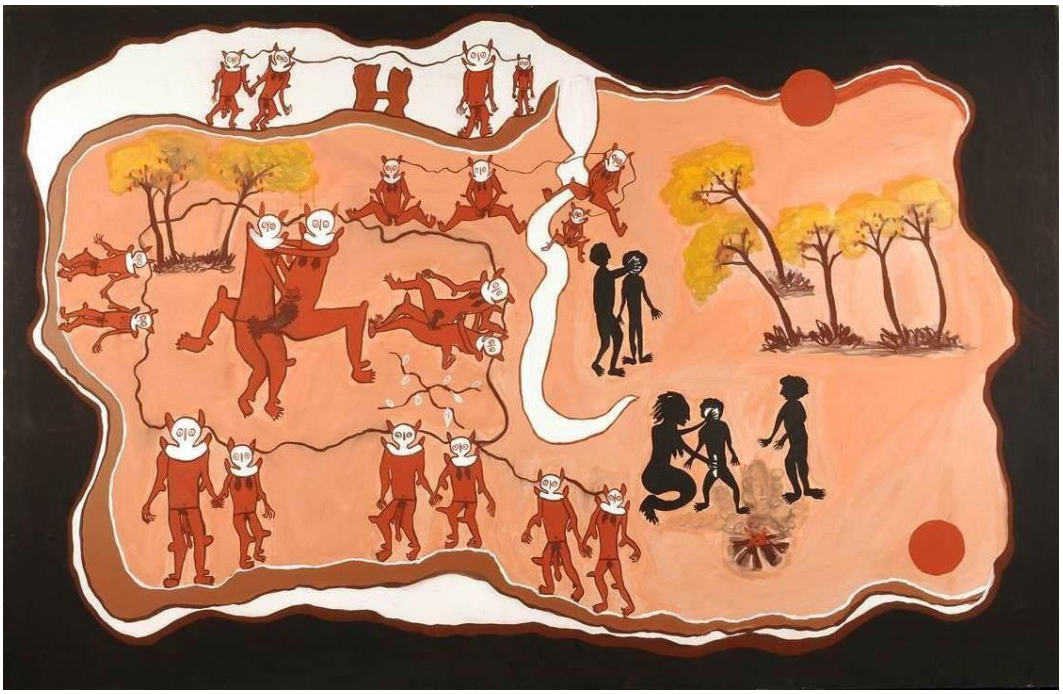
Wunggud's thread:
One Ngarinyin story of individuation



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April 2016

Prpic, J.K. 2016. Wunggud's thread: One Ngarinyin story of individuation, In Lowe. (2016). *Jung in effect: Jung's ideas in the wider world*. C. G. Jung Society Melbourne

Once upon a Dreamtime … a Ngarinyin story of 'before, then, and after' is told …

… ***The Beginning of Humans*** by Bungal (David) Mowaljarlai

In the beginning, before humans were humans, they were spirit people who roamed in the imagination of the world, ignorant of what they would or could become. Connected in their minds by wunggud's energetic thread, the male and female wonder together outside the world, in the littoral of becoming. A pair of spirit people walk past a rock; two rocks in fact joined in the middle. This rock still physically exists in the natural landscape. The spirit pair look at the coupled rocks and decide to copy them by joining hands. After all, they know that everything in Creation is their teacher; the law which abides in the land is revealed to all observant listeners. As the spirit world has no day or night spirit people can slip into the physical world at sunset when it is neither light nor dark, signified by the orb posed in the littoral of the world and the dark. The couple walk around the edge of the world until sunrise time, when they slip through the dimension into physical space. Once inside the world, they are joined by others. In the world, wunggud's lifeforce streams through creation – trees, animals, water, day and night, because everything created lives as an action of wunggud. They see the Guloi tree's four branches pointing to the north, the south, the east and the west, signifying the birth of four tribes, and the lands to which each belongs. These become the Wanumbal, Wororra, Ngarinyin, and WilaWila tribes, connected in the wunan relationship system as branches of the same tree. The Guloi, a native plum, is the Tree of Life which signifies birth and holds the sacred pathway of knowledge. The couples realise that while they are connected in their minds and in their joined hands, the rock is telling a more profound story. The two rocks are, in fact fused together, not simply connected to each other. This informs the spirit couples that they must each fuse together, one inside the other, in relationships that cannot be broken, in order to give birth to their respective tribes. As a result the couples copulate, fuse their seeds and give birth to humans. The birthing takes place beside the river, whose source and life is another littoral between seen and unseen dimensions of existence. In Mowaljarlai's depiction the river is very significant. Water is the medium between physical and non-physical, heaven and earth, day and night, being and non-being. His river is both in the world and beyond it. A conduit that flows from its source in the imagination of wunggud into the physical world, the river represents a crossing, a seamless bridge between dimensions of existence. Then, within the world, it is the medium in which birth and renewal takes place, from spirit to human. In crossing the river of life, spirit people birth black humans. The spirit connection is then sustained and renewed every morning in the wuddu ritual, signified by the rising sun into the world. Grannies wuddu the children at the renewed early morning fire, to bring the beautiful spirit of dawn into the spirit of the child. The wuddu ritual reminds the young to respect everything and everyone in wunan.

Mowaljarlai narrated this story as he created the untitled painting shown in Figure 1.

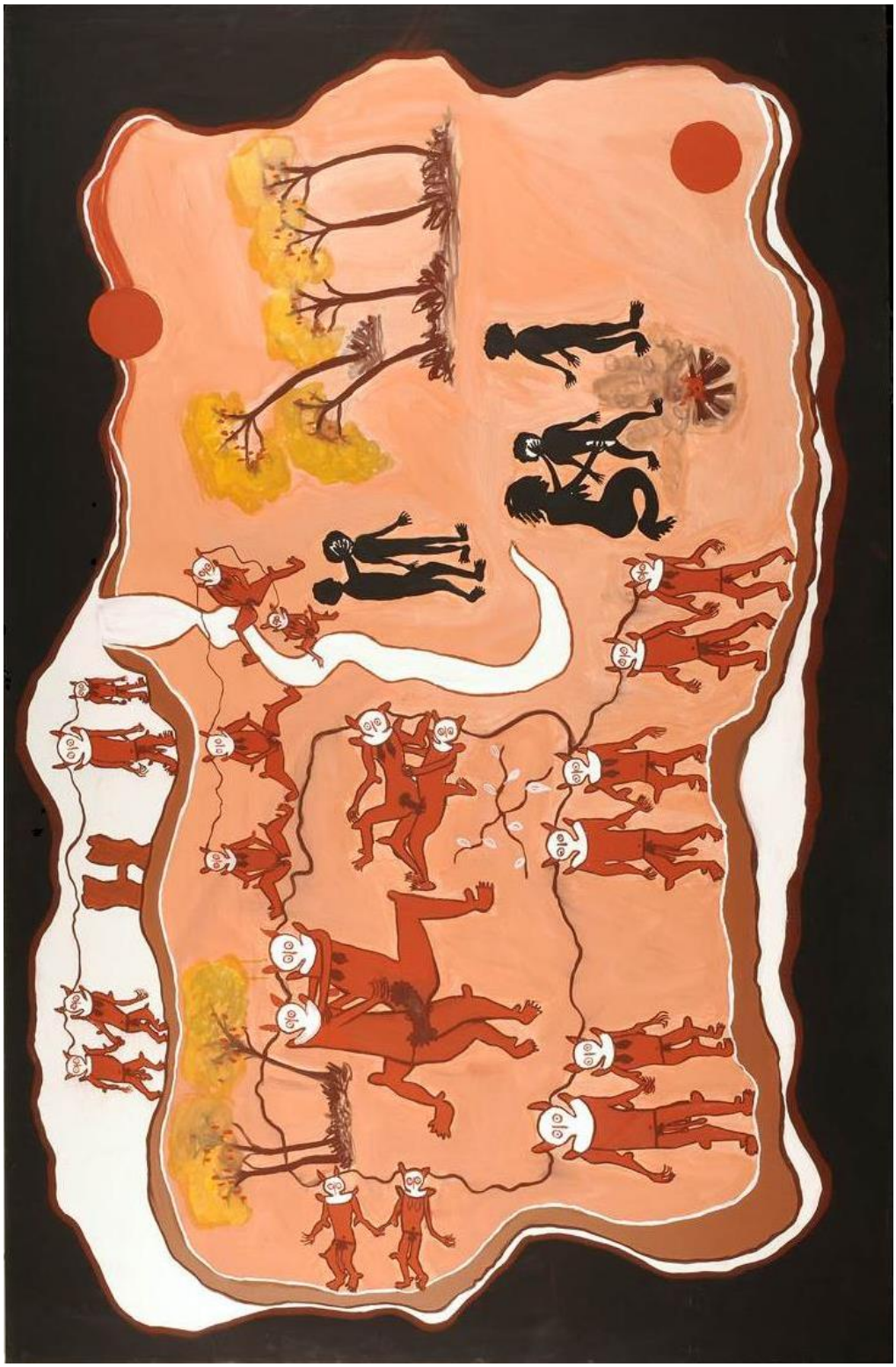


Figure 1: ***Untitled by Mowaljarlai***
(From: Bell, Hannah Rachel, 2009. *Storymen*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 104-105)

Australian Aboriginal culture is rich with mythology. It is an oral tradition, where stories have been passed down from generation to generation for millennia. Most of the written works exploring Aboriginal mythology have been written by Westerners, who have lived for significant periods with particular Aboriginal communities, and been given access to deeper understanding by Aboriginal Elders who, like them have been keen to build bridges between their cultures.

My own journey of discovery into Aboriginal culture has only just begun. Three years ago, at the same time as I began training as a Diploma Candidate at the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich, I joined an academic team working on a project entitled *Integrating Indigenous perspectives into the engineering curriculum*, which engaged me with the question "What do we mean by Indigenous perspectives?"

In exploring this, and the much vaster cultural landscapes that have opened to me as a result, I count myself privileged to have met the late Hannah Rachel Bell, in October 2014. Hannah was an activist for sustainable cultural, social and economic relationships and had developed a deep friendship with the Ngarinyin people of the Kimberley extending over more than four decades. In particular, she worked with Bungal (David) Mowaljarlai OAM, the revered Ngarinyin lawman and Elder, to deepen understanding between Ngarinyin and 'mainstream' Australian cultures. Her books *Men's business, women's business. The spiritual role of gender in the world's oldest culture* (1998), and *Storymen* (2009) are a cultural revelation. Mowaljarlai and Hannah shared a belief that the telling of Aboriginal stories was important for building understanding between cultures and for revealing the fundamental similarity of our origins, identity, social codes and destiny.

My discussions with Hannah ranged widely and, not surprisingly, took on a Jungian flavour. I offer here a story she urged me to explore, a story she was told by Mowaljarlai and has published in her book *Storymen* (2009). I am deeply grateful for her permission, and that of her publishers Cambridge University Press, to reproduce it here.

Mowaljarlai told the story as he created the painting. Narrative and painting are deeply connected and rich with symbolic imagery, so that simultaneous engagement with both is necessary if we are to appreciate their depth of meaning.

The value of using a Jungian approach to exploring Mowaljarlai's story is that it allows us to connect to both the narrative and the painting at that deeper symbolic level. Through the symbolism we can relate emotionally and discover how this story mirrors our own. A symbolic approach transcends culture since it can be applied regardless of the origin of the story. In this way, it is possible to avoid some of the problems of engaging with a story from another culture, such as dismissing it as irrelevant or as a childish fantasy. A Jungian perspective also avoids the risk that we will misappropriate the story and assume we know the depths of its meaning.

As pointed out by Petchkovsky et al (2003, p. 232), there is a congruence of worldviews between Aboriginal people and Jungian psychology. When their principal Aboriginal mentor Andrew Japaljari first encountered Jung's *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* he asked;

> *Who is this Jung? He thinks like Yapa (Aboriginal people).*

My aim in this paper is to explore, through one Aboriginal story, how a Jungian perspective resonates with an Aboriginal worldview.

The Beginning of Humans is a Ngarinyin creation myth, as told by Bungal (David) Mowaljarlai. As such, it has much in common with mythologies from all over the world.

As Joseph Campbell (1972, p. 13) says, myths tell us in symbolic language about:

> *… powers of the psyche to be recognised and integrated in our lives, powers that have been common to the human spirit forever, and which represent that wisdom of the species by which man has weathered the millenniums.*

Jung believed that myths were expressions of the collective unconscious, and are the first and foremost psychic phenomena that reveal the nature of the soul (Jung, CW 9i, para. 7):

> *All the mythologised processes of nature, such as summer and winter, the phases of the moon, the rainy seasons, and so forth, are in no sense allegories [i.e., a paraphrase of conscious contents] of these objective occurrences; rather they are symbolic expressions of the inner, unconscious drama of the psyche which becomes accessible to man's consciousness by way of projection – that is, mirrored in the events of nature.*

Mowaljarlai's story is indeed a story of the unfolding drama of the psyche as "mirrored in the events of nature". For his people, the Ngarinyin, it can be said that every lawperson knows their own country as intimately as they know themselves. This includes the images from the Dreamtime or sacred places that become internalised and form their identity. This theme of identity with the land and landscape appears to be common across Australian Aboriginal cultures.

For example, Robert Lawlor (1991) who spent many years with the Pintupi people of the Western Desert describes the concept of *ngurra*, which to the Pintupi meant their sense of personal identity derived from *place*. As he explained *ngurra* is a word of great importance, containing both physical and metaphysical connotations (p. 235). For the Pintupi, "the question of identity, of *who* I am, is resolved in their consciousness to know the full implications of *where* I am" (p. 236). *Each Aboriginal knows his country as he knows himself, through his own body and the internalised images of dreaming places – these are his identity* (p. 237).

In the Pintupi language, the Dreamtime is known as the *tjukurrtjana*, whereas the actual, perceivable world of reality is known as *yuti*. Fundamentally, the *tjukurrtjana* is the universal continuum from which all differentiation arises, however it is an unmanifested realm and is known to conscious perception only through its effects. *Yuti* is the actual, perceivable, phenomenal world and is comprised only of phenomena experienced through one or more of the five physical senses. It is conceptually synonymous with truth and reality. Importantly, *tjukurrtjana* and *yuti*, although mutually exclusive, carry equal weight in Aboriginal consciousness.

Lawlor explains that *The Dreamtime stories are always related to enduring features of the living landscape* (Lawlor, 1991, p.263), and the presence of the Gods is revealed by the footprints they leave behind. The concept of the "footprints of the Gods" and dual sub-worlds is also explained beautifully by Helen Watson, who worked with the Yolngu community of Yirrkala in North East Arnhemland (See: Exhibit 5 Aboriginal Australian Maps in Turnbull *et al*, Maps are territories: Science is an atlas: a portfolio of exhibits). For the Yolngu, the worlds of spirit and matter, or Dreamtime and reality, are known as the *Dhuwa* and the *Yirritja*, respectively.

Jung's understanding of collective and individual consciousness resonates deeply with Lawlor's description of Aboriginal modes of perception. As Jung writes in CW 7, para. 507:

> *In the hope of unravelling these tangled problems (collective/individual), I would like to emphasise the architectonics of the factors to be considered. We have to do with the following fundamental concepts:*
>
> 1. *By this is meant those contents of consciousness which consist of perceived images of the world and of our conscious thoughts and feelings about it.*
> 2. *The collective unconscious. By this is meant that part of the unconscious which consists on the one hand of unconscious perceptions of external reality and, on the other, of all the residues of the phylogenetic perceptive and adaptive functions. A reconstruction of the unconscious view of the world would yield a picture showing how external reality has been perceived from time immemorial. The collective unconscious contains, or is, an historical mirror image of the world. It too is world, but a world of images.*
> 3. *Since the world of consciousness, like the world of the unconscious, is to a large extent collective, these two spheres together form the collective psyche in the individual.*
> 4. *The collective psyche must be contrasted with a fourth concept, namely, the concept of individuality. The individual stands as it were, between the conscious part of the collective psyche and the unconscious part. He is the reflecting surface in which the world of consciousness can perceive its own unconscious, historical image ... Accordingly, the individual would be point of intersection or a dividing line, neither conscious nor unconscious, but a bit of both.*
> 5. *The paradoxical nature of the psychological individual must be contrasted with that of the persona … It represents a compromise formation between external reality and the individual. In essence, therefore, it is a function for adapting the individual to the real world. The persona thus occupies a place midway between the real world and individuality.*
> 6. *Beyond individuality, which appears to be the innermost core of ego-consciousness and of the unconscious alike, we find the collective unconscious. …* [… and the anima and animus].

In Figure 2 (shown below), I have redrawn Lawlor's diagram that shows the Pintupi perception of the world of spirit and the world of matter and how they come together in the landscape. I have placed beside it an analogous diagram in which I summarise Jung' understanding of collective and individual consciousness.

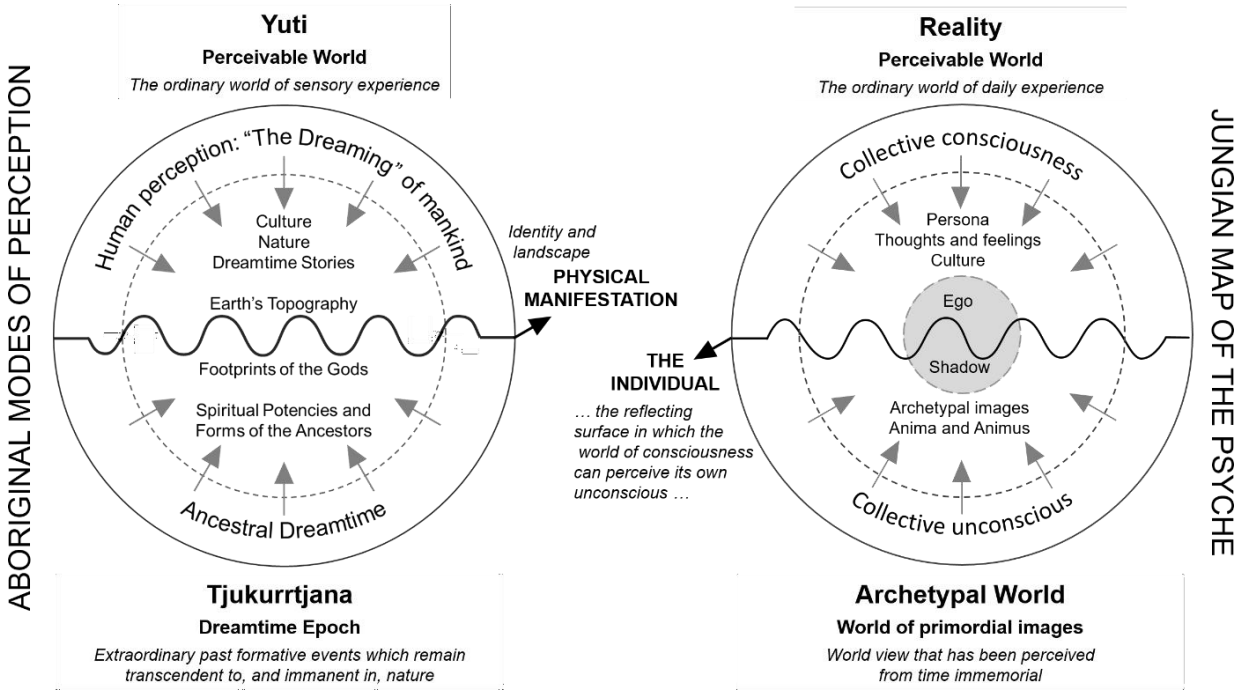


Figure 2: Comparison between Aboriginal modes of perception (left) and a Jungian map of the Psyche (right)
(Lawlor's diagram modified from Lawlor, R. (1991). *Voices of the first day: Awakening in the Aboriginal dreamtime.* p. 271)

Mowaljarlai's story ***The Beginning of Humans*** is a Dreamtime story of Aboriginal identity, where the world of spirit and matter come together. Jung also had a story where the world of consciousness and unconsciousness come together in the individual. What follows is my story of how these two stories, so different in place and time and culture, might actually be telling the same story – the story of the individuation journey.

Jung used the term 'individuation' to refer the general process of psychological development, shared by all humans, and a more specific process engaged in by a few. The 'active' individuation process can be summarised (Sharp, 2008, p. 99) as the following sequence of steps:

1. Difficulty of adaptation. Difficulty in progression of energy.
2. Regression of libido (depression, lack of disposable energy).
3. Activation of unconscious contents (infantile fantasies, complexes, archetypal images, inferior function, opposite attitude, shadow, anima/animus, etc.). Compensation.

4. Formation of neurotic symptoms (confusion, fear, anxiety, guilt, moods, addictions, emotional volatility, etc.).
5. Unconscious or half-conscious conflict between the ego and contents activated in the unconscious. Inner tension. Defensive reactions.
6. Activation of the transcendent function, involving the Self and archetypal patterns of wholeness (mandalas, etc.).
7. Formation of symbols (numinosity, synchronicity).
8. Transfer of energy between unconscious contents and consciousness. Enlargement of the ego, renewed progression of energy.
9. Integration of unconscious contents. Active involvement in the process of individuation.
10. A renewed zest for life, with a focus on where one's energy wants to go.

Individuation or the "synthesis of the Self" is one of the central themes of Jung's work. Why is individuation important? Jung himself grappled with question (CW 9i, para. 177):

> *But why on earth," you may ask, "should it be necessary for man to achieve, by hook or by crook, a higher level of consciousness? This is truly the crucial question, and I do not find the answer easy. Instead… I can only make a confession of faith: I believe that, after thousands and millions of years, someone had to realize that this wonderful world of mountains and oceans, suns and moons, galaxies and nebulae, plants and animals, exists. From a low hill in the Athi plains of East Africa I once watched the vast herds of wild animals grazing in soundless stillness, as they had done from time immemorial, touched only by the breath of the primeval world. I felt then as if I were the first man, the first creature, to know that all this is. The entire world round me was still in its primeval state; it did not know that it was. And then, in that one moment in which I came to know, the world sprang into being; without that moment it would never have been. All Nature seeks this goal and finds it fulfilled in man, but only in the most highly developed and most fully conscious man.*

Jung spoke of the Self in both psychological and spiritual terms, elucidating the archetypes and symbols in relationship to the Self. The Self, as an archetype of wholeness, guides our psycho-spiritual development. For Jung, the Self forms the distance horizon of psychic life, revealing itself in archetypal forms.

Individuation is a path of Self-realisation or enlightenment. For Jung, the central movement of psychic life is about bringing opposites, such as consciousness and unconsciousness, light and dark, forbidden and permitted, spirit and matter, anima and animus, or ego and Self, together in a process that occurs not consciously but unconsciously through symbols. This duality of symbolic forces is represented in dreams, imagination, spiritual stories, and myths, and is beautifully evident in Mowaljarlai's story and painting.

To illustrate this I have identified a number of specific elements in Mowaljarlai's painting (see Figure 3) that are symbolic of the processes of individuation as described by Jung.

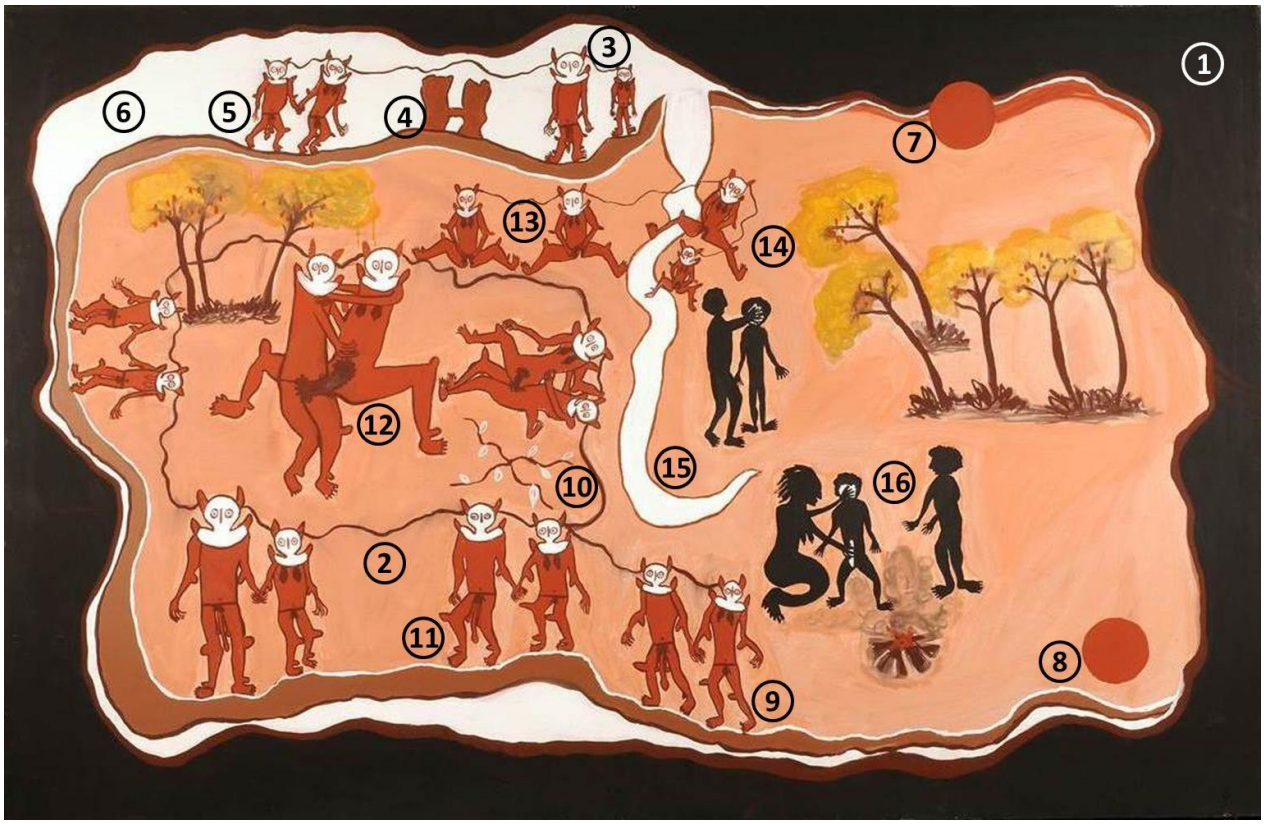


Figure 3: Specific symbolic elements in Mowaljarlai's painting numbered
The numbered elements are discussed in sequence below.

In my reflections below, I have followed the sequence of Mowaljarlai's narrative and associated each relevant symbolic fragment of his story with specific numbered elements of his painting. I then explore each of these symbolic fragments as they apply to Jung's theory of individuation.

1. In the imagination of the world

In the beginning, before humans were humans, they were spirit people who roamed in the imagination of the world, ignorant of what they would or could become.

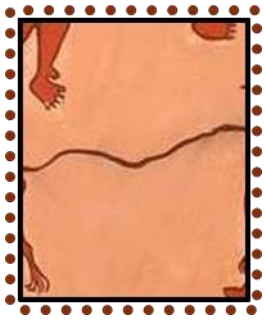
The journey of individuation begins with the emptiness of ignorance. We are in the void, the place of no-thing, no-knowing, no-consciousness. We don't know what we don't know. We have our body and our instincts … and from this pocket of time and space our being can begin to become.

Jung describes this time and space "before humans were humans:" as the void or nothingness, the "*primeval cosmic night that was soul long before there was conscious ego and will be soul far beyond what a conscious ego could ever reach*" (Jung, CW 10: para. 289).

In the opening lines of Jung's *Seven Sermons to the Dead* (Jung, MDR, Appendix V), he begins to put into words his experience of an equivalent emptiness, and names it the pleroma. Jung regards the pleroma, which contains the undifferentiated unity of all opposites and contradictions, as nothing but the primal (or collective) unconscious from which the human personality will emerge.

The pleroma, or the unconscious, is limitless, unknowable, the procreative source of all being, and is the undifferentiated union of everything with its opposite. It is a place of chaos, where time and space come together. It is the place of archetypes.

For Jung, archetypes *represent certain instinctive data of the dark, primitive psyche, the real but invisible roots of consciousness* (Jung, CW 9i, para. 271). *The archetype represents a psychic probability* [that which we could become] (CW 8, para. 964). Archetypes belong to the quantum world of invisible and indefinite boundaries, a world of wave patterns (Jung, CW 16, para. 497).



2. Wunggud's energetic thread

Connected in their minds by wunggud's energetic thread …

In a conversation with photographer Jutta Malnic (Mowaljarlai & Malnic, 1997, p. 45), Mowaljarlai describes Wunggud:

Inside the earth lives today and always – Wunggud, a big snake. She is the earth, and the primeval substance from which everything in nature if formed. She is female, njindi, "her"…

Wunggud is the Earth Snake. She is the name, the body, the substance and power of the earth. All nature grows and exists on her body.

With the sweet waters the Snake made rain. She is still in charge of this process. She is controls the rhythm of all cycles: wind and weather, tides and currents; climate and seasons; reproductive, menstrual, growth and life cycles. …

Wunggud has her own powers: powers to destroy, to heal (restore her own substance), to clear the way, smash up rocks for gorges and rivers, and powers over the physical conditions preceding the embodiment of all creatures and growing things. Wallanganda (The Milky Way), then as now, is constantly sending batches of energy to Earth. They are stored in the wunguud pools as images. The image projections always precede anything that takes form.

Wunggud is deeply symbolic of the Great Mother, who remains always attached to the earth and to the body. The Great Mother is one of the four "great" archetypes described by Jung (Jung, CW 9i). She is the primordial image of the human psyche, the *prima materia*, the matrix out of which the process of individuation begins. Jung's description of the earth is remarkably similar to Mowaljarlai's. In CW 12, para. 444, he writes:

> *… the earth (as prima materia) is not a dead body, but is inhabited by a spirit that is its life and soul. All created things, minerals included, draw their strength from the earth spirit. This spirit is life, it is nourished by the stars, and it gives nourishment to all the living things it shelters in its womb … This invisible spirit is like the reflection in a mirror, intangible, yet at the same time the root of all the substances …*

In terms of individuation an important first step is to separate from the primal mother, or the collective unconscious. Indeed, Jung claims (CW 5, para. 652), separation is vital if we are to become fully conscious:

> *The world comes into being when man discovers it. But he only discovers it when he sacrifices his containment in the primal mother, the original state of unconsciousness.*

3. Spirit people wandering in the littoral

… the male and female wonder together outside the world, in the littoral of becoming.

At this first stage of the individuation process, we start to become aware of something bigger than ourselves beyond the boundaries of our ego consciousness. We may notice a repeating pattern in our behaviour or thinking that we can't explain, or we might find ourselves responding by erupting in a way that is "out of character".

The spirit people in Mowaljarlai's story/painting correspond to Jung's ideas about the fundamental archetypes, the anima and the animus. Anima and animus are the two primary anthropomorphic archetypes of the unconscious. They are at the core of all polar opposites – masculine and feminine, light and dark, known and unknown, consciousness and unconsciousness. These spirits/archetypes guide to our spiritual transformation. Pairs and dualities exist as challenges to, and as potentials for, integration.

Importantly, the spirits are as yet "outside the world" in the littoral of becoming (which I describe below), and therefore, undifferentiated and unknown. This is in keeping with this early stage of the individuation process. This movement of the anima and animus from the unconscious towards consciousness is a step toward integration and the wholeness of Self. Hillman (1985) also argues that the archetypes lie neither within nor without – they do not belong to us personally yet they form us, and all our ideas about them.

4. A rock

… a rock; two rocks in fact joined in the middle. This rock still physically exists in the natural landscape.

We can think of the rock as representing something hard enough, big enough, and tangible enough to force us to pay attention. If we stub our toes on a rock – it hurts! There is pain. There are frequently many rocks in the landscape of our psyche. These can make themselves known to us through symptoms such as neuroses, depression, addiction, anxiety or any of a host of dis-ease states. As Jung states, without pain there can be no birth of consciousness (Jung, CW 17, para. 331)

Jung said that the pain and the adversities associated with individuation are necessary because they force us to re-assess our values, self-esteem, and courage. Individuation is a journey of duality, and hence conflict, as we continually assert our individuality against the internal seduction toward psychological placidity and even regression, and against the external demand for social conformity and "adjustment." However, the refusal to allow the individuation process can be even more painful; we experience psychological stagnation and crises, and even neurosis or psychosis.

The rock also signifies the importance of being grounded in physical reality. For Jung, as for the Aboriginal people, the symbolic or spiritual life is simultaneously embodied in matter, in physical being. Spirit and matter are not divided but are two manifestations of the same phenomenon. Jung (Jung & Douglas, 1997, p. 1313-14) reminds us that:

> *When an individual has been swept up into the world of symbolic mysteries, nothing comes of it; nothing can come of it, unless it has been associated with the earth, unless it has occurred when that individual was in the body… Only if you first return to your body, to your earth, can individuation take place; only then does the thing become true.*

As illustrated above, for Aboriginal consciousness, there is a distinct separation between the world of Ancestral Dreamtime (which Jung would call collective unconscious or the archetypal world) and physical reality. Nevertheless, one always informs the other. Indeed, in Mowaljarlai's worldview nature is personal, an archaeological and ancestral map of all relationship (Bell, 2009, pg. 115).

5. Joining hands

The spirit pair look at the coupled rocks and decide to copy them by joining hands. After all, they know that everything in Creation is their teacher; the law which abides in the land is revealed to all observant listeners.

Enter the Shadow! The joining of hands of the spirit pair is recognition, in Jungian terms, of the relationship between anima and animus, indeed all dualities, as being polar opposites, yet always connected. Critical to individuation is the need to discriminate and differentiate between the opposites, for without this there can be no consciousness (Jung, CW 9i, para. 178). To make things more complex, in the West, one part of the duality is often exalted, while the other is split and kept in shadow, creating what Jung called the Shadow archetype.

An essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge involves recognising the dark aspects of the personality lurking in shadow, knowing they are always present and real (Jung, CW 9ii, para. 14). Without this recognition of our own shadow, there can be no integration, as Jung points out in CW 14, para. 706:

> *[C]onsciousness can take up no position, which will not call up, somewhere in the dark corners of the psyche, a negation or a compensatory effect, approval or resentment. This process of coming to terms with the Other in us is well worth while, because in this way we get to know aspects of our nature which we would not allow anybody else to show us and which we ourselves would never have admitted.*

These dualities of light and dark, conscious and unconscious, exalted and hidden, create a drama that is central to psycho-dynamics, where the unconscious and underrepresented aspects of the self are projected onto the outer world. Jung called this the 'projective making factor'. As we become more conscious, the projected unconscious dimensions of our being can enter our conscious awareness. If we are unable to recognise our projections, they continue to isolate us from reality, making it harder and harder for the ego to see through its illusions.

This part of Mowaljarlai's story suggests a major difference between Western and Aboriginal consciousness. This difference is alluded to in Figure 2. Central to the Jungian map of the Psyche is the Ego and the Shadow, which are notably absent from Lawlor's map of Aboriginal modes of perception. As Lawlor writes (1991, p.273):

> *The projection syndrome abounds in the psychological makeup of Western society because of its inherent repression and denial. …*and *… In contrast, Aboriginal society provides an open avenues for expressing these archetypal forces in the physical world through endless rituals and ceremonies. The Aborigines recognise these energies as having an extraordinary independent existence originating with, and projected by, the Dreamtime Anscestor.*

Mowaljarlai's story and painting highlight the importance of knowing that the polar opposites always exist as a pair – holding hands. Where there is one, there is always the other.

6. The littoral

As the spirit world has no day or night …

Hannah Rachel Bell describes the littoral as "the intertidal of both land and sea – sometimes land, sometimes sea – both not actually, fully belonging to either". This littoral zone has its own distinct character (Bell, 2011, p. 19). Likewise, there is a littoral zone between consciousness and unconsciousness, a zone where our ego consciousness can go 'beachcombing' … picking up the treasures cast up from the depths of the unconscious, building sandcastles, exploring rock pools or splashing in the surf.

From a Jungian perspective, this littoral-zone is where symbol resides. It is the realm of image and imagination where curiosity and childlike wonder are vital. A symbol is the best possible expression for something unknowable. In his writings, Jung (CW 5, para. 180) made a clear distinction between the term sign and symbol:

> *A symbol is an indefinite expression with many meanings, pointing to something not easily defined and therefore not fully known. But the sign always has a fixed meaning, because it is a conventional abbreviation for, or a commonly accepted indication of, something known. The symbol therefore has a large number of analogous variants, and the more of these variants that it has at its disposal, the more complete will be the image it projects of its object.*

As a littoral entity, a symbol is both conscious and unconscious, both rational and irrational. It is a manifestation of the transcendent function (see below), and it represents the union of opposites. Jung believed that symbols and images were manifestations of archetypes, which are always unconscious and in the process of formation. Archetypal images (or symbols) are both partially conscious and personally and culturally conditioned.

Jung spoke at length about the importance of "living a symbolic life" (Jung, CW 18). Jung's primary interest in symbols lay in their ability to transform and redirect instinctive energy. Symbols, expressed as images, allow the mysteries of the soul to cross the threshold of consciousness.

One of the many ways we can access the archetypal images of the unconscious is through dreams, active imagination, art and ritual. Speaking in the context of dream images Jung says in CW 17, para. 187:

> *Dreams…are invariably seeking to express something that the ego does not know and does not understand.*

The littoral as described above refers to a space. Jung describes it as *a point of intersection or a dividing line, neither conscious, nor unconscious, but a bit of both* (Jung, CW 7, para. 507). This state of 'neither conscious, nor unconscious' is also known as the liminal state. The spatial littoral now takes on a temporal dimension.

Liminality was first coined by the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1960), who wrote about the three stages of initiation ceremonies – separation, liminality (or transition), and incorporation (or aggregation). Victor Turner, another anthropologist, delved deeply in the liminal stage of initiation. He described the liminal stage as a 'betwixt and between', when the initiate belongs to neither the old status, nor the new one (Turner, 1987). He likened the experience to death and rebirth.

During the individuation process, liminality can be thought of as period of disorientation and disquiet. A time when the 'old conscious order' begins to crumble, but the 'new unconscious material' has not yet been integrated. It can be a time of regression of energy, and can foreshadow the activation of unconscious contents.

7. Sunset

… spirit people can slip into the physical world at sunset when it is neither light nor dark, signified by the orb poised in the littoral of the world and the dark.

Sunset, metaphorically, is a time when our egos are not alert, a time when archetypal forces can 'slip in' unbidden. It is a liminal time. Psychologically it is a time when the unconscious can make itself 'felt', rather than 'known'.

This image of the spirit figures in Mowaljarlai's story that slip in at sunset can symbolise several aspects of Jungian psychology. Firstly, there is a parallel to Jung's (CW 8, para. 158) idea that our unconscious is active and ever-present:

> *The secret participation of the unconscious is everywhere present without our having to search for it, but as it remains unconscious, we never really know what is going on or what to expect. What we are searching for is a way to make conscious those contents which are about to influence our actions, so that the secret interference of the unconscious and its unpleasant consequences can be avoided.*

Indeed, in the 'half-light' haziness of sunset, we are more receptive to the dark potentialities and secrets of the unconscious – when the spirits provide 'in-spirations' (Jung, CW 11: para. 240):

> *We ourselves still feel certain particularly enlightening ideas as "in-fluences," "in-spirations," etc. where judgments and flashes of insight are transmitted by unconscious activity …*

If the spirit figures who slip in at sunset carry an emotional charge, they are what Jung called complexes. He defined complexes as emotionally-charged psychic entities that constellate around archetypes and have splintered-off from conscious control, leading a separate existence in the unconscious. Complexes can emerge at any time leaving us in their grip or in situations, as Jung says, when our complexes can have us (Jung, CW 8, para. 200). He goes on to say (CW 8, para. 253):

Complexes interfere with the intentions of the will and disturb the conscious performance; they produce disturbances of memory and blockages in the flow of associations; they appear and disappear according to their own laws; they can temporarily obsess consciousness, or influence speech and action in an unconscious way. In a word, complexes behave like independent beings.

The unconscious contents 'that slip in at sunset' can manifest in several ways: as fantasies, dreams, archetypal images, complexes, or compensation; as symptoms of neurosis, such as confusion, moods, fear, anxiety, guilt or inner tension, or as defensive reactions.

Jung also pointed out that what we are unable to work through at the conscious level is often worked through at the unconscious level, in dreams and fantasy, for example, and that when we encounter *that for which there is yet no dream, we confront the limits of sense* (CW 5, para. 4-45).

8. Sunrise

The couple walk around the edge of the world until sunrise time, when they slip through the dimension into physical space.

Sunrise brings the new day, fresh light, and the dawning (consciousness) after the darkness of night (unconsciousness). However, sunrise does not mean the banishment of night, as Jung (CW 13, para. 335) highlights:

Filling the conscious mind with ideal conceptions is a characteristic of Western theosophy, but not the confrontation with the shadow and the world of darkness. One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.

In Mowaljarlai's story, the spirit-pair walk around the edge of the world until sunrise, when the time is right for them to slip through the dimension into physical space – in other words, for unconsciousness to enter ego consciousness. Jung alluded to this 'right time' (CW 8, para. 132) when he wrote:

The unconscious contains all the fantasy combinations, which have not yet attained the threshold intensity, but which in the course of time and under suitable conditions will enter the light of consciousness.

For individuality to manifest fully we need to 'bring the outside in'. In other words, it is vital that the unconscious contents of the personality that lie outside the range of the ego complex be made visible and assimilated, remembering that the unconscious not only contains the past (the dark) but also contains the prospects of a psychological future (the light).

The impact of archetypal images entering 'the light of consciousness' is that one is confronted not only with what they mean but also with their moral demands.

9. Wunggud's lifeforce

Once inside the world, they are joined by others. In the world, wunggud's lifeforce streams through creation – trees, animals, water, day and night – because everything created lives as an action of wunggud.

It is interesting that Mowaljarlai re-introduces wunggud at this point of the narrative. Why? It seems that Mowaljarlai is highlighting two different aspects of the Anima. When wunggud's energetic thread was first introduced in the story there was a sense that this energy represented the Great Mother archetype and the collective unconscious. The task of individuation at that point was separation from the Great Mother, which is one aspect of Anima.

Now however, the feeling is somewhat different. Anima can now be seen as *Anima Mundi* or *Soul of the World* (CW 11, para. 759). *Anima mundi* is a pure ethereal spirit (soul) diffused throughout all nature, a divine spark that embraces and animates all life in the universe. The task of individuation at this point is to develop a relationship with Anima, a relationship with soul.

How does *Anima Mundi* impact on the journey of individuation? Perhaps the most accessible Jungian writings about *Anima Mundi*, or soul, come from James Hillman (Hillman & Moore, 1990). He defines soul as:

> *… a perspective rather than a substance, a viewpoint toward things rather than a thing itself. This perspective is reflective; it mediates events and makes differences between ourselves and everything that happens. Between us and events, between the doer and the deed, there is a reflective moment – and soul-making means differentiating this middle ground* (p. 20).

Hillman goes on to say:

> *First, soul refers to the deepening of events into experiences; second the significance of soul, whether in love or religious concern, derives from its special relationship with death. And third…the imaginative possibility in our natures, the experiencing through reflective speculation, dream, image, fantasy—that mode which recognizes all realities as primarily symbolic or metaphorical* (p. 21).

Once we recognise that we are part of the whole, the cosmos, we make a connection between our spark and the world's. We make this connection consciously with our imagination, and we become open to finding pathways of light through the darkness of the collective unconscious – or in the sense of Mowaljarlai's story the spirit-pair is joined by others.

We could also imagine Wunggud's thread, or the action of Wunggud, to be what Jung called *esse-in-anima,* or the essence of being human. *Esse-in-anima* refers to the continually creative act of psyche (CW 6, para. 52):

Idea and thing come together, however, in the psyche, which holds the balance between them … Living reality is the product of neither the actual behaviour of things or of the formulated idea exclusively, but rather the combination of both in the living process, through esse in anima.

Thus, e*sse-in-anima*, or the 'imaginative possibility in our nature' brings together our experience of the outer world of things and our inner world of understanding. Jung states (CW 8, para. 618) that the *psyche consists essentially of images...a 'picturing' of vital activities*. He goes on to write (CW 13, para. 75):

It is as if we did not know, or else continually forgot, that everything of which we are conscious is an image, and that image is psyche.

Indeed, Jung placed images as the very source of our sense of psychic reality. Our experience of reality is a product of the psyche's capacity to image. When our inner and outer worlds come together in psychic images, we have a vital sense of the *lifeforce* [that] *streams through creation*.

10. The Tree of Life

They see the Guloi tree's four branches pointing to the north, the south, the east and the west. … The Guloi, a native plum, is the Tree of Life which signifies birth and holds the sacred pathway of knowledge.

Jung spoke extensively about the Tree of Life in a lecture he gave on 7 December 1938 (Lecture VII, Jung & Jarrett, 1988, pp. 1437-1456). His descriptions (pages 1438) directly mirror Mowaljarlai's narrative about the Guloi tree:

*Another more specific aspect is the tree of life, the tree which gives life to human beings and animals and the universe. And this tree also has the aspect of the world axis: the branches up above are the kingdom of the heavens; the roots below form the kingdom of the earth, the netherworld; and the trunk is the world axis round which the whole world revolves, …*and *…Then another aspect of the tree is the tree of knowledge. It is the carrier of revelation …* (p. 1438)

… and, in a discussion following the lecture, he refers to the four rivers flowing from the tree of life, pointing in the four cardinal directions:

Prof. Jung: … remember that I spoke of the Bodhi-fruma, the Bodhi tree. Now where is the Bodhi tree?

Mrs. Brunner: In paradise, on the round terrace of enlightenment.

Prof. Jung: Yes, and the text called it "the Bodhi mandala". It is the circulus quadratus, which is a sort of circumambulation, and in the center is the Bodhi tree. So the promontory is the Garden of Eden. And that is characterised by what?

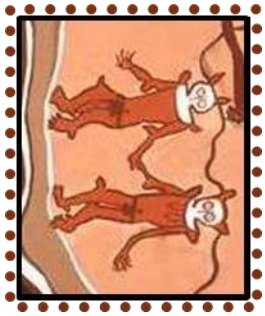
Mrs. Fierz: By the four rivers.

Prof. Jung: Yes. The tree is in the center and the four rivers issuing from the Garden of Eden make it the typical mandala. And the Bodhi mandala contains also the idea of the square building inside, the corners of which are identical with the cardinal points of the horizon. North, south, east and west, are called the four corners of the world, or the four winds, and that gives the basis, the natural pattern, for the squaring of the circle. And inside the circle is a sort of stupa, a container, in which are the sacred relics. The most precious thing, the cinta mani, the pearl beyond price, is contained in the vessel in the center of the temple with the four corners.

Then if you follow it up psychologically, you arrive at the fact that consciousness has four corners as it were, four different ways or aspects, which we call the four functions. For since psychological consciousness is the origin of all the apperception of the world, it naturally understands everything, even the system of that axis …

Mowaljarlai refers to the Guloi tree as holding *the sacred pathway of knowledge*. Jung echoes this when he writes in CW 10, para. 289:

The attainment of consciousness was the most precious fruit of the tree of knowledge, the magical weapon which gave man victory over the earth, and which we hope will give him a still greater victory over himself.



11. Four tribes

… signifying the birth of four tribes, and the lands to which each belongs. These become the Wanumbal, Wororra, Ngarinyin, and WilaWila tribes, connected in the wunan relationship system as branches of the same tree.

In Mowaljarlai's painting, there are four sets of spirit-pairs, indicating what Jung calls a quaternity. For Jung, the quaternity was *an order pattern par excellence* (CW 9ii, para. 381) and an archetype of wholeness (CW 9i, para. 715). It's *ideal completeness is that round, the circle, but its natural minimum organization is the fourness*. (CW 11, para. 246).

The quaternity is essentially a doubling of duality, whereby we move from the conflict of opposition to completion, solidity, and comprehensiveness. There is a wide spectrum of four-fold symbols and systems in religion, myth, history and culture, not the least of which are the four psychological functions – sensing, intuition, thinking and feeling.

12. Fusion

The couples realise that while they are connected in their minds and in their joined hands, the rock is telling a more profound story. The two rocks are, in fact fused together, not simply connected to each other. This informs the spirit couples that they must each fuse together, one inside the other, in relationships that cannot be broken, in order to give birth to their respective tribes. As a result the couples copulate, fuse their seeds and give birth to humans.

Undoubtedly, the most striking element of Mowaljarlai's painting is the spirit couple copulating with a second copulating couple nearby. The prominence of these couples suggests the symbolic and archetypal significance of what Jung called the *unio mystica* or sacred marriage, the archetype of the union of opposites (Jung, CW 8, para. 354).

Further, it also suggests that the bringing to together of innumerable pairs of opposites is an ongoing and lifelong task. Jung believed that the psyche is constantly at work uniting opposites as part of the grander plan of individuation guided by the Self. In *the bringing together of opposites*, Jung stressed the importance of the conscious and unconscious being able to dialogue as equals (Jung CW 8, para. 185):

> *Thus, in coming to terms with the unconscious, not only is the standpoint of the ego justified, but the unconscious is granted the same authority. The ego takes the lead, but the unconscious must be allowed to have its say too …*

When conscious material is brought to ego consciousness, the union of conscious and unconscious contents generates a tension charged with energy and creates a third, living essence, which Jung called the transcendent function (Jung CW 8, para. 145):

> *The tendencies of the conscious and the unconscious are the two factors that together make up the transcendent function. It is called "transcendent" because it makes the transition from one attitude to another organically possible.*

This union of opposites typically manifests symbolically. Jung stated unequivocally that it is in the process of symbol formation that the union of conscious and unconscious contents is consummated (Jung, CW 6, para. 480):

> *The raw material shaped by thesis and antithesis, and in the shaping of which the opposites are united, is the living symbol. Its profundity of meaning is inherent in the raw material itself, the very stuff of the psyche, transcending time and dissolution; and its configuration by the opposites ensures its sovereign power over all psychic functions.*

Jung goes on to say (CW 11, para. 755):

> *But if the individuation process is made conscious, consciousness must confront the unconscious and a balance between the opposites must be found. As this is not possible through logic, on is dependent on symbols which make the irrational union of opposites possible. They are produced spontaneously by the unconscious and are amplified by the conscious mind.*

If we are able to hold this tension of opposites, and grasp the meaning of the symbol that emerges from the transcendent function, we move toward new conscious attitudes and a new way of being.

As Mowaljarlai said, the opposites *each fuse together, one inside the* other.

13. Gestation

Although there is no mention of gestation in Mowaljarlai's story, his painting shows two female spirit figures between the copulating pairs and the birthing. An internal marriage, a union, has occurred so things are different, but nothing is apparent yet.

These spirit female figures might represent pregnancy, or perhaps labour, and introduce the importance of time. Time for gestation. Time for process. Time for incubation. Or as the Indigenous people would say: "*We need time to sit in the dust".* In addition, since the symbolic process is an experience in images and of images (Jung, CW 9i, para. 82); we need time for the symbolic images that emerge from the transcendent function to make sense and to have meaning.

13. Birthing

The birthing takes place beside the river … In crossing the river of life, spirit people birth black humans.

In Mowaljarlai's painting we see a spirit figure giving birth. She has one foot in the spirit world and the other in the physical world of reality.

This image beautifully illustrates Jung's notion of rebirth in the individuation process, in particular his concept of *renovatio* (Jung, CW 9i, para. 203). This *renovatio* or renewal results in a blossoming of self-development or self-realisation (Jung CW 7, para. 266):

Individuation means becoming an "in-dividual", and, in so far as "individuality" embraces our innermost, last and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. We could therefore translate individuation as "coming to selfhood" or "self-realisation".

Thus individuation, or self-realisation, which represents the highest level of human development, involves a psychological rebirth and an integration of conscious and unconscious elements of the psyche into a unified or whole individual. Rebirth often brings a new attitude or a new perspective and there is a *better and more complete fulfilment of the collective qualities of the human being* (Jung, CW 7, para. 267). Not only do we relate to the Self in a deeper and richer way, we also relate with other people in ways which were not possible previously.

14. River of Life

… the river, whose source and life is another littoral between seen and unseen dimensions of existence..... Water is the medium between physical and non-physical, heaven and earth, day and night, being and non-being. His river is both in the world and beyond it. A conduit that flows from its source in the imagination of wunggud into the physical world, the river represents a crossing, a seamless bridge between dimensions of existence.

Just as the river is very significant in Mowaljarlai's painting, it is also replete with symbolic meaning from a Jungian perspective. One of the commonest symbols for the unconscious is water (Jung, CW 9i, para. 40), and water in motion is like the stream of life (Jung, CW 16, para. 15). One of the most impressive characteristics of a river is the power of water flowing in a definite direction, which Jung likened to the teleology or goal-directedness of the psyche (CW 8, 798).

Jung also likened the flow of instinctual energy to a river. He also spoke of archetype as the riverbed, the deep channel in which the water of life has flowed for years. So, archetype can be thought of as the channel that directs our instinctual energy (CW 10, para. 395).

Ronnberg & Martin in *The Book of Symbols: Reflection on Archetypal Images* (2010, p.42) describe a river as *a boundary between lands and between the living and the dead. Crossing is a transition and a metaphor for the possibility of traveling between the mind's two shores, the conscious and familiar shore and the unconscious farther shore*. Mowaljarlai's narrative provides an elegant and powerful indigenous parallel.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper, there are mythologies from many cultures that associated a river to rebirth.

The river in Mowaljarlai's story reminds us of the constant presence of the unconscious. The waters of the unconscious nourish, direct and remind us

15. Wuddu ritual

The spirit connection is then sustained and renewed every morning in the wuddu ritual, signified by the rising sun into the world. Grannies wuddu the children at the renewed early morning fire, to bring the beautiful spirit of dawn into the spirit of the child. The wuddu ritual reminds the young to respect everything and everyone in wunan.

Mowaljarlai ends his story with the wuddu ritual. This serves as a potent reminder that it is essential to both sustain and renew the gifts of individuation. This aligns deeply with Jung's writing (CW 18). about the importance of ritual for living a symbolic life.

> *You see, man is in need of a symbolic life … Where do we live symbolically? Nowhere, except where we participate in the ritual of life. But who, among the many, are really participating in the ritual of life? Very few* (para. 625).

> *These people have no problems. They have their daily life. Their symbolic life. They get up in the morning with a feeling of their great and divine responsibility; they are the sons of the Sun, the Father, and their daily duty is to help the Father over the horizon – not for themselves alone, but for the whole world.* (para.630).

Grasse (1996, p149) defines a ritual as the art of using symbols to transform consciousness in accordance to will, highlighting the importance of intent. Jung (CW 18, para. 626).underscored the importance of creating a temenos, or sacred place when he wrote:

> *Have you got a corner somewhere in your house where you perform the rites, as you can see in India? Even the very simple houses there have at least a curtained corner where the members of the household can lead the symbolic life, where they can make their vows or meditation. We don't have it; we have no corner…We have no time, no place! Where have we got these dogmatic or these mysterious images? Nowhere!* (CW 18, para. 626).

Do you have a sacred space and a sacred time? A place where you can consciously engage on a daily basis in your symbolic life? A place where you can touch the sacredness of your being, and the mystery of your becoming?

I would like to dedicate this paper to the late Hannah Rachel Bell, who inspired me so profoundly. Through her writing, and our discussions, Hannah built a bridge for me to Mowaljarlai, whose work provides doorways into to wisdom that draws on 60,000 years of culture. Jung, and his life's work, has given me some of the keys to start the process of discovering what lies beyond these doors and to building my own bridges through the intercultural littoral.

To conclude, I am moved to quote Hannah's dedication of her book *Men's Business, Women's Business*:

> *To the memory of David Mowaljarlai, without whose friendship, inspiration and wisdom I might never have known that while I write with my right hand, my left hand gives me balance, support and lift to dance a two-handed life.*

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