



# Awakenings on Ancestral Lands

## Prologue

### Ancestor Trees

The Land is our Mother. (18)

When the settlers came in and chopped all those trees down, they not only chopped those trees, they chopped all the people in the process. ....

People really cry if they see a tree chopped down. It breaks their heart-“it’s a part of us”. ....

“That’s just an old tree”, the Whitefeller might say, because he doesn’t really know what it is. (19).

Might be the Ancestors came through from other countries and stopped here on their journey...They might be dropped their seeds there and other trees came out of those Ancestors before they travelled on. *Alekenhe*. (154)

If you ask that old person why that tree is sacred, he won’t give an answer straight away... But only the people that started from where that tree came, how it follows, only they can tell the story.”

...The way I like to tell the Story is how I see how Aboriginal people, relate to the Land. How important it is to us. Because sometimes it’s not listened to really properly (126).

And if you are seeing the Land without the Story, then there is nothing there. We see our country, even though it might be destroyed by another species, we see how the beautiness is still in the country (126).

Turner, M. K. (2010). *Iwnehe Tyerrtye*. Alice Springs: IAD Press

## Introduction

### Background: psychic trauma and socio-political turmoil

Creating a Safe Supportive Environment (CASSE) work began in the relentless, suffocating heat of the summer of 2012 in Central Australia. I fell into the furnace of the molten coalface of the lives of Aboriginal people, fringe dwellers, who walk the streets of chopped down trees at night, neither sleeping nor dreaming, with no place to be, night patrols cruising, drowning their sorrows, facing cruel condemnation in the courts, fighting to the screaming noise of the singing cicadas, their pain suppressed, their hopes repeatedly whiplashed and dashed, and found the word trauma was deleted from my mind. Mindlessness and indigestible panic prevailed; Terra Nullius and the shameful heat of it all.

What do we know of this world, this war zone, a veritable Holocaust created, unleashed and disavowed by Whitefellahs, when they declared the continent of Australia Terra

Nullius? The red Centre of Australia, indeed the heart of Australia, is like a bleeding heart of lacerating pain and the blood of those murdered and marginalised, has hemorrhaged throughout the ancestral lands, seeping and congealing into the very foundations of the nation of Australia, which has been built on a colonial crime and a crime against humanity. It has been largely a country of soul murder and not a country of soul making. Fearful rage silenced and silences lament. Only the deafening cicadas mostly make the noise, likened to a psychic noise, making sleep near impossible and wakefulness, an eternal mental indigestion. Aboriginal Dreaming lives on but what might become an Australian dream, remains timelessly suspended, in no-man's land, which psychoanalyst Ogden (2003, p.3) describes, as a land where there is neither imagination nor reality, neither forgetting nor remembering and neither sleeping or waking up, (and I add, a land where there is no doubt and no hope and no yesterdays or tomorrows and no recognition), which is different to and worse than a nightmare. The opposite of a good dream is not a nightmare but no dreams, where a dream cannot be dreamt (Ogden, 2004, p.859). It is a land in the words of Bion (1984, p.8), of indigestible panic, a panic which can only be evacuated or annihilated but cannot be symbolised or held. It is an empty land. Nightmares are frightening and often marked by fear and murderous rage.

We know all the children in detention in the Northern Territory are Aboriginal. As of June 2019 there were 24 children in detention, 22 boys and 2 girls. Eleven of them are in Don Dale – the centre that the Royal Commission said was not fit to house juveniles and should be closed immediately – and 13 are in Alice Springs youth detention. Sixteen of them are on remand, while eight are sentenced. Sentencing age begins at ten in the NT.

We know that the suicide rate for Aboriginal youth is high, particularly males. We know the suicide rate in the NT is the highest in Australia.

We know domestic violence has ravaged families. More than 60% of assault offences in the NT are associated with domestic violence. Aboriginal women comprise the highest proportion of victims of domestic violence at 82 per cent. Indigenous females in the NT are almost 22 times more likely to be victims of domestic violence than non-Indigenous females.

What perhaps is less well known is that these rates reflect longstanding trauma of manifold losses, social turmoil and oppression. People are not born mad or bad and often become bad when sad and their pain is unrecognised.

For the Aboriginal people of Central Australia, a 60,000 year old civilisation has been challenged first by colonialism and dispossession from their traditional lands, followed second by modernity's affront to traditional ways of life, including their homeland and interdependent relationship with the land. More recent challenges have come from government intervention. Successive governments – promoting assimilation – developed missions, settlements, and interventions, including those in which “stolen generations” of

children were removed from families under the guise of protection. Then in 2007, the Federal Government enacted the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Bill, in the name of protecting children from abuse, giving the Federal Government wide control over Aboriginal lands, families, Law and community governance and services. Currently, there is a changing landscape in policy and programs in the NT and Canberra whereby government policy is now in support of local, community driven, cultural programs. NT Families, in response to the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory, have developed and funded a major program for at-risk youth called *Back on Track*, in the attempt to reduce criminality and to provide alternatives to detention. As part of this program, CASSE will deliver a six month targeted therapeutic/cultural program delivery for youth and families- *Shields for Living, Tools for Life*- and if the program is successful indications are that funding will continue.

Traditional Aboriginal culture has indeed been severely ruptured (Lear, 2007), but nonetheless survived and is transforming. *Tjukurrpa* [honoring the Aboriginal preference, in the words of Green, (2012, p. 177) not to be translated], Aboriginal Dreamtime or from the Dreaming, remains fundamental to the Aboriginal view of reality, albeit to varying degrees. Tjukurrpa refers to Aboriginal understandings of the world and its creation, and to the Dreaming stories of the ancestral beings which matrix the land with dreaming songlines. It provides the fundamental source of identity and Being. Traditional Aboriginal Law (laws), ancestral lands, and ceremony continue to have an important place in cultural life.

This is the ground on which we are working. What do Aboriginal people say about it? Over the years, they have spoken to us about their “hurting hearts”, of “weakened spirits” and of the need to “wake up strong”.

An Aboriginal leader, JJ, told us: “We all throw up our hands, we live under constant threat and constant sorry business and everyone asks ‘what to do?’ as the gaols and the hospitals are all full and our people are homeless.”

Another leader, S, wearily declared: “The cycle continues and it gets wearing.”

JJ continued: “People are never happy. There is so much constant sorry business, always problems. People are deadened or despairing.”

As Kumunjayi Granite said: “I speak your language but you don’t speak mine”.

One mother whose child was removed said: “They’re ‘hurting’ if they are not with their mothers. They want to be with them!” Another woman went on to say in an anguished voice: “The mother wanted to be with her son and the son wanted to be with his mother.”

Many Aboriginal people say they want their children to be with them, to rehabilitate on country with their leaders and families and not have them detained far away in detention. As one Countryman said: “We want our young people to pick up their law and culture but too much Whitefella business being mixed up. Our country is medicine for our people.”

The wounded psychic world of the red Centre, the ‘hurting heart’ - at the point of impact of central, first contact – comprises the emotional epicentre of life and death, cultural oppression and cannibalised collision. Anguishing pain, and primordial anxiety become manifest in this psychic world. The immediate trauma and longstanding trauma of colonialism and the racial divide, catalyse disturbances and conflicts, and song line the Dreaming of Australia into a country of breakdown and homelessness. There are however, breakthroughs of hope and vitality that illuminate this bedrock of death. Indeed, this pivotal point of generational impact, can be galvanised at the very centre, providing a critical, crucible from crisis to change.

### **Psychoanalytic concepts that inform the work of CASSE**

Several psychoanalytic concepts informed the work of CASSE at the outset. These concepts, described in the paragraphs below, provide a foundation for facilitating transformative experience (Ogden, 1988) by which the emotional turbulence, uncertainty, and psychic dread associated with profound trauma may be faced.

Bion’s elaboration of *caesura*, the dramatic separation heralded by birth, suggests a model for rising above every rupture, gap, space or break to find the continuity that exists between seemingly dissimilar yet connected states of mind, events, and persons (Bion, 1989; Bergstein, 2013). Bion (1989) underlines the critical importance of attending to the caesuras as this is where emotional aliveness resides, but also where the threat of drowning loiters. Bergstein (2013) suggests a metaphor of a raging river between two banks of the mind where catastrophic change can occur, but where the danger of catastrophe lies as well. Bion asks us to be in the eye of the storm (Bergstein, 2013, p. 625)—bearing the frustration of the apparent discontinuity—without gripping onto the banks to stand still nor slackening the hold on familiar moorings until the next storm. Thus, we must tolerate and listen to what is in the gap in order to find continuity and psychological growth (Bergstein, 2013; Civaterese, 2008).

I now mention three concepts radical doubt, radical hope and recognition which are commensurate with the principles of self-determination which featured in the early 1980s.

Related to the notion of caesura is the concept of *radical doubt*, referring to the achievement of truth through emotional experiencing (Bion, 1963; Civaterese, 2008). Radical doubt, Civaterese (2008) says, shifts the focus of thinking from content and/or

outcomes to dreaming, processes, relationships, differences, and movement The embracement of ambiguity and uncertainty--without investment in predetermined outcomes--is proposed as the means by which radical doubt transcends rigid and static thought to allow a process of new thinking to emerge (Bergstein, 2013; Bion, 1963).

*Radical hope*, a concept coined by Jonathan Lear (2006), anticipates a good outcome for those who hold hope but as yet lack the appropriate concepts with which to understand it--a future yet to be articulated. This concept can be particularly applied to crises of cultural collapse, where notions of the good life--a future with meaning--may be unfathomable.

The principle of *recognition* is particularly important in working with the effects of intergenerational trauma. Psychoanalytic endeavour is the story of recognition. Do you see me? Do you know me? Do you see my pain? Winnicott (1960) saw recognition as the emotional response that makes our feelings, intentions and actions *meaningful*. Recognition, he believed, can only come from another whom we, in turn, recognize as different and valuable in his or her own right. Winnicott said that without recognition by another person we are adrift; we cannot know who we are when left in a state of complete isolation (Winnicott 1967, 68). Benjamin (1990, p. 42) says that it is this appreciation of the other's reality--mutual recognition--which gives rise to the establishment of *shared reality and empathy*. Ogden (2016, p. 1260) says this process of recognition, in the mutual experience of pain, in the face of destruction and survival, both necessitates and heralds, emotional responsiveness, lively presencing and the ability to dream. Aliveness or being real, Winnicott (1960) claimed, is not inevitable, it can only be achieved through recognition.

CASSE embraced *Link Theory* developed by Pichon-Riviere as a helpful means of understanding Aboriginal communities, couples and families. Working in a community context necessarily shifts the focus of these principles from an intrapsychic world to an external socio-cultural world, albeit the focus shifts back and forth in a dialectic relationship between the internal and the external.

In this regard we find Scharff's definition of the link, "the way that each person's immersion in culture forms an essential part of their linkage to society" (Scharff, 2017, p. 221) particularly helpful. He continues to say that through the links "we contribute to all who interact with us (...). Each person is embedded in history, culture and relations just as these dimensions are affected by the person's internal unconscious world" (Scharff, 2017, p. 222).

CASSE privileged *cultural experiences and differences*, and recognizes the containing and creative possibilities (Ogden, 1985, p. 128) they provide. Culture is essential for survival and a sense of belonging, having a place and an identity; the language of the soul is both emotional and cultural. Relationships - including clinical interactions - are saturated

with cultural meaning, since interpersonal experiences, internal representations, and relational patterns are culturally shaped and socially constructed.

CASSE also necessarily privileged the *reality of race*, racial divide, and racial relations, recognizing the powerful memories of people and communities to the colonial past and living present and the realities of inequality and power differentials. Crucially, in doing this work in the world of trauma, one never forgets the past of conquest, dispossession, murder, stolen generations and government intervention in any encounter or event. Traumata can re-ignite and erupt suddenly and are linked to cultural dispossession and racial inequality. Aboriginal people live these realities daily, with routine evidence of racial inequity. And if one forgets one is frequently and painfully reminded.

### **The work of CASSE**

Projects and partnerships in central Australia began to emerge and take shape through dialogue between leaders of the organization the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and the communities, along with community consultations, workshops, and focus groups. I will describe one of the major projects in the western desert. This program returns power to the elders and youth to the homelands .

### **Men's Tjilirra Movement**

The Men's Tjilirra Movement (MTM) involved collaboration early on, with the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) and the western desert men. Embedded in ancient culture (60,000 years old), tjilirra are traditional tools such as shields, boomerangs and spears, tools of hunting, ceremony, Aboriginal Dreamtime, and Law that were confiscated under western law as weapons. With the MTM the men make the tools the traditional ways. The heart of the Men's Tjilirra Movement lies in Australia's remote central and western desert region, involving five Northern Territory communities of people, primarily Luritja and Pintupi, who were the last people to come in from the desert, many as late as the 1950s- Kintore, *Walanguru*, Mt Liebig, *Watiyawanu* and Haasts Bluff, *Ikuntji*, and Papunya, *Warumpi*. The men of the western desert report that tjilirra are a source of pride, cultural survival, and emotional well-being: "*If we do not have these we have no language, no culture. We have nothing. We are nothing. It's our history. A part of us*". Because many elder men had been in jail, incapacitated by substance use, or died, cultural knowledge was lost to whole generations of younger men. Thus, a key objective of the MTM is to facilitate cultural revival and strengthen generational connections by the elders 'giving of (cultural) knowledge' to the younger generation.

With respect to cultural transmission, there is generational succession, governed by cultural protocol, and the elders "*give*" the knowledge to the young men, with an emphasis on giving and legitimacy in receivership (Myers, 1991, p. 152). The

transmission of knowledge is considered a vital responsibility. Knowledge is “given” which is held in side his stomach with his spirit *kurrunpa*. This inherited knowledge is localized and given according to seniority. If there is danger or conflict or trouble there is a return to country; to the knowledge base, for protection. The cultural knowledge is highly valued and who owns it and who can speak for it, is treated with great respect.

The MTM team know and live the cultural world of the Pintupi people. The MTM team is comprised of an Aboriginal *ngangkari* or Aboriginal traditional healer, Walter Jugadai and or his brother Martin, and a ‘whitefella’ man, Jamie Millier Tjupurulla who has longstanding and trusted relationships with the communities. He is an initiated man who learnt to make *tjilirra* through an old *ngangkari* who ‘gave’ him the knowledge. The program is conducted on the ancestral lands “on country” and in traditional language. Cultural camps of a few days at a time, rotating between the five communities, is the *modus operandis*. Weekly supervision is provided to the program leader. He provides detailed and very rich reports of his weekly visits to the communities and of the processes that unfold.

Cultural competency is also seen as a positive factor in social and emotional well-being, in mitigating psychic turmoil, addictions and criminality. The Men’s *Tjilirra* Movement is a cultural healing program. The MTM team know the “broken spirits” of the people and they share in their sorry business. Their consulting room is on country, along songlines and waterholes. Members of families usually present in crisis. They are often silent about the nature of the crisis. They can be filled with shame and fear. Silence and breaking the silence often pends not being a stranger and sensitivities to cultural differences. Long term relationships and a knowledge of transgenerational trauma and lived experience of the bi-cultural world facilitates presentation and engagement.

The MTM cultural healing work can involve talking “sideways” with different family members along gender lines. For example, if there is a suicidal youth, they will talk to different family members about his/her state of mind, alone, so as not to “shame” the youth, then take the youth out on country, his country, with uncle or grandfather if they can. They then go “level” with the family groupings. They encourage the youth to look after the old people, the grandfathers. They are mindful of avoidance relationships. They know about the “troubles” of families and they work with the men who have committed domestic violence and take them out on country. Some of these men do not talk but beat the wood to make the tools, beating out their feelings on the tool.

The MTM cultural healing program acknowledges and works with the importance of relatedness, family and country for the Pintupi people (Myers, 1991, p. 63). Referring to Fred Myer’s seminal work here, there is no self without kin (Myers, 1991, p. 109). The identity of self is embedded in mutual relations with others and with the *Tjukurrpa* and “one’s story” derived from ownership and narrative of “named place” and with it are songlines and sacred objects making it “that’s his story” (Myers, 1991, p. 91). Geographical location, where events occurred punctuate any narrative and sacred spaces



and places entail stories and movements of ancestral beings. One's own country, *ngurru walytja*, is a place of security (Myers, 1991, p. 151). The emotional world is inextricably linked to the *Tjukurrpa* and to country. Sorrow can be heralded at times of ceremony or ritual. Celebration is evoked by being on country, holding country and dancing on country. (Myers, 1991, p. 111). Kanyininpa, holding is a key cultural value in cultural healing- the Land holds and links walytja, ngurru and *tjukurrpa* .

So another important objective of the MTM, is facilitation of the men's narratives, which are part of their sacred world and a container for their emotional world. The stories are stories from the *Tjukurrpa* discovered and remembered along old song lines and waterholes. Their emotional experiences are inextricably linked, ground and found, on their ancestral lands. Sorrow, lament, meaning, connection and responsibility are embedded in the culturally sacred, "in memory". As Martin Jugadai, ngangkari (traditional healer) says: "*Making tjilirra is special-it is the spirit of our grandfather inside you*". Through the storytelling the men find continuity between the old and the new. The stories can also be representations that fill in the blank spaces of psychic trauma. They animate and expand the living repertoire of sacred and emotional life. The men, in achieving cultural revival, move emotionally from psychic disconnection to a state of enlivened being by engaging with states of mourning and thereby catalysing psychological change.

The men talk about their troubles and the 'problem life'. They are often enabled to talk following encounters with their sacred world. The MTM team encourage the men to talk about their challenges of living in two worlds and about the trauma they have endured and acted out. The men talk together about jail time, away from family and country, and how to create a new life without imprisonment and the challenges of living in two worlds. Thus, the making of old tools become new tools for living.

The Movement has grown and since November 2014 over 600 men, women and youth have been involved on a repeated basis making tools. Dozens of cultural camps have been held. MTM have made two films, their second entitled "Wake up Strong", and a book is planned. MTM is now increasingly contracted by local government and other stakeholders to engage with local Aboriginal communities. Overall, MTM's impact can be evidenced in the changing emotional states of its participants and containment of violence, leading to strengthened generational connections and closer families.

So the making of *tjilirra* symbolize a going-on-being without traumatic disruption, affirmation of cultural worlds, kinship relationships, differences, transmissions, and transformations. *Tjilirra* symbolize recognition of an Aboriginal world for Aboriginal people, and in surviving colonialism are a testimony to the resilience of Aboriginal people. The making of *tjilirra* is an emotional and cultural experience of recognition for young and old men and for the community. In the words of Lear, as symbols of radical hope (Lear, 2006), and of wisdom gained from suffering (Lear, 2014), *tjilirra* "strengthen the

spirit” not only of the men involved in the MTM, but of the broader communities. With the durability of traditional life comes continuity in conceptions of a good life, using traditional anchors and emergent new ways.

When the individual is able to move freely through a generative, spatial and non-intrusive environment and select objects through which potential is released, the true self will become emergent. The act of finding an object enables the personal idiom to reach some sort of self-transformation. The subject chooses an object and allows it to change in the transitional space of the experience. The *tjilirra* is also a metamorphic object, an object of recognition. The cultural experience of returning to sacred places and holding sacred objects in memory of ancestors, enables the finding of a place, the uninterrupted Being, shifting emotional experiences, the mourning for what was and the finding of what can now eventuate, in the experience of aliveness.

Freud confessed to Carl Jung: "I must always have an object to love." Interestingly, Freud was a great collector of objects of antiquity-the Gods of Freud-and his consulting room was full of them. Freud chose to die in his study, surrounded by 'his ancestors of choice, his most faithful colleagues, and the embodiments of his excavated truths of psychoanalysis.'

The *tjilirra* are powerful objects. They are part of the living cultural traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. *Tjilirra* presents a stirring counterpoint – a vision of western desert communities that are vital, dynamic and proud of their people, cultures and land. *Tjilirra* furthermore are a tangible legacy and bear witness to the strength and endurance of Aboriginal people today. Without *tjilirra* there is an annihilation of objects and object relations. "There is no object to love"!

### **The emergent-applied psychoanalytic practice in the bi-cultural field - concepts essential to awakenings.**

I now want to underline psychoanalytic notions, some of which have been briefly alluded to already, which became emergent in the MTM work, providing solid scaffolding, which engender awakenings on ancestral lands in the mind and on country; they help further explain why the MTM is helping Aboriginal people to heal and grow with their own stories. In doing so, it is not my intention to eclipse what is intrinsic to the Tjukurrpa. So what are some of the essential ingredients in the processes of psychological growth and how are they manifest in the MTM and what can we learn? In answering this question, the *universal* and *practical* value of psychoanalysis can be revealed and the model of CASSE may be cantilevered to become a model for bi-cultural interventions, saving lives and changing minds, in a traumatic landscape of post-colonial relations and illuminate new ways forward.

In the consulting room we know that *psychological change and growth* is achieved by paying attention to the ongoing dialectical interplay of three different emotional modes of generating experience which can go forward and double back like a boomerang—namely, the paranoid-schizoid, depressive, and the autistic-contiguous (Ogden, 1988, p. 17).

CASSE has been mindful of these different states of mind and of the importance of facilitating emotional shifts. In the world of trauma, family breakdown, domestic violence and suicide can exemplify the paranoid-schizoid mode, which is the world of danger, threat and fear. If a move to the depressive mode is engendered, then concern, guilt and integration can be paramount.

On the MTM cultural camps, the making of the traditional shield is symbolic of the protective shield against persecutory anxiety and the men are encouraged to make them. Youths make them in reparation for damage done also. “Sorry business” and ceremonial life can engender the depressive mode of mourning, concern and repair and family life can be strengthened. The sensory touching of sacred objects by the MTM generates a visceral connection, in mourning, with the grandfathers and the ancestors of the *Tjukurrpa*. There was a near suicide of a young man in one of the remote communities which induced collective fear. The MTM helped facilitate a *pularpa* - a community ceremony - for the safety of the community - to support the family - to strengthen the spirit - to enable them to “carry on”. It was the first time in ten years the community had held a community ceremony. Thus, the MTM can function, one might say, as a third link or “el vinculo” and can engender a spiral process, breaking the existing emotional experiences and catalyze change (Scharff *et al.*, 2017).

The provision of a *facilitating or holding environment* as developed by Bion and Winnicott on container-contained and Ogden (2004) on dreaming and waking, is essential to hold the fiery repetitions, emotional storms and pain, experienced in traumatic breakdown and transform from breakdown to breakthrough. A holding environment can serve to enable movement from the persecutory mode to the depressive mode of being. Winnicott (1990, pp. 52-54) speaks of “primary maternal preoccupation”, heralding a close emotional bond, generated in a holding experience, which safeguards and enables, a tolerance of frustration, the containment of fears of dying, psychic digestion, and the insulation of the infant from the disruptions. It provides, in the words of Winnicott (1990, p. 54) a “continuity in being”, a temporal continuity in the self-experience of what is felt, remembered and expected. Without continuity, Winnicott says “the personality develops on the basis of reactions of environmental impingements and not on existence” (1990, p. 54). Of course, trauma penetrates the shield of continuity and leaves it violently ruptured. The MTM both recognises and facilitates the Aboriginal notions of holding on country and the country holding the people and holding the spirit strong. The holding of the country camps on ancestral lands equate to the Land is Mother and the eternality of *Tjukurrpa* found on country ensures continuity in space and time.

Bion (1963, p. 3) extended the notion of the *container and the contained* referring to how there can be lively processes in dynamic interaction. Ogden describes the container, an apparatus for thinking, as the capacity for the unconscious psychological work of dreaming (coming-into-being) which is facilitated by the capacity for rêverie (Ogden, 2004, p. 1356). The contained, Ogden says, (Ogden, 2004, p. 1356) is a living process, which in health, forever changes; in ill-health it remains stultified in a veritable prison of sameness. The central psychoanalytic concern from Bion's perspective is the dynamic interaction between the container, entailing the capacity for dreaming and thinking those thoughts and the contained involving the thoughts and feelings derived from *lived experience* (Ogden, 2004, p. 1359).

The lived experience is a cultural one and in the Aboriginal world, as Keogh (2014) describes, the mega container is the Tjukurrpa, a cultural container. The MTM actively helps the people remember and revive cultural practices on the ancestral lands. Painful losses can be felt. The MTM expands the lived experience there can be, in the words of the Pintubi, a "rising of the spirit" (Myers, 1991, p.11) and feelings of happiness engendered when on country with kin.

Our awareness, processing and use of countertransference reactions in our work with Aboriginal people of Central Australia, has been pivotal, allowing Aboriginal people to recognize CASSE, in the words of Pichon- Riviere, as a trusted container, which can stay in the eye of the storm, hold the good and bad, bear the pain, and deposit trust in the other (Riviere, 2017). Several types of countertransference responses have been prominent in CASSE work: a rollercoaster of depression, rage, threat and danger, helplessness, humiliation, shame, guilt, isolation, and grief. Often, such reactions are experienced simultaneously, resulting in emotional rollercoaster rides involving a sequence of hopefulness, urgency, rupture, (being whacked!) and humiliation--followed by grief and despair. People know we hear their stories, which have a temporal dimension (Scharff *et al.*, 2017, p. 129) and respond to them with spontaneous, real receptivity and interpretations if needed, in the "here-and-now-with-me" (Scharff *et al.*, 2017, p. 127). The role of the therapist as Pichon-Rivière says, is becoming part of the interpretation vector (Pichon-Rivière, 2017, p. 177) and therefore part of transformational change "ahead-and-somewhere-else" (the future) (Scharff *et al.*, 2017, p. 129).

Holding is essential to the development of creativity which is essential to psychological growth and health. Winnicott (1951) postulated that primary creativity exists in what he calls the transitional or potential space or the intermediate third space. Specific forms of potential space include the play space, the area of the transitional object and phenomena, the analytic space, the area of cultural experience, and the area of creativity (Ogden, 1985, p. 128).

Central to inspiring creativity is playing. Playing, Winnicott says is not a means but an end in itself and therapeutic in itself, which can promote a new experience found in the

immanence of the experience itself (Lenormand, 2018, p. 85). The playing creativity Winnicott describes in cultural experiencing, belongs to the promotion of self-healing and permits the discovery of the self (Lenormand, 2018, p. 87). The MTM facilitates cultural creations made by and for men. Lenormand reminds us here of Schiller's (1975, p.80) famous words: "Man plays when he is in the full sense of the word a man, and he is only wholly Man when he is playing (Lenormand, 2018, p.87).

Having described some of the essential and inter-related ingredients of the psychoanalytic frame, we arrive at the pivotal wellspring of psychic health. The dreaming tracks of the psychoanalytic journey, one might say, enable us now to discover and pinpoint, a primary source of *real health* which is the *feeling of real*. Feeling real, in the face of catastrophic psychic trauma, manifest in unthinkability, violent explosions, evacuations, primitive agonies and more, heralds prodigious survival, thinking, emotional life, experiential abundance and space and time. Referencing Ogden's recent and creative work, Winnicott says, the origins of feeling real arise, firstly, from the experience of transitional phenomena, in terms of a man's imaginative cultural life whose ancestor is the infant's transitional object predicated on a healthy "unself-conscious" mother infant relationship (Winnicott, 1963, p. 183).

Secondly, Winnicott (1963, 192, Ogden, 2018, 1302) builds, somewhat paradoxically, on the notion that the feeling of real arises from communication with subjective objects which involves the core of the self or the true self which is a silent self, an "isolate, permanently unknown and unfound" (1963, p.184, Ogden, 1297) . Winnicott says:

We have to recognise this aspect of health: the non-communicating central self, for ever immune from the reality principle, and forever silent.... it is like the music of the spheres, absolutely personal. It belongs to being alive. And in health, it is out of this that communication naturally arises.

The preservation of the individual as an isolate, Winnicott elaborates, (1963, 189), is very important as it is part of the search for personal identity, and for the establishment of a personal technique for communicating, which does not lead to a violation of the central self. Traumatic experiences that lead to primitive defences, can belong to the threat to the isolated core, the threat of its being found, altered and communicated with (Winnicott, 1963, 186). Therefore as therapists, Winnicott (1963, 189, Ogden, 2018, 1297) underlines, our most important responsibility is to recognize the power we possess to violate the person's sacred core, by knowing too much and instead of waiting for the patient to creatively discover. In considering psychic development here, Winnicott (1963, 190) allows for two seeming enigmatic opposites: "Silence is equated with communication and stillness with movement" (1963, p.191) whereby communication arises out of silence and movement out of stillness.

Winnicott (1963, p.184, Ogden, 1297) speaks of the co-existence of two conflicting psychic trends - the need to communicate and the need not to be found: "it is a

sophisticated game of hide and seek in which *it is a joy to be hidden but a disaster not to be found*" (186). A mitigating resolution to the contradictory need to communicate and the need to be incommunicado, Winnicott (1963, p.186 & 192) expands, can be assuaged by sharing that belongs to the whole range of intermediate cultural experience.

Ancestral Lands are the place and space of awakenings of sacred selves, cultural selves, and ancestral selves. The feeling of real for the Pintupi people is equated with "from the Tjukurrpa" – it becomes real (Myers, 1991, p.49). The MTM provides a potential space for the disaffected youth and for the men who have been displaced, to talk stories of truth about family "troubles" on country, to tell sacred stories, "his story", facilitating enduring being, finding their cultural life and selves, protecting the personal and experiencing the feeling of real, in the sharing of cultural experiences, which is kin and country in one. In such a space on country, these youth can hide and be found, can create new objects, can play, can just Be, in the experience of cultural being, thereby enabling a rhythmic, expanding emotional container, transforming terra nullius states of mind, into minds strong in spirit on country, keeping their stories inside.

In this space, the MTM space, Aboriginal people do not have to manufacture false selves engaging in compliant object relating with Whitefellahs. Instead, there can be real relationships with human receptive companions. Whitefellahs do not violate this space with knowing, preconceptions, determinations or expectations, but let the sacred space be and let the Beings, Become, in silence, stillness, recognition, waiting and movement. Such realities, cannot solely or in absolute, be defined with words, figured out, nor fetishized with outcomes or statistics; the outcomes are phenomenological, in the process of experiencing in and of itself, and is at the core of the healthy self, psychic growth and awakenings. In the words of Margaret Kemarre Turner (2010, p.96):

"It's a touching way of how you can feel for that person, which is the sacredness of that person to yourself, and of yours to him. There's a big line in between that person and yourself. And it's a sacred thing. To keep it alive is one of the things we must do. We musn't run over ourselves, we musn't go across, we musn't twist it around. To be who we are, you can't tangle up the lines". (p. 96).

The feeling of being real, of living realities, of being found, of going-on-being with time and space, of being alive, in stillness and movement, the sacred self, the elixir of experience, is the most essential lifeblood of all. In answer to the question: "What do I have to be?" there is a simple answer- "You".

### **In conclusion:**

Kathleen Kemarre Wallace (2009, p.111) tells the Tjukurrpa story of the *Desert Flower Spirits* and in doing so, tells, I think, how whitefellahs can help seed awakenings on ancestral lands, by letting the selves be, in silence and stillness and not feverishly searching for, nor seizing change with force. I will tell a briefer version:

“Long ago there were two women who used to move from place to place. They were the spirits of the plant whose flower petals are bright and shiny and red with a big black red centre where the petals meet. That plant grows up everywhere across that country when there has been enough rain. They would sometimes change from their spirit form to look like two beautiful Arrernte women. One day when they were in this human form a young Arrernte man came along and caught sight of them. He thought they were very beautiful. He did not realise they were spirits. But sadly they disappeared from sight as soon as they were aware of him watching. Every time the rain clouds came he returned back to the same place as the flowers began to grow in the hope he could catch the women. The spirits always *hid* their human form from him remaining as spirits so he could not see. ...”They always *hide* from me”. He had really wanted to catch them so they would be his wives but no man ever caught those women spirits. Now the only time anyone might see them is as flowers when the rains come”.

Pamela Nathan

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APAS Conference 21 September -2019- Nurturing the Buds: creating space for growth

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### **Photos**

The Bush of Ghosts by Ben Carroll (Montalto Sculpture)

Between the Silence and the Heartbeat by Clancy Warner (Montalto Sculpture prize)- is about the indifference to indigenous deaths within "white" Australia: whether it is in police custody, suicide, the gap in health care or being deliberately targeted. The senseless deaths must stop. Indigenous Australians have been her for 60,000 years: giving up and lying down is not an option. The heartbeat keeps beating. It's time for us all to stand up.

Remaining photos- Men's Tjilirra Movement (MTM)/CASSE taken in the western desert region.

Illustrations: Rosie Santos-CASSE booklets

