

“THE CARS THAT DRANK LAKE EYRE”



An Anthology of Architectural Fan Fiction

Spatial underpinnings:

Being situated at the end of the world – positioned between the finality of total destruction and the infinite variety of creation – it's difficult to discern which one lies ahead, which lies behind and what, if anything looms beyond.

Thus, the questions of 'who are we?' and 'where are we?' remain inseparable, making the search for orientation in fact, a search for the world.

This section is illustrated by collages assembled to generate project content - they are loosely related to the text.



"...the country had not existed until the Ancestors sang it."

Bruce Chatwin, Songlines

If we were to stop sensing the world, the world would cease to exist. Aristotle would mourn the loss of consciousness and lament the dissolving of our souls. ¹

..



"The landscape begins with a notion, however vague or confused, of distancing and of a loss of sight, for both the physical eye and the eye of the mind."

Jean-Luc Nancy, The Ground of the Image

The case of travelling to the flat edges at the end of the world. One is faced with the heightened sensation of matching the imagination's internal realities with new external physical realities. That encounter – a perfectly normal exercise in everyday existence – is brought to the forefront in a collision of the mind and body.

Through sense and sensation a frontier for spatial participation and being-in-the-world opens up. The character of this spatiality sets a reference point (worldview) for cosmological, cultural, social or individual understandings.

The space of architecture appears here as an imperative to reduce prevailing distances with incremental, haptic, human scaled articulations of the world – to "bring near what is far." ²

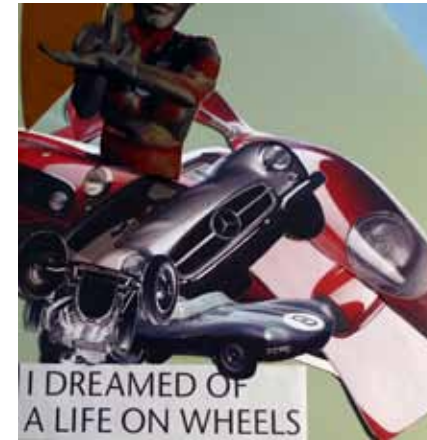
...



"If the path before you is clear, you're probably on someone else's."
 Joseph Campbell, The Power of Myth

Similar to the heroic explorers of the apocalypse, ancient stories of creation are located likewise, somewhere at the end of the world. They too underscore the human condition of longing between internal and external realities, assisting our exodus down from the trees. Myth also equipped our ancestors with the imaginative and reflexive ability to look back up at those trees and gaze beyond into the cosmos.³ Myth-telling reveals the space of appearance between Being and Becoming.⁴ The nature of this space is to reveal understanding through distance and connection; to create a sensible world to dwell.

....



"In the end, everything takes place as if the world affected and permeated itself with a death drive that soon would have nothing else to destroy than the world itself."

Jean-Luc Nancy, The Creation of the World

However, our current paradigm denies us the world, displaces our souls, and abandons the ghosts of our ancestors. The world, we are told, has been replaced by a techno-scientific rationale, beginning with the mathematisation of space and continuing into our current capitalist economy.⁵ These conditions render everything transparent and meaningless unless proven otherwise. Value is thus replaced by economic and utilitarian criteria.

The wholeness of the world disappears, resulting in the fragmentation of social-cultural-spatial realms. This fragmentation⁶ leaves architecture operating within the narrow scope of aforementioned capitalistic and autonomous imperatives. The role of the architect has been largely condemned to navigating disinterested bureaucracy and being commercial service providers.

.....



“Architectural meaning, like erotic knowledge is a primary experience of the human body and yet takes place in the world, in that prereflexive ground of existence where reality is first “given”.”

Alberto Perez-Gomez, Built Upon Love

With the world reduced to disappearance, the task of architecture remains essentially unchanged: to restore and maintain haptic communicative spaces. The concern with this transformation and truthful revealing of space (embodied as both experiential and existential) suggests the role of the architect as somewhat akin to that of a magician, alchemist or shaman.

It also suggests the architect be situated, not only in skill, but in an empathetic interest in worldliness. To undergo this search is to listen to the stories that form culture, to touch the land, to find the world, and in turn, to say ‘thank you’ to nothing in particular and everything all at once, all the time.

Yours truthfully,

Anon.

1. Aristotle, in his Treatise on the Soul, De Anima, relates human sensation to a common sense, which enables the sense of sensing. He argues this as consciousness, analogous to the Soul.

2. Alberto Perez-Gomez, Built Upon Love, p42

3. Vitruvius associates the origins of architecture with the discovery of fire and birth of language. Architecture is framed as communicative, steeped in spatio-cultural concerns of togetherness, wholeness and solidarity. He then accredits human bipedalism with the gift “beyond the other animals in not being obliged to walk with faces to the ground”, and thus the ability to gaze into cosmos. Vitruvius, Ten Books of Architecture, Book II, Chapter one: The Origin of the Dwelling House.

4. Plato, Timaeus. Chora (literal translation is ‘space’) is the final component of the tripartite model of Being and Becoming. Countless similar tripartite models are found in religion and folklore.

5. See The Post-Modern Condition by Jean-François Lyotard

6. See Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation by Dalibor Vesely.

The following pages illustrate the structure for the project - based on Joseph Campbell’s tripartite Monomyth - and preliminary content.

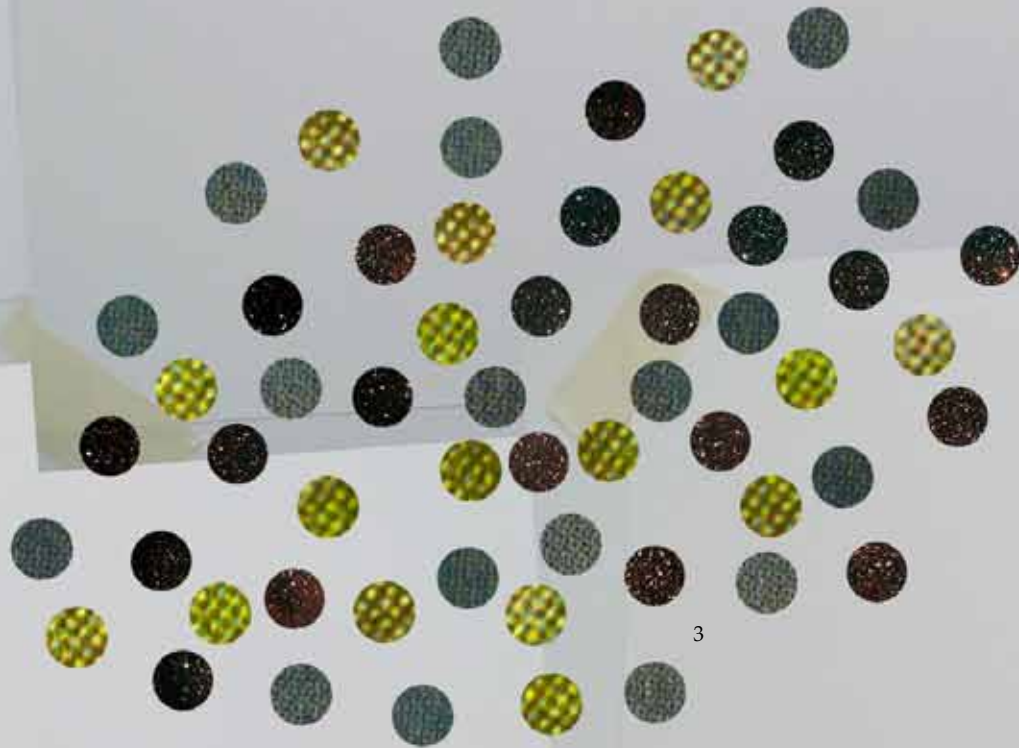
I: The Departure

II: The Initiation

III: The Return

Each part will be developed through research and drawing, and translated into spatial performance.

1



3

4

Looking back, I can see the release of the *New World*
a beautiful blue-and-white jewel. But closer inspection reveals that our home is the world.

2

I: The Departure

The awakening of the self / Being / Intelligence / Idea / Thought / Calling / Consciousness / Utilitas / Communication / Movement / Body / The Son / Sex

1. "If you fail to find water, you will die." Michael Cathcart, author of *The Water Dreamers* argues that the history of Australia can be told through the history of its water. In this case, with water comes the full breath of life, from the mythical to the philosophical, cultural, historical, political, economic and ecological.

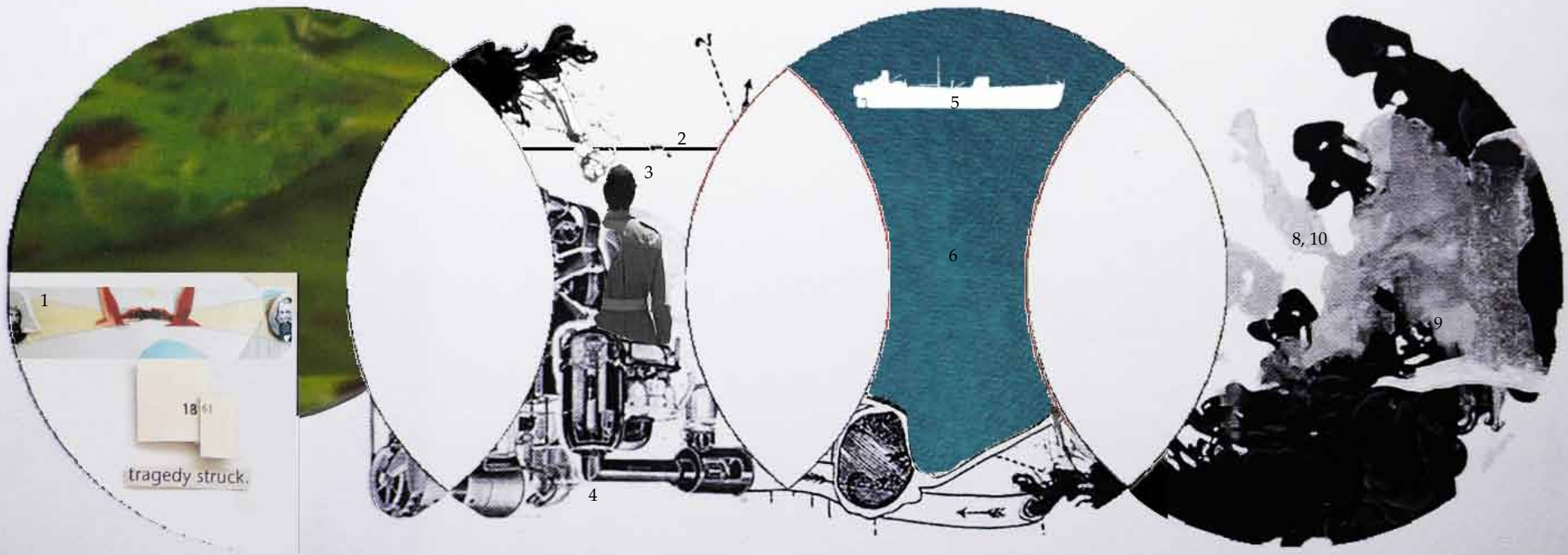
An Aboriginal myth about the longing for water: A creator of the world, tired of being a human, transformed into the tigershark Mana, and tried to make his home in a fresh-water swamp. But, finding it too shallow, Mana entered the sea where, in company with another tiger shark, he has continued to live.

2. There was once an open sea within what is now the continent of Australia. It was a shallow sea that stretched from Western Australia through New South Wales. Lake Eyre is the remaining incarnation of this great sea, preceded by Lake Dieri, The Great Artesian Basin, and the Eromanga Basin. It is Australia's largest inland water mass, featuring the

continent's lowest geographic point at -15m below sea level. It is the drainage basin of the country, yet is located in the most arid areas of the Outback. It floods every decade or so, bringing with it entire ecologies and life. Lake Eyre has an important place in the formation of Australia's 'national cosmology' as Cathcart puts it. From Aboriginal myths to tales of early colonial explorers - they all dreamed about water.

3. In stories of creation there is always chaos at the beginning; everything with no articulation, no order. With exception, there is always an underlying bubble of activity. This is described in many ways; Being, intelligence, thought, idea, essence, consciousness, a calling, etc.

4. The Australian continent spun out of the super-continent of Gondwanaland, which in turn originated in the Super Continent of Pangea. 245-208 Million years ago, most of Australia lay underneath sea, and its land was split into six main islands. These islands now roughly correspond to areas of water activity (basins, rivers, rainfall) and with it reflects the population settlement of Australia. The continent, having undergone desertification, is a huge, largely dry flat land.



i
the inland sea

ii
machines

iii
the hero⁷

iv
apocalypse¹¹

WAS born and I had lived

II: The Initiation

Adventure / Chora / Essence / Distance / Formless / Venustas / Will / Emotion / The Father / Drugs

1. Robert O'Hara Burke and William John Wills were colonists who explored the interior of Australia. On 1861 both died whilst on an expedition together. Upon the return of their bodies in Melbourne they were given a heroes welcome, and their bodies were shown on display. In Melbourne there is a monument of the pair, in the style of Michelangelo's statue of Moses. Will's head rests on the seated body of Moses. Next to Wills stands the upright body of Burke, with facial hair to match that depicted in the Moses statue.

2. Deacon: *Dry land is not just our destination, it is our destiny!*

From *Waterworld*, director Kevin Reynolds, 1995.

3. "The Cars That Ate Paris" subverts the sanctity of vehicular mobility until the final scene of the film when the effeminate "foreigner", Arthur, overcomes his driving phobia, as well as the tyrannical Mayor, and reasserts his mobility/masculinity with his auto-affirming (and perhaps pioneering) proclamation, "I can drive!" Catherine Simpson, *Antipodean Automobility and Crash: Treachery, Tres-*

pass and Transformation of the Open Road, <http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-September-2006/simpson.html>

4. White Girl: *We're English! English, do you understand? This is Australia, yes? Where is Adelaide?*

White Boy: *Ask him for water!*

From *Walkabout*, director Nicolas Roeg, 1971.

5. "...all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in *Moby Dick*. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it." Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*.

6. "Let me only say that it fared with him as with the storm-tossed ship, that miserably drives along the leeward land. The port would fain give succour; the port is pitiful; in the port is safety, comfort, hearthstone, supper, warm blankets, friends, all that's kind to our mortalities. But in that gale, the port, the land, is that ship's direst jeopardy; she must fly all hospitality; one touch of land, though it but graze the keel, would make her shudder through and through...for refuge's sake forlornly rushing into peril; her only friend her bitterest foe! ...

But as in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God - so, better is it to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were to safety! Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*.

7. The walker is defenceless because he is he who is beginning to be, and never finishes being small.

Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1*.

8. When in flood Lake Eyre is predominantly fresh water and allows native freshwater fish, like the Bony Bream, to survive. As the salt crust on the ground surface dissolves into the water a massive fish kill occurs.

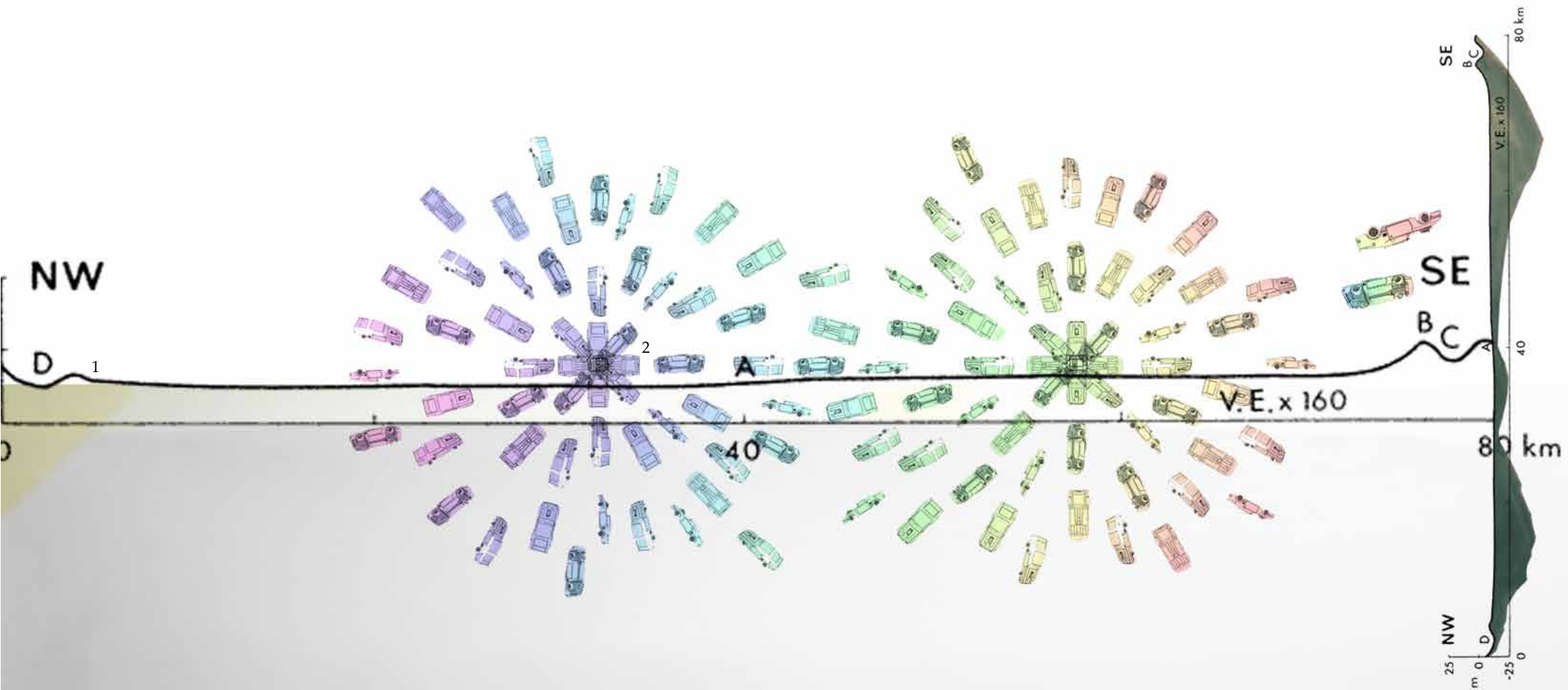
9. Oil and water are immiscible

10. Charles Sturt made a religiously motivated expedition into the Outback, in search for an inland sea. He was informed by stories told by people such as Thomas J. Maslen. Maslen drew a famous fictionalized map of Australia featuring a heart-shaped lake, connected to the ocean by a giant river labeled 'The Great River or the Desired Blessing'. Sturt, with a crew of men, carried a 10 foot whaleboat 2,000km into the Outback, before having to abandon it. In many folklore the origins of the dwelling house is described as a boat turned upside down.

11. Curmudgeon: *Paradise! Two thousand miles from here. Fresh water. Plenty of sunshine. Nothing to do but breed!*

[Gives Max a knowing wink]

From *Mad Max 2*, director George Miller, 1981.



life on wheels' my life on wheels' life in a wheel confined to a wheel' | Look for-ward to the day when I will leap from my wheel with full confidence

III: *The Return*

Adventure / Chora / Essence / Distance / Formless / Venustas / Will / Emotion / The Holy Spirit / Rock n' Roll

1. The salty shores of Lake Eyre are filled with many tales. Early colonial explorers greeted it with dread and disappointment. John Edward Eyre discovered it, whilst on an adjacent landmass which he named Mt Hopeless. John Walter Gregory after an inland expedition would later write a book about the Lake entitled "The Dead Heart of Australia".

2. Catherine Simpson argues Australian filmmakers regularly replace the dialectic between invader and invaded with a dialectic between pioneer (white car-driver) and nature. This climaxes in the crash where the driver is thrown out on the landscape - and if the driver dies and their body merges with the land through the car, they become a martyr in the colonial effort. Although indigenous people are "over-represented in road fatalities by approximately 3.5 times", indigenous films do not generally depict car crashes. Catherine Simpson, *Antipodean Automobility and Crash: Treachery, Trespass and Transformation of the Open Road*, <http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-September-2006/simpson.html>