costumes and movement. Working in parallel with this are ancestral Autumn traditions and festivals centred around the material reality of harvest and ‘bringing home’. It is a time to review what had been and return to the present.

Autumn,

a time of assessment,

of visiting ancestors

and ghosts of the past,

of gathering in,

sorting,

letting go,

and a time of preparing for long nights ahead

*(Passage, 2000: program notes)*

Autumn is the time for assessing the gains of feminism, feminist theology, ecofeminism, and other related movements and ideals, in face of the reality of the Western ‘futures’
perspective. It is a time to acknowledge that a masculinist market economy and corporate globalisation is actually preferred by Western countries and some powerful, and powerless, women over a ‘sustainable and equitable future’ which works with, and not against, the natural environment, women, and indigenous peoples. It is a time for holding together the contradictions and paradoxes revealed in the previous performance-rituals.

In relation to nature, the renaming is one of including natural changes, and the uneasy human-nature relationship, in an evolving spirituality. This is extended further with ‘place’.

**Place**

In the initial video, *Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis* (1998), ‘sense of alienation’ is identified as having been experienced by the character in relation to Australian city life. The sense of alienation is triggered by a series of abstract paintings, which were interpreted as figures of women placed on, or in, the Australian landscape. Seeing the figures heightened a sense of alienation in the viewer. The viewer’s response was the desire to become like the figures, to feel enough at home with the land to be able to merge with it, and so experience a ‘sense of place’. This realisation is followed by the verbalisation of the desire. ‘Sense of place’ here is used to describe the feeling of being ‘at home’, ‘belonging’ or ‘fitting’. At this stage it is assumed that the process of gaining a deeper understanding of ancestral history and tradition, from a woman’s perspective, and confronting this with Australian history would, in fact, engender the desired ‘sense of place’.

**Beginnings**

During the ensuing performance-rituals ‘sense of place’ is attempted by creating ‘sacred’, or ‘sacred sites’, in relation to different referents. In *Beginnings*, ‘sacred place’ is used to refer to those places where the moment of conception occurs. This then becomes a
‘sacred site’ identified is the ‘site of conception’, which refers specifically to the womb of a woman, but also includes the various ‘sites of conception’ in nature and the ‘Sacred Site of Origin’.13

**Sense of Place, Sacred Space - Arrival**

In *Sense of Place, Sacred Space - Arrival*, ‘sacred site’ broadens to include ‘untouched’ nonhuman nature, especially the Australian bush, which is in danger of being desacralised by the newly born. It is not the newly born who are the danger, but the newborn’s potential actions which emerge from their philosophy of life. The Western patriarchal philosophies which have supported human, and mainly masculine, domination and control of nature, women and indigenous, are challenged, and there is a quest to develop a more biophilic relationship.

**The Fire of the Sun** (Appendix C: 6)

*The Fire of the Sun*, extends ‘sacred place’ to include those sites which have ancestral stories of ‘life experiences’ attached to them, even when the stories are of destruction. They become ‘sacred’ because of the story and the person, not because of their just ‘being’. The concepts of ‘spirit’ and ‘sacred place’ need to extend to include these stories. In this performance-ritual, Pulley’s life journey is traced, marking as sacred those sites where she lived, had children, and struggled to survive. Beginning with her disembarkation at Sydney Cove, the story moves to Rose Hill, The Ponds, Mulgrave Place, Ropes and South Creek, Tumbledown Barn, and Castlereagh. *The Fire of the Sun* serves to create a ‘sense of place’ in relation to land, or country, as the ancestral story is unravelled and told. ‘Place’ has moved beyond its use in *Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival*, where it meant ‘sense of place’. It is now inclusive of ancestral story and family, so moving closer to indigenous Australian’s usage of ‘land’ and ‘country’; a usage addressed in Chapter 1. These sacred places are places of stories of beauty and hope, as well as horror and despair.
Passage

In *Passage*, ‘sacred place’ returns to ‘womb’; the place where all that has eventuated, including contradictions and paradoxes, are held together. The changing referent for ‘sacred place’ illustrates that the term is given to objects and places to create meaning. The usage is not necessarily logical or consistent. Nevertheless, the process of creating ‘sacred places’ in this way does, in one sense, give a feeling of ‘belonging’. It certainly highlights the uniqueness of a woman’s body, the Australian natural environment, and places of ancestral story. It brings them into focus and engenders a sense of respect for the whole of life. The ‘knowing about’ creates a greater ‘attachment to’.

The difference is also seen in the way in which the performance-rituals in *Centre of the Storm* work with the land. Apart from a generalised ‘relationship to place-Australia’ and a more specific identification of sites and their stories, and therefore ‘country-Australia’, the performance-rituals enact stories about European people on the land, uneasy in their new environment, and struggling with the land. It continues the ‘colonial stance’ of ‘heroines who face the adversary’ (Langton, 1996:11). Only once is the non-human environment embodied and performed, and that was in *Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival*, in an attempt to move beyond the story of the alien ‘newly born’. In this respect, *Centre of the Storm* also reflects the Biblical tradition: the story of a people who were aliens in a strange land, and of a focal character, in her/his land-country. These similarities and differences have served to challenge and encourage my own attempts at devising my own woman-body-nature-Australian centred spirituality and practice; one that ‘fits’.

So, a feeling of alienation remains, and it is partly because of the ideas examined in Chapter 1 and above. Modern life is one of alienation, and the Western project of increasing capitalist consumerism and dependence on technology does not encourage a relationship with natural processes or nature. Some women actively support this futures project. However, others do not, and find that they have no real place in a culture so
defined. They have been positioned as ‘not fitting’ by masculinist mindsets and they still do not fit when they exorcise these mindsets from their own psyches. Many women find that their spiritualities do not fit with the institutionalised ‘central religions’. In fact, many feminist spiritualities oppose institutionalisation. *Centre of the Storm*, therefore, continues to be a spirituality on, and for, the boundary, and its individualistic nature confirms that position.

**Spirit** (Appendix C: 7)

*Centre of the Storm* begins with specific reference to this woman’s womb as a sacred site, with the potential for experiencing ‘Be-ing’. It then moves to view nature, especially the Australian bush, through the same lens. In *The Fire of the Sun* life experiences, the stories of ancestors, stories of conflict, and the places of the stories, speak of ‘Be-ing’. The concept of Be-ing is inclusive of all human and nonhuman life. In *Centre of the Storm*, ‘spirit’, or Be-ing, is viewed as the essence of life; the immanent, transcendent, linking energy that is both supranormal and everyday. All life is the carrier, and expression, of Be-ing. The spiritual is the material, is the spiritual.

Like Mary Daly’s journey, and performance-ritual, *Centre of the Storm* is multidimensional: one of moving between the foreground of present and past ‘reality’ and the background of women’s experience, which because it is the centre for this woman, is also ‘the centre’ (Daly, 1990:4 ff.). It is one of bringing the past and future into the present. Daly’s three charismas of healing, prophecy and tongues, are reclaimed. The healing is of self and of supporting others’ own healing. Because *Centre of the Storm* is a public event as well as one woman’s journey, it has the potential to confirm and support others on similar journeys. Daly’s prophecy is the ability to see and address the root of the problem, and then re-imagine and re-name it in the light of personal experience and vision. *Centre of the Storm* engages in this work as it presents an individual woman’s interpretation of historical events, while holding a dream for the future, and presenting an evolving spirituality. The charisma of tongues is a rebellion against impotent language,
and a creation of new languages and meanings (Daly, 1985a:160ff.). Performance-ritual is a new language; a language of images, ideas, feelings, and multidimensional meanings.

The spiritual journey of performance-ritual is one of ‘moving on’. There is a need to break with the past and live out something new, based on hearing, speaking and envisioning, or, listening, hearing, seeing, sensing and understanding, the self in the world (Daly, 1985a:10 and 1990:315 ff.). Centre of the Storm, as all performance-ritual, does this work as it continually confronts ideals of be-ing with the lived reality, and finds new ways to experience and express this intersection. According to Daly, this is a woman’s metamorphosis. It is an individual journey; one in which women experience community as they participate with other women. The rituals and celebrations are an expression of that journey. In contrast to the repeated rituals of tradition, however, they are rituals of self-actualisation, so are continually being recreated to incorporate changing awareness and situation (Daly, 1985a:146). The work of performance-ritual is this woman’s spiritual work and, because ‘the spiritual’ is the ground of be-ing, it is also political. It moves beyond the spiritual expression of the early dance pioneers to incorporate feminist and ecofeminist understanding and critique.

There are two more areas associated with the ‘spiritual’ work of these performance-rituals which allow the journey to spiral through stages of confronting, moving on, and return. They are the actions of ‘holding’ and ‘letting go’.

**Holding and Letting Go** (Appendix C: 7)

As earlier chapters illustrate, performance-ritual uses the term ‘holding’ to refer to a psychological and spiritual process of negotiating and harmonising contradictions between the ideal and the lived reality, so that a relationship exists between them. This action has been part of all of the performance-rituals. In *Dark Fire* (1994), the action is engaged in relation to an individual woman’s love-hate relationship with her body. It is
extended with the added knowledge of the history of abuse of many women and their bodies, by patriarchal and sexist actions, which becomes the springboard for For Eve (1995). In Fallen Totems (1997), it is extended again to include a women’s betrayal by myth and institutionalised knowledge, which confronts her desire for autonomy. In each case there is a need to hold together the abuse, with the knowledge and experience of the worth and value of her and other women’s bodies and lives. *Leavetaking* (1997) confronts life with death and begins to look at the broader world view. It also questions the underlying paradigm of the Western ‘work ethic’, a concept which had already emerged in *Fallen Totems*. In tandem with the questioning of the paradigm, is the awareness that society must be engaged with for survival.

By the time of *Centre of the Storm* (1998-2000), there is a need to begin to place these contradictions socially and historically, while still viewing them through the eyes of a woman. The concept of ‘holding’ first appears in the initial video, *Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis*. The character is responding to, what she experiences as, the increasingly fast pace of Western life, and expresses the wish to ‘hold on’ to time. In this video ‘hold’ carries the definition rejected by feminists redefinition in Chapter 1, and in the later performance-rituals.

Time...too much...too little...
Shhhoo.....shhhoooo.....shhhooo.....

I must...I need...
It is important....

I’m sorry I don’t have time right now....
Where did that time go?...It’s gone already...I don’t believe it...What happened?....I’ve missed it! What did you say? Sometimes I feel I don’t even have time to breathe.

How can I hold...hold on to it?

She is looking for time out, and finds it in the park, and in the imaginings of her mind. She is not yet aware that time cannot be held, as in ‘grasped’. The sense of needing to escape material reality is present, and the passage into the transitional phase has begun.
In *Beginnings* the attention returns to 'a woman's body' and, again, as in *Dark Fire*, *For Eve* and *Fallen Totems*, the conflicts and contradictions associated with the ideal of 'sacred place', and the material reality of violence and rape, intrude. *Sense of Place*, *Sacred Space: Arrival* extends this conflict to nature, and *The Fire of the Sun*, to indigenous people. The broadening of the debate from 'women', to 'nature' and 'indigenous people', moves the performance-rituals from a 'radical feminist' perspective, exemplified in *Dark Fire, For Eve* and *Fallen Totems*, to the 'ecofeminist perspective' of *Centre of the Storm*.

By *Passage*, the 'holding' image refers to 'the dream', or 'the ideal', and 'the reality' and the need to let them go, while at the same time holding them together in the womb. This dual concept of 'ideal' and 'reality' emerged in poetry written during *Beginnings* which did not, in the end, become part of the performed script. The duality recurs in the ensuing performance-rituals. By the time of *Passage*, however, the realisation emerges that there was, perhaps, never an 'ideal life'. Archaeological research undertaken for the series illustrated that unthinking land clearance and violence probably existed from the beginning of human life. The feminist 'patriarchal reversal' of woman=pure/good and man=impure/evil, which has a tendency to emerge from feminist spiritual interpretations of pre-Bronze Age cultures, is also brought into question.

The feminist push for continuums, rather than either-or, becomes an increasingly attractive option. 'Life as paradox' is a recurring metaphor and the need to let go the 'ideal', without letting it go completely, is apparent. The tight 'holding on' expressed in the initial video has changed to the more flexible understanding of being able to negotiate and hold, with movement. *Passage*, particularly, engages in this action, and is the time of standing together with 'spirit' in this action. In fact, there is an emerging idea that this is the work of 'spirit'. It is the entity that sets up and holds together relationships: giving and taking; testing, negotiating, and adapting; so that harmony and balance are
maintained, and growth continues. This action of ‘spirit’ is expressed materially as well as psychologically.

As introduced in Chapter 1, this is also an area in which Centre of the Storm and traditional religion have similarities. Religion is a ‘story’ which allows people to live with paradox. Religions like Christianity ‘hold together’ an image of an idealised life, exemplified in ‘god’, ‘the god-man, Jesus’, and ‘heaven’, with a different experience in the materiality of daily living. The need for ‘ideals of perfection’ is exemplified in the mythology and also in the aesthetic life of many ‘religious’, who attempt to separate themselves from the material reality, both physically and psychically, to find ‘god’. Yet even there, in that ‘hallowed place-space’ materiality creeps in, as Karen Armstrong’s experiences illustrate and the words of Julian of Norwich, used in The Fire of the Sun, reveal.\(^\text{18}\)

And at once I saw the red blood trickling down from under the garland, hot, fresh, and plentiful,...

And I still seemed to see with my actual eyes the continual bleeding of his head. Great drops of blood rolled down from the garland like beads, seemingly from the veins; and they came down a brownish red colour - for the blood was thick and as they spread out then became bright red, and when they reached his eyebrows they vanished....

After this I saw with my own eyes in the face of the crucifix hanging before me and at which I was ceaselessly gazing something of his passion. I saw insults and spittle and disfiguring and bruising and lingering pain more than I know how to describe...

After this I looked, and saw the body which was bleeding copiously, apparently as the result of the flogging. The fair skin was broken and there were deep weals in the tender flesh...

And...I saw his dear face, dry, bloodless, and pallid with death. It became more pale, deathly and lifeless. Then dead, it turned a blue colour, gradually changing to a browny blue as the flesh continued to die...

After this I saw the whole Godhead concentrated as it were in a single point, and thereby I learnt that he is in all things....

For I saw that God in fact does everything, however little that thing may be. Indeed, nothing happens by luck or chance, but all is through the foresight and wisdom of God.

\(^{\text{(The Fire of the Sun, 1999)}}\)\(^{\text{19}}\)
These words express the contradiction Julian experienced between the image of a ‘God of love’, and a God who allows His children to suffer. There is no such thing as perfection or separation. Life always intrudes. Where Centre of the Storm differs from traditional religion is that it recognises this fact and sees ‘spirit’ in the action of all, a point that Julian also comes to, but expresses great difficulty with.20 Centre of the Storm creates a process whereby the work of ‘holding together’ is accompanied by ‘letting go’, so that the material world can be engaged with more fully, not separated from. As Raphael expresses it, ‘chaos and harmony belong together in a creation where perfection is both impossible and meaningless’ (Raphael, 1996:270). The paradox is not longer two opposites conflicting with each other, but a continuum of possibilities, choices, and places to be. Allowing for this movement between the two, can create an inner stillness. That movement and stillness is one way of experiencing engagement with Be-ing and the ‘centre of the storm’. It is the place where contradictions can be seen clearly and addressed, but also let go in full awareness of the ‘chaos’ of imperfection in the lived reality. This has been the spiritual work of Centre of the Storm.

Once I had a dream
a dream of Nirvana
of Eden before the Fall
of a time when...

And I believed as I believed others believed
that if I searched I would find the truth
of this perfect beginning of all things
culmination of all things
fulfilment of all things

But the truth that was revealed did not match the dream
and no matter how close I came to the dream
it remained just
out of reach
out of touch
with the reality of the truth revealed.

So we have made a pact the dream and I
She had shed her half bloomed petals
revealing her centre
her heart
her potential
her seed.
And I have taken this seed and hidden her
in the deepest recesses of my womb.
For we have made a pact the dream and I
and we will love, nurture and protect each other
until the time is right
and then,
and only then
will she risk to birth again. (Passage, 2000)

Notes

1 It needs to be stressed, again, that this analysis is after-the-fact and, from a performance perspective, it does not matter if any of this detail of information is realised by the audiences. As argued in the Introduction, it is the position of this thesis that audiences see what they want to see, or what their particular life experiences condition them to see.


4 The mask ‘just happened’ to be selected by one of the other performers, and was not the one I initially had in mind. Although the themes were already emerging at that time, I was not naming them or consciously making the associations that are now being made.

5 The ‘secret’ aspect of the ceremony was not planned either. It became ‘secret’ due to inadequate rehearsal, which led to inadequate lighting on the night, so all that was seen were shadows on the wall and ceiling. However, the secret nature of this part of the event was actually important. It emphasises that part of women’s need to own and control their own bodies and knowledge is the responsibility of what to
reveal, how to reveal it and to whom. This is not meant in a ‘puritanical’ sense, but in the sense of honouring and ownership.


7 One male member of the audience was heard commenting, when asked about what was going on, ‘the whore is still up the tree’. Pulley did not describe herself as a ‘whore’. She did, however, say that the officers called the women, ‘whores’. The need to position and disparage in this way seems to be still present in 1999.

8 These are similar paradoxes explored by Sara Ruddick from a material reality point of view in Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace. London, Women’s Press, 1989. Also, historically, the elimination of ‘childless women’ from some ‘sacred roles’ is reflected in some other cultures’ practices (Ellis & Barwick in Brock, P. (ed.) Women, Rites & Sites. Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1989, p. 29). Performance-ritual certainly does not support this distinction. The ground of performance-ritual is that each individual has the power to create meaningful rituals for themselves.

9 Windeatt, B. A. (transl.) The Book of Margery Kempe. Middlesex, Penguin, 1985 and Wolters, C. Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love. London, Penguin, 1966. Of interest here is the library cataloguing of the two works. Because of the ‘official’ nature of Julian’s writing, her work comes under ‘religion’, in contrast to Kempe’s writing, which are catalogued under ‘history’. Yet both are engaged in similar exercises. One, however, has the advantage of education and ‘official sanction’, the other does not and writes of her experiences, not attempting to theorise ‘god’.

10 I’ve been told that at least one audience member had a problem with this, considering that this sort of performance would have been better suited to the stage. From the perspective of performance-ritual, this would have negated the purpose of the exercise.
11 Hildegard von Bingen, *O Viridissima Virga*. Translated by Professor Janet Martin and Dr. Greta Mary Hair for personal use.


13 It is not used to refer to the Petrie dish. Rather, it refers to those sites and moments when ‘conception’ occurs without technological manipulation by humans. I have a general aversion to equating technological manipulation of environments, eggs and sperm with the ‘natural process’. Somehow or other ‘natural conception’, because of the lack of the human control and manipulation, carries greater ‘magic’, even though IVF process’s success rates are poor and a ‘miracle’ does happen when the two unite. This contradiction needs more discussion, and I need to confront more fully my own biases, but this is not the place for it.

14 Armstrong, (1993) illustrates this shift in the beginnings of Christianity from a nature-based religion to a character based religion. The Christian religion was also, in its beginnings, attached to place-country; a country around which stories emerged, which have become the sacred text of sacred peoples and places. But the land, in relation to Australia, is far away and its people are not ‘my people’. When Christianity spread through North-Western Europe it functioned side by side with, and took over some of, the pre-Christian traditions. Its ritual became formatted around the seasonal changes. In Australia, this was not the case. The Christian religion does not ‘fit’ in this country on many levels.

15 There is a danger associated with a focus on land-country that needs to be mentioned. It is one of nationalism and it is illustrated by the ongoing wars over tracks of land in places like Ireland and along the Israel-Palestine border. But these wars and acts of resistance are more complex in their development than a direct outcome of ties to ‘sacred’ land-country. Nationalism can be encouraged quite artificially, especially in times of war. It is beyond the scope of this document, however, to enter this debate. It is enough, at this stage, to just note it.

17 Daly, M. *Beyond God the Father*. Boston, Beacon, 1985a.


20 I am tempted to speculate whether it is this difficulty which caused the sickness from which these revelations came.
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Appendix A  Centre of the Storm: Scripts

Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis

Beginnings

Sense of Place, Sacred Space - Arrival

The Fire of the Sun

Passage
Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis
Script

Women and the Land
Women on the Land
Women in the Land

Tread softly dear heart
Each step a mark.....an imprint

Know where you step
Be sure how and where you go

How to be sure?
How to know?

Time...too much...too little...
Shhhoo.....shhhoooo.....shhhoooo.....

I must...I need...
It is important....

I’m sorry I don’t have time right now....
Where did that time go?...It’s gone already...I don’t believe it...What happened?....I’ve missed it! What did you say? Sometimes I feel I don’t even have time to breathe.

How can I hold...hold on to it?

I am a displaced woman
Living in a strange land,
not mine by right
But claimed by my recent past

My people came from the North
What is it about the North that gives “right of possession?”
The right to see a land
and a people
and say
that it is O.K. to take possession
That we are more civilised
and will benefit those already on that land
That we will bring a better morality
a better understanding of life
a better experience of life
That we have the answers.

The vanity.....the foolishness.....

Yet we bring in all the trappings of an alien life
and suffocate what is already there
alien food
alien clothes
alien morality
alien spirituality
alien lifestyle

Nothing...not one thing
interacts
So we fight...and fight...
    to survive
Fight the land
    Fight the people of the land
We do not listen
    We do not see
    We do not respond
until we have created a space...an environment
    that is our own
Then and only then do we feel
    a sense of place

But it is an alien place in this land
It sits on top...
    over...
covering...
    hiding...
    ignoring...
    all that is here
All that makes this land itself.

And what of our spirituality?
Those religions which came with us from the North?
    from elsewhere?
They also sit on top
    uneasy in their new location
Imposing their rituals
    their beliefs
    their festivals
    their seasons
on a place that does not connect...communicate

Their place...their heart...
    like the people who worship them
    is not here.
It is in another land
where their people make pilgrimage
    away...
    always away...
    never here...
    never here

How then can we aliens feel a sense of place
    of belonging
    of home
    of spiritual home
when we ignore and are ignorant of all that is here...
    that was here from the beginning?

Can we recover what was lost...
    connect with what was ignored...
    or is it already too late
    too late to make a beginning
    to take the first step
        to take time to make the first step?
Women and the Land
Women on the Land
Women in the Land

Tread softly dear heart
Each step a mark.....an imprint

Know where you step
Be sure how and where you go

Be sure...secure...
    listen...
        feel...
            breathe...
Beginnings
Script

The context is the arrival of a group of female travelling players to a Midwinter celebration, sometime when...

*(Six performers enter with music and dance - noisy celebration)*

A. Welcome one and all, etc

**Flag dance** is performed by four of the performers, the other two accompany on drum and piccolo.

**Irish dance** in which audience is invited to take part.

*(When finished, A runs to prominent position and begins story)*

"Father of all, Master of Heaven,
the noble angelic King,
our Champion, our Lord, our Head,
without beginning, end or termination.

Better than every King is the King of Grace
by whom was made the great excellent world-stuff,
the orders of Heaven, fair the fame,
together on the first Sunday.

He formed the seven heavens on the Monday,
on the Tuesday sea, earth with enduring surface;
on the Wednesday, moon and bright sun;
clouds and birds on Thursday.

Man, who was formed thereafter,
...on the Friday,
he was taken, from foot to head,
out of the fair common earth."

*(LEBOR GABALA ERENN, PART 1)*

*(Others run into the centre and interrupt with their own stories during this)*

K. I thought we were doing...

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth
was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and
the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the
light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. So God
called the light 'day' and the darkness he called 'night'. And there was
evening, and there was morning the first day.

And God said, 'Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate
water from water'. So God made the expanse and separated the water
under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. God called the
expanse 'sky'. And there was evening, and there was morning - the
second day."
And God said, ‘Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear’. And it was so. God called the dry ground ‘land’, and the gathered waters he called ‘seas’. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, ‘Let the land produce vegetation....

...And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being....

...and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man....”

(THE HOLY BIBLE, Chpt 1 & 2)

H. That’s not the one....

“In the beginning there was Chaos and Night and black Erebus and broad Tartarus,
and there was no earth or air or heaven; and in the boundless recesses of Erebus,
black-winged Night, first of all beings, brought forth a wind-gotten egg, from which, as the seasons came round, there sprang Love the much desired....”

(ARISTOPHANES, ‘BIRDS’)

...or was it..(?)

“The first power to come into being was Chaos. Then arose Gaia,
broad-bosomed earth, which serves as the ever-immovable base for all the immortals who dwell on the peaks of snowy Olympus;
and then shadowy Tartaros deep in the wide-wayed earth;
and then Eros surpassing every immortal in beauty, who, loosener of limbs, brings all immortals and mortals under his power and makes them unable to think as they should. And out of Chaos black Night and Erebus came into being, and out of Night then came the brightness of Aither and Day, whom she conceived by lying in love and mingling with Erebus.”

(HESOID)

S. What? I thought I was doing ....

“There was a virgin, maiden of the air, lovely woman, a spirit of nature. Long she kept her purity, ever her virginity...

...She carried a hard womb, a stiff bellyful for seven hundred years, the self-begotten fetus does not come free...

...A little time passed, a little bit passed quickly. A golden-eye came, a straight-flying bird; it fluttered about seeking a place for its nest, considering a place to live. It flew east, it flew west, flew northwest, south. It does not find such a place, not even the poorest kind of place, in which it might build its nest, take up its dwelling place...
So the mother of the water, mother of the water, virgin of the air, raised her knee from the sea, her shoulder blade from a billow, for the goldeneye as a place for a nest, as an agreeable dwelling place. That goldeneye, graceful bird, flits about, soars about. She discovered the knee of the mother of the water on the bluish open sea; ...On it she builds her nest, laid her golden eggs, six golden eggs, the seventh an iron egg...”

(THE KALEVALA, POEM 1)

A. (meanwhile has been trying to get their attention) Hang on a minute, this is my story...this is my story...!

(They ignore her. At some stage S gets more and more confused)

S. This doesn’t make sense... (turns to others and gets their attention) Look, its supposed to be the beginning of creation, right, and already there’s a woman there...and the sea...and a bird...and eggs...and one of the eggs is made of iron. Imagine...

H. Well I’ve got eggs too, and their flying on the wind...no bird, just Night with wings..

K. You think yours is crazy, I’ve got a woman being made out of a man’s ribs!

(A. has been watching them and getting more and more frustrated as they get further off the track. Finally she interrupts their arguing with a gong. When they have all stopped she begins another story, reclaiming her right to speak and trying to gain some control over the situation with varying degrees of success)

A. Many years ago in Egypt there were rumours of a great Flood that would wipe away the world. A man named Noe,...

K (interrupting) Noah!

A. (persisting) began to build a huge boat for his family in preparation for the Flood. He had a granddaughter called Cessair. (jumps on box. Others boo her off the box)

H, K & S. Granddaughter?!!

A. (stepping down. S. takes her place) One day she asked Noe for room on the ark for herself, her father and two others...

K. (interrupting again) Noe considered them to be robbers and thieves and would not let them on board.

A. So Cessair, who was also known as Daughter of the Universe, gathered together a group of fifty women who were called the Mothers of all the nations of the world, and three men,...

K. one of whom was her father Bith which means ‘Life’,

H. a second called Ladra the pilot

A. and a third called Fintan the Ocean (grabs cloth in glee and makes sea, getting carried away with being the centre of attention again)

H, K & S. Just get on with the story...etc.
A.  *(pleased with her own interruption)* ... and they built three ships of their own and set sail. She had heard of an island where no-one had ever been and where no evil or sin had been committed so she headed there thinking she would be safe from the flood. For many nights and days they travelled. *(Others set out on journey)*

First North from the Nile River in Egypt and across the Caspian Sea, then from the Caspian Sea across the Cimmerian Sea, from the Cimmerian Sea across the Torrian Sea, and then through the Alps to Spain.

From there Cessair, Daughter of the Universe and the others who were with her continued North until they reached Ireland the farthest point of the world. Two of their ships were shipwrecked but the third landed on the hill Dun na mBaur, the Fortress of the Ships.

They began exploring the island but one by one the men began to die. *(during this section the others enact the story dramatically egging each other on)*

Fintan fled in fear and hid lest he should die too *(hides behind pillar)*. When Cessair heard that her father had died she let out such a cry it could be heard for days. Some say it broke her heart and that she died as well.

So it was that Cessair was the first woman to arrive in Ireland and that is why Cuile Cessrach in Connachta is named after her and Ireland was known as the land of women.

*(LEBOR GABALA ERENN, PART II)*

K.  That doesn't sound like a creation story

H.  She's right. It's as bad as the others, the sea was there already, and...

A.  Yes it is... Look *(placing the others in the space, and highlighting symbolism)*

Cessair was Daughter of the Universe...The fifty women were the Mothers of all the Nations of the World...Fintan was the Ocean...Ladra was a good pilot...and...Bith was Life! *(They pull up ocean, laughing, and move straight into dance - a version of Waves of Tory)*

**DANCE with audience participation**

*(After dance K. begins to change staging. The others conspire together and A. blindfolds her and game is played around her to confuse, using vocal sounds and gong. Game is finished with whispers, getting louder and building to chant)*

A., H., S.  Begin...begin...begin...

K.  *(after getting more & more confused and frustrated, sits in centre)* I don't know...I don't know...I don't know the beginning! *(A. places gong in front of her. K. hears and reaches for it...and begins hesitantly)* You wish me to narrate the world's beginning? I remember giants...nine worlds...nine wood-ogresses and a glorious tree under the ground...*(fal ters)*

A. *(prompting)* In the very beginning before there was any *(gradually K joins in, and as she gets more confident A drops out)* sand or sea or chilling waves, or Earth, or Heaven or sun or the moon her companion. Before this, there was a yawning void.

K.  Then all the powers, the most holy gods gathered together and took counsel

They named the Night and her offspring, the morning, midday, afternoon, evening and began to count the years.
They set their courts and temples on high

Then three maidens came, giants. (Others move on to ‘pillars’ for a dance section) They had the power to lay down laws and choose out lives for the world’s children and speak of men’s destinies.

(Finishing story, K. takes of blindfold, picks up gong and joins others on ‘pillar’ and begins accompanying the movement with gong and voice)

(VOLUSPA)

DANCE OF NORMS

(The dance builds in intensity, with vocal accompaniment. At the sound of the gong everything pauses, then continues from where it left off. The concept of the dance is the Norns viewing the history of the world. As things get out of control the gong is ignored. Suddenly there is a climax and everything stops.

The Norns come down from their pillars and begin to pick up the pieces, singing over them, assisting their passing/transformation and mourning their loss.

K. transforms the set into a cave, a candle is lit and the lights go out.

Out of the darkness of the cave comes the spirit of the primordial water. It moves through the audience and returns to the cave with drum and flute playing quietly in background.)

DANCE OF WATER/CLEANSING

A. (on return to the cave, seated behind candle)

“When on high the heaven had not been named
Firm the ground below had not been called by name
Naught but primordial Apsu, their begetter
And Mummu-Tiamat, she who bore them all

The goddess they called the mother
The most helpful of the gods, the wise
Thou art the mother-womb
The one who creates mankind

Then the waters of Mummu-Tiamat and Apsu commingled as a single body

No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had appeared
When no gods whatever had been brought into being
Uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined
Then it was that the gods were formed within them

Fourteen mother-wombs were assembled at the time of the new moon
To tread upon the clay before her

She recited the incantation; when she completed her incantation
she drew upon her clay
Fourteen pieces she pinched off; seven pieces she placed on the right
Seven pieces she placed on the left; between them she placed a brick

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Of the seven plus seven mother-wombs, seven brought forth males, 
Seven brought forth females. 
The Mother-Womb, the creatress of destiny, 
In pairs she completed them, 
In pairs she completed before her 
The forms of the people”

( Assyrian/Babylonian Text)

(Drum and flute begin quietly, performers begin moving to the accompaniment, both pausing for the text)

It is said a woman’s egg holds the life force, the cell of life. Each month it is released awaiting the right time. It emits a pheromone that attracts the male. When the male penetrates the membrane the cell’s hairs stand on end and then wrap around him drawing him into the collapsing cell. Both lose something of themselves as they commingle as a single body.

DANCE CONTINUES

It is said that in Aboriginal tradition the child spirit waits until the mother dreams who it is who will be reborn and that place of dreaming is a special, secret and sacred place.

DANCE CONTINUES

The beginning of life
The beginning of the magic of life
The magic of the beginning of life

When did we fool ourselves that we knew the story of the beginning?

In the beginning...

Do we even think about it now
have time to think about it now
need to think about it now?

What is the story of our beginning?
What is the story of our beginning
our conception
our place of conception?

That magic place where egg received sperm and became a new being
where soul became present and said ‘yes’ to life

Do we even know that magic place
Let alone the magic place of the beginning of all things?

(During the last section the set has been returned to the way it was, the candle is blown out, it is dark.)

A. (continues) There is a building, a monument, a tomb, on a hill overlooking a river in Ireland...

Once surrounded by smaller domestic buildings, shelters, hearths, pits, signs of life over 4,000 years ago.
The door has been sealed shut with heavy stone slaps

In front a large stone decorated with spirals in two’s and three’s and a mark indicating the direction of the door
   Behind another
   Beside another

Above the door a small slit-like opening in the roof, hidden, protected.

(During the next section a spotlight begins to shine into the space lighting up the area, and then retreats)

At midwinter, on the shortest day of the year, at sunrise, the first rays of the sun hit this secret place and a pencil thin beam of light makes it’s way slowly down the passageway to the very centre.

For seventeen minutes this beam lights up the darkness and then retreats the way it came

Once a year, for three days, it makes this journey at the day’s beginning then disappears altogether for another year.

Once a year, at midwinter

   Midwinter

   The time of magic

   The time of conception
   That hidden unseen, unnoticed change when life begins
       and the potential to be...is

(Drum and flute begin slowly and then pick up speed. Houselights go on. Bows are taken and then people are invited to join in Dance of Celebration)
Sense Of Place, Sacred Space
Arrival
Script

The performed sections of the performance-ritual occur in three main areas, the second of which is in two parts. The dialogue is improvised around the ideas written here.

Part 1

Space is set up with Drummer and flag.

Joker/M.C. (Enters, takes scroll out of bag and reads/announces:)

Welcome to our springtime performance. If you have come especially for this performance a donation is gratefully accepted. Registered conference participants have already paid, thank you. Please take a program as a memento (collects money in hat and hands out programs).

We are about to embark on a journey, a pilgrimage. The journey is in three parts.

  Part one begins here,

  Part two takes us into and through the bush,

  and part three takes us to the mountaintop.

Thank you and enjoy.

(Exits)

(In the distance a procession is seen through the trees, moving to the sound of the drum. The procession is led by Spirit of Spring/Journey/Arrival/Birth, followed by the Joker/M.C. holding two large flags attached to a long tunnel. The procession stops and Spirit of Spring, etc. continues across performing area. One by one the characters enter the space - their arrival in this land - react appropriately, then exit.

Characters

  Priestess
  Refugee
  Nun
  Immigrant
  The Modern Woman
  Convict Woman

Each arrival is announced by the drum which fades as each character exits the space. The last is the Convict Woman.

Convict Woman (coming out of the tunnel) Oi! Quit shovin’! I’m movin’. See, ‘ere I am, I’ve arrived! (back to ship, lifting skirts) Wooo! (Looks around) Ooo, it’s no’ bad really. They done a good job ‘em boys. Plenty of space.
(To audience) When we arrived it were all trees, no room for us, to live. Bu’ look a’it now. Nice. Plenty of space. And look o’er there - is the garden - vegetables. Well we ‘ad to bring our own wi’ us, you see, weren’ not’in’ ’ere to eat. Look at it! Not’n’. Don’ know what them Natives eat, fish maybe, they’re out there all day on that water fishing. No, we bro’ our own. Carrot, potato, yea and see, there’s sheep ’n pigs. ‘N over there, that’s where I live. The women’s camp, ’n that there beside it is the men’s camp, ’n in between is the judge, and the prison. Tryin’ to keep us apart I think. Not much chance of that. I’ve already seen a man I’ve got me eyes on.

(Looks around again) Yea, it migh’ be all righ’ ’ere. At least the rain has stopped. (To audience) That’s one thing tho’, one minute its pourin’ rain and the next its boilin’ ‘ot, you don’ know where you are. ‘N tha’ lightnin’ when we arriv’d! Gawd! Thought I was goin’ to die! It hit that’ tree over there, split it in two - right over there next to the L’ten’s tent. That’s Lt. Clark, off our ship, or, I mean the first ship we were on. We got moved. ’e didn’ like us, yu see, called us his ‘damned ‘ores’, Not like his little Betsy-ne’er-do-wrong,’is little A-l-i-c-i-a, who ‘ed pine about all night. All night moanin’ and dreamin’ of ‘is little Betsy and ‘is son back in England. A seaman tol’ us all about it. No, we didn’ get on. Got us moved to another ship and filled up where we’d slept with sheep, ’e did. But we gave ‘im a good run for his money.

Well I best be gettin’ on then, don’ want to get in trouble on me first day. (Moving off and looking around) Naw, it might be all righ’ ’ere I think.

(When she has exited, drum stops, Joker/M.C. puts flags down and moves into central position. She takes the scroll out of her bag and reads)

Joker/M.C.

I want to tell you a story
a story of my people

Many years ago in the lands of my ancestors,
    Ireland...England...The Netherlands,
in the time before,
    the time before the one land became three,
there was a mighty freeze,
    a long, cold Winter.

Then imperceptibly,
    gradually,
the ice began to melt
and on this barren land
    a different kind of life
life appeared.

A Garden of Eden.

And into this Eden arrived a people.
Small groups
two or three families together
    living off the land
    and the gifts this land had prepared.

An equal relationship,
    taking
    and if needed moving on,
    allowing for regrowth.
At the same time
on the other side of the world
was another land not yet on its own.
Its story also was of a long, cold Winter,
one of flood and storm,
freeze and thaw
erosion.

It too had a people
in small groups,
living on what the land had to offer,
moving on,
allowing for regrowth.

For more than forty thousand years
it seemed,
in most cases,
an equal relationship.

Then my ancestors arrived
to this land
on the other side of the world.

They had changed.

They had learned new ways,
new ways of controlling the land
and all it had to offer.

No need anymore to listen
to see
to learn
to understand

They came
and recreated this new land to suit themselves.

“This is what we know”, they said.
“This is what we need to survive.
This is what we need for ourselves.”

But in the recreating
and the ignorance of their recreating
they changed forever
more quickly
more permanently
this Eden.

(Puts scroll away, picks up small flag which is in the space and directs audience to follow)

Please follow me.

Part 2a

A bush setting. In this setting are masks and three performers representing Spirits of the Land. As the audience arrives they are continuing their life as normal, being in their own environment, designated by the masks. They interact if appropriate. Suddenly the silence is shattered by the arrival of the Priestess who moves through the space with great determination accompanied by the sound of the drum. Spirits of the Land stop
and watch, and as she moves off continue with their lives. This process is repeated with Refugee and Immigrant who each respond to the environment and 'creatures' in their own way. The last is Convict Woman.

Convict Woman (not so happy this time, a bit suspicious of the environment. Picks up a stick and begins hitting ground.) Where are yo'? C'm on out now. I can 'eer yo' back there. Yo' can't 'ide from me. Don' think I'm fright'n of yo', I aint, you 'ear me. I'm no' fright'n'. I'll get you little buggers if I see yo', yo' see if I don'...etc.

(As she disappears around the corner, Spirits of the Land who have stopped again and watched her progress, begin to move slowly away and disappear forever into the bush. When they have completely gone, Joker/M.C. directs audience to follow her to the next performing area.)

Part 2b

(On one side of the path the Priestess is making her offering to the Sun. On the other side of the path the Convict Woman is perched in the branches of a tree).

Convict Woman Not feel'n too good lately. Tha' first night...don't remember much abou' it. Ai but it was fun. 'N you know that man I was tellin' you about? 'E might be all right, that one. But not been well since, sick every mornin'. 'Ope I have'n got that dysentery that's goin' about. Not so sure about it 'ere tho'. (Looking around at ground and bush) Strange noises. Don' know wots there. 'Don' like it much. 'N at night all these ants and spiders crawlin' all over yo'. Can't wait to get off the ground. 'N those natives. Yo' don' see them. They just creep up on yo' and then disappear in them trees. No, I don' think I like it much. (Getting down off tree) I miss me 'ome. Wer'nt much there, 'n prison 'n that, but I just wanna go 'ome. (Moving off) I wanna go 'ome.

(As she moves on down the path, Joker/M.C. takes out scroll and reads)

Joker/M.C.

They say it is dying
the earth

They say with each arrival
the difference disappears
all becomes the same.

Sameness is another kind of death.

They say with each small change
the balance is tilted
the whole is affected and begins to readjust.

They say it's evolution
progress
the future
change for the better
change for our survival...our immortality

That is the dream.

But where have we come from, we who dream,
and what is the future we are dreaming of?
For if the dream becomes the reality,
what is the reality of the place we have come to out of our dreaming?

Do I like what I see
   of the present,
   of the past,
   of the future dream?

Do I want to stand still
   hold on to what I know,
   what I understand?

Do I want to go back
   is it possible,
   desirable?

Or do I want to move
   allow change
   adapt?

And can I agree to only part
   without taking the whole?

If I hold on to what is,
   or go back,
I am left behind,
   irrelevant.

And if I let go,
   accept change,
what is the future we are dreaming for ourselves
   and our children?

What I see I love
   and mourn its passing with passion.

What I do not see,
   have never seen,
   have never heard,
   never experienced,
I do not miss at all

And that is the reality.

(After poem Joker/M.C. invites them to the mountain, warning that it is another 10 minutes walk. As they walk, the mountain can be seen in the distance, and the figure of Convict Woman is seen seated on a rock overlooking the valley)

Part 3

When the audience arrives three others have joined the Convict Woman and are seated on three other rocks overlooking the valley. They are dressed in white. When the audience settles the Convict Woman calls/cries/ ...and the four begin to move. During the movement the Convict Woman removes her clothes. Underneath she is dressed like the others. This section is a movement piece, performed in silence, to the sound of the environment around and responding in movement to the environment. At the end of the dance, the performers sing/cry to the land and stand in silence. When
ready all performers leave the space and the audience. The audience then is left to sit in silence or follow as needed.
The Fire of the Sun
Script

**Newsreader**

1. This week Caesar landed in Britain. After an abortive attempt last year due to the shipwreck of his fleet, Caesar has returned in strength seizing territory to the south and west. The British leader, Cassivellaunus, had amassed large numbers of resistance fighters, but in the ensuing battle the superior methods and weaponry of the Roman army forced their surrender. Other tribal leaders are expected to follow suit.

2. The resistance to Roman rule in Britain has resurfaced with Caratacus from the west leading the rebel forces in a renewed attempt to rid the country of its foreign invaders. The resistance has been hindered by those tribes who have formed treaties with Rome. So far, eleven kings have submitted. One being Prasutagus, King of the Iceni in East Anglia. Prasutagus holds land just north of Camulodunum the main Roman base. Throughout the rest of the country druids are being forced out of their sanctuaries in an attempt to stop the growing resistance.

3. Celtic opposition to Roman presence is increasing. The Iceni in the east have now joined other tribes in using guerrilla tactics on the Roman occupation forces. The Roman policy of freely giving land grants in Britain to its retired soldiers and other citizens has exacerbated the situation.

4. The Roman offensive has moved to the druid refuge on the isle of Mona in the west. There are reports that druid men and women have gathered at the shore. They are unarmed but brandishing torches and calling on their gods and goddesses to curse the approaching Roman army. Unperturbed the Romans are crossing the channel and maintaining the offensive. The island is on fire. Many have been killed, homes and sanctuaries completely destroyed.

5. News has just come to hand that Prasutagus, the Iceni King, has died causing mayhem in the east. Prasutagus had taken the unprecedented step of bequeathing his kingdom to his daughters as well as to Rome. This was in direct opposition to conditions laid out in the treaty. The reaction has been swift. Local Romans, including the recently arrived veterans as well as others in the garrison, have stormed the palace. Boudicca, the Queen, has been attacked and severely lashed. Her daughters have been raped. The rampage has continued throughout the territory. Romans are taking all land and goods by force. The native population has fled.

6. Boudicca is fighting back. In retaliation for the atrocities committed by the Romans on her person, family and nation, Boudicca has gathered her scattered people and, with additional assistance from neighbouring tribes, is marching towards the capital, Camulodunum. This unexpected move has caught the Romans unprepared.

7. Spurred on by their successful raid on Camulodunum, the forces led by Boudicca of the Iceni are pressing forward towards Londinium. The city is in panic. The Roman forces have not yet returned from their victory over the druids in the west and the city is defenceless. Residents are being evacuated as quickly as possible.

8. Reports have come in of the destruction of Londinium and the abuses inflicted on remaining citizens. The rebels seem to be out of control. There has been a frenzied massacre of men, women and children. Their mutilated bodies, have been hung, crucified, on trees. The city streets have turned into rivers of blood.

9. The rebellion is dead. After their successful razing of Londinium and Verulamium, the rebel forces under Boudicca had continued towards the returning Roman army. The Roman army were now well prepared. The rebels, high on their previous successes
walked blindly into the trap. In the ensuing battle their guerilla tactics were no match for the superior Roman military machine and they were convincingly defeated. Boudicca has fled.

10. News has arrived of the death of Boudicca. In the Summer of 60, Boudicca led the resistance army’s reign of terror through three major British towns. Although the resistance was defeated by the Roman army there is now talk of statues being erected at significant sites to remember this valiant woman and the cause she embodied.

*Julian of Norwich*

And at once I saw the red blood trickling down from under the garland, hot, fresh, and plentiful,...

And I still seemed to see with my actual eyes the continual bleeding of his head. Great drops of blood rolled down from the garland like beads, seemingly from the veins; and they came down a brownish red colour - for the blood was thick and as they spread out then became bright red, and when they reached his eyebrows they vanished....

After this I saw with my own eyes in the face of the crucifix hanging before me and at which I was ceaselessly gazing something of his passion. I saw insults and spittle and disfiguring and bruising and lingering pain more than I know how to describe...

After this I looked, and saw the body which was bleeding copiously, apparently as the result of the flogging. The fair skin was broken and there were deep weals in the tender flesh...

And...I saw his dear face, dry, bloodless, and pallid with death. It became more pale, deathly and lifeless. Then dead, it turned a blue colour, gradually changing to a browny blue as the flesh continued to die...

After this I saw the whole Godhead concentrated as it were in a single point, and thereby I learnt that he is in all things....

For I saw that God in fact does everything, however little that thing may be. Indeed, nothing happens by luck or chance, but all is through the foresight and wisdom of God.
Passage
Script

‘Passage’ is in three parts:

Part One: Preparation

As the gallery opens the four performers are already in the space involved in their own action and experience. The actions are based on their own suggestions and ideas in response to the themes. The actions are:

- text written by the performer read quietly aloud;
- binding tape unravelled, wound and unwound around body;
- beads sorted, mixed and sorted;
- mirror reflecting image before, during and after shaving of hair, interspersed with held movement.

At end of action performers exit area.

Part Two: Revisiting

Three performers enter and stand by Totem masks, place them on their heads and begin to move as the fourth performer begins to drum.

Fourth performer stops drumming and recites first two verses of the poem. She then moves to last Totem mask and enters dance. Drummer accompanies. When dance is finished masks are returned to their stands and performers exit.

Part Three: Passage

Movement piece to poem and drum which begins synchronised and moves on to personal expression with movement links to the beginning and each other.

Once I had a dream
a dream of Nirvana
of Eden before the Fall
of a time when...

And I believed as I believed others believed
that if I searched I would find the truth
of this perfect beginning of all things
culmination of all things
fulfilment of all things

But the truth that was revealed did not match the dream
and nomatter how close I came to the dream
it remained just
out of reach
out of touch
with the reality of the truth revealed

So we have made a pact the dream and I
She had shed her half bloomed petals
revealing her centre
    her heart
    her potential
    her seed.
And I have taken this seed and hidden her
in the deepest recesses of my womb.

For we have made a pact the dream and I
and we will love, nurture and protect each other
until the time is right
and then,
    and only then
will she risk to birth again.
Appendix B The Story of Elizabeth Pulley
Beginnings

At midnight on Christmas Eve in 1782 Elizabeth Pulley broke in and stole 10 lbs cheese, 3 lbs bacon, 24 oz butter, 3 lbs raisins, 7 lbs flour and 2 rolls of worsted material from the shop of Elizabeth Mimms at Hethersett in the South-East of England (Cobley, 1970:225; Hope-Caten, 1984 - Norfolk Chronicle 11/1/1783).

Elizabeth was a single woman, poor and had no known trade. Little else is known about her background so we can only imagine how she lived and survived. According to Portia Robinson ‘it was the very poor, especially the single women, the washerwomen, the charwomen, the street-sellers, the silk-winders, streetwalkers and those of “no trade” who lived in...cellars and garrets...’ in ‘...all the major cities and towns of Britain’. Their lives ‘were characterised by squalor, poverty, dirt and disease...’ (Robinson, 1993:17ff). The poverty had grown with the spread of the industrial towns and cities which were unable to deal with the increased population.

Everyone at the time seemed to agree that poverty was the principle cause of crime but noone was interested in exploring the cause of poverty. People like her were considered ‘feckless’, ‘indolent’, ‘reluctant to work at an honest trade’. The authorities believed that the only remedy to the problem was to increase the severity of the punishment so that the pain and the fear of pain would deter the criminal from acting again (Robinson, 1988:40,41).

When Elizabeth stole from Mrs Mimms it was the middle of Winter and, after all, Christmas, the time of celebration and the giving of gifts. Some of the more privileged made a habit of giving gifts to the poor (Hutton, 1996:Chpt.6). Perhaps Elizabeth had nothing and wanted what everyone else had: a good meal, a Christmas pudding and a new dress for herself and family or friends.
Whatever the case Elizabeth was arrested, tried, confessed and sentenced to death. She had done this before. During the previous four years at least she had been arrested annually and convicted of stealing. She had been gaoled, publicly whipped and sentenced to twelve months hard labour in the house of correction at Aylsham (Hope-Caten, 1984 - Norfolk Chronicle 1779, 1780, 1781). It had made no difference. She still stole. Perhaps there was no alternative for someone like her.

The courts had tried everything. There was no improvement. The gaols and prison hulks were overflowing already. Transportation to America was no longer possible after 1781 when America won its independence from Britain (Weidenhofer, 1973:Chpt.1). So in 1783 the judgement was made that Elizabeth 'should be hanged by the neck till she be dead' (Cobley, 1970:225). She was about 22 years old.

Meanwhile in 1770 Captain James Cook had discovered 'New Holland'. Since then the British government had set up a committee to examine the possibility of reviving transportation and New Holland was suggested as a possible site. James Maria Matra’s ‘A Proposal for Establishing a Settlement in New South Wales, 23 August 1783’ was presented to the English Government and the idea of transporting convicts there “...became for the first time a matter of serious consideration...” (Historical Records, 1892:xxi). Although the report did not at first receive a positive response, by 1786, three years after Elizabeth’s conviction the plan to send convicts to NSW was put into operation by the government, and preparations began (Weidenhofer, 1973:18, 21).

At some stage during this period Elizabeth’s death sentence was reprieved and, instead, she was to be transported for seven years. She spent the time waiting, imprisoned in Norwich Castle.
It was 1787. The seed was planted. The seed of hope and new beginnings for the 778 convicts who were to travel from England on the First Fleet...and the seed of despair and death for the indigenous people of this ‘new’ land (Summers, 1975:267).

Two years later in another Winter, the Winter of 1789 on the other side of the world, thousands of the original inhabitants of the Sydney basin died from the effects of smallpox brought in by the new arrivals. That was another beginning. Over the next ten to fifteen years the original population of Australia was decimated by 50% - 90% as the smallpox epidemic was quickly followed by measles, influenza and violence (Kohen, 1993:15; Stockton, 1993:87).
Arrival

In England, Winter had ended and the Spring festivities, including Lent, were in full swing when, on 11th March 1787, Elizabeth Pulley was received on board the transport ship, *Friendship* by Lt. Ralph Clark (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:1, 8). Yet it was not for another two months, on 13th May, after Easter and Mayday celebrations were over, that at 5 oClock in the Morning...The Sirius made the Signal for the whole fleet to get under Way’ and they set sail down the channel (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:11 and Hutton, 1996:Chpts. 11 - 21). ‘By ten o’clock they were clear of the Isle of Wight’ (Crittenden, 1981:13).

The *Friendship* was the smallest of the transport ships, really a brig, with only two masts and square rigged (Crittenden, 1981, p. 14). It was carrying ‘76 male and 21 female convicts; 1 captain, 2 lieutenants, 2 sergeants, 3 corporals, 1 drummer and 36 privates, with 1 assistant surgeon’ (Fletcher, 1975:iv.)

The women had spent the time at Plymouth lolling about ‘on the deck half naked and filthy’ for although fresh clothing had been promised the women’s clothing had never arrived (Crittenden, 1981:12 and Weidenhofer, 1973:24). Elizabeth and the other convict women continued to wear the clothes they had worn in prison. During the ensuing journey Phillip wrote to Lord Sydney back in England requesting that the women’s clothing ‘be sent out by the first ship’ (Historical Records, 1892:107).

On the deck, ‘a barricade studded with iron prongs had been erected’ to keep the crew and convicts away from each other. Below deck, the convicts were enclosed by another bulkhead studded with nails which also had holes through which the guards could keep an eye on them and ‘fire in case of mutiny’ (Weidenhofer, 1973: 26). In spite of these precautions by the third day of sailing the seamen on *Friendship* had broken through to the convict women. Lt. Clark however blamed the women.
I never met with a parcel of more discontent fellows in my life the[y] [the seamen] only want more Provisions to give it to the damned whores the Convict Women of whome the[y] are very fond Since they brock throu the Bulk head and had connection with them -- I never could have thought that there wair So many abandond wrecches in England, the[y] are ten thousand time worse than the men Convicts, and I am affraid that we will have a great dele more trouble with them (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:12)

The *Friendship* continued out to the open sea on the first leg of the journey. Almost immediately it began to storm and the seas became rough causing seasickness in both the convicts and crew, including Lt. Clark (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:12).

The convicts had been allowed on deck during the day and by the second week the order came through to put them out of irons. Lt. Clark was reticent: ‘[I] don’t think is Save for so great a number to be out of irons at once.’ They decided instead ‘to put them out when we think proper and on the Smales falt to put them in again’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:13). The weather remained unsettled. The *Friendship* lost the main Top Gallant Mast on 30th May, but by 3rd June the Island of Teneriffe, one of the Canary Islands and their first stopover, was ‘in Sight distance 12 Leagues’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:14, 15).

While moored at the port of Santa Cruz, Teneriffe, the convicts were again put out of irons and given ‘wine and fresh Beef for the whole of use while we remained here’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:16). This was quite a change to the salted meat and beer which were the usual provision while at sea (Yarwood, 1983:13, 14). That, however, was the limit to their freedom. Unlike the seamen and officers, they were not allowed to disembark. The freedom did not last long for Elizabeth. On 9th June Elizabeth Pulley and three other women were put in irons ‘for fighting ther was never three great whores living than they are, the four of them that Went throu the Bulk head while we lay at the Mother Bank’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981, p. 19).
By 11th June the First Fleet was on its way again. In the two weeks in port the ships had been watered and fresh supplies taken in. In contrast to the May rains experienced on leaving England, there was little wind and the heat had made its presence felt. Lt. Clark complained, ‘the Sun very hot endeed wish that we wair gone from heer’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:16). The second leg of the journey was not without incident. On 18th June a gale broke and the Fore Top Sail split. The next day Elizabeth and the others were allowed out of their irons, with the comment by Lt. Clark, ‘I am convinced the[y] will not be long out of them the[y] are a disgrace to ther Whole Sex B.....s that they are I wish all the Women Wair out of the Ship’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:19).

Sure enough, one month later, on 3rd July, it was reported that the day before some of the ‘men [seamen] had brock thru the Womens Convicts Bulk head again and that he had caught four of the women in the mens place’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:22). Pulley was one of them. The men were flogged and the women ‘to be keep in Irons all the Way -- if I [Lt. Clark] had been the Commr. I Should flogd the four Whores also’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:22).

On 5th July the whole Fleet was placed on water rations (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:23). Previously Phillip had tried to stop at ‘Porta Praya in the Cape Verde Islands...to take on more water and fresh vegetables’ but the surf was too strong and the winds tricky. In the end he was warned off by gunfire from the Fort so he decided to keep going (Crittenden, 1981: 33). Later that same day one of Elizabeth’s ‘crowd’, Elizabeth Dudgeon, was flogged for impertinence ‘then order her to tied to the pump She has been long fishing for it which She has at last got untill her hearts containt’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:24).

On Saturday 14th July the Fleet crossed the equator and soon after the wind picked up and they began to make headway (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:25, 26). Midway through the next week Elizabeth Barbur, another woman mentioned in the same breath as Elizabeth Pulley, ‘was very much in liquor’, first abusing the ship’s doctor and then anyone else
who came near her, except for Lt. Clark, who commented, 'I wonder how She come to forget me amongst the number'. She was promptly put in leg irons, had her hands tied behind her back, and was gagged to keep her quiet (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:27).

The next week Pulley was in irons again (24th July), although the irons must have been taken off at some stage previously as she was taken out of handcuffs to do it (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:30). This leg had been a long one and it showed in the restlessness of the women convicts. As well as Pulley and the two women already mentioned, another two, Margaret Hall and Mrs McNamara, had caused problems, and on the 24th July there had been quite a lot of shuffling between the handcuffs and leg irons. There also had been a problem with bed bugs, so that 'the Ship is Swarming with them every body complains of them Except Capt. Meredith and Self who Sleep in cotts' and this would have added to the general restlessness of the women (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:29).

Pulley was not in irons for long this time. By the 26th 'the doctor desired that Eliz. Pully might be put out of Irons She being very ill having a blister on her' (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:29). It must have been some blister, but not bad enough! Six days later (1st August) she was back in irons with Elizabeth Dudgeon: 'the doctor having reported them well again...the damned whores the moment that they got below fel a fighting amongst one a nother and Capt Meridith order the Sergt. not to part them but to let them fight it out which I think he is very wrong in letting them doe so' (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:32).

During this leg both the male and female convicts had been kept occupied sewing clothes for the officers, or mending or washing. The seamen had been catching fish (shark and dolphin), which augmented their diet, and cleaning barnacles off the sides of the boats (Crittenden, 1981: 32, 36; Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:22 - 29). On 24th the weather changed, it began to blow hard and squall. On 28th the women's caboose was carried away by the sea, and other ships lost sails. However, it meant that the Fleet made up time and, on 2nd August, land was sighted (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:32). Almost immediately the Fleet
was becalmed, and it wasn’t for another four days that they entered the harbour of Rio de Janiero, and, after shifting birth twice, came finally to rest on 8th August.

The Fleet stayed in Rio de Janiero for a month. Fresh food was immediately taken on board: ‘fresh Beef and greens came on board for the Marines and convicts’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:35). Later, after going ashore, Lt. Clark ‘Brought on board Several Young orange Trees coffy and Bananas to carry to botany bay’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:43). Oranges were plentiful and cheap, so were added to the diet (Crittenden, 1981:42). The crew spent time on shore enjoying the Portuguese hospitality and roaming the countryside. Some of the convict women were moved to other ships (Elizabeth Pulley was not one of them). The Friendship lost ‘the Six Very best Women we have in the Ship’ and received instead ‘Six of the Worst from the Charlott’, much to Lt. Clark’s despair: ‘I dont think is right and I dont know what I shall doe now as well as the rest of use for the[y] are the only Women that can wash amonst them’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:36). Nevertheless, he soon found someone, for five days later he gave ‘to one of the convict women all my dirty Linnen to wash’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:38).

It seemed that by now everyone had realised that putting the women convicts in irons as punishment had done nothing to encourage their better behaviour, so the order was put out to ‘flog them the Same as the Men when the[y] behaved ill’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:37). On Monday 13th August Pulley, and the other three women chained with her, were finally taken out of the irons they had been wearing during the previous two weeks, and were free to mingle with the other convicts.

On Tuesday 4th September the Fleet departed on the third leg of their journey, towards the Cape, well rested, well fed and the ships restocked and watered, rum instead of wine for the crew, and ‘seeds and plants for the new colony’ (Crittenden, 1981:42). On 7th September a squall hit during the night and as they travelled further south the temperature
dropped, the winds began to blow and the sea began breaking over the ships. On the *Friendship*, Lt. Clark's records in his diary,

19th September: ‘the[sea] Brock in the Ship this afternoon a wetted Several of the People Particular the Convict women as it went down ther place’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:47).

23rd September: ‘it blows very hard much harder than it has Since we have Been at Sea - - the Sea Brock over use Several Times to day...Battend the hatches down of the Marines and convict women the Sea Breaking over the Ship’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:48).

25th September: ‘it blowd very hard all night and the Ship rould her Gunwale under Several times and a great dele of water went between decks and washt the marines out of ther beds and the Convict Women all the thing roulign about’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:48).

The squalls continued off and on for two weeks interspersed with calm weather, fog, and/or rain. The changes in weather seemed to occupy everyone on board as it wasn’t until 3rd October, during a period of calm, that ‘two of the convict Women that went throu the Bulk head to the Seamen on the 3 of July last have inform the doctor that they are with child (Sarah McCormick and Elizh. Pully) I hope the comr. will make the two Seamen that are the Fathers of the children marrie them and make them stay at Botany Bay’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:51). No more was mentioned of these pregnancies, so whether Elizabeth and Sarah were really pregnant and miscarried, or whether it was a ruse to get sympathy and special treatment, is a matter of conjecture. Elizabeth’s first child, that is known about, was born nine months after arrival. It was not from this encounter.

Three days later, on 6th October, two other convict women ‘wair put in leg Irons to gether...for quarelling, dirtyness and theft’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:53). Later still, on 11th October,
the doctor met with a great lost this afternoon one of the convict women whom he gave some thing to was for him said that she lost seven pair of stocking over board but I am apt to think that the[y] are not over board but that some of the other women have stole them which is my opinion for their wair never a greater number of D....d B......s in one place as ther is in this ship -- if the[y] wair to loose any thing of mine that I gave them to wash I would cut them to pices (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:54)

Neither the convict women nor Lt. Clark had undergone a change of heart.

On Saturday 13th October Cape Town was sighted: 'about seven oclock the supply made the signal for seeing the land' and the fleet 'came to ane anchor at half past 3 oclock' (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:55). Whereas Teneriffe was owned by the Spanish, and Rio de Janeiro was a Portuguese colony, Cape Town had been colonised by the Dutch. As the fleet entered the harbour they 'found riding here one Dutch sloop of war, Dutch eastindiaman I and two French eastindiamen -- the town appear very pretty from wher we lay but very little wood and the hills very hight' (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:55).

The seas were populated with ships from many countries, including The Netherlands, Portugal, France and England, and the fleet had passed a number already during their journey. Both the Dutch and the British had their East India Companies. Britain traded with China for tea and had large holdings in India, which it was just beginning to exploit (Crittenden, 1981:2, 3). In this it was competing with France, a competition which extended to America and Canada. France was also in conflict with the Dutch whose East India Company controlled the spice trade centred at Batavia in Java. The black slave trade to America had begun after the American War of Independence, when there was a need to replace convicts from England working off their time as 'slave labour'. On 1st August a Portuguese ship, carrying black slaves from the coast of Guinea, had overtaken the fleet (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:37). With all of this competition, ships relied on 'friendly' ports
for stopovers during such long journeys and there was a lot of protocol to be followed on arrival and departure (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:13, 34, 43, 56). The Dutch and British had agreed to co-operate, hence the availability of Cape Town to the Fleet. In Rio de Janeiro, Cpt. Phillip was quite well known as he had served as Captain in the Portuguese army (Crittenden, 1981:40).

Immediately on arriving at Cape Town a search was made ‘for the doctors Stocking a monst the convict women but could not find them’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:55). The stopover in Cape Town proceeded along the same lines as at the other ports: the crew going ashore for rest and recreation, and stores and water taken on board. Again, the stopover allowed fresh food to replace the regular ship fare.

Since we came into this port the marines and convicts have had the same allowance (Spirits Excepted) a Pound of Beef or Mutton and a Pound and a half of Loaf Bread a day ...and as much Greens as the[y] can make use of in there Broth (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:259)

On the Friendship Lt. Clark was having problems with the drinking habits of one of his men, ‘Mr. F got very much in licour then came on board wher he begane to abuse me in a very Publick manner to Capt. Meridith’, and insisted on a court martial to exonerate himself (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:55). The court martial did not eventuate and Lt. Clark had to make do with a public apology (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:260). As well, the convict women began playing up again.


The next day however, Major Ross, the Commander of the Marines ‘came on board after Tea to Speak to the convicts’, returning to do the same again, on 23rd (Fidlon & Ryan,
came on board a little after nine to See wher we could put Stocks if the Women and men
convicts wair taking out’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:60). Later that same day, the plan was
explained to the convicts.

Soon after Major Ross came a long Side and told me to inform the women
convict that the[y] Should be put into another Ship to morrow or Next day
and desired me to Send him the Names of those women of the convicts that
had children on board’. (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:60)

On Sunday, 28th October Lt. Clark finally got his wish. The convict women were
moved to the other ships to make room for stock. ‘about 1 oClock Sent the Women
convicts away as order thank god that the[y] are all out of the Ship -- I am very Glad of it
for the[y] wair a great Trouble much more So than the [men]’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:60, 61). And on 6th November: ‘30 Sheep came on board this day and wair put in the Place
where the women convicts Were -- I think we will find much more Agreeable Ship mates
than they were’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:65). Lt. Clark was delighted. In a letter written
on 8th November to a friend in Plymouth he wrote,

thank God we have got Quite of the most troublesome Sett (the Women) and
have Received 40 Sheep in there Room which I have not the least manner of
doubt but we will find them much more agreeable Ship mates than the (Ladys)
were -- I never came a Cross Such a D.... Sett of B....... in all the course of
my life than the[y] are -- the men cannot hold a candle to one of them & I am
glad from the Bottom of my Soul that the[y] are gone for I was heartily tired
of them (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:259)

Elizabeth Pulley was moved to the Prince of Wales. The women’s arrival was remarked
on by James Scott, Sergeant of Marines on the ‘Prince of Wales’: ‘Rec’d 13 Woman
Convicts from the Frend Ship Transp’t (Fendship Cleard for Stock)’ (Scott, 1963:22). The Historical Records note that she and the other women convicts took their beds with them (Bladen, 1893:404). The Prince of Wales was a larger ship than the Friendship having two decks and three masts. It was one of the two newest ships in the Fleet being built only the year before (Crittenden, 1981:14, 15).

After the departure of the women convicts Lt. Clark’s journal is filled with his many dreams, his allocation and distribution of rum, lack of fresh food (being sick of salt beef and pork), the weather (rain - cold - windy - calm - snow - hail - calm), the sheep (first the birthing of lambs but by the end their dying from lack of food as the hay ran out) the pigs, the life of the sea (porpoises, whales, albatrosses, flying fish and 'mother carrying chickens'), and the male convicts who were stealing food and wood from the supplies and being impertinent to the seamen: 'ther never were Such D...... Rascals collected together as ther is on board this Ship' (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:67 - 90). It seems that everything was back to normal and he was no happier with the men.

Meanwhile, after some delay due to bad weather, 'The Whole Fleet. Sail’d About. 2 Oclock P.M. With a Feaverable Brees' on 12th November, 1986, the last leg of their journey to Botany Bay (Scott, 1963:24). The two months of this leg were filled with preparations for arrival. Male convicts with a trade, such as carpentry or gardening, were moved to 'the ‘Supply’ to have Some houses and Some Ground turned over against the arriv[al] at Botany’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:69). The plan was that the Supply, Alexander, Scarborough, and Friendship would go ahead of the rest of the Fleet to begin preparations (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:69, 70). The Alexander carried Anthony Rope, Pulley’s future husband.

On 25th November the forward party prepared to separate from the rest of the Fleet. Lt. Clark received the orders 'to follow the Supply and also not to have any conversation with the Natives when we get to Botany'. So '1/2 after twelf the Supply made Sail as did
the Alexander Scarborough and use and parted with the rest of the fleet' (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:72). Elizabeth Pulley would have watched their departure from the deck of the Prince of Wales.

In the records from James Scott, Pulley is not mentioned by name and there are only two mentions of the women convicts. One was when on Saturday 24th November 'At. A.M, Elenor McCave (a Convict) Was Delevered. of a Dead Child, Buried at P.M' (Scott, 1963:26). The other was on 20th December when 'Doc'r White Came on B'd to See the people, from Charlotte. Order'd 4 of the Female Convicts to be hove in a Gentle Sall, for the Venereal,' -' (Scott, 1963:29). Perhaps the women had settled down, or perhaps, Scott was not concerned with their activities. As the Fleet travelled further south and neared Australia the weather gradually worsened: 'Very Cold, Sence Wee Left the Cape of Good Hope, it being More so, Sence Wee Came on the Coast. of New Holland' (Scott, 1963:31). Scott reports on the gales which continued off and on.:

23rd November: 'Yorgan Yorganness a Seaman, Over Board. he fell. from the Main Topsail Yard, it. being Dark. & Blowing fresh Wee had No Hopes of Saveing, him' (Scott, 1963:26).

28th November: 'It. Blow'd a Very fresh Gale.' (Scott, 1963:27)


10th January: 'Was overtaken By a Very Heavey Squall, Which Carr'd away Our Main Yard in the Slings Split our Main topsail. Main Sail & Main Topmas Steacle this Happned About. 2, P.M.' (Scott, 1963:32).

Water and food was getting low. A week after leaving Cape Town the whole Fleet was put on water rations again, and, a month later (14th December), 'Our Butter & flower.
that Was found, by the Contracter, (Mr. Richards,) for Victuling. Mar’n & Convicts. is Out; Marines, Rec’d Beef in Leu of Flour, & the Convicts Bread in Leu of Flour’ (Scott, 1963:25, 28). Then on Monday 7th January land was sighted: ‘At . 2. P.M, The Prince of Wales Made Van Demans Land or South Cape of New Holland’ (Scott, 1963:31). The southernmost tip of Australia, now called Tasmania, came into view.

After the first sighting, land was eagerly looked for as the forward party and the remainder of the Fleet tacked backwards and forwards along the coast. Lt. Clark reports on his impressions:

5th January: ‘it is very hight land’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981: 84).

6th January: ‘it appears very hight’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:85).


15th January: ‘it appears very high land...can See the Trees very plain on the Shore’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:88).

James Scott does not add a great deal more.


But by the 18th, the mainland was sighted, and Philip Gidley King, an Aide-de-camp, and friend, of Governor Phillip, was a little more expansive from his position as Lieutenant on the Sirius (Crittendon, 1981:10).
18th January: ‘Land from WSW to NW & at the same time saw ye Hill ressembling the Crown of a hatt...The Shore along here is steep & a surf beating on it. The hills are cloathed with a verdant Wood with many beautfull slopes’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1980: 31, 32).

Scott is also complimentary.

19th January: ‘the Land Looks Exceeding Well, Very level from Red Point to Point Solander’ (Scott, 1963:33).

Eventually, on Saturday 19th January, the Prince of Wales, with Pulley on board, and the rest of the Fleet, arrived at the entrance to Botany Bay. Arthur Bowes Smyth who, although untrained, had been appointed as Surgeon to the Ship’s company aboard the Lady Penrhyn, expresses the feelings of those on deck.

The joy everyone felt upon so long wish’d for an Event can be better conceiv’d than expressed, particularly as it was the termination of the Voyage to those who were to settle at Botany Bay, & it is 10 weeks on Monday since we left the Cape of Good Hope; the longest period of any we had been at Sea without touching at any Port. (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979: 56).

That evening the Prince of Wales ‘Lay too off the opening of the Bay...All Night’ and the next day, Sunday 20th January, ‘At. 4 in the Morning Made Sale, Entred Botnay Bay at. 8 Oclock A.M. found the Commodore & the 3 Sale that parted Us at Sea Here’ (Scott, 1963:33). They were eagerly awaited by the forward party, which had arrived earlier.

at 9 oClock the Supply made the Signal for the fleet -- Soon after Saw them in the offing coming in...thank God the[y] are all come Save -- haild the P. of
Wales and Charlott and ask the Lads on board how the[y] did answer all well. (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:91)

As David Collins, Judge Advocate and Secretary of the Colony, later writes, their safe arrival was

as much matter of surprise as of general satisfaction; for in the above space of time... (eight months and one week) we had sailed five thousand and twenty-one leagues; had touched at the American and African Continents; and had at last rested within a few days sail of the antipodes of our native country, without meeting any accident in a fleet of eleven sail, nine of which were merchantmen that had never before sailed in that distant and imperfectly explored ocean: and when it is considered, that there was on board a large body of convicts, many of whom were embarked in a very sickly state, we might be deemed peculiarly fortunate, that of the whole number of all descriptions of persons coming to form the new settlement, only thirty-two had died since their leaving England, among whom were to be included one or two deaths by accidents; although previous to our departure it was generally conjectured, that before we should have been a month at sea one of the transports would have been converted into a hospital ship. But it fortunately happened otherwise (Fletcher, 1975:1)

The forward party had not gained much by their efforts to arrive early. The three transports ships had arrived only the day before, and the Supply with Governor Phillip on board, had arrived one day earlier (on 18th). As the second half of the Fleet sailed in ‘We saw by the Assistance of a Glass, 7 of the Natives, running amongst the trees’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979:56). ‘they called to us, some of them walked along the shore & others kept setting on the rocks’ (Bradley, 1969:59). By this time the forward party had already been on shore and were slowly gaining the trust of the indigenous Australians.
18th January: ‘at a quarter past 2 in ye Afternoon...when abreast of Point solander we saw several of ye Natives running along brandishing their Spears’. By ‘3 the boats were hoisted out & Governor Phillip & some Officers...landed on ye North side of ye Bay & just looked at the face of the Country’. When they returned they ‘observed a group of the Natives, we put the Boats onshore near where we observed two of their Canoes lying, they immediately got up & called to us in a Menacing tone, & at the same time brandishing their spears or lances, however the Governor shewed them some beads & orderd a Man to fasten them to the stem of the Canoe’. The landing party then asked (signed) where the fresh water was and ‘they directed us by pointing, to a very fine stream of fresh water, Governor Phillip then advanced toward them alone & unarmed, on which one of them advanced towards him, but would not come near enough to receive the beads...but seemed very desirous of having them & made signs for them to be lain on ye ground, which was done, he (ye Native) came on with fear & trembling & took them up, & by degrees came so near as to receive Looking Glasses &c, & seemed quite astonished at ye figure we cut in being cloathed & I think it is very easy to conceive ye ridiculous figure we must appear to those poor creatures who were perfectly naked’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1980:32, 33).

19th January: ‘the Natives came down & were much more confident than they were the night before’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1980:33).

When the first three transports arrived that day, they decided to explore further, looking for fresh water and a possible settlement site: In ‘ye first inlet on ye SW side of ye bay...we saw several huts & lances but no natives’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1980:33). So that by the time the remainder of the Fleet arrived on the 20th, the indigenous Australians ‘had much the appearance of being well disposed toward us’ and ‘by Noon we saw that our People and the Natives were mixed together’ (Bradley, 1969:59). Scott found that ‘the Natives here is Very Affable. & Will Except of Aney thing, that You Will Give them, (& Even take Aney thing that the Can Lay Hold of)’ (Scott, 1963:34).
Some of the Lieutenants split up into a number of parties to explore further along the inlets and rivers (re)naming landmarks as they went. In spite of Lt. Bradley’s confidence not all of the indigenous people were happy with these explorations. Lt. Gidley King, especially, had a few unfortunate encounters. He

discovered a number of ye natives who halloo’d & made signs for us to return to our boats...I adadvanced before them unarmed presenting some beads & Ribbands, two of the Natives advanced armed, but would not come close to me, I then dropt ye beads & baize which I held out for them & retreated, they took it up & bound the baize about their head they then in a very vociferous manner desired us to begone & one of them threw a lance wide of us to shew how far they could....I took this for a menace that more could be thrown at us if we did not retreat & being unwilling to fire amongst them, there being twelve of them, I retreated walking backward till I came to the brow of the hill, where I halted & again offered them presents which they refused, on descending the hill they showed themselves on the top of it & were ten times more vociferous & very soon after a lance was thrown amongst us on which I ordered one of the Marines to fire with powder only, when they ran off. (Fidlon & Ryan, 1980:34).

Governor Phillip fared better.

governor Phillip joined me from the South side of ye Bay where he had found ye Natives very sociable & friendly we relanded on Lance point & ye same body of natives appeared brandishing their lances & defying us however we rowed close in shore & ye Governor disembarked with some presents which one of them came & received thus peace was re-established much to the satisfaction of all parties. (Fidlon & Ryan, 1980:34)
At times the gift giving got out of hand. Lt. Gidley King

found it necess'y to put a stop to our generosity as they were increasing fast in numbers & having only a boats crew with me I was apprehensive that they might find means to surprize us as every one of them were armed with lances, & short bludgeons (Fidlon & Ryan, 1980:3.5).

So it continued for the time the Fleet remained at Botany Bay. In spite of their efforts Governor Phillip and the officers were unable to find a suitable settlement site. The Bay was unsuitable on a number of counts. First, for the ships.

tho' extensive, it did not afford shelter to ships from the easterly winds; the greater part of the bay being so shoal that ships of even a moderate draught of water are obliged to anchor with the entrance of the bay open, and are exposed to a heavy sea that rolls in when it blows hard from the eastward. (Historical Records, 1892:121).

Secondly, the bay was unsuitable in regard to fresh water, and therefore settlement.

Several small runs of fresh water were found in different parts of the bay, but I did not see any situation to which there was not some very strong objection...Several good situations offered for a small number of people, but none that appeared calculated for our numbers, and where the stores and provisions could be landed without a great loss of time. (Historical Records, 1892:121, 122)

And, thirdly, it was unsuitable for building or agriculture.
Upon first sight one wd. be induced to think this a most fertile spot, as there are great Nos. of very large & lofty trees, reachg. almost to the water’s edge, & every vacant spot between the trees appears to be cover’d wt. verdure: but upon a nearer inspection the grass is found long & coarse, the trees very large & in general hollow & the wood itself fit for no purposes of buildg. or anything but the fire -- The Soil to a great depth is nothing but a black sand wh. when exposed to the intense heat of the Sun by removing the surrounding trees, is not fit for the vegetation of anything even the grass itself...add to this that every part of the grown is in manner cover’d wt. black & red Ants of a most enormous size. (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979:57)

So Governor Phillip ‘judged it advisable to examine Port Jackson’ (Historical Records, 1892:122). While he was away, so ‘that no time might be lost if I did not succeed in finding a better harbour, and a proper situation for the settlement’, Phillip organised for the officers to continue with their explorations and begin clearing the land in preparation for settlement (Historical Records, 1892:122). He then headed towards Port Jackson.

The indigenous Australians were not pleased with this new development: ‘The Natives were well pleas’d with our People until they began clearing the ground at which they were displeased & wanted them to be gone’ (Bradley, 1969:59). But on the whole they seemed curious and wanted to know more about the new arrivals.

They all exprefsed great curiosity as to our sex having our beards shaved & being clothed they could not tell what to take us for’ and ‘made themselves understood by bringing some of their Women down, pointing to themselves, our people & the Women alternately, who as the Men were entirely naked, they were immediately satisfied in this particular by one person in the Boat which served to convince them all were the same. The Natives that appeared on the N. side of the Bay expref’sd. the same wish...after being
satisfied...One of them...in amongst the Bushes, made himself a Belt of Grafs. & came Dancing out with it round his waist with leaves hung over it (Bradley, 1969:63, 60).

The next day,

when the sein was hauled this evening several of the Natives were by & when they saw the quantity of Fish brought on shore at once were much astonished which they expressed by a loud & long shout, They took some of the Fish (which the Officer permitted) & ran away directly, some of the Officers going to that part of the Wood, to which they retreated occasionally thean to stop & make signs that they did not like to be followed. on which they were left to themselves to walk off with their Fish. (Bradley, 1969:61, 62)

The curiosity was on both sides. Bowes Smyth makes the following observations during his explorations: ‘Their principal food consists of fish wh. they in general eat raw’, and ‘The Women in general fish with a hook & Line the men strike them wt. a kind of spear. The Hook is made of the convoluted part of the Ear Shell, sharpen’d on a stone to a fine point.’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979:57, 58). ‘Sometimes they feast upon the Kangaroo...There are great Nos. of Kangaroos but so extreamly shy that ‘tis no easy matter to get near enough to them even to shoot them’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979:57). ‘Their Huts or Wigwams are dispersed abt. & cat paths leading from one to the other’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979:58).

There are also detailed descriptions of the aborigines appearance and markings, but the difference was that underneath the surface friendliness of the newcomers there was quite a different attitude.
The Governor’s plan with respect to the Natives, was, if possible to cultivate an acquaintance with them without their having an idea of our great superiority over them, that their Confidence & Friendship might be more firmly fixed (Bradley, 1969:69)

Bowes Smyth remarks, ‘but I believe them to be too stupid & indolent a set of people’, and ‘they seem altogether a most stupid insensible set of beings’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979:57, 58). Yet Lt. Gidley King does concede that ‘I must do them justice to say that I believe them to be conscientiously honest’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1980:35). In spite of the newcomers belief that they were the superior race they were not at all confident when confronted by the traditional people, or if they became lost during their explorations.

Having wandered some distance into the woods in search of Insects & other natural Curiosities, I lost myself & cd. not find my way back to the Wooding Party, which threw me into no small panic least I shd. meet with any of the Natives before I cd. extricate myself from the Labarynth I had got into. (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979:59, 60)

Meanwhile Phillip had taken three open boats to Port Jackson and found it the finest harbour in the world, in which a thousand sail of the line may ride in the most perfect security...The different coves were examined with all possible expedition. I fixed on the one that had the best spring of water, and in which the ships can anchor so close to the shore that at a very small expence quays may be made at which the largest ships may unload. (Historical Records, 1892:122)
He and his party returned to Botany Bay on 23rd January with the good news. By then
'Several trees had been cut down at Point Sutherland, a saw-pit had been dug, and other
preparations made for disembarking' (Fletcher, 1975:3). But there was no contest.

On board the Prince of Wales Master John Mason records in the log book, 'At 5 p.m.,
the Sirius made the signal for all masters. The captain went on board, and received
orders to prepare for going round to Port Jackson' (Bladen, 1893:405). The next day
(24th) 'to the infinite surprise of everybody we saw 2 large Ships in the Offing standing
in for the Bay'. Although they were too far away to determine their nationality the British
staked their claim. The

Governor had English Colours hoisted on the South side of the Bay near the
Watering place, call'd Sutherland Point...he also issued orders for no person
whatever to be suffer'd to go on board either of the Ships if they came in, as
he did not wish to let them know particulars, especially that we were upon the
eve of leaving this place & going to Port Jackson. (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979:62,
63)

On 25th 'every one was in a bustle to depart' but the storm that had begun the day before,
with 'a good deal of thunder & Lighteng', continued with 'the wind being directly against
us, blowg. very strong & rather increasing. At 2 o'Clock p.m. it blew almost a
hurricane, Thunder'd Lighten'd & rained very much.' (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979:63). After
three unsuccessful attempts to get out, the Fleet anchored and stayed put. At about 10
o'clock in the morning of 26th 'the two Ships mentioned above came into the Bay' and
'proved to be French Ships on Discovereys' commanded by Monsr. La Perouse (Fidlon
greetings and 'civilities' the Fleet again attempted 'to work out of the Bay & wt. ye.
utmost difficulty & danger wt. many hairbreath escapes, got out of the Harbour's mouth
abt. 3 o'Clock p.m.' (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979:64). The exit was a circus.
The Charlotte was once in the most imminent danger of being on the Rocks -- The Friendship & Prince of Wales who cd. not keep in stays came foul of each other & the Friendship carried away her Jib Boom -- The Prince of Wales had her New Mainsail & Main topmast staysail rent in pieces by the Friendships yd. The Charlotte also afterwards ran foul of the Friendship & carried away a great deal of the Carv'd work for her (the Charlotte's) Stern...however at last the whole fleet got clear of the Harbour's mouth without any further damage being sustain'd, Every one blaming the Rashness of the Governor in insisting upon the fleets workg. out in such weather, & all agreed it was next to a Miracle that some of the Ships were not lost, the danger was so very great. (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979:64)

In spite of this the Fleet survived and the Prince of Wales 'Came to an Ankor at. 1/2 p, 6 OClock in Port Jackson Close to the New town Which Was Crisned this Day & 4 Vollies of Small Arms. Fired' (Scott, 1963:35).

As usual Phillip had gone ahead 'with a party of marines, and some artificers selected from among the seamen...and the convicts'. At the time the rest of the Fleet were struggling out of Botany Bay, Phillip was already at work at Port Jackson clearing the ground 'for encamping the officer's guard and the convicts who had been landed in the morning.' Collins, the Judge Advocate for the new colony, was poignantly aware of the impact the new arrivals would have.

The spot chosen for this purpose was at the head of the cove, near the run of fresh water, which stole silently along through a very thick wood, the stillness of which had then, for the first time since the creation, been interrupted by the rude sound of the labourer's axe, and the downfall of its ancient inhabitants; a stillness and tranquillity which from that day were to
give place to the voice of labour, the confusion of camps and towns, and ‘the busy hum of its new possessors.’ (Fletcher, 1975:4)

That evening they ‘assembled at the point where they had first landed in the morning, and on which a flag-staff had been purposely erected and an union jack displayed, when the marines fired several vollahs; between which the governor and the officers who accompanied him drank the healths of his Majesty and the Royal Family, and success to the new colony’ (Fletcher, 1975:4, 5). Possession had begun.

‘The next Morning Jan’y 27th A great part of the Troops & Convicts were landed, & the latter was immediately sett to work clearing away the ground, ready for ye encampment’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1980:36). Tents were erected for accommodation and looked ‘a pretty amonst the Trees’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:94). On 28th the rest of the marines, their wives and children, the male convicts, and some stock disembarked and landed (including mares, stallions, cows, a bull and a calf, ewes, poultry, goats and hogs). Lt. Clark remarked ‘I never Saw So much confusion in all the course of my life as there was in the three compys. disembark’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:94). Collins remembers,

The confusion that ensued will not be wondered at, when it is considered that every man stepped from the boat literally into a wood. Parties of people were every where heard and seen variously employed; some in clearing ground for the different encampments; others in pitching tents, or bringing up such stores as were more immediately wanted; and the spot which had so lately been the abode of silence and tranquillity was now changed to that of noise, clamour, and confusion: but after a time order gradually prevailed ever where. As the woods were opened and the ground cleared, the various encampments were extended, and all wore the appearance of regularity. (Fletcher, 1975:5)
That night all but the women convicts slept on shore. Pulley could have watched the day’s activity from the deck of the *Prince of Wales*.

During the next week more land was cleared; tents for the women convicts, the hospital and the temporary canvas house for the governor were erected; gardens prepared and planted; and the rest of the stock landed. The officers began tasting the local food (fish and oysters) and collecting the insects and bird life. Bowes Smyth writes,

28th January: ‘This day visited Capt. Campbell in his Marquee who presented me wt. some curious insects & a Loriquette’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979:65).

2nd February: ‘This day I caught many small Birds wt. Bird lime. Mr. Alltree this day shot 2 curious Maccaws wh. at my return’d on board he presented to me’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979:66).

Lt. Ralph Clark also began to collect Australian birds.

1st February: ‘went out with my Gun and Kirk only one Parrot -- the[y] are the most beatifulless birds that I ever Saw -- when it is please god that I am to Return...I will bring Some of them home’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:95).

And some not so welcome wildlife made its presence known. ‘I never Sleept worse...than I did [last] night -- what with the hard cold ground Spiders ants and every vermin that you can think of was crawling over me I was glad when the morning came’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1981:95).

Some of the convicts began running away as there were no longer any constraints. A number ended up at Botany Bay and tried to obtain a passage on the French ships but they were dismissed with threats and were given ‘a days provisions to carry them back to
ye settlement' (Fidlon & Ryan, 1980:38). The local indigenous population seemed to keep away from the settlement site but Lt. Bradley had come across quite a few while surveying the harbour. On 28th January he discovered,

On a point of land in the lower part of the Harbour, between Middle Head & Bradley point we saw several of the Natives on the upper part of the rocks who made a great noise & waved to us to come on shore. There being a great surf we could not land at the Point we wished, which they observing, pointed to the best place to land & came down unconcern’d to meet us...On our landing we observed some women at the place the men came down from, they would not come near us, but peep’d from behind the rocks & trees; when the Boats put off the Men began dancing & laughing & when we were far enough off to bring the place the Women were at in sight, they held their arms extended over their heads, got on their legs & danced till we were some distance, then followed us upon the rocks as far as the Boats went along that shore (Bradley, 1969:65, 66)

The next day as they continued their explorations, Bradley and his party found that the indigenous Australians mixed freely and were quite sociable. The women still remained at a distance until ‘as we were going along the beach a Man & a very old Woman and us, they stoped with us a short time & then walked on to the place our People were at; This was the first Woman that came among us’. The younger women still kept their distance and ‘had a party of very stout Armed Men near them’ (Bradley, 1969:70). By 30th Bradley’s party had negotiated (bribed) the group so that ‘the Women came, having a party of Armed Men with them who had each a Green bough in his hand which they waved as they advanced’ (Bradley, 1969:71). Eventually the party was able to give gifts to the women who were at all times guarded by an ‘old man’. When the party left the beach ‘the men hold(?) their spears carelefsly & began shouting, laughing & Dancing;
We counted 72 besides Women & children this was more than twice the number ever yet seen together before’ (Bradley, 1969:73).

Back at the settlement site preparations were continuing. Then on 5th February ‘slops of every kind’ were issued ‘to all the women & Childn. on board previous to their landing tomorrow...5 of the women, who supported the best Characters on board were this day landed on the Governor’s side of the Encampment, & had Tents pitch’d for them not far from the Governor’s house’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979:66). And, on 6th February,

At 5 o’Clock this morng. all things were got in order for landing the whole of the women & 3 of the Ships Long Boats came alongside us to receive them: previous to their quitting the Ship a strict search was made to try if any of the many things wh. they had stolen on board cd. be found, but their Artifice eluded the most strict search & abt. 6 O’Clock p.m. we had the long wish’d for pleasure of seeing the last of them leave the Ship -- They were dress’d in general very clean & some few amongst them might be sd. to be well dress’d. The Men Convicts got to them very soon after they landed, & it is beyond my abilities to give a just discription of the Scene of Debauchery & Riot that ensued during the night -- They had not been landed more than an hour before they had all got their Tents pitched or anything in order to receive them, but there came on the most violent storm of thunder, lighteng. & rain I ever saw. The lighteng. was incessant during the whole night & I never heard it rain faster -- Abt. 12 o’Clock in the night one severe flash of Lightg. struck a very large tree in the centre of the Camp under wh. some places were constructed to keep the Sheep & Hogs in: it split the tree from top to bottom; kill’d 5 Sheep belonging to Major Ross & a pig of one of the Lieuts. -- The severity of the Lighteng. this & the 2 preceeding nights leaves no room to doubt but many of the trees wh. appear burnt up to the tops of them were the Effect of Lightening -- The Sailors in our Ship requested to have some Grog to make
merry wt. upon the Women quitting the Ship indeed the Capt. himself had no small reason to rejoice upon their being all safely landed & given into the Care of the Governor, as he was under the penalty of 40l. for every Convict that was missing -- for wh. reason he comply’d wt. the Sailor’s request, & abt. the time they began to be elevated, the Tempest came on -- The Scene wh. presented itself at this time & during the greater part of the night, beggars every discription; some swearing, others quarrelling others singing, not in the least regarding the Tempest, tho’ so violent that the thunder shook the Ship exceeded anything I ever before had a conception of. I never before experienced so uncomfortable a night expectg. every moment the Ship wd. be struck wt. the Lighteng. -- The Sailors almost all drunk & incapable of rendering much assistance had an accident happen’d & the heat was almost suffocating.’ (Fidlon & Ryan, 1979:67)

Elizabeth Pulley had arrived, again carrying her bed with her (Bladen, 1893:405).
Survival

Sydney Cove

26/1/1788  Anthony Rope landed (probably) with other male convicts and began clearing land

4/2/88    Aborigines pelt fishing boat with stones

6/2/88    Elizabeth Pulley landed (probably) with the other women convicts

27/2/88   First man hanged on gallows

2/3/88    Two soldiers lost in the woods

3/3/88    Some convicts attacked by natives

9/3/88    Man stripped by natives in woods

16/3/88   Four convicts cutting rushes attacked

April, 88  Cabbage trees felled for women’s huts

14/4/88   Two natives came into camp

May, 88    Women’s huts being built. Wood collected, and women making pegs, for shingles.

Conflict with natives begins in earnest.

19/5/88    Elizabeth married Anthony Rope at St Philips C of E, Sydney, witnessed by John Summer & Elizabeth Mason. Anthony was a bricklayer, Elizabeth was, at some stage, working (as a maid?).

21/5/88    Convicts speared cutting herbs at Botany Bay. Another dragged off.

24/5/88    Lieutenant George Johnstone’s goat disappeared

25/5/88    supper party at Anthony’s tent, including ‘Sea-Pye made of Beef and Pork’.


Two male convicts murdered by Aborigines. Payback for them taking a canoe, or for natives killed by convicts earlier in the month.

2/6/88     Anthony and Elizabeth charged & acquitted: found it dead near the brick fields and as one of the men was to be married ‘the next day’ took a piece for the wedding dinner.

September  Phillip making plans for a settlement at Rose Hill

30/10/88   Robert  born, probably in the garrison (so the story goes)

2/11/88    Robert christened, Sydney
Elizabeth mentioned in letter published in The London Chronicle for 1989, from an overseer of the women to a friend, 'the girl that was with us, Elizabeth Pully is married, and has a fine little boy' (Taylor, 1992:13).

30/12/88 Two Aboriginal men captured, one escaped. Arabanoo, re-named Manly, (the place that they were caught also carries that name) brought in to settlement and secured with a rope (months later rope taken off)

11/2/1789 Anthony and John Summers charged with neglecting work and were given 25 lashes

(6/3/89) 16 armed convicts left brick kilns to steal spears and fishing tackle from Aborigines in Botany Bay. They were ambushed; one convict was killed and 7 wounded. Those who made it back were given 150 lashes and put in leg irons for a year. Anthony is not mentioned on the list of those who were involved.

9/3/89 Anthony charged with neglecting to work where ordered and was given 25 lashes

April, 1789 Aborigines begin dying of smallpox. Two children, Abaroo and Nanbaree brought in sick with two old people. When recovered were given to White and Rev. Johnston (first stolen generation?). Attempts were made to entice others into settlement through them.

8/5/89 Arabanoo dies and is buried in Gov. Phillip's garden.

5/9/89 Anthony a witness to a wedding of William Richardson and Isabell Rawson at Sydney Cove

25/11/89 Benelong and Colbee captured, shaved, washed and shackled. Colbee escapes one week later with shackles attached. Benelong quickly learns language and Western ways.

March, 1790 or later Elizabeth's sentence is over

30/3/90 Phillip sets up James Ruse for farming experiment at Rose Hill.

4/5/90 Benelong escapes at 2 a.m.

3/6/90 Second Fleet begins to arrive with hundreds more convicts, many sick and dying, and little food, much of which is bad.

8/10/90 Benelong visits, and Gov. begins building a house for him...is free to come and go

December Pemulwuy spears McEntire (Phillip's gamekeeper; had a reputation for attacking the Eora) at Botany Bay. Search and destroy mission organised. War declared
Rose Hill (Parramatta)

1791  Eora begin guerilla warfare with raid on Rose Hill

31/3/91  Anthony charged with receiving and buying a pair of stolen shoes at Rose Hill and given 25 lashes (Bricklayers had been sent there since 1990, probably one lot in July and another in September)

June  Phillip renames Rose Hill = Parramatta

1791  **Mary** born

The Third Fleet begins arriving at Sydney Cove

31/7/1791  Mary baptised at Parramatta

August  convicts with terms expired are given land at Prospect Hill and The Ponds.

The Ponds (Dundas)

1/12/1791  settled at the Ponds, 2 miles NE Parramatta on a land grant of 70 acres

6/12/91  Mentioned on Tench’s list, as at the Ponds, with Anthony’s trade given as Bricklayer who is permitted to work in leisure hours. One acre is under cultivation.

10/1/92  Anthony mentioned in land in cultivation, returns of, as land granted at The Ponds 2 miles NE of Parramatta. Friends, John Summers and William Field, are mentioned as granted in 18/7/91. Anthony’s and Elizabeth’s land has acres under wheat, barley, oats, maize, garden ground, vines & cleared ground (16/10/92?).

14/2/92  Grose arrives to command the NSW army corps. Sydney is now an army base.

22/2/92  Anthony on list of grants & leases in the State Archives, with rent of 1 shilling per year due to commence after 10 yrs. Of the 70 acres, 8 1/2 acres are cleared and 8 1/2 acres are under wheat & maize. At this stage they have 1 horse and 8 hogs. 3 of them are still on family stores (probably Mary was still being breastfed?).

March, 1792  Anthony’s sentence due to expire

April, 1792  Markets open at Parramatta

Dec, 1792  Fires destroy wheat

1793  Pemulwuy & guerilla forces begin raiding settlements and taking provisions (Grassby & Hill)

12/4/93  Aurora seen

Oct, 1793  Ruse sells farm - has had enough

Dec, 1793  Aborigines attack travellers between Parramatta and Toongabbie

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Jan, 1794  Hawkesbury opens up, leading to problems as settlers take over the Aborigine’s yam beds and drive away those who try and get food.

7/2/1794  **Elizabeth** born. She probably died young.

10/2/1794  Elizabeth confirmed, not ‘baptised’, at Parramatta (record at St. Johns)

Feb, 1794  Aborigines attacking women between farms and Parramatta

Mar, 1794  Trouble begins between Aborigines and squatters at Hawkesbury. At some stage a young Aboriginal boy is tortured and killed. This led to retributions: the killing of a settler and convict.

At some stage, Paterson orders a detachment of 50 NSW corps to kill the natives of the ‘woods tribe’, probably the Buruberongal, a band which lived on the Hawkesbury River near Richmond. ‘The people killed were unfortunately the most friendly of the blacks, and one of them more than once saved the life of a white man’ (Rev. Palmer, June, 1795)

Hunter hangs two white men for ‘wanton destruction’.

1795  Rape and torture of a young woman from Pemulwuy’s family.

May, 1795  Killing party sent out from Parramatta to Hawkesbury to kill and hang. English soldiers spread out among settlers.

June, 1795  Paterson orders redcoats to search and destroy along Hawkesbury River. They march from Sydney to Parramatta, to Hawkesbury, past Toongabbie. Counterattack by Dharruk at Richmond Hill: The Battle of Richmond Hill. Dharruk are destroyed, with ten men and four women taken prisoner.

22/12/1795  **John** born

End 1795  Eora increase guerilla warfare. Hunter sends NSW corps to retaliate. Six killed, four taken prisoner. English are killing Aboriginal parents, and taking children.

2/1/1796  John baptised at Parramatta (record at St Johns)

Jan, 1796  Eora continue to apply pressure under Pemulwuy. Black Caesar (new arrival) begins own band of escapees and begins own raids. Conscription begins.

**Mulgrave Place (Hawkesbury District - ‘Birds Eye Corner?’)**

30/12/1796  Listed in the 1800 Settlers Muster as having settled on a grant at Mulgrave Place on this date. They are supporting themselves with 10 acres of wheat, 5 acres of maize, 8 pigs and are off government stores. Children listed include Robert = 7 yrs, Mary = 5 yrs, Elizabeth?, and John = 1 yr.

March, 1797  Pemulwuy leads resistance fighting from the northern farms (Toongabbie) to Parramatta. Punitive party comes from Parramatta, is defeated, and returns to Parramatta. Pemulwuy follows. A battle ensues, Pemulwuy is wounded seven times, ending up in hospital. He recovers and escapes, leg iron intact. Eora moves north of the Harbour. Fighting now also
around Lane Cove and, by 1799, along Georges River. Forts being built. It continues to 1802.

1797/1799/1801 **Susannah** born (date uncertain)

Jan, 1798 Irish causing problems and escaping into the bush

March 1798 The area has a flood which destroys grains, stock and homes

1798 It is also the beginning of a 10 month drought which continues until Feb. 1799

1/3/1798 **Sarah** is born

26/6/1798 Sarah is baptised at Parramatta (records at St Johns)

1799 Pemulwuy along Georges River. Eora spears and kills an invader. Armed settlers capture two Eora boys, tie them with ropes and shoot them. The whites are put on trial, but London does not follow through with punishment.

1-3/3/1799 2-3 days of rain leads to a flash flood at Mulgrave Place. The flood destroyed grains, stock and homes of settlers who had to live on credit with notes/ assignments as security. The Government store swept away.

July 1799 **Anthony** mentioned in the Civil court at Green Hills. The case was that he tried to sell property to John Larkam for 50 pounds without the crops. He lost the case (Sloan).

Jan, 1800 Horrendous murder of two Aboriginal boys on the Hawkesbury (had attempted to murder three) by Powell. Five men are put on trial. Hobby testifies that Hunter had, in fact, condoned the killings on the Hawkesbury. Hobby authorised to use discretion. Men found guilty but released after a few days in gaol. Aborigines threaten to burn everything down.

During the year a native woman and child killed by troops.

1800 Muster conducted (see above)

c. 1800 settled at Birds Eye Corner, 4 miles from Penrith on E side of river and N of an abrupt angle (Ryans memoirs)

Mar, 1800 Floods

20/6/00 Hobby granted 100 acres = Hobby Farm

Sept., 1800 Rumours of Irish sedition (new arrivals had supposedly been part of the Irish rebellion). Reprisals by Gov. Hunter = torture and flogging (on the order of Magistrate, Rev. Samuel Marsden)

Oct, 1800 Floods

6/1/1801 **Anthony** mentioned in petition of settlers from South Creek. The petition is a letter to Governor regarding losses from 1798 flood & drought and their plight with creditors threatening to sell their farms & throw them in gaol.
March 1801  Flood

May 1801  King (newly arrived) issues Government Order permitting settlers at Parramatta, Georges River and Prospect Hill to fire on troublesome Aborigines.

The following year he retracted somewhat, making it clear that he did not sanction indiscriminate shooting.

1802  This Muster mentions only 3 in family (this just the children?). There have 30 acres, 8 1/2 of which are cleared 8 1/2 are in wheat & maize. They have 8 hogs and are still off stores.

6/1/1802  Petition for assistance from those 'of the Hawkesbury' regarding their indebtedness (State Archives)

Oct 1802  Pemulwuy still attacking, and taking food and supplies. Two English settlers kill him, cutting off his head, which is pickled and sent to Britain. Tedbury, his son, continues the fight for the next eight years.

1803  Blight & rust destroys 1/5 wheat in the area.

Irish transportees begin to plan rebellion. English join. Aim is to attack Parramatta and Sydney and then to return to Ireland, or set up an Irish republic.

Sept, 1803 - April 1804  A caterpillar infestation destroys wheat in the area

1804  The farm of 100 acres on Wm. Cox’s estate, leased to the Ropes, was to be auctioned. Sold for 52 guineas (not to Anthony)

4/3/1804  Irish rebellion ended at Vinegar Hill. Spies and informers had let Hunter know and everyone knew about it. The corps moved in from Sydney to Parramatta, to Castle Hill, and Constitution Hill, Toongabbie, where 300 had rebelled. They escaped to Vinegar Hill, where they were tricked into surrendering. Seventeen (20?) were shot and the rest pursued to Windsor.

8/3/1804  Nine hung and others lashed and put in chain gangs.

c. 1804/1805  William born

1805  Blight & smut affects the wheat in the area

March 1805  Another flood in the area destroys most of the corn/maize

27/3/1805 (or May?)  Anthony & Elizabeth give evidence on behalf of Dennis McCarthy of the Hawkesbury, against John Kenny for lighting fires on his own property and destroying wheatstacks on McCarthy’s. In 1800, McCarthy’s property was listed as being along South Creek, Mulgrave Place. Anthony and Elizabeth’s property is not on map.

April, 1805  Aborigines annoy settlers on outskirts of Hawkesbury. They spear a settler and set fire to another’s farm house. One week later two of Macarthur’s stockmen killed between Prospect Hill and Cowpastures. Detachment sent out to protect settlers, including on the Nepean, for those who needed to cross the river.
May, 1805  Aborigines attack Govt. Stock farm at Seven Hills. Andrew Thompson, Chief Constable on the Hawkesbury, leads a raid against the ‘branch’ natives, a southern band of the Darkinjung (around Wilberforce, Wiseman’s Ferry, Jerry’s Plains and Singleton), and destroy their weapons.

July, 1805  King visits Hawkesbury-Nepean to talk to Aborigines to negotiate a truce for eight years.

Agnes Banks

1806  Muster lists them as Landholder at Windsor on Badgery’s Land (probably renting) with 48 acres: 4 acres of which have maize, 18 acres of pasture, and 26 acres lying fallow. There is 1 bushel of wheat & 6 bushels of maize on hand. They are employing 1 freeman and are not dependent on the Government. In addition there are 2 horses, 1 oxen, 1 bull, 5 cows, 250 sheep, 7 goats, and 5 hogs. 6 children are listed: Robert = 17/18, Mary = 17, John = 10, Sarah = 8, Susannah = 7, and William = 1 (Sloan)

1806 Another caterpillar infestation attacks the wheat

March 1806  Flood

19/6/1806  Anthony’s name mentioned in Hawkesbury District Court in connection with case of Robert Crumby’s working of a private still. Also mentions Anthony’s association with William Smith of South Creek.

Aug, 1806  signed an address to Gov. Bligh, which included a welcome and addressing the need for a bill of rights and protection of settlers

1805-1808  Isolated Aboriginal attacks continue, especially during harvest.

17/2/1808  Mary has a son, named Thomas Rope/Hobby, to Lt. Thomas Hobby, while working for him at Hobby’s Farm, which was situated on the road from Green Hills to Richmond. Hobby already had a wife and was a Lt. in NSW Corps. When he retired he became the first Coroner of Windsor and adjoining districts, then assisted in the building of the Blue Mountains Road in 1814/15. Their son was not baptised until 31/3/1811 and probably lived with his father.

24/3/1808  Elizabeth Ann born to Elizabeth (baptised at St. Matthews, Windsor 15/9/1811).

2/10/1808  Robert is acquitted regarding a murder of a fellow employee while out to rob ‘pigsty’ on Sth Creek. He is working for Mr. Andrew Thompson (tanner?) of Hawkesbury, next to Badgery’s land. Thompson is wealthy and has cattle across the river

May, 1809  A period of floods, hurricane and fire

31/7/1809

1/8/1809 = After the high winds

To the tops of houses on the plain

One man with his wife & family were carried away in their barn...broke a hole in the thatch...& begged for help as they passed. It grounded on the stump of large tree. Margaret Catchpole got in a boat & tied it to a rope & went after them...& “received the dear children into my arms”...they were all taken from the thatch...horses, cows, sheep & all kinds of animals
were hurried along the water to the sea. I brought ‘Mr Lacey’s’ family to my own house, and they assist me...until they have another home. The legend is that it is the Ropes...but ‘Mr Lacy?’

**Early 1810**
Andrew Thompson becomes magistrate and trustee for road from Parramatta to Greenhill

**18/5/1810**
Mrs Rope is mentioned buying 1 lb tea from Hassals at Parramatta for 1-0-0 (Hassals Day Sales Book, Parramatta)

**30/5/1810**
Mrs Rope buying 1 lb tea - L1-0. (Hassals Day Sales Book, Parramatta)

**June, 1810**
Tedbury, Pemulwuy’s son, shot dead, in a private quarrel.

**1/6/1810**
Mrs Rope buys sheet of paper - 63p. (Hassals Day Sales Book, Parramatta)

**28/6/1810**
Mrs Rope receives L10 from Mrs King for picking and husking 400 bushels of maize (Hassals Day Sales Book, Parramatta).

**25/10/1810**
John Rope agrees to work for R. Hassal for 12 months L20 a year and weekly ration and buys 2 yds brown strip cotton (11-0) and thread (1-0) (Hassals Day Sales Book, Parramatta)

**20/11/1810**
John Rope buys sheppard & pr shoes (16-0) (Hassals Day Sales Book, Parramatta)

**9/2/1812**
Robert marries Esther Mary Gambol, a prisoner, at St. Matthews Windsor

**11/7/1812**
Eleanor Ann Rope/Hobby is born to Mary Rope & Thomas Hobby. She is baptised 16/10/1814 at Castlereagh Church.

**1814**
The Muster lists them living in the Windsor district, with Elizabeth ‘free’ and Anthony a ‘landholder’, with 3 children, and off stores. Also listed are John, Mary who is single and with 1 child, and Sarah who is single, Robert, Ester Mary Gamble who is listed with 2 children. It is not certain Robert is living there. All are off stores.

Hostilities begin again over harvest of maize crop, but it is a poor harvest due to caterpillars and flood.

The kangaroo has almost disappeared, the opossum is scarce, and there is not enough roots. The cause given is the clearing of forests.

School opens at Parramatta for Aboriginal children. They are taken there by force.

**18/4/14**
Road over Blue Mountains begins. During the month mountain natives (Burragorang band of Gundungurra) attack Edward & George Cox’s labourers at Mulgoa.

By now the Dharug has ceased open warfare and live on edges of large estates, taking temporary jobs. Natural food is scarce. Warfare continues with mountain Aborigines around Appin. Plundering continues off and on and paybacks by whites are severe
18/6/1814  Macquarie issues general order not to take law into own hands.

14/1/1815  Blue Mountain’s road finished. 1815 sees relative peace and a drought.

14/3/1815  **Sarah** marries Thomas Frost, a convict constable and pound keeper, at Castlereagh. From 1821 they live in the Evan District, in same house, for 55 years.

25/4/1815  Ryan arrives and is assigned to Anthony. He lives in a hut beside the family home.

12/6/1815  **George Rope/Hobby** is born to **Mary** Rope and Thomas Hobby(?)


22/6/1816  **John** is given cattle from Government

6/8/1816  **Mary** marries Michael John Ryan at Castlereagh Church and continue to live with Elizabeth and Anthony. They ended up having 2 children of their own plus 2 from Hobby(?)

Conflict continues with the Gundungurra murdering a shepherd at Mulgoa and his sheep. Soldiers kill fourteen men, women and children at Appin, hanging them in trees as a warning.

16/11/1816  Anthony, listed as ‘landholder at Castlereagh’, had claimed he was ‘free’ at the last General Muster without supporting documentation. He is asked to supply...and recalled to government to work

17/2/1817  **John** (24) marries Maria Field (16) at Castlereagh. Edward Field, Maria’s father, had farmed with the Ropes at the Ponds.

26/12/1817  Henry born to **Sarah**

4/1/1818  James Tobias born to **Mary** & **Ryan** (at Birds Eye Corner)

1818  Attacks by Aborigines at Springwood...leads to a massacre which moves on to Bathurst.

April-May 1818  **John** mentioned as being, or having, a servant/convict

7/9/1818  **Susannah** (21) marries John Bradley (28) at Castlereagh Church

1819-1821  Aborigines given grants of land at Blacktown. Nurrangingy (‘Creek Jimmy’) & Colebee living along Bells Creek, along Richmond Rd. Others settled nearby...becoming Blacktown.

15/11/1820  **Anthony** listed in ‘A return of persons living on or holding Lands in the District of Evan and Township of Castlereagh who have become free by Servitude...’. He is listed as having 20 acres under tenant.

1821  Two aboriginal girls given land near others and joined by three other families (Blacktown)
Ropes and South Creeks

1820 - 1822 moved to Tumbledown Barn/Farm near Windsor, owned by Charles Marsden...probably South Creek aboriginal community nearby.

1821 Mary & Ryan, who was emancipated in 3/9/1821, apply for land but are rejected. They rent from Wm. Bowman at Birdseye Corner

29/12/1821 John supplies wheat to Government stores

1/1/1822 Anthony bought 20 acres in district of Field of Mars, bounded in NE by Howard farm and other 3 sides by Govt. land - paid L30 to John Bowen (has 2 farms here?)

4/1/1822 John supplies wheat to Govt. stores

28/1/1822 Eliza Jane born to Mary Rope & John Bevan at Parramatta. She later ends up in female orphanage.

1822 The Muster lists Anthony, and Elizabeth, as ‘Landholder’ living at Windsor, with two children (Mary’s?). Also listed are John & Marie, as ‘Landholder’ and their two children (Anne & Robert)

(1822) James is born to Elizabeth Ann) see 12/8/24

2/9/1822 John & Thomas Frost (Sarah’s husband) sign a letter regarding payments by the Government in Spanish dollars.

23/9/1822 Anthony Rope’s farm in the District of Evan, is mentioned in relation to Kings occupation of land bounded by the Russell & Ropes farms.

John mentioned as owning a farm in the District of Evan

31/12/1822 Anthony, along with James Crighton, William Hand and John Hughes, receives L10 (in total) compensation for loss of clothes when conveying a lifeboat to Port Macquarie.

1823 Robert disappears on whaling trip...drowned in Tasmania...ran away...?

Mary has son to John Ryan

Four groups of Aborigines listed: the ‘Nepean Tribe’ (38), ‘Mulgoa Tribe’ (15), ‘Richmond Tribe’ (73), and Burrungurang Tribe (30). Original, 1788, bands were Mulgoe (Mulgowey) on the Nepean between Mulgoa and Castlereagh; Boorooborangal, between Castlereagh and Richmond; Gommerigal-tongarra, along South Creek; and the Gundungurra-speaking Booroogoorang, between Emu Plains and the Burragorang Valley.

Native Institute moves to Blacktown

9/5/1824 Elizabeth, daughter of Mary Rope and John Bevan, born at Parramatta. Elizabeth ends up in the Female orphanage in 1828.

23/8/1824 John on leased land in the District of Evan, Hawkesbury River (No. 493). He is asking for more land as he has 3 children, is renting a farm, has stock, but not enough pasture
31/8/1824  John requesting grant of land/farm of his own. He is given 60 acres on
Northern Rd., Londonderry, near Rickaby’s Creek.

Anthony & John & William settler at South Creek are listed as
signatories on memorials for grants of land. They are renting a farm with
inadequate pastures and would like a farm of their own.

12/8/1824  Elizabeth Ann has son, James Rope. The father is William Jones,
publican at Evan. Elizabeth Ann is baptised 9/1/1825 at Castlereagh.

6/9/1824  Henry Fulton writes in support of Anthony, who is on rented farm,
applying for a grant of land.

1825  The Muster includes John Rope (9), son of Robert

1825  Susannah takes up with John Proctor, chief constable, Penrith

14/2/1825  Anthony mentioned in the list of Government servants transferred to
and from District of Evan

21/6/1825  Anthony mentioned in the list of Government servants transferred to
and from District of Evan

22/2/1825  Anthony mentioned in the list of Government servants transferred to
and from District of Evan

11/4/1825  Mary (51) buried...(?)/wrong details (= Esther Mary Gamble?)

26/4/1825  Anthony & John mentioned in request for a common given to King,
to be reverted to former purpose

August, 1825  The settlers want King to move from common land

4/1/1826  Anthony, listed as living at South Creek is charged with harbouring
runaway, Owen Mullaghan, by force of arms (fight). Charged 10th
January, on L50 bond. Trial 10th May. Sentence passed 11th May.
(Punishment?) He is listed as having a Government servant at the time.

1826  Anthony is listed on William Faithfull’s Estate, South Creek (near Ropes
Creek). By now, Robert has married Ester Mary Gambol, Mary has
married John Ryan, John has married Maria Field, Sarah has married
Thomas Frost and Susannah has married John Bradley

30/10/1826  Elizabeth Ann marries Thomas Player, a freeman, of Castlereagh at
Castlereagh Church

C. 1826/27  Mary & Ryan go back to South Creek, which is Anthony’s previous land
of 20 acres, on William Faithfull’s estate.

6/10/1827  William, son of Elizabeth Ann and Thomas Player, is born at
Castlereagh.

1828  Census lists Anthony, a farmer of 65 years of age, and Elizabeth, aged
64, living in the District of Evan (Jordan Hill, South Creek) on 11 acres
which are all cleared and cultivated. There are 5 horned cattle. With them
are William (fence...24 yrs) and James (grandson...6 yrs).

Eliza Jane (granddaughter...4 yrs) and Elizabeth (granddaughter...3 yrs)
are both at the at Female Orphan Institute.

Also listed are John (farmer...30 yrs), Maria (27 yrs) and their 4
children: Ann (10 yrs), Robert (7 yrs), George (5 yrs) and Thomas (2
yrs). They are living on 85 acres, of which 25 acres are cleared and cultivated, and have 12 horned cattle.

30/9/1829 Sarah B, daughter of Elizabeth Ann and Thomas Player is born at South Creek, Castlereagh

Susannah, of Evan, is a washerwoman working for John Proctor and a Penrith policeman

Elizabeth Ann, a tenant at Evan, is also a washerwoman

1830 John is mentioned in R. Darling’s dispatch as farming with William at Rickaby’s Creek

5/3/1831 John Bowman buys farms originally belonging to Thomas Howard and Elizabeth Ann Clark from Anthony for L30 each

Bushrangers around South Creek

19/10/1831 William is given 60 acres of land at Londonderry. It is positioned South of Carrington Rd and East of Londonderry Rd

12/12/1833 William (27, headstone says 29) died. He was buried on 14th in the Anglican Cemetery, Church St, Castlereagh

16/12/1834 Eliza (Sarah’s daughter) died at 1 month old. She is buried in Castlereagh cemetery

23/11/1835 In R. Bourke’s dispatch William & John of Castlereagh are mentioned in “List of Applications and of Male Convicts during the Year 1833”. William applied for and received 1 assignment. John is mentioned twice (2 assignments?)

9/8/1837 Elizabeth Pulley dies at 80 years of age. She is buried in the Anglican Cemetery, Castlereagh.

1841 Anthony, who is living alone in a wooden house, next door to John, signs an address of welcome to Bligh, etc.

28/8/1842 Maria dies in childbirth with William

20/4/1843 Anthony Rope dies at 89 years of age. He is buried in the Anglican Cemetery at Castlereagh

11/7/1845 John dies

1850 four of John’s children move west to Mudgee

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*Index to Colonial Secretary's Papers.* Fiche 3267:9/2731, p. 8; Reel 6020; 2/8130, pp. 363-9; Reel 6038; SZ759, p. 282; Reel 6009; 41/3506, p. 295; Fiche 3108, 4/1839A, No. 842, pp. 489-92; Reel 6063 4/1785, p. 183a; Reel 6064, 4/1787, p. 47a; Reel 6017, 4/5782, pp. 299-301; Fish 3266, 9/2652, p. 99.


Multimedia item accompanies print copy
Appendix C Compilation Videotape of Centre of the Storm

This list of rites and concepts is sequenced in the order they appear on the videotape and are discussed in the written text. This sequence is not necessarily followed in practice, as Chapters 4-6 make clear, and many occur simultaneously. They are taken out of context for the purpose of discussion. To view the rites in the context of each complete performance-ritual, view the appropriate videotape in Appendix D.
**Centre of the Storm as Rite of Passage (Chapter 5)**


2. Rites of Transition
   
   2.1 Rite of Celebration: *Beginnings* (1999)
   
   2.2 Rite of Remembering: *Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival* (1999)
   
   2.3 Rite of Naming: *The Fire of the Sun* (2000)
   
   2.4 Rite of Honouring: *Passage* (2000)
   
   2.5 Female Fury: *The Fire of the Sun* (Boudicca)
   
   2.6 Rite of Mourning: *Beginnings* (The Norns)
   
   2.7 Rite of Holding: *The Fire of the Sun* (Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe)
   
   2.8 Rite of Letting Go: *Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival*
   
   2.9 Rite of Initiation: *Passage*

3. Rite of Incorporation: *Passage*

**Centre of the Storm as Feminist Spirituality (Chapter 6)**

4. Body: *Beginnings*

5. Nature: *Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival*

6. Place: *The Fire of the Sun*

7. Spirit, Holding and Letting Go: *Passage*
Multimedia item accompanies print copy
Appendix D       Videotapes of the Performance-Rituals in Centre of the Storm

The videotapes in this appendix are not professional productions. Except for Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis, which is meant to stand on its own, all the other videotapes act as records only.

Video 1  Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis

Video 2  Beginnings

Video 3  Sense of Place, Sacred Space - Arrival

Video 4  The Fire of the Sun

Video 5  Passage
Conclusion  *Centre of the Storm*: An Australian Feminist Spirituality Through Performance-Ritual

Performance-ritual is a genre of performance in which an evolving spirituality is explored and performed in ritual form. The performance-rituals in this thesis are an outward expression of one feminist spiralling journey of exorcism and ecstasy; a journey of a woman becoming. They are an extension of the spiritual naturalism of 19th to 20th century performers and avant garde explorations of ritual, in dialogue with feminist and ecofeminist understandings. Performance-ritual is performed text; an intuitive, personal, and embodied process which is given shape, and read through the skein of performance.

The spiralling journey of exorcism and ecstasy began in some earlier performance-rituals, *Dark Fire*, *For Eve*, *Fallen Totems*, *Leavetaking*. These early performance-rituals concentrated on the identification, naming, and exorcising, of a patriarchally defined ‘woman’ from the performer’s psyche. *Centre of the Storm*, began to re-name a personal and contextualised Australian spirituality. The focus of these performance-rituals also evolved, moving from the radical feminist perspective of the earlier work, to the more ecofeminist standpoint of *Centre of the Storm*.

The spiritual matrix created in the performance-ritual *Centre of the Storm*, integrates history and past traditions with present realities, using the concepts of body, nature and place. These concepts are carried within a cycle of ‘beginnings’, ‘arrival’, ‘survival’, and ‘passage’. Whereas much spiritual feminism is developed around the concepts of body and nature, place is usually omitted. The concept of place, in *Centre of the Storm*, extends the meaning of ‘sense of place’, or ‘belonging’, to family story. The inclusion of this ‘place’, therefore, is an extension of spiritual feminism. It treats spirituality as immanent; held in the material world, its history, and the mundaneeness and particularity of everyday life. It also honours the potential for a unique relationship between an individual, her place-country, and her spirituality. In this way *Centre of the Storm* can serve as a model for others authoring their own spiritualities.
Locality is achieved by setting the performance-rituals in the Australian cycle of seasonal change. This is extended by Sense of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival being situated in the Australian bush at Katoomba, the enactment and stories of European ancestral arrivals to this land, and questions about 'development', 'the future', and the subsequent unease many colonialists continue to experience in this land. The Fire of the Sun continues to address the Australian context with the story of Elizabeth Pulley, the story of colonisation, and its effects on indigenous Australians. These performance-rituals visit the sites of the story, so personalising the site, as well as the story, as 'sacred'.

The thesis challenges and interrogates current trends in ritual theory using Arnold van Gennep's work on rites of passage as a springboard for the analysis of functional and structural aspects of performance-ritual. In turn, the thesis extends van Gennep's earlier work to include a feminist experience of other rites emerging from the journey of exorcism and ecstasy. These rites are Naming, Honouring, Remembering, Mourning, Female Fury, Holding, and Letting Go. It is argued that the expression of subjective, embodied processes introduce deeper levels of intention in ritual acts, so helping differentiate theatrical performance and ritual.

The experimentation here with rites of 'holding' and 'letting go' extends both ritual theory and feminist spirituality. These actions emerge from women's experiences as 'peacemakers' in community, and their skills learned as mediators of nature. Here, 'holding' refers to the spiritual work of engaging with contradictions and complexities, while at the same time allowing them 'to be'. The combined action of 'holding' and 'letting go' allows complexity, multiple understandings, and continuums of choices. Chaos can exist without losing 'the still centre'. 'Holding' is extended, and used as a metaphor for the work of 'spirit'. This is an exciting development and one which I hope others will pursue.
*Centre of the Storm* is the ground for one white Australian woman's spirituality, but that does not preclude other women, and men, from identifying with its content. It has established a tradition of story and belief which relates to the experience of living, as a woman descendent of European settlers, in 21st century Australia. More specifically, it has brought a particular family's colonial past into dialogue with the present. The meeting has not been easy. There are still many questions unanswered, contradictions unresolved, and other performance-rituals to be realised. But the exemplar of feminist performance-ritual will vary according to the specific place-time experience of a particular woman. Therefore the thesis lays the groundwork for comparative studies of other women involved in parallel performance-ritual journeys.

The performance-rituals in *Centre of the Storm* sit on the chaotic boundary of ritual theory, feminist theory, performance, religion, and culture. This is not a negative attribute. The boundary position allows autonomy, and, in Raphael's (1996:241) words, it is 'a place from which the transformative, liberative vision and language of otherness can be generated'. 
CENTRE OF THE STORM

IN SEARCH OF AN AUSTRALIAN FEMINIST

SPIRITUALITY THROUGH PERFORMANCE-RITUAL

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Submitted in full requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

MAY 2002

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL ECOLOGY AND LIFELONG LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
Multimedia item accompanies print copy
Title Page: 'Moment' by Irene Kindness
Certificate of Originality

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis is entirely original research which has not been submitted for any other degree at any place of learning.

Every effort has been made to ensure that writing and ideas delivered in any medium, have been acknowledged and referenced.

Annette Maie Rups-Eyland
Dedicated to

Irene Kindness, whose work continues to inspire

and

Grainne ni'Maille, as elusive as ever
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Feminist Spirituality and Nature • Source Material, Cause and Action • The Sprialling Journey of Exorcism and Ecstasy • Identifying and Naming the Paradigm • How the Paradigm Functions • Exorcism • Re-naming • ‘The Individual Woman’ • ‘The Human Community’ • Individual and/or Community • Reformists In Search of Another Way • Revolutionaries In Search of Another Way • Body • Nature • Holding and Letting Go • Place • Women’s Ritual and Boundary Living • Notes
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Chapter 4  The Spiralling Journey of Exorcism and Ecstasy

This chapter draws the theoretical discussion into an analysis of early work to establish the framework for situating ‘performance-ritual’ in relation to ritual theory and feminist spirituality. Particular focus is given to performance-ritual as the ritualised expression of my ‘spiralling journey of exorcism and ecstasy’, body, nature, place, holding and letting go.

Introduction to the Performance-Rituals • Descriptions of the Performance- Rituals • Performance-Ritual as Rites of Passage • Rites of Separation • Rites of Transition: Remembering, Naming, Honouring, Exorcism, Female Fury, Mourning, Healing, Holding, Letting Go, Initiation • Rites of
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Centre of the Storm is examined as performance-ritual, from its structural and functional aspects.

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Bibliography
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Abstract

'Performance-ritual' is performed ritual. It extends the 19th-20th century European explorations and expressions of 'the spiritual' through performance to include a feminist perspective, re-situating 'ritual' as a contextualised, embodied and subjective process. The present approach to performance-ritual emerges out of a need to re-imagine and express a sense of 'divinity' and a religion which 'fits' the circumstances of a particular life. In this case, the exploration of embodied spirituality is that of an ex-Christian woman, of Anglo-Celtic descent, living in Australia at the beginning of the 21st century.

The outward form of the text in which the spiritual search is housed is 'performance-ritual', that is, performed 'ritual'. This genre has its 'performance' roots in the dance pioneers and its 'ritual' roots in the Christian church. The content of this performed text is influenced by an emerging ecofeminist consciousness. In this way, this thesis has a grassroots inspiration as well as crossing academic areas of performance studies, ritual studies, and feminist spirituality.

The project begins by an examination of 20th century feminist and ecofeminist writing on spirituality, which evokes the subjective, embodied and historically contextualised, with particular focus on body and nature. Additional concepts of place, holding and letting go are introduced. It then overviews the emergence of spiritual naturalism in European 'performance' at the turn of the 19th to 20th centuries, especially in relation to women's dance. Current academic debates on ritual, which theorise it from an objective, disembodied and decontextualised standpoint are introduced and challenged.

At this point the particular performance-rituals are introduced under the overall heading 'the spiralling journey of exorcism and ecstasy'. They include earlier work, such as, Dark Fire, For Eve, Fallen Totems and Leavetaking, as well as work performed specifically for this thesis, Centre of the Storm. These performance-rituals are analysed,
first, from a structural and functional point of view, as rituals. Secondly, they are analysed from the standpoint of feminist and ecofeminist spirituality, the spiralling journey of exorcism and ecstasy, highlighting themes of body and nature, and the emerging themes of place, family, holding and letting go. *Centre of the Storm* re-situates ‘ritual’ as a subjective, embodied and contextualised performed event. It challenges ritual discourse to incorporate ‘spirit’, and feminist spirituality to incorporate the material world, through ‘place’, ‘family’, and the ritual actions of ‘holding’ and ‘letting go’.
Introduction

Was that how it worked? she brooded: you started out thinking you were doing something for others, to find you were doing it for yourself - or the reverse: And was that a good thing or not?

Robin Morgan, 1988:48

This document introduces performance-ritual as a genre, and the particular series Centre of the Storm as an example of that genre. It is an examination of the journey of a woman in search of an Australian feminist spirituality through ‘performance-ritual’. The journey had its outcome in the series of performance-rituals, Centre of the Storm. As a genre, performance-ritual is an extension of Theatre and Feminist traditions of spiritual and political action. The feminist content of the performance-rituals exemplified in this thesis positions them as ‘feminist performance-rituals’. As events, performance-rituals are many-layered expressions of personal, intuitive, political and religious journeyings. They embody questions and comments which evolve from a need to continually revisit and deconstruct the philosophical and religious paradigms from which Western society has been, and continues to be, built. This revisiting is conducted in the light of new images and ideas which spring from readings, experiences and a ‘need to know’. The outcome is then performed with conscious acknowledgment of ‘spirit’. As an example of this process, Centre of the Storm focuses on the implications of being a white Australian woman at the beginning of the 21st century.

The research was conducted for, and the results presented through events I have termed ‘performance-rituals’: events which simultaneously function as performances and rituals. As ‘performance’, performance-ritual is subjective and embodied text. It is the enacted expression of a personal, inner and intuitive journey. As ‘ritual’, it is the ritualisation of that journey and an enacted expression of an evolving spirituality. Because it is ritual, the completion of the ritual process is more important than ‘high art’ performances, and
the videoed and photographic records are just that: they are not presented as professional products. These, and other, differences between ‘performance’ and ‘ritual’ are examined in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

The written examination, which follows in this document, is illustrative of academically privileged ‘written’ text. The written text is an objective analysis of intuitive, embodied text.² It refers back to what had been already accomplished through performance-ritual and, using feminist and ritual theory, develops frameworks from which to discuss the results. The distinction between performed and written text is important. From my perspective, as a creator-performer, the performance-rituals are the text which gives shape to the research being undertaken at the time. They ‘say it all’, and they say many things simultaneously. They are ‘my voice’. From an academic perspective, however, the actual enactment of the journey is not enough. Academia prioritises written text.

Academia also prioritises the selection of a narrow range of concepts around which to argue; the fewer the better. It might be possible, therefore, to select one of a number of concepts presented in this document, and develop a thesis from there. It might also be possible to develop a thesis around this one concept without the performance-rituals being enacted in the first place - the concept would have sufficed. But that is not the way it happened. The intuitive journey of the performance-rituals, what they say, and how that locates them in ritual theory and feminist spirituality is what drives this thesis. This means that many interrelated aspects are discussed. So there is a degree of difficulty in locating this type of thesis in the academy.

This document prioritises the performance-rituals as text. It is the practice which is important. The written text, or analysis, arises from there. In this way the performed and written sections, when viewed as a whole, support the feminist project of continuums and equality of, rather than hierarchical dualisms between, rational and embodied knowledge. In Melissa Raphael’s terms, it is part of the other movements in this
historical epoch, which strive for a ‘reunion of rationality and intuition’ (Raphael, 1996:228).³

Less Than Half the Story

My interest in this particular way of performing grew from involvement in the Christian church and an increasing need to search for ‘the truth’ underlying Christianity.⁴ Growing up and being educated as a white Australian woman during the 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s was a process of being introduced to Eurocentric and masculinist values. This was reinforced by my commitment to the Christian faith. All foreground models were the stories, actuality and authority of men doing and saying.⁵ In my experience the only places where women were a focus was in the home, which was ‘mother’s’ domain, and in the area of dance, where the majority of my teachers were women. It was not until the 80’s that women’s ideas began to filter into mainstream social institutions, including the Anglican Christian church.⁶

At the same time, there was an emerging awareness of other hidden stories: those of indigenous Australians. In suburban Australia, schooling in the ‘50’s’ and ‘60’s’, was contained by an insular white, Anglo community. The stories of early Aboriginal presence were taught once in primary school, as part of early Australian history, and never referred to again.⁷ Other ‘exotic’ cultures were likewise rarely mentioned. The underlying assumption was that ‘Aborigines’ had lived a long time ago and were no more. Finally, in 1973, ‘the newly elected Labour government developed and implemented...a policy of self-determination’ for indigenous Australians and ‘government-funded Indigenous community controlled organisations were established to deliver services’ (Moreton-Robinson, 2000:13).⁸

The National Aboriginal and Islander Dance Association (NAISDA) was one of the organisations established, under the direction of Carole Johnson, as a direct result of the National Seminar On Aboriginal Arts, held in Canberra the same year. Following this,
the Aboriginal Dance Centre Redfern (ADTR) was founded in 1979 by indigenous Australian, Christine Donnelly.\textsuperscript{9} The change in governmental policy meant that during the 70's and 80's the dominant culture's lack of awareness of indigenous presence began to change in some circles, including the Christian church. Institutions, like Pitt Street Uniting Church and its minister, Dorothy McRea-McMahon, began to engage in political action with, and on behalf of, indigenous Australians. As with the feminist awakening, it took forty years before any public awareness of Aboriginal presence as real, 'here and now'.

At the same time there was a growing interest, in some Church circles, in developing an Australian-specific expression of the Christian faith. The increasing awareness of Aboriginal presence, the perceived relationship of indigenous spirituality to 'the land', and the simultaneous publication of the writing of American Dominican scholar, Matthew Fox, fuelled the growth of the 'Creation Spirituality' movement in Australia.\textsuperscript{10} Eminent Australian scholars, Veronica Brady and Eugene Stockton were at the forefront of this work and are continuing to address these issues in their writing, as are others, including anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose.\textsuperscript{11} Pitt Street Uniting Church and the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Sydney, under Dr. Jim Tulip, were among a number of Christian organisations beginning to incorporate an Australian consciousness into their Christian expression.

Since the 80's, therefore, I have felt a need to 'catch up'.\textsuperscript{12} In relation to this thesis, my own 'catching up' has been in three major areas. One is in relation to 'women's' story; the quest to discover where women have been all this time. Another is to find an alternative spirituality which expresses the reality of being an ex-Christian white woman living in contemporary Australia. This feeds into the third quest to revisit the story of the colonisation of Australia and discover some of the hidden story of indigenous Australians. Centre of the Storm is the medium that integrates and expresses the outcomes of these quests. In this way performance-ritual takes the place of the written
word. In performance-ritual the questions, discussion and theories are embodied in the actions and words of the performers, and performance-ritual becomes religious expression and political action. Therefore, this thesis prioritises performance-ritual as a medium for presenting information and experience.

Performance as Religious Expression and Political Action

Within the Christian dance movement, modern dance, as well as other theatrical performance, has been used to express ‘spirit’ and religious experience for a number of years. These same media have also been used to explore political and environmental concerns. Yet the quest to find the ‘truth’ sometimes interferes. In my case, after completing an introductory course in theology, questions about the ‘facts’ underlying Christian doctrine, began to outweigh belief. My trust in Church teaching as a true and accurate record of once existing identities and sayings began to erode, and along with it, my confidence in the honesty of the ministers/priests and spiritual directors. Any sense that their teaching might have relevance for the Australia of the 90’s, especially for women, evaporated. This disillusionment is common to other women engaged in spiritual feminism.

Simultaneously, opportunities for contact with indigenous Australians brought to light unspoken differences. This began with Worship in the Park (1988).13 This event included segments of a danced history of arrivals and conflicts, leading to a message of reconciliation and ‘working together for the future’. The National Aboriginal and Islander Dance Company was invited to be part of the performance as original inhabitants of Australia, and to be integrated into the ensuing scenes as part of the Australian cultural mix. The music and direction of the scenes had already been decided, so already it was a token invitation and illustrative of Western privilege. NAISDA’s company insisted on including a dance solo to the song, ‘Brown Skin Baby’. At the time the significance was not realised, and there was a lack of understanding about their insistence. But, of course, it was the story of the stolen generation. These events which had a devastating impact on
the indigenous community had not been included as part of ‘our’ Australian story. We, that is the Church organisers and me as a choreographer, thought we were being inclusive. But we weren’t.

This story of white ignorance was repeated in another Church context five years later: a high profile ecumenical service on ‘healing for the nations’. Representatives of a particular Aboriginal community were invited by the organisers ‘to carry their flag and put it on the altar’ but were not invited to be part of the spoken word or asked how they would like to represent themselves. Again, they were just being told what to do, not asked, nor involved in the planning. The promise of Revelation, which was one of the readings for the service, was still a distant reality and it was time to step outside the Church.

**The Emergence of Performance-Ritual**

Even before stepping out of the Christian church, the performances I had been creating were already mirroring this search. The performances became the outward expression of an inner journey in which others were invited to take part as coperformers or as members of an audience. This kind of journey is reflected in the work of feminist writers, such as Mary Daly and Susan Griffin in non fiction, and Robin Morgan and Eavan Boland in poetry and fiction. To summarise Elsbeth Probyn, it is a journey to and through self in order to make comment on the world as ‘I’ experience it in the hope of finding meeting points and commonalities with (an)other.

By 1994 the Christian paradigm was no longer acceptable to me and I decided to take sole responsibility for my own spiritual life and journey. The journey parallels the one many other spiritual feminists have travelled. It is one of listening to ‘self’: to own inner being/soul/heart. Rather than relying on another’s spiritual, or religious, ‘truth’, ‘the self’ became its own model, its own ‘guru’ (Daly, 1985:73 ff.). The search for alternatives began.
My own early research into women’s story and ‘spirituality’ was expressed in three performances: *Dark Fire* (1994), *For Eve* (1995), and *Fallen Totems* (1997). Only gradually did I come to realise that the performances had a ritual aspect and in some ways reflected the journey and structure of the Christian liturgy. They were all performed in recognition of ‘the sacred’ and *Dark Fire* ended up being a ‘rite-of-passage’ and a ‘rite of initiation’. So, I began to call them ‘performance-rituals’. The dual term allows for the implications of both performance and ritual; implications which are addressed in the following chapters. Performance-rituals are rituals, as well as performances, journeys, stories, questions and challenges, and it is difficult to pinpoint one thing that the performance-rituals are or do above all else for they work in many dimensions simultaneously. The allowance for continuums, rather than the dualistic ‘either-or’, and for concepts, such as multidimensionality, is an important part of feminist theory and practice.

**What is Performance-Ritual?**

So what are these events termed, performance-ritual? Performance-ritual can be used as an umbrella term to describe the genre and as a descriptive term for each event. It is a term I have coined to explain the genre in an attempt to differentiate it from other theatrical performances performed in a ritualistic style. The differentiations are discussed further in Chapter 3. Therefore, it may mean different things to different people. The following is an explanation of the multidimensional aspects underlying my use of the term, ‘performance-ritual’.

Performance-rituals are first and foremost *performances.* From the perspective of performance-ritual, performance is the medium through which thoughts about changing relationships with the world are processed, integrated and expressed. They are *embodied* expressions of personal *journeyings*. They are many discrete journeys which when added together parallel the journey of life. The overall journey is a journey of question, a political journey, and a journey of the spirit. It is a journey which reacts to and is
motivated by readings, what is happening in the world and in the mind. It includes a re-mythologising of ‘self’ and ‘life’. It reforms identity by placing ‘self’ at the centre so that the mind and body can take in the information and re-integrate, allowing a new outlook and understanding. In this way performance functions as a form of embodied discourse, the writing on and through the body, literally not just metaphorically. It is the writing of a process, a movement towards ‘self’ and ‘soul’ which may or may not be the same thing. As such, it is an extension of 19th - 20th century women performers’ explorations of spiritual expression through performance. This early work is introduced in Chapter 2.

But it is the ritual aspect which is of particular interest in this thesis. ‘Ritual’, however, is a contested word. It has been re-defined in theory to refer to a range of performed activities. The problem of definition due to the lack of context specificity in discussions of ritual is examined in Chapter 3: In relation to performance-ritual, however, ritual is context specific, and is used with ‘performance’ because the journey on which the audience is invited to embark is the outcome of a search for meaning. There is a need to acknowledge ‘Life Force’, ‘Elemental Be-ing’, or ‘the why’. It is part of religious practice. Some performance-rituals also signify specific moments of significant change and end up functioning as rites-of-passage and rites of initiation, such as, Dark Fire (1994) and Leavetaking (1997). These structural and functional aspects of ritual will be further examined in Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

Unlike traditional public ritual, performance-ritual is one individual’s religious expression. Others taking part in or viewing the event are not expected to experience it in the same way. It is not the aim to speak on behalf of the audience or the other performers or to create a ritual for them. In presenting the work the assumption is, ‘This is where I am, this is my experience, this is my understanding, these are my questions. Is there anything with which you can identify?’ If anyone identifies with any element in the performance-ritual, it is a bonus. It is enough for the piece to work as a performance for others and as a ritual for me. If the piece works as a ritual as well for some audience
members and co-performers it has more to do with their own questions and journey than anything else. But when it happens ‘community’ or ‘church’ is temporarily brought into being. The ritual aspect is exemplified in a number of ways and will be discussed more fully in the following chapters. This current discussion serves as a summary.

As performance-ritual is an expression of a personal sacred search, it continually recreates an individual and independent religion, theology, or cosmology. Feminists engaged in this work tend to prefer the terms, spirituality or theology. These women are examined in Chapter 1. Yet, there are problems with these terms, as other spiritual feminists, such as Raphael, have illustrated (Raphael, 1996:15 ff.). ‘Religion’ is usually associated with institutionalised beliefs, which this thesis critiques. ‘Theology’ has historically been used for ‘the science treating of God, His nature & attributes, & His relation to man & the universe’; an anathema to a woman centred spirituality (Fowler & Fowler, 1955:869). ‘Cosmology’ refers to beliefs about the creation and development of the universe, which is only part of a spiritual belief system. ‘Theology’ has been coined by spiritual feminists in opposition to ‘theology’, but has strong links with ‘goddess spirituality’ which performance-ritual attempts to move beyond. Feminist spirituality may include, but is not limited to ‘goddess spirituality’, as the work of Daly, Luce Irigaray and performance-ritual exemplify. Therefore, ‘theology’ is only used when the writers examined define their work in this way. ‘Spirituality’ is a much more encompassing term. However, it errs in being too vague, without the implied need for an accompanying tradition or ground, which Centre of the Storm begins to establish. Without satisfactory alternatives, all these terms are used in this thesis in specific reference to particular writers, and ‘feminist spirituality’ is used for the work of performance-ritual.

The performance-rituals do the work of creating an alternative ground for spirituality by exploring ways of viewing, metaphoring and expressing an experience of ‘god’, energy, ‘? ’ or ‘the sacred’ in the light of the material reality of our world and its past and present history. The difficulties with terminology continue. ‘God’ is historically gendered
masculine. ‘Goddess’ is gendered female. The practice of defining ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ expressions of divinity creates a dualism. The experience of ‘divine’ is part of and beyond gender and is unity, not dualism. It is ‘mystery’, the ‘?’. It is immanent and transcendent and everywhere in between. It is part of, and connecting, all that there is. This is the view held by this writer. In this thesis, therefore, the terms ‘energy’, ‘spirit’, ‘Be-ing’, ‘other’ and ‘life force’ are variously used.

The implications of accepting a ‘divine’ aspect in all of life, leads to a biophilic approach to spirituality. This is in contrast to the Western domination model enshrined in Christianity, where God is at the pinnacle of the pyramid, man is under God, as His representative on earth, and all else is underneath. This model has been critiqued by a number of feminist theologians inside of the Church, such as Elizabeth Dodson Gray and Rosemary Radford Ruether. These reformists have offered alternative eco-friendly interpretations of the Christian Bible, especially of the Old Testament, and their work is examined in Chapter 1. This reinterpretation parallels other work emerging from within the Christian church, with a similar aim, such as by Fox and, in Australia, The Earth Bible Team, led by Norman Habel.

Fox’s and Habel’s work do acknowledge the feminist critique of Christianity’s patriarchal history and content, but sidestep the issue by their focus on ecological retrieval; a practice reflected in Ruether and Dodson-Gray’s work. Fox and Ruether address Christianity’s focal story; that of the masculine hero, Jesus. However, Ruether reinterprets this historically male figure and story, and finds value in it from a feminist perspective, as does Australian theologian, Elaine Wainwright. Fox reinterprets Christ as a cosmic, all-encompassing global symbol, without reflecting that this practice of universalising Western thought is a continuation of the Western patriarchal, colonialist habit of the white male voice defining, and speaking for, all. None of this work confronts the possibility that it might be time to move on. Rather, their purpose is retrieval.
In contrast, performance-ritual struggles to define and express an evolving and changing, ground for spirituality; one relevant to this woman, time and place. Centre of the Storm, in particular, begins to incorporate ecofeminist understandings. In addition, performance-ritual’s work of viewing, metaphorizing and expressing one individual’s spirituality challenges the need for recognised, official, institutionalised group religions and their focal stories and underlying philosophies or the need for designated and approved ‘truths, ‘gurus’, tradition, and ritual action.

Another part of the ritual aspect is a willingness to be open to, allow for, and acknowledge synchronicities in the time/place context and content as well as during the performance itself. This element is part of the listening to, and opening up for, communication with ‘life force’. The interest is in the fact that it happens when it does happen rather than trying to explain it or explain it away. Whether synchronicities occur because ‘energy’ becomes another player, or whether it is because they are looked for and therefore in some way created, invented or brought into being is irrelevant. It is a way of honouring ‘the mystery of life’; of acknowledging that there are some things about life that can never be understood, contained or controlled; to be content living with that uncertainty; and to honour that ‘something’ which had to be/not be in the beginning, if in fact there was a beginning.

The opening up of a sacred time and place into which the performance-ritual can exist is another outcome of the ritual aspect. The area into which the performance-ritual moves becomes a sacred and safe place where experiences, stories and metaphors can be presented with respect. The concept of ‘sacred place’ moves beyond the confines of a church or temple, insulated and set apart from the world outside, to incorporate the body, nature and many varied places and spaces which are engaged during the performance-rituals. Performance-ritual is the way in which I can claim my own ‘sacred’ and ‘sacred space’ and explore the story of my own inner (spiritual, emotional and physical) and
outer (temporal, spatial and historical) sacred places and see if there are meeting points with others.

The preference is to focus on women’s stories in relation to ‘sacred’ and not to try to accommodate or include men or men’s stories, ideas or metaphors in any of the action unless it is absolutely necessary, but even then it is only to assist the overall woman-focus of my work.\(^{33}\) From this perspective, performance-ritual is open to criticism for being essentialist and this criticism is answered in Chapter 1. The need for ‘woman’ specificity comes in reaction to a number of experiences. It has something to do with the ‘energy’ or ‘life force’ and the way in which it is involved and experienced in individual bodies. It is a very personal experience and intimately associated with sexuality, union and the gender of the body through which energy passes and in which it resides. It is also a reaction to the male-hero centred religion of Christianity and the need to re-create a spirituality that speaks to, and for, me. But beyond this, the focus on ‘woman’ is because it is an individual journey, ‘my journey’, and this individual is biologically female. Part of this journey is the need to find my own voice.

On the other hand, the individualised and personal nature of the journey should not preclude other women and men identifying with part, or all, of the journey, or with the evolving spiritual matrix, or with the performance-rituals. It was exciting for me to discover that the journey of the performance-rituals from 1994 onwards parallels Daly’s ‘spiralling journey of exorcism and ecstasy’. In addition, women in institutionalised religions, like Christianity, do not seem to have a problem identifying with the male hero’s journey, the belief system, or the rituals: at least, I did not at the time. So men should experience similar ease. As anthropologist Drid Williams points out, ‘the story of our growth and maturation as human beings can be seen to be parallel with the growth of our knowledge(s) concerning the ethnographical narrative of our ethnicity and its relation to others’ (Williams, 1991:254).\(^ {34}\)
But the ritual aspect of the performance-ritual functions in other ways as well. The performance-rituals are a way of imparting information and knowledge of story and history as part of the process of exploring 'the meaning of life' and redefining what it means to be 'human'. This makes links with ancestral oral tradition, which was later mirrored in the liturgy of the Christian church and the morality and miracle plays and the pageants of the Middle Ages. This aspect also reflects traditional and ritual practices of other cultures, including indigenous Australian communities. In performance-ritual the story of 'now' is placed in conversation with the story of the past.

Since 1991, I have consciously decided to centre this action around women in time and place, for it is this story that was not part of my upbringing or education. It is important to know this past and present story for the process of re-defining what it means to be a woman, as well as 'human'. The content of the early performance-rituals emerged from reading generic 'history' and 'religion' in relation to 'woman'. The story had not been totally personalised or related to particular women in specific times and places. That was the next step. By the time of Centre of the Storm there was a need to see the reality of particular stories and situations and relate this to familial story, especially how this story continues to impact on Australia.

The performance-rituals are also a way of recreating meaning in response to change, a reordering of reality. The social changes which have occurred prior to and during the 20th century in the West, including in 'the body of knowledge', technology, and the globalisation of knowledge and lifestyle, have led to the difficult process of birthing new ways of mythologising, believing and expressing world view. The glass which obliterated the rest of the world from 'ourselves' as white, middle class, or trying to be, has been shattered and 'we' can no longer pretend to believe in our 'specialness', or that we are 'better than' no matter who 'we' are; a point that Probyn also makes (Probyn, 1994:61). The life-and-soul destroying, as well as life-enhancing, effects of change in
relation to people and the environment are becoming more apparent. The performance-rituals allow this re-ordering to be ritually presented and expressed.

The performance-rituals allow time to ‘touch base’ with the so-called ‘eternal’ or ‘universal’ values and ideals such as truth, honesty, integrity, social conscience, charity and love in light of the knowledge of what is, and is not, valued in our own and others’ culture and experience, and in relation to the impact of social change. The values themselves are called into question, as is ‘hope’.\textsuperscript{37} The performance-rituals function as a place to explore the apparent or real contradiction between the ideal and the reality and re-define, or re-affirm, ‘belief’ and ‘Be-ing’ in life, in self, and in the present.\textsuperscript{38} The action of holding together these contradictions is part of the ritual process, and is an emerging concept in feminist theory. In the context of performance-ritual ‘holding’ becomes part of the ritualised response to, and expression of, the historical reality of social, cultural and ethical changes. This concept will be discussed further in Chapter 1.

As well as ‘holding’, the performance-rituals function as a time and place for healing and letting go. The process of preparing for the performance-rituals as well as the events themselves are a time for exploring and ‘holding’ the complexity of life on this planet. This includes the identification of personal and global issues and their implications. The identification is followed by a time of centring, or healing, and allowing the issues and questions ‘to be’ as well as addressing them in the presence of others. In the end the issues and questions are ‘let go’ or ‘given over’ in a similar way to the way in which prayer functions in the Christian church. It does not mean that they will not be revisited at some stage. It is just for a time. At the right time, if change has not occurred, appropriate issues will re-emerge in a different context. The ‘letting go’ allows movement and gives the freedom to move on unencumbered so that the journey can continue. This extension of ‘holding’ builds on Sara Ruddick’s and Ariel Salleh’s work and will be further explored in Chapter 1.\textsuperscript{39}
In spite of their changing identity and content the performance-rituals still dialogue with tradition. They unite the traditions of the past, including that of Christianity, with an evolving tradition of the present; a tradition which includes the history of people, of religious belief systems, and ritual. This dialogue is presented through the past and present stories of women in relation to a more general history of the world, as well as ritual actions, metaphors, images and journeys which have both past and present significance. In this way they help to illuminate and recreate a continuing cultural connection that has relevance to a person who is increasingly experiencing a sense of alienation in a rapidly changing world.

Like feminist writing, performance-ritual is also political action. It is a space, time and place where those issues, stories, metaphors, symbols and images which need to be seen and heard can be presented and highlighted. In this way, information and awareness can be directly or indirectly transferred. Performance-ritual opens a space to ask questions such as, ‘who are we?’, ‘where did we come from?’, ‘what are we doing?’, ‘what do we think we are doing?’, ‘what is happening in the world, in our country, in our own community?’, ‘do we like what we see?’, ‘what needs to change?’, ‘what can change?’ ‘how can we create a ‘better’ world/country/community?’, ‘what do we mean by ‘better’?’, ‘what do I see is woman’s ‘place’?’, ‘what, as a woman, would I like to change?’...? The questions are explicit, taking performance-ritual beyond just an expression of a woman’s spirituality. When it is part of the feminist project of identification, and naming, of the patriarchal paradigm underlying Western culture, and of searching for alternatives by re-naming and re-creating from a woman’s perspective, it can be termed ‘feminist performance-ritual’. This is the journey Daly terms ‘the journey of exorcism and ecstasy’ and the journey of ‘a woman becoming’ (Daly, 1990:1). This journey is examined in detail in Chapter 1 and, in relation to performance-ritual, in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.
‘Performance-ritual’ offers a space, time and place for questions and comments in the hope of connecting with others and triggering, or motivating, other questions and actions. To again summarise Probyn, it is the text that holds ontological and epistemological ways of knowing together and supports the broader project of challenging structures of power in an attempt to bring about holistic awareness and radical change. It is a way of speaking of real concerns about the world, its people and its future with the aim, in Morgan’s (1996:8) words, of ‘saving the fragile blue and green biosphere named Earth’, or, as Raphael’s says, ‘the...spiritual feminist is an epistemologically unified subject in pursuit of a just, organicist future’ (Raphael, 1996:114, 115).42

The performance-rituals, then, are multi-dimensional. They simultaneously function, and can be expressed, in many ways. They could be described as personal, embodied, gendered narratives of journeys and politico-religious discourse...or, an evolving, personalised and therefore, in this instance, woman-centred theology and tradition...or, part of the reformation and signification of a changing physical and spiritual identity as a white Australian woman in time and place as well as non-time and non-place...or, a contemporary white Australian woman’s religious and feminist practice. In whatever way they are described, the performance-rituals have provided me with an alternative to the socio-religious function that the Church once filled: a sacred time and space/place to reflect on the ‘self-world’ interface in the presence of community/audience and ‘other’/’life force’/’energy’/?’. In this way, the performance-rituals in Centre of the Storm become an expression of one moment in an individualised, white, woman-centred and changing religion, that draws on tradition and also reflects the Australian context.

This thesis celebrates the multidimensional nature of performance-ritual within the broader categories of feminist spirituality and ritual. The written text discusses those areas the performance-rituals exemplified in this document reveal: body, nature, place including family, holding, letting go, and the ritual structure and function of each event.
The allowance for multidimensionality is part of feminist theory, and allowing multidimensionality challenges the academic preference for linearity and minimalism.

**Background to Centre of the Storm**

Most writing on women’s spirituality has come out of the United States, and does not completely answer the needs of this Australian woman. The increasing public presence of Indigenous Australians challenges Australia’s ‘whiteness’ and history of colonisation. At the same time, seeing the way in which many in the indigenous community take pride in ‘family’, and in reclaiming their unique traditions and traditional expression, highlights the lack of knowledge Christians and ex-Christians have about their pre-Christian cultural and familial history, especially in relation to religion. These observations are given weight by an awareness of the growing numbers of ‘whities’ in the Sydney of the 70’s, 80’s, 90’s and 2000 who are searching for alternative spiritualities, artistic expression, and societal functioning, by searching in the East or in indigenous cultures. This is especially intriguing in relation to those women who have found the Christian religion lacking and have embraced other religions authored by men, such as Sufism, Hinduism or Buddhism, which have little to do with our own cultural background and experience. It is as if the ‘Western’ culture has failed in some way.

Often, there seems to be the expectation that somehow ‘the answer’ is in ‘being’ these ‘others’ or following the philosophy of life, art and religion of other cultures. This observation is reinforced in the writing coming from Europe and America at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries from those Western spiritual and artistic forebears who had rejected or at least were questioning Christianity. They had followed the same path to the Orient. A number of these writers are examined in Chapter 2. What have ‘we whities’ lost or felt we have lost, and what do we expect from life?

On the other hand a number of members from other cultures, whom I met when travelling through Fiji, Bali, Thailand and Ghana, seem to want to get out of their own culture and
poverty, become ‘Western’ and come to Australia. Some have become Christian, even if they have kept their traditional beliefs and practices. During these travels there was always somebody wanting to adopt an ‘auntie’ or who wanted addresses, money for family or sickness, or... Each on their own side seeing ‘other’ as having ‘what is needed’: for the West the spiritual, artistic and a romanticised ‘time of perfection and harmony’, and for indigenous, the Western spiritual and its associated material benefits, and ‘ideal life’. At the same time, there were others who viewed the Western culture in a less than favourable light.

There seems to be a romanticism which emerges when ‘other’ cultures, especially those which seem to differ radically from ‘our own’, are spoken, or written, or thought about. Other cultures always seem ‘exotic’, more exciting, more interesting and more meaningful. It is as if ‘they’ know the answer and have the secret to life. This attitude is also reflected in popular Western rejections of ‘goddess worship’, ‘witchcraft’, ‘druidism’ and other ‘ancient’ religions. One of the quests in Centre of the Storm was to revisit these ‘ancient times’ through the eyes of ‘respected’ archaeologists, historians and researchers into early religion. The hope was that the process of knowing the reality, or as close to it as available material allows, of my own changing tradition and history, would give a base from which to develop an individualised and relevant spirituality. This means that the project is also deliberately and consciously Eurocentric. At the same time, it is acknowledged that this subject position is just one of many other subject positions. So, it is hoped that the process of learning my changing story and tradition, and how this story places me in this land, will allow me to accept and understand the traditions of others.

Centre of the Storm

This is the way in which Centre of the Storm (1998-2000) came into being. The initial video, Centre of the Storm: the videoed hypothesis (1998), expresses the spiritual alienation of a contemporary suburban Australian white woman who had been raised in,
and had left, the Christian faith. It begins from a statement of alienation, asks ‘why?’, and hypothesises that an understanding of the family-religion-Australia intersection may engender a ‘sense of place’. The research and performance journey that followed was directed by this hypothesis. The video consequently gave birth to four seasonal performance-rituals which attempt to answer the questions posed in the video. The seasonal performance-rituals are:

Beginnings
Sense Of Place, Sacred Space: Arrival
The Fire Of The Sun
Passage

This series is a continuation of previous performance-rituals in that, individually, they fulfil the previously described elements of performance-ritual. They are multidimensional performances and rituals which are intuitive, embodied, gendered journeys and politico-religious discourse. As well, they have all relied on synchronicity in timing, place and theme for their actualisation. None were planned in advance but evolved during the research around the ‘next idea’, which was related to the next season, and were performed where and when the opportunity was offered at the ‘right time’. Because of the time pressure that this way of working engendered, each performance-ritual was also partly improvised, and this assisted their ritual aspect. As well as individual rituals the series of five, when viewed as a whole, form a rite-of-passage, a rite of passage into the ‘centre of the storm’ and into the beginnings of a new ground for spirituality. The ground is a multidimensional woven matrix which includes the series titles, ‘centre of the storm’, ‘beginnings’, ‘arrival’, ‘survival’ and ‘passage’; the associated metaphors of ‘conception’, ‘birth’, ‘maturation’, ‘aging’; the material reality and specificity of this ‘body’, ‘nature’, and specificity of ‘place’, where ‘place’ includes ‘family’; and the ritual actions of ‘holding’ and ‘letting go’. The performance-rituals in Centre of the Storm begin Daly’s ‘journey of ecstasy’. 
The written thesis interprets early performance-rituals *Dark Fire, For Eve, Fallen Totems, and Leavetaking* and the more recent series, *Centre of the Storm*, from the standpoint of feminist theology, ecofeminist theory, Western ritual discourse, and the 19-20th century history of women performing spirit. The early performance-rituals are included to establish a ritual and theoretical ground for *Centre of the Storm*. The discussion begins, in Chapter 1, with an introduction to 20th century radical and ecofeminist spirituality, which Daly terms 'the spiralling journey of exorcism and ecstasy', 'the journey of a woman becoming'. Feminist writing supports spiritualities and rituals which are subjective, embodied, contextualised and process oriented. *Centre of the Storm* extends this theory to include concepts of 'place' and 'family', especially in the development of an Australian spirituality.

Chapter 2 examines the emergence of spiritual naturalism in Western women's performance at the turn of the 19th to 20th centuries. The examples given are embodied, subjective and process-oriented expressions of spirituality, and the precursor of performance-ritual. It continues with an examination of the beginnings of the loss of conscious spiritual expression in 20th century secular performance.

Chapter 3 engages with ritual theory. It examines the loss of 'spirit' in current theoretical debates on ritual, beginning in 20th century, where ritual becomes objectified, disembodied and decontextualised; a loss that this thesis and spiritual feminist's usage of the term challenges. It argues against the universalising of 'ritual' to include many types of action, and uses performance-ritual to highlight the similarities and differences between performance and ritual.

Chapters 4 revisits and analyses earlier performance-rituals, *Dark Fire, For Eve, Fallen Totems, and Leavetaking* in the light of this theoretical base. They are included to illustrate the overall 'spiralling journey of exorcism and ecstasy' and to introduce the analytical framework. The analysis takes two major approaches. The first is an analysis
of the structural and functional aspects, from the perspective of ritual. The second is an examination of the content from a feminist and ecofeminist perspective. This chapter lays the groundwork for the establishment of a feminist spirituality through performance-ritual.

Chapters 5 and 6 apply this analysis to *Centre of the Storm* to establish a matrix for an Australian feminist spirituality around the concepts of body, nature, place, which includes family, and the ritual actions of ‘holding’ and ‘letting go’. *Centre of the Storm* is the beginning of ‘the journey of ecstasy’. Where *Centre of the Storm* differs from previous performance-rituals is its focus on the Australian context of seasonal change, and white history of colonisation. *Centre of the Storm* begins to address how this history affected, and continues to affect, the traditional landholders, the nonhuman environment, and the colonisers themselves. In this way *Centre of the Storm* moves from the more radical feminist standpoint of the earlier work to an ecofeminist perspective, and begins to form a new spirituality. This progression will be illustrated in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Appendix A contains the scripts of the performance-rituals in *Centre of the Storm*. The complete scripts of the earlier works are not available. Appendix B contains additional information on Elizabeth Pulley. Appendix C contains a videotape with short selected excerpts from the performance-rituals in *Centre of the Storm*. It is to be used to illustrate the written analysis in Chapters 5 and 6. Appendix D contains videotapes of the complete performance-rituals in *Centre of the Storm*. Visual records of earlier performance-rituals are not available, apart from photographs used in Chapter 4.
Notes


4 In Protestant Christianity, the teaching presents the Christian Bible as the actual ‘word of God’, and the stories contained in the Bible, as historically accurate. I wanted to find if there was historical evidence for these events. This was ‘the truth’ I was searching for.

5 Even Jesus Christ was a sanitised version, presented as a white man, son of a white God, even though he was from the Middle East. His ethnicity was somehow ignored or not stressed.

6 Women’s writing was not seen to be serious writing. Even if women-authored books were read and enjoyed they were quickly dismissed or it was assumed that they were written by men (see also Spender, D. *Women of Ideas and what men have done to them.* London, Pandora, 1982/1988 and *Writing a New World, Two Centuries of Australian Women Writers.* London, Pandora, 1988). Also the focus was on English, that is, British-written, texts. I remember being riveted by *Coonardoo* by Katherine Susannah Pritchard as a teenager but did not really note that it was written by an Australian woman about Australia and that this was unusual. Nor was I aware that its publication had caused so much controversy. My dad was a partner in a bookstore at the time and brought it home, among others, for my literary education. It was only recently, while reading Spender, that I realised the significance of the fact that it was probably
one of the few books I had read that was authored by a woman, in spite of the many women writing and being published at the time. It’s significance also lay in it thematically being focused in Australia with an Aboriginal woman as the central character in an attempt to explore black-white relationships.

7 This may not be the truth. The fact that it is remembered this way illustrates how much and what kind of an impact the story had.

8 Moreton-Robinson, A. *Talkin’ Up to the White Woman: Aboriginal Women and Feminism*. St. Lucia, Qld, University of Queensland, 2000.

9 Information taken from NAISDA’s 1994 Student Handbook and an email from ADTR, dated 8th April, 2002.

10 Fox, M. *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality*. Santa Fe, NM, Bear, 1983.


12 The catching up is time consuming. The unavailability of women’s studies in educational institutions, and my consequent late discovery of a long and forgotten tradition of women’s philosophy and writing, has meant that women can spend a lot of ‘wasted’ time re-inventing, re-thinking, re-discovering and re-writing ideas that have been around for centuries. It also requires a concerted effort to search out both women-authored as well as male-authored material, a practice men may not find as necessary. It is a slow
process without a guide. On the other hand the time is not wasted for it is necessary to keep re-
re-discovering and re-presenting the past to keep women's writing and heritage alive. In relation to the ‘real’
Australian story both white women and men are equally disadvantaged.

13 The Festival of Sydney, *Worship in the Park*, The Domain, Sydney. An outdoor ecumenical service as
part of Bicentennial celebrations.

14 By this time I was becoming more aware because of events at an Australian Creation Spirituality
conference I had attended the year before. So I decided to perform a protest piece to the readings: Isaiah's
and Revelation's prophecy of the coming of ‘a new heaven and a new earth’. By the time of the service
one of the female ministers, who had been on leave, returned, also realised what was happening and made
some last minute changes. I doubt if anyone else, except the organisers, knew. After it was over one of
the members of the congregation came up after the service to say she enjoyed the performance but felt I
should have left the tape off my mouth at the end, not put it back on. I don't remember what I said but I
knew that we, that is the Christian church as a whole and the members of its congregation, were not yet
ready to hear the voice of ‘others’, that 'they' were still being spoken for and therefore silenced.


16 For example, *Song in a Strange Land*, Eastside Uniting Church Hall, 1987, *Memories and other
Matters*, Eastside Uniting Church Hall, 1992, *Into the Dark*, Eastside Uniting Church 1993 and *A Cup

17 Boland, E. *In Her Own Image*. Dublin, Arlen, 1980; Daly, M. *Beyond God the Father*. Boston,
Lust*, *Elemental Feminist Philosophy*. U.K. The Woman's Press, 1984, *Quintessence...Realizing the


19 Daly, M. Beyond God the Father. Boston, Beacon, 1985a.

20 Dark Fire was an outdoor performance trilogy funded by Newtown Festival in 1994. Part 1, Descent, was performed at Victoria Park Pool; part 2, Initiation, was performed in Newtown Square, part 3, Dark Fire, was performed in Sydney Park. For Eve was performed as part of the School of Women Artists Network exhibition in 1995. Fallen Totems was performed at Sydney Fringe Festival, Belvoir St. Theatre, Sydney and as part of the Songs of the Wind Festival in Katoomba in 1997. The installations for each of these were created by Irene Kindness.

21 The temptation is to say ‘levels’ but this suggests a hierarchy of functions. Rather, the functions work simultaneously and democratically; co-operating and communicating. This way of functioning is also supported by feminist theological and ecofeminist writing.

22 ‘Performance’ is used in this thesis in the theatrical sense: as an event specifically created for time and place, and in ‘heightened’ form for a potential, if not actual, audience. It does not refer to ‘the everyday’, ordinary, or mundane, as used for example in Cultural Studies and Management. ‘Performance’ or ‘theatre’ are both used to indicate the combined use of dance, movement, drama, enactment, text, music, sound and song, otherwise the specific term is used to define the particular form of performance or theatre being discussed.

23 In Mary Daly’s terms, Elemental is ‘of, relating to, or caused by great forces of nature’ (Daly, M. Pure Lust., Elemental Feminist Philosophy. London, The Woman’s Press, 1984, p. 4) or ‘characterized by stark simplicity, naturalness...’ and Be-ing is ‘Ultimate/Intimate Reality’ (Daly, M. Webster’s First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language. London, The Women’s Press, 1988, pp. 64, 72).
24 *Leavetaking* was performed in 1997 as part of The Performance Space’s Open Program.

25 In the context of this document, ‘structural’ refers to the analysis of ritual in terms of the rites it contains, and ‘functional’ refers to the analysis of the purpose of each rite.

26 This contradicts Polyani’s assertion that the viewer experiences an emergence into the mind of the artist (Polyani, 1983:16, 17). ‘Emergence’ cannot be assumed or expected and probably is not the case. Who can ‘know’ another’s mind? Whatever is triggered in the viewer’s mind and emotions probably has more to do with the viewer’s own ‘mental state’, needs, desires, experience, motivation or purpose.


28 Although Daly addresses the ‘Gates of the Goddess’ and ‘Goddess murder’ in *Gyn/Ecology* her theology moves beyond women-centred metaphors and vocabulary, a point which will be discussed further in Chapter 3. In *Divine Women* Irigaray does use women-centred vocabulary for ‘divinity’, but does not go as far as naming the ‘divine’ in women, ‘goddess’.


Christ. From an ecological perspective, not all writers in *The Earth Bible* series found that the scriptures they selected supported the concept of ecojustice. The first volume also included Heather Eaton and Elaine M. Wainwright, who critiqued the ecojustice principles and scripture from an ecofeminist standpoint. Not all of the articles were 'scripture-friendly'.


32 This is important, especially for women. In 1994 I had the unfortunate experience of facilitating very personal workshops for women and having the male owner of the space in which we were working, and which was booked for the weekend, come in over night to see what we were doing. His comment was something along the lines of ‘...I couldn’t help myself...I just wanted to see what was going on...and when I saw all the casts of women drying on the floor I wanted to put my own cast there as well...’. Why wasn’t he comfortable with the concept of a ‘women only’ space, community and process? Why couldn’t he honour it and us and just let it and us be? Why did he have to see and want to ‘spray/claim territory’ invade and de-sacralise/defile it? Needless to say I felt betrayed on behalf of myself as well as on behalf of the other women.

33 This mirrors the needs of other contemporary women for their own ‘sacred space’ in their attempts to define their own spirituality. A number of cultures have separate women-only rituals for specific purposes, including in some indigenous Australian and African tradition and this will be discussed in Chapter 1.
34 Williams, D. *Ten Lectures on the Theories of the Dance*. Metuchen, N. J., Scarecrow, 1991. Part of my hope, of course, in performing and writing about this work is that others may be inspired to begin, or continue, to author their own spirituality and/or perform their own spiritual journeys.


37 Whether they ever were in fact ‘universal’ or ‘eternal’ is debatable and probably as incorrect as it is now. In Western society any illusion we had about the significance and importance of these ‘values’ has been squashed. The current crop of television series, such as ‘Shipwreck’, ‘Greed’, ‘The Weakest Link’ and ‘Temptation Island’ works consistently to show how easily people can be persuaded to ignore them all. In addition, the examples we are given of corporate and political practices, by the media and other communication networks, illustrate clearly that these ‘values’ are not, and probably never have been, a reality of those in power.

38 This creates another question in relation to ‘whose ideal and whose reality’? The answer is, that it is this writers; the ideal is that which is held in the psyche, created and promoted by the Church’s and Society’s teachings through its various institutions, as well as youthful imaginings. The reality is the writer’s interpretation of ‘the real’ way people function and interact, and ‘the real’ way nonhuman nature functions and interacts, drawn from experiences, the messages promoted by the media and the written word, including the Internet. The ‘reality’ debate is not entered into in this thesis.

40 It is important for me to acknowledge the enormous influence Christianity has had on the West in general, and my life in particular: from awakening in me an understanding and acceptance of a 'divine realm', to opening up in me ways of experiencing and expressing 'other', and to the way I perceive and use ritual in the form of 'performance-ritual'. Hence, I include a number of texts from Christian nuns in the text of the performance-rituals, and constantly refer to the Christian experience in the written text. I have moved beyond, but the 'beyond' is still influenced by the past.


43 The Eurocentrism is unavoidable. A number of indigenous writers have severely critiqued Western appropriation of indigenous material and Western bias in discussing it (Moreton-Robinson, A. *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism*. Australia, University of Queensland, 2000). While attempts were made to gain as much understanding as possible about Australian indigenous presence and tradition, it was conducted mainly by book research, so it is only partial. The partiality is emphasised by the fact that most books written on indigenous Australian traditions are written by white Westerners. This current project, therefore, must remain within the Western tradition.

44 Here I identify with Probyn where she writes of the need to know 'who I am' in the process of being ready to know who 'they' are so that I can find a way of moving from a secure centre to the edge of myself and see if it is possible to 'be with', acknowledging differences without priority of position. The Christian outlook of my upbringing was, and in many cases still is, one of seeing itself as the one and only true religion in which all the world should believe. The performance-rituals in this project were the first step in a longer and continuing process in what Probyn describes as the forward-backward movement towards difference/other. Whereas Probyn is exploring ways of writing about 'self' and 'other' I am interested to see if this process of knowing who I am and where I am historically, traditionally and
culturally will eventuate, in the future, in a case of communication across 'difference', or whether it will further highlight or accentuate the differences and cause greater division.