

Pan place, Coyote space, and Bunyip country: planning for wild-ness and ecological imagination in the creative city

Introduction

Creativity relies on different and new ways of thinking and doing, as well as drawing upon an eclectic and culturally diverse range of resources. A May 2002 article by Richard Florida in the *Washington Monthly* discusses the rise of the creative class, explaining why cities without gays and rock bands (for example) are losing the economic race. Florida, author of *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002), says that despite a desire to attract innovation and high tech growth, towns remain trapped in the past.

While it certainly remains important to have a solid business climate, having an effective people climate is even more essential. By this I mean a general strategy aimed at attracting and retaining people – especially, but not limited to, creative people. This entails remaining open to diversity and actively working to cultivate it, and investing in the lifestyle amenities that people really want and use often [urban parks, bike lanes, off-road trails, authentic heritage buildings], as opposed to using financial incentives to attract companies, build professional sports stadiums, or develop retail complexes. (Florida, 2002: 11)

This paper argues if city planners want to build creativity into cities, then they need to be thinking in environmental and culturally diverse terms, actively working to cultivate multiplicity and amenity. And to be successful, they need to take a much greater step, far beyond the diversity suggested by Florida. To plan for a creative city requires a creative planner and planning that flows from a creative and imaginative process. A key indicator that might suggest such creative planning had taken place, lies in planning for the additional diversity of the non-human and the mythic in our city spaces. Animals in particular provide both an easy entrée into the natural world and a reconnection with more traditional approaches to understanding the world and our place in it. This paper shows how animals, both mythic and biological, reflect the wild and the need for the wild in our cities, and suggests how we might plan for and celebrate these non-human influences in developing a more creative and multicultural spirit of place. It is the mythic that offers a creative cadence to our built spaces by referencing both the imagined life and traditional memory.

What lies beneath? The trolls of subaltern theory

The use of myths and archetypes has often been proffered as social therapy by psychoanalysts (from Jung to Thomas Moore or Arthur Mindel). I'll offer one now as a metaphor for subaltern theory. We build bridges to avoid contested and difficult terrain, but the terrain remains beneath. And under each bridge, waiting for our crossing, lie the trolls that inhabit these muddier terrains. Even when we cross unscathed, we know (at least subconsciously) that the trolls are there. Every now and again the trolls leap up to our bridges of easy clarity to demand a toll of recognition. The muddiness of reality, the ground we ultimately stand upon (courtesy of the now seemingly more flimsy structures of our bridges), has emerged in the embodiment of the troll to remind us of our subaltern links. The subaltern underlies our dominant colonising structures, and it is from such ground that our edifices develop strength. If we refuse to acknowledge the troll's voice, not only will our bridges be destroyed, but we will be eaten. By paying the toll, we acknowledge more indigenous and traditional underlying influences while keeping to the cultural self-comfort of our known bridge. Only a very few get down in the mud to celebrate another kind of crossing! This paper pays the toll, I hope, even if it ignores the wilder lure of the mud.

Traditionally, philosophers have used metaphors that polarise the edge from the centre. Such dualisms have been problematised through suggestions that edges lie all around the

centre. I would draw upon the more advanced of subaltern theory to go further, and ask “what lies beneath?” A table’s shape is defined by its edges; its top the most visible and usable of surfaces. But the underneath is the hidden edge that lies in darkness – the more interesting place of unknowing. It is from this dark side of the moon that archetypes lie in wait to trip up our sophisticated and rational cultural constructions. The table-top of city planning is only possible because of what lies beneath. The trend to celebrate the more creative has encouraged the troll to emerge from its darkness, and ask that we pay attention to the mythopoetic beasts of cultural archetypes. By making room in our cities for these darker archetypes, giving them a place at the table, we change not only culture/ nature relationships, but also the relationships between developing and developed countries or indigenous and settler cultures. By celebrating the existence of human/animal coalitions in the construction of city landscapes, we are also acknowledging a wilder and more diverse place. This perhaps is the basis for a more creative city.

Donna Haraway in *The promises of monsters: a regenerative politics for inappropriate/d others* argues ‘we must find another relationship to nature besides reification and possession’ (1992: 296) and that we can do so when we turn to enspirited localised gods; that “nature is the place to rebuild public culture”. Haraway argues we should refute rationalism and redefine ‘us’ to include: ‘the human-discourse partners of animal, inorganic and non-technological actors... nature is made, but not entirely by humans... [into]... the narrative of collective life’ (297). While artists and storytellers might interpret such narratives, it is the administrative responsibility of planners to determine the concrete realities of that collective life. The acknowledgement of a more active nature through imagining the animal and monster voices that lie beneath might help in relabelling the West’s imperatives from economy to creativity.

Animals, animals everywhere

Donna Haraway suggests the promises of monsters lie in their ability to remind humans of their natural connections. She includes ‘the coyote and protean embodiments of a world as witty agent and actor’ (1992: 298). She gives an example of a peace protest in Nevada in which demonstrators crawled through a dragon beast as a surrogate birthing to stand on illegal land “as an act of solidarity with the tunnelling creatures of the desert, who had to share their subsurface niches with the test site’s chambers.” (319). For Haraway, it is the alliance of human and non-human actors that will change the maps of the world, and it is animals who act as the change agents.

Animals are fairly obvious actors, and their interfaces with people and machines are easier to admit and theorise... animals lose their object status that has reduced them to things in so much Western philosophy and practice. They inhabit neither nature (as object) nor culture (as surrogate human), but instead inhabit a place called elsewhere... [their] otherworldiness must not be disenchanting and cut to our size but respected for what it is... (332)

Animals can act as a surrogate nature, representing the non-human interests of community, that too often lie forgotten beneath our bridges of planning. Barry Lopez’s (2003) definition of community is that it must include its original indigenous groups and acknowledge the presence of wild animals. It is animals, he argues, that most easily allow the creative power of imagination to be lit.

And what draws me ahead is the possibility of revelation from other indigenes – the testimonies of wild animals... The idea that animals can convey meaning, and thereby offer an attentive human being illumination, is a commonly held belief the world over. The view is disparaged and disputed only by modern cultures with an allegiance to science as the sole arbiter of truth. The price of this conceit, to my way of thinking, is enormous.

...

The fundamental reinforcement of a belief in the spiritual nature of animal’s lives (ie in the spiritual nature of the landscape itself) comes from a numinous encounter with a wild creature. For many indigenous people (again, in my experience) such events make one feel more

secure in the 'real' world because their unfolding takes the event beyond the more readily apparent boundaries of existence. In a numinous encounter one's suspicion, profound, persistent, and ineluctable, that there is more to the world than appearances is confirmed. (Lopez, 2003: 160 and 164)

It is animals that increase our collective wondrous awareness of the world. And it is indigenous people the world over who have been "more at ease talking about animals as exemplars of abstract ideals, as oracles and companions, and as metaphorical relations" (Lopez, 2003: 164). Ultimately though, I think, the social learning we might gain from animals, cannot be handed down by any expert genius or particular culture. It is developed through a social facilitation of each extant community, and it draws upon that community's multiple cultures and their mythic links to the distinctiveness of their particular place.

Science and history has demonstratively played an ineffective role in preserving "wilderness" (badly defined by the very paradigm that destroys it). Planning has relied upon the same rational paradigm and has not only removed wilderness from the city, but defined the urban in opposition to the wild. So the majority of the world's developed population has become removed from and ignorant of the role of the natural and the feral; the environment becomes a minority concern. In contrast, the developing world and colonised subaltern cultures have generally maintained a notion of wild-ness by acknowledging the sacred role of the animal. Human celebrations, rituals, and art have been used to create a landscape memoir that keeps the ecological imagination active and emotive.

Yet these subaltern influences are not so buried in Western cultures. There lie barely beneath the surface of our cultured constraints. Dragons live in the small boy or museum imaginings of dinosaurs, and in the increasingly common practices of Feng Shui. Our love of the sacred in animals can be found in the continuous revival (survival) of the pagan, in the tale of the little Mermaid, in the use of dogs as therapy in hospitals, even in our cataloguing of endangered species. By appreciating their influences we might undo their otherwise more destructive response to the dominant's lack of acknowledgment. (If we planned a valued place for the troll, it would no longer have to live under the bridge exacting tolls or vengeance.)

The wildest place on earth?

An American religious landscape painter of the 19th century, Thomas Cole, wrote an essay on the beauty of the American landscape as unspoiled, primeval and virgin (conveniently overlooking its longer-term inhabitants). His expression of wild nature as American landscape reinforced a necessity for imagination that still applies today:

In this age, when a meagre utilitarianism seems ready to absorb every feeling and sentiment, and what is called improvement, in its march, makes us fear that the bright and tender flowers of the imagination will be crushed beneath its iron tramp, it would be well to cultivate the oasis that yet remains to us. (in Mitchell 2001: 137)

Wilderness was created as the antidote to the poisons of industrial society. Wilderness was a useful cultural construct of the 19th century. As Simon Schama says in *Landscape and Memory*, "But of course the healing wilderness was as much the product of culture's craving and culture's framing as any other imagined garden". The poet, Gary Snyder differentiates wildness from wilderness: wilderness is an entity, a fragile place that is easily destroyed; wildness is a concept – a force of nature found not only in wilderness but also in suburbia and cities, and even in barren devastated landscapes.

Mitchell in his book *The Wildest Place on Earth Italian Gardens and the Invention of Wilderness* (2001) says in wildness of the restoration of the world. Wildness requires daily contact: "...a life *in* nature, or a life *with* nature, rather than one of those extended wilderness

sojourns, which require ironically, and in fact perversely, the use of the highly advanced, energy consumptive technology of flight to attain.”(16)

If we can find (or imagine) wildness in our cities, then we might return to a more natural understanding of place.

“Wilderness” then is a weakening dominant metaphor for the wild – indicated by the increasing use of cultural quotation marks; one culture’s trash is another’s treasure. Perhaps the wild is held more in our minds and hearts than in our landscapes. David Rothenberg (1999: 33) says “The wild is more than a named place... It is a tendency we both flee and seek”. In our increasingly urbanised lives we need this wild all the more. We need fear, the new wildness, a more (primal) emotive responses to land, the pan-ic inspired by Pan. Mitchell says that “19th Century painters of wilderness wanted to inspire *terribilita* – a state of fear or ecstasy, the sense of the sublime, an elevated emotion in the presence of power and beauty (2001: 61) “, and shows how the wild ‘*terribilita*’ might be found in the cultivated Italian gardens of today because of the presence of Pan. There have always been places where humans should not go. Thoreau in 1846 climbed Mount Katahdin in Maine, despite the local Indian avoidance of the spirit of the Mountain, Pomona. Before reaching the summit, he realised this fear (“a place not yet tamed for the human children of the gods”) and turned tail. This was Thoreau’s ‘Contact’ that led to his questions: ‘Who are we? Where are we?’ Perhaps it is in such fear or awe of nature that we might find identity.

The purpose of urban four wheel drives is not after all to manage difficult terrains, but to meet an overly urbanised populace’s need for imagined risk and created wilderness; to recreate the identity of the hunter. In the UK (at least) it is even possible to buy spray on mud for your four wheel drive as an indicator of imagined wildness. The Australian poet Les Murray (in *Louvres*) says we imaginatively buy:

...the four-wheel drive

vehicle in which to make an expedition
to the bush, or as we now say the Land,
the three quarters of our continent
set aside for mystic poetry.

The four wheel drive epitomises our city yearning for the wild and the non-human. But there are better ways to meet this need than in the purchase of such unused commodifiers.

Planning for the non-human and the mythic

Mitchell compares the elation felt by a teary tourist in Notre Dame cathedral with the video camera response of American national park visitors, in which he has yet to see one “swept to tears by the power of the place. And yet, this spirituality, this pure force of wild nature, the unexpected religiosity of place is why these sites were originally preserved.” (2001: 150) Rather than simply planning for more national parks, perhaps we need the equivalent of more city cathedrals, that encapsulate a spirit of place in the heart of the urban. These could simply be small sites of wild nature come upon unexpectedly, inciting a rapid retreat and a quick panic at their clear inhuman nature. They would be places for our imagination to reside and for more creative celebrations of an active and emotion-charged nature.

Perhaps it is time to celebrate the underlying non-human and the wild of our cities in more concrete ways – allowing for and mapping its existence would generally require little land, but may make greater spaces of spirit. The habitat of such animals would only be limited by the local community’s imagination; it would be a rare community that might imagine an animal so large that its habitat would become economically impossible, since wilder nature seems to prefer (or resort to) places that are most difficult to develop for human habitation. Determining the place, the habitat, and the creature would not only encourage creativity, it would also develop the participating community’s culture and change attitudes to nature.

Perhaps it might make participation in planning processes enjoyable and light-hearted, rather than focusing on more intense sustainable development dichotomies.

Generally planning has been an instrumental process, so that each area of land is marked out for a (human) purpose. There are very few, if any, spaces intentionally reserved to be purposeless. Even riparian or buffer zones are named with some attempt at human justification; wilderness areas are to be conquered and trekked, unbuildable places become recreation zones. There are no spaces of the non-human, no place of the other in our human developments. An ecocentric planning response would involve more than buffer zones. Rather, we might plan for particular places to be left alone (by the human), to be inhabited by the imagined or the real non-human that is specific and endemic to that region. Environmental planners already identify and lobby for rare and endangered animal habitat (knowing that the animal, especially if cute or furry, is the best social argument in preserving the place). And social planners, along with community cultural development workers, have the skills to facilitate a social dreaming. Together they might use participative consultative processes to help a community determine: where to site their locally wild place, and the particularities of the creatures that might inhabit such an unvisited inhuman location¹. The processes of community – mythologies, memories, land stories, and art (rather than the more expert processes of the natural sciences or histories) might aid in creatively defining (the metaphor of) such non-human owners. Artist, poets and storytellers might help create and celebrate the mythopoetic beast, but it is planners that can facilitate such processes as well as allocate and save its habitat.

It is the particularity of place that modifies the monster animal metaphor into a thing of meaning and value for those living there, attracting a greater diversity of multiple cultures and of past, present, and future populations. There is an initial reluctance and an overflowing joy in the development of such talismans – there is a wild thinking involved that we both flee and seek. It serves both postcolonial and environmental ends by offering a strong counterpoint to Western ways of doing and planning. Such dominant groups, developed countries in particular, need to demonstrate their re-connection with land. Wild and mythopoetic animals seem the easiest access point to an understanding of a more active land. But each place needs to develop its own sacred animal, of relevance to its particularity. It might draw upon and borrow from other mythologies, or at least be reminded by Aboriginal, Chinese, European, and increasingly SE Asian mythologies. But it needs to also build upon the West's own mythologies of place: it needs to be bioregional, and draw upon the local ecology and local community culture. Those who inhabit the place, that are embedded in its particularity, are those who shape the place. With the aid of community based planners, they might shape their place with a positive and creative imagination that celebrates the wild in their land and in themselves.

Marion Mahony Griffin worked as an architect and artist in the first half of the 20th century with Walter Burley Griffin. Their combined interest in landscape architecture and ideal of a place where 'everyone lived at home with nature and each other' was reflected in their commitment to theosophy. They were interested in planning 'that would free the spirit of the beholder' (Rubbo 1997:p123). The Griffins' major Australian contribution was the planning of the capital, Canberra, in which they pioneered environmental design (design based upon existing terrain rather than a superimposed grid plan). Their Canberra plans were based on spirit, using crystal, water, and luminous light, and a sacred and ancient cosmological schema (Proudfoot, 1994: p74). Amongst Canberra planners, a story persists that the first suburbs of Canberra were planned to accommodate 'the wives' (referring to the wives of the Chief Engineer and of the architect, Walter Burley Griffin (ie Marion Mahony)) and their belief in fairies. For instance, the need for small areas for fairies to dance in – fairy rings - has been used to explain the many little green patches between groups of houses around Ainslie². In Marion Mahony Griffin's unpublished diary, *The Magic of America*³, she says that the same

faculty that allows us to believe in fairies also allows for creativity and original work, reminding us of the importance of the imagination.

Again we must convince the minds of children, warped by the superficialities of our present day thinking, that they are surrounded not only by a world that they can see and hear and touch with their physical senses...but are also surrounded by another world, the world of causes just as diverse, just as rich, just as full of adventure, which they can learn to perceive and in perceiving to enter, and in entering to become a creator in this realm of criterion, the world of life.

For the same faculty which enables one to see the fairies is a faculty which enables one to do original work in all human realms, and to transform our community, so rich in toys and tools, into a civilisation thereby attaining great and worthwhile ends. For this, human beings must develop their spiritual powers of perception, the basis of a new form which will enable them to know causes as precisely as at present they know effects...if they [her planner students] wanted to be among the geniuses in their work, they must be ready to develop that kind of thinking which would someday enable them to see the fairies. (Mahony Griffin: 229-34)

To plan with the mythic beast in mind is to develop the creative city. There are many examples of how such beasts might be defined and planned for, but each beast to be relevant must be locally developed. The fairy arose from late 19th century romanticism and garden city planning, and should not necessarily be applied across time and place. Anthony Harding in *The Reception of Myth in English Romanticism* (1995) says that Romantics own mythmaking drew its meaning from contemporary politics and ideological conflict, not a timeless unchanging myth of value. Mythmaking cannot be universalised. In asking who or what might inhabit the non-human spaces, the importance of specificity and locale cannot be overemphasised. Pan, Coyote and the Bunyip are three brief generic examples of regional beasts that might serve as embodiments of a more creative, more active nature.

Regional Mythic Creatures

A new metaphor for creativity might draw upon powerful and cross-cultural human emotions, such as fear, and on the long-term links between human and other animals expressed in traditional mythologies. If the new metaphor creature intertwined a region's people's mythologies and memories - a creature of direct meaning to its locale and its inhabitants, then it might be strong enough to sway our cultural conversations, and allow for more creative cities. This muddy inhabitant emerging from the landscape, attributed with more emotional and arbitrary responses (those that we don't otherwise like to impose on humans), could be the powerful subaltern voice that changes the community's culture to one more aligned with our own animal forces and the land itself. Such beasts have strong impacts in our past histories and in our present memories. Perhaps Pan overcomes the power of more dualistic metaphors, being both man and beast; perhaps the Coyote breaks down the walls of a suburban psyche through both its real and mythological presence; perhaps the bunyip invades not only Western civilised landscapes, but also the discourse of progress; these emotive, animalistic, metaphors continue to remind us of our wilder (and, I would argue, more creative) nature, one not subject to economic rationalism or concrete order.

Pan, half-man, half-goat, is the classic wild god of the mountainside. He is the son of the trickster messenger, Hermes and of the human Penelope. He inverts the world and embodies the spirit of the dark forests, sleeping in the afternoon after orgies of sex, wine, dance, and music. It is the reed instruments of Pan that give us panpipes. If disturbed, Pan engenders panic, to the point that whole armies have fled in fear at the noise of Pan. Patricia Merrivale in her study of *Pan, the goat god, his myth in Modern Times* (1969) makes it clear that Pan covers a lot of ground: Pan is both a god and an animal, the god of the whole of nature. It is not a coincidence that Pan means everything in Greek and is the root of panic. Mitchell (2001) says "Pan was one of the traditional horned guardians of the Omphalos, and if you came face to face with him...you could cross a threshold and step into the sacred zone

of the spirit world and gain the source of knowledge of the universe.” (189) But whether you survived is another matter! After all, Pan is the “emblem of escape, of danger perhaps, of passion and mystery and energy, music and ecstatic dance and ancient rhymes and rhythms... an image of contact with the old forces that rule nature.” (191). Pan sounds like an opportunity and a symbol for a wilder celebration of nature, if ever there was one.

Despite the Christen legend that the wild lord of the earth has been replaced by a single lord of heaven, the Great God Pan is not dead. He has survived over the centuries, even in the assumed form of the devil; he is in the writings of Thoreau, Emerson, Cole, Rachel Carson and other advocates of wild nature. Today, whole web sites are dedicated to how Pan creates human panic: In *Pan(ic) in the woods*, there are hundreds of stories about experience Pan in nature of the ‘it happened to me’ variety, strange sounds, sensations, and emotions inspired by a more active sense of nature – one writer refers to ‘landscapes of panic’. The last word on the subject goes to the writer than inspired me with his maze-like images of Pan, John Hanson Mitchell:

Pan is very much with us. And it is not necessary to outfit expeditions into the remnant wilderness at the uttermost ends of the earth in order to find him. Just go out to some nearby dark wood on a moonless night, bushwhack thirty yards into the thickets without a flashlight, stand still for a few minutes, and wait. He'll be there. (194)

Trickster Coyote Embodiments

The Trickster Coyote reveals the function of an active landscape and is both haphazard and liminal. The Trickster travels in the region of the ‘in-between’, a place of fires, thresholds and boundaries. Barbara Babcock-Abrahams says the Trickster Coyote “tend to inhabit crossroads, open public places, doorways and thresholds” (1975: 159). Larry Ellis (1993) claims the Trickster as a Shaman of the liminal: “Liminal reality holds sway here, and thresholds or points of crossing – bridges, crossroads, and fords – are of special consequence, for they provide a point of interaction between mortal or mythic beings and the forces of the liminal.” (1993:59). Franchot Ballinger (1989) says Native American Trickster tales educate and entertain with the notion of ‘living sideways’. The Trickster Coyote represents an opposing force to the rational planner. As Margaret Atwood (1998) says: “It’s the Trickster who’s responsible for the changes – the mistakes, if you like – that have brought about the sometimes deplorable mess and the sometimes joyful muddle of this world as it is.” It is the failures of the cowardly foolish and impatient Coyote that make the world. Coyote Trickster helps transform liminal edges into thresholds, doorways to cultural change or Otherness, through the satirical use of metaphor, symbol and image. Lewis Hyde says: “Trickster is among other things the gatekeeper who opens the door into the next world; those who mistake him for a psychopath never even know such a door exists.” (1998: 159).

Coyote Trickster breaks the rules and powerfully creates the new, mostly through laughter, lust, and inattention. He remakes culture through disorder. But the Trickster’s mythic core lies in his embodiment of the land he inhabits; as Larry Ellis (1993) says, the Trickster metaphor lies in “... a place that is more closely associated with the landscape in which he travels and performs than in who or what he appears to be. (55)... It [the landscape] sings his boundaries, and in this way, perhaps defines him. (66)

The University of Virginia library’s site (1999) offers a number of traditional stories about Coyote, written up by 19th century American settlers: *The little coyote* by Mary Austin; *How Squire Coyote brought fire to the Cahrocs* by John Vance Cheney; and *Little friend Coyote* by George Bird Grinnell. William Bright in his *Coyote Reader* (1993) claims the Coyote as the apt mediator between animals and humans, nature and culture. While such Trickster nature remains hard to define, grasp, stabilize or taxonomize, we are reminded that nature is still out there. For Bright, the coyote offers us “a dynamic interposing of the mind between polar opposites, as if affirming ‘either/and’” (1993: 182). Harold Ramsey in *Reading the Fire:*

Essays in the Traditional Indian Literature of the Far West (1983) says the Coyote offers the promise of god and man that each generation must interpret anew: "If we laugh at him, he grins at us. Whatever happens to him, happens to us." (1983: 29) Paul Radin in *The Trickster: a study in American Indian Mythology* (1972) says the Coyote is timeless: "the "mythic" Coyote and the "biological" Coyote are not two different things: they are two manifestations of a single identity... either on the reservation or in the city: it's the same Coyote." (1972: 177).

In discussing such intersections of biology and culture, Haraway turns to 'available metaphors and narratives', but also invites into this science/ art intersection the wit of the coyote.

In considering what kind of entity "nature" might be, I am looking for a coyote and historical grammar of the world, where deep structure can be quite a surprise, indeed, a veritable trickster. Non-humans are not necessarily "actors" in the human sense, but they are part of the functional collective that makes up an actant⁴.

The 'collective' of which "nature" in any form is one example from my point of view, is always an artifact, always social, not because of some transcendental Social that explains science or vice versa, but because of its heterogeneous actants/actors ...the artifactual "collective" includes a witty actor that I have sometimes called coyote... re-inventing an old option within a non-Eurocentric Western tradition indebted to Egyptian Hermeticism that insists on the active quality of the world and on "animate" matter. Worldly and enspirited, coyote nature is a collective, cosmopolitan artifact crafted in stories with heterogeneous actants.

Coyote is no a ghost, merely a protean trickster. (1992: 331, 332 and 298)

The Trickster Coyote embodies a wilder creativity than most of us (planners or otherwise) feel comfortable with: "He is both conjurer and conduit of the creative and cultural forces that he puts into motion". (Ellis, 1993:57) But the Coyote also shows us there are diamonds in the mud, if we choose to see his doorway. Coyote nature is more than animal; it represents an active nature as well as a chaotic spirit of creativity. The natural has agency and acts upon us.

The Trickster is the patron of celebrations, such as the Mardi Gras, where social customs are temporarily ignored or reversed. The Trickster makes and re-makes the world, an essential part of creativity. If planners want to contribute to the creative city, they need to apply the gift of a mischievous and lively imagination. The Coyote and its Trickster spirit, signifies the liminal boundaries between animal and spirit, between the biological and the mythical, and between human and nature that might allow us to howl at the moon and evade the pervasive rational, grinning all the while.

Bunyip Reconciliations⁵

The bunyip is Australia's yeti/ yowie monster. It is wild nature, living in swamps. It exists in tales to scare children, to explain the terrible, and to care for the land. There are many bunyip-like figures in Aboriginal legends. Most region and tribal groups have a bunyip-like mythic creature. Although language names vary, the set of traits and responsibilities are similar enough to generalise this awe-ful dreaming animal that booms in the night and arbitrates on natural resources. But the bunyip is unusual in that it crosses the gaps between both black and white cultures and between art and science. The bunyip was treated by white settlers as a serious subject for scientific investigation and vestiges of such status still remain. Although with little substantiated evidence, stories of the bunyip moved from science to the stuff of literature. The National Museum of Australia (2002:p6) says: "This people-eating monster of Aboriginal legend has been keenly adopted by non-Aboriginal artists and writers." Just as fairies and witches became the stuff of European children's tales, so too in Australian children's stories has the bunyip⁶. It has been adopted, if not appropriated, by white Australians as a well-known monster.

The bunyip reconciles not only black and white stories of the bush, but also white settlers to the wilder nature of Australia, and the human to the non-human. The author Patricia Wrightson imagined these journeying coalitions in her award-winning books; for example, in *The Ice is Coming* (1977) she describes a young Aboriginal man Wirrun working with the many mythic spirits of country (including a Mimi rock/ earth spirit), along with humans ('the People' indigenous and 'Inlander' rural - but not 'The Happy Folk' of the cities), and animal inhabitants (including birds, lizards, whales, and spirit dog) - to avert the ice and free the land: "*These* [animal, spirit, human coalitions] *see me true, for they are me*, said the land crouching over the sea. *But where are the eyes of men?*" (214) Wrightson pictures the fear of the intangible 'Mu-ru-bul, Tu-ru-dun, Bunyip'; Wirrun goes to the river edge, not noticing the cloudy water: "Something heavy moved in the reeds. Red eyes glinted, strong jaws clamped and pulled... The Bunyip had him... a smell: of iodine and slime and decay, but mostly of age" (166 - 167)⁷. But it is this 'ancient one of the waters' that takes him to the place of 'the Eldest, a First Thing', and scares away two ice giants⁸, pungently contributing to Wirrun's collective, emotive and spiritual quest of freeing the land's spirit.

The bunyip might act as a cross-cultural Australian symbol for the awe-ful and the sacred in nature. It has engaged Australian communities. The National Library of Australia runs an ongoing web-based project in schools discussing the bunyip and encouraging children to imagine and draw its appearance and traits⁹. Such a process is successful and accessible, and might be generalised to other communities and creatures.

Celebrating Land/ Imagining Beast

We might imagine a more active nature if we draw upon these metaphor of monsters. As Haraway points out in her paper, 'Monsters have the same root as to demonstrate; monsters signify' (1992: 333). And monsters such as Pan, Coyote, and Bunyip make us uncomfortable as our emotions of panic, chaos and fear shows respectively. They all smell and are more lustful than seems acceptable; their myths "are the story of intelligence arising from appetite" (Lewis Hyde, 1998: 1). Planners, the more rational order seekers amongst us, have tried to bridge over and build out their appetites from the city, but they have lain beneath, an always subaltern presence, if not influence. As we seek the more creative in our cities, their spectres have risen up, demonstrating a link to landscape and imagination that we ignore at our peril.

Perhaps the environment is best celebrated through the memory of such supernatural beings and their tracks, remembered through the specificity of place. In Aboriginal terms, they might be dreamings, but by including a wider society there is a greater recognition and understanding, not only of the local environment and of the non-human elements, but also of the contributions that indigenous understandings and lifestyles have made, whether covertly or not, to the more dominant, human-centric approaches of Western society. Human festivals¹⁰ that celebrate animal rituals take us beyond and outside the dominant planning paradigms. They offer us more creative and lateral approaches in developing landscapes. We might re-imagine the landscape, re-animating it with the non-human or nature spirit. Such nature celebrations also elevate the importance of locale, it is the particular place and its (non-human) inhabitants that is uncovered. Elisbeth Bronfen (1999) argues that we use spiritual and creative activity so as to be present simultaneously in the physical and the imaginative world, and this is precisely the role of festivals.

Place-based festivals are community-based processes that arise from the grass-roots to celebrate the seasonal rituals of animals and their movements. To name three of countless examples, in Australia: Melbourne celebrates the Return of the Sacred Kingfisher, Maroochy's Splash! Festival celebrates the role of water and the black swan, and the Lake Bolac Eel Festival traces and promotes the returning path of the eel in western Victorian waterways. Australians, along with other peoples the world over, have been tracking, mapping and celebrating the non-human for centuries. In our contemporary information-rich

world, it would be interesting to now track and map such celebrations¹¹ and plan spaces – set aside non-human places - for their occurrences.

Much of this approach is already undertaken in human communities. When new human developments are planned, environmental assessments are undertaken that map and expose the non-human. So the golden bell frog is found on the Sydney Olympics site or the legless lizard in the greenfield development of Canberra's Gungahlin. Spaces are put aside for such animals and areas left undeveloped. Planners already have processes to reach community agreement as to what of the non-human is important enough to re-locate development proposals – we can generally all agree if the animal is both rare and cute that at least some token aspect of its habitat should be retained. We have planned for animal and mythopoetic spirits in the past, as the fairy example of Marion Mahony Griffin attests; we have worshiped roadside shrines as traditional peoples in earlier histories; we celebrate them today as the myriad of animal place festivals indicate; such places of inhuman spirit remain as ongoing subaltern influences in our development.

Mitchell emphasises that the wild-ness of Pan can be located everyday and everywhere, and especially in the settled density of Europe. He says: "Italian Renaissance garden designers always left one section of the grounds, the so-called *bosco*, in a natural state, complete with native trees and a dense undergrowth of wild shrubs and herbaceous plants." (2001: 189) This idea was emulated by Capability Brown in English estates and carried to the New World, as shown for example in the Paca Gardens of Maryland. Today for instance, several landscape designers in Canada have used such forest folklore as a metaphor to inform their project proposals, whether they are garden festivals, urban parks or town plans. Peter Jacobs in his article shows that these Quebec forest metaphors are most effective, as they draw upon "emotional forces that inspire a profound attachment to the forest" (2004: 90).

The path of gods upon the land is an old and common traditional story: the rainbow serpent marks its grooves, tracks and waterholes in Australia, the Feng Shui dragon shapes how the Chinese live, and in West Africa the serpent creates a series of massive ditches. There is always a tension between non-Western and Western groups as to how such landscape features are described and perceived. A deep groove on the North Goulburn Island of the Northern Territory is both the track of the Rainbow Snake, Ambidj, heavy with eaten people, and more unimaginatively, 'Number Two Sandy Creek' (see Berndt, 1992: p399). European accounts of the ditches in West Africa ascribed them with Western military designs and exploits; whereas Norman and Kelly show that the Hueda and Dahomey groups linked them with mythic tales of serpents and rainbows – they "used the built landscape to reference cosmological factors ...to negotiate and shape the political landscape" (2004: 109). Such a process as the West acknowledging these 'cosmological forces' in our landscape, might also bring about a reconciliation between traditional and modern cultures. Judy Ling Wong discusses the success of the Black Environment Network in Britain in "engaging all cultures to create sacred spaces by drawing on the cultures of their origin and beyond" (2003: 30). Their three projects (*The Medicine Wheel* in Milton Keynes, *The Balaji Temple* in Tividale, and *A Forest of Memory* in Cashel Forest) have increased environmental participation and cross-cultural understanding between different faiths and cultures. There are many such examples from community cultural development workers all over the world.

If planners are to engage in like processes, then they must also engage the community. The emotions inspired by mythic animals such as Pan, Coyote and Bunyip along with their protean and localised relatives may be just what is required to allow wild spaces their place in city planning. Wild spaces, however small, if acknowledged and celebrated, might increase our appreciation of the environment and of the many cultures that make up a city's society. Perhaps, now it is time for planners to pay the toll price and to give status to the incarnate land of the troll.

The spirit of the place?

The dominant Western value system based on economics suggests the outer life is more important than the inner life, that “basic needs” are more important than spiritual needs. From a non-Western point of view the argument has often been turned on its head: if you have no resources to spend on the basic connection to place, how can you live? Such an Aboriginal approach to country, for instance, is taught to visiting guests at Angatja, 600km from Alice Springs in the centre of Australia. The elder Nganyinytja who does much of the teaching, offers a philosophy of open country, open mind and heart, strong spirit and culture. She says that by being in and feeling the open country, people hear the land and know themselves:

They lose their spirit living too long inside shut houses... Our spirit stands open. I live in the open, where I can see the hills and the bush... Living in the open, not enclosed, one's spirit is strong. A long time ago everything became our relatives – the stars, the earth, the hills, the different animals we eat for meat, the vegetable foods – everything (in Diana James, 1991: p109).

Nganyinytja embodies Australia's Indigenous plea to the West in saying we need to reconnect with the land to see more clearly our relationship to all elements of the Earth.

Diana James (1991: p115) who writes about Angatja, says:

...we must believe in life's meaning renewed by theatre, art, and any personal or communal creative expression – an expanded definition of “community art” where we can fearlessly constantly create our own active culture, giving birth to the unborn within ourselves.

But these are still subaltern arguments. Welfare discussions are dominated by low cost housing and better diet provisions, planning is dominated by development and public goods.

We continue to ignore issues of fearless creativity. A more general emphasis on such things as place celebrations and on planning spaces for the non-human may be the first step to reconciling these differing approaches. Animal planning and place celebration offers an easy entrée for Western culture to begin to understand the importance of subaltern relationships to land. At their more optimistic, place celebrations and planned non-human spaces might change the misunderstandings between economic and spiritual value systems, or at least change the West's assumptions that everyone should aspire to a plasma TV. Perhaps finally, the dominant middle class could loose their “baffled, but complacent air¹²” as to why their attempts at proffering welfare to its subaltern communities never benefits those target communities.

Bronfen argues for creativity's role in straddling spiritual imagination and economic physicality. Such creative approaches of animal planning might allow mainstream society to stand with one foot in each camp. And what's more, such place planning and celebrations could be, and are, enjoyed by the whole community.

Conclusion: an imagined landscape of human/animal coalitions

Place based animal planning and celebration offers us an accessible way forward to reconciliation between developing/ indigenous and developed/ settler cultures. Mythopoetic beasts such as Pan, Coyote and Bunyip (and their more regionalised embodiments) might help build a culture of engagement. Whereas capitalism is based on an assumption of generic sameness of place, the development of each region's beast would reinforce another understanding that each place is different, specific to the qualities and traits of the (mythic) animals born of a particular community's imagination. It is not only our ecology and our creativity that would benefit if we resorted to a little wilder planning in our cities.

Such imagined animal and human coalitions are not new. Behind them lie centuries of tradition, taken up by many artists and story-tellers. The extremes of nature and culture that lie at edge and centre are no longer an interesting reality or a useful metaphor. Rather it is in the substitutions, cross-overs, and translations between nature and culture that might shape more creative places. Donna Haraway in *The promises of monsters*, says:

When the pieties of belief in the modern are dismissed, both members of the binary pairs collapse into each other as into a black hole. But what happens to them in the black hole is, by definition, not visible from the shared terrain of modernity, modernism, or postmodernism. It will take a superluminal SF journey into elsewhere to find the interesting new vantage points. (1992: 330)

Let us hope that planners are members of the party that takes this interesting and superluminal journey, and that they are not simply dismissed with older pieties of belief. Planners have the community skills and place-based mindset as well as a public good imperative to enable each community's creative place: planners might choose to be the pilots of such collaborative animal/human journeying.

It is the imagined landscape with its coalitions of human and non-human that might lead the way on such a journey of imagination. Just as in planning, there will be no end-point to such imaginings, since each imagining needs to be specific to a time, a place, and a community. Each place of subaltern terrain and mainstream bridge will need to imagine their beast and its place as payment to the troll that lies beneath our more human constructions of land.

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¹ Perhaps these places are not entirely unvisited by humans. The imagination of a small child when fearfully visiting the waste space of the vacant block, the undeveloped weed infested leftovers, or the edges between developed land and creaking sea, approximates that which we might like to emulate.

² Discussed at a number of RAIPA ACT meetings and pers com Alison Burton, then Acting Chief Planner 1994.

³ Although a photocopy is held in the Sydney public library near Castlecrag.

⁴ Borrowing Terrence Hawkes' term: actants operate at the level of function, not of character; several characters in a narrative (actors) may make up a single actant.

⁵ This section is covered more fully in Kerr, Tamsin 2004 "As if Bunyips mattered... Cross-cultural mythopoetic beasts in Australian subaltern planning" in Elizabeth Hartrick et al (eds) *new talents write/ up* Australian Research Institute and University of Queensland Press (*Journal of Australian Studies* 80): 14-27 <http://www.apinXXX>

⁶ Some of the most well-known range from Ethel Pedley's classic 1899 children's tale, *Dot and the Kangaroo*, to contemporary children's literature such as Jenny Wagner's *The Bunyip of Berkeley's Creek*. The bunyip is also immortalised in poetry and song: one example is a song by Michael Atherton, with the chorus: "It's a bunyip, a bunyip with a bite, so don't go on walks while it stalks, through the bush at night...it's got a big appetite" The Bunyip is also described in this "Radam Scadam" tape as having "the head of a seal, and the tail of an eel". (Australian Broadcasting Corporation music tape).

⁷ Later described: "...something drifted there, large and slow. A wetness of scales or feathers or fur – an arm or flipper reaching, a drifting smell of slime and age (216)"

⁸ All the errant ice giants – Ninya – are sung back home to their own country by the People of the inland region where the ice giants come from – they do no (spiritual or physical) damage in their own place. It is only when these mythic beings leave their own region that the land is reduced.

⁹ See National Library of Australia *Bunyips site* <http://www.nla.gov.au/exhibitions/bunyips/html>

¹⁰ There are of course animal festivals – such as the collective chorus of the graceful tree frog after the first rains – but humans are not invited, except as accidental audience.

¹¹ There is a project proposal developed by George Main of the National Museum of Australia and myself to develop a section on the National Museum website to do just this as well as develop a theory framework of place-oriented festivals.

¹² To reference Hugh Stretton 1975 *Ideas for Australian Cities* in which he argues that cities still act as mechanisms to shift resources from the poor to the rich, despite planners' baffled but complacent air.