# Chapter II

## The Centre of Attention

The future is somehow...
somewhere in the despised and neglected desert,
the belly of the country
not the coastal rind.
The secret is in the emptiness.
The message is the thing we have feared,
the thing we have avoided
that we have looked at and skirted.
The secret will transform us
and give us the heart to transform emptiness.
If we go there and listen
We will hear the voice of the eternal.
The eternal says that we are at the beginning of time.
(David Ireland, *Last Words,* 1979: 349)

This chapter argues that the image of Ayers Rock has been staged as the imagined embodiment of a promised inland paradise that in actuality failed to materialize for the first European explorers. Ayers Rock has subsequently served as the physical and culturally locatable focus or marker point, for those non-Aboriginal visitors seeking some tangible expression for their own mission of discovery.

The following sections of this chapter analyse, in turn, how the anxiety of a perceived empty centre has grown into a phobia – how lapidarian fantasies, anthropomorphic metaphors and Oriental analogies have been employed to give the Rock a familiar face to what David Ireland refers above to as the "despised and neglected desert" (Ireland, 1979: 349).

### 2.1 Anxieties of an Empty Centre.

David Ireland's poem cited above replays the myth of an outback paradise diminished then he mounts a mission to find another reborn paradise somewhere within the "belly" central Australia that gives birth to time. In conforming to the image of a paradise reborn, Ireland cries out for some secret key to unlock our sense of belong to the land. Yet, coming through the poem, there is a slightly pathetic awareness that although the conviction is strong, our quest is still doomed. Ireland's call has a rather desperate ring it. The land is too vast, alien and incommensurable to be controlled by European desires. In order to overcome our fearful lonely voices of the empty centre echoing the names of explorer-prophets such as Sturt, Eyre and Mitchell, Ireland constructs an appeal to an eternal voice of truth that will galvanise all contemporary tourists – they are standing at the source of time and at the signpost Rock that fixes this fact for all to see.

Having invented the Rock as a central marker from Gosse onwards, Europeans proceeded to rationalize the Rock as a symbol of the dialectical opposition between nature and culture – between desert and garden or wasteland and plentitude. Since 1872 the Rock has been press-ganged the Rock into the service of nationalistic myths of one kind or other, be it the Bicentennial of 1988 or a new model Ford car. However, there stills exists an underlying tension within the centric notion of an Australian heartland. The land must first of all be imagined as landscape: that is, constructed as territory that can be taken charge of, rendered safe and suitable for manipulation and consumption. Every nation be definition constructs it own naturalised , fixed, locatable centre. In Australia, geography failed to provide an obvious centre for the first European explorers. The resulting tension produced what has been termed as the "anxiety of the centre".

In his article on "Antipodean semiotics," academic David Wills suggests that "there exists in the Australian context something that might be called an anxiety of the centre, a fear generated by the absence of that centre" (Wills, 1984: 98). Following the work of Foss (1981), Botsman (1981) and Morris (1984) who all speak of the myth of an empty centre, Wills is also drawn to the empty centre trope to characterise the state of Australia's intellectual and artistic topography carved out by French, English and American imperialism.

Borrowing Wills' notion this thesis argues that anxieties of the centre have affected the advertising industry's conception of the outback, and in particular, Uluru's resistant position as the central marker of that empty centre. Resistant in the sense that over the last few decades Uluru has become a symbol of an increasingly crowded centre.

Over the last thirty years the image of Ayers Rock (and more recently Uluru) has come to occupy the position of, as Thomas Keneally phrased it, "supreme symbol of that hinterland known as the Outback" (Keneally, 1986: 60). There has been an increasing desire on the part of thinkers like Ireland to hold the Rock up as a symbol of hope: of the nation's economic and cultural future made solid again.

Ayers Rock is the phallic pillar or navel stone that stands silently between us and any notion of some magical centre. The immense Rock symbolises, for non–Aborigines, a certain topophobia or fear of flat open spaces at the centre. The solitary presence of the Rock highlights the absence of other meaningful signs. Anxieties of the empty centre are prompted by the fear that nothing of comfort can be found in the outback. As Paul Foss remarked, "the imagery of the void resounds like a mantra throughout the pages of all of Australia's discoveries" (Foss, 1981: 31). The interior made void produced a vacuum that in turn provoked a certain desire to incorporate (make solid again) this image as a model for other Australian ventures.

Observing Australia as an island continent, Paul Foss argues that islands tend to culturally "die from the inside out" and therefore "islands can only survive by facing their interior" (Foss, 1981: 37). The more uncertain Australia's economic and political position becomes in recent deregulated post-cold war environment, the more government and advertising heads have turned towards the centre for reassuring images of cultural security and national difference.

As a touchstone for a rising mantra of nationalism during the 1980s, Uluru became the focal point for a number of cultural and political debates involving questions of Aboriginal landrights, tourism, advertising and national identity. Uluru grew into a crowded meeting place for radical and conservative voices alike. Largely as a result of these political and cultural struggles, Uluru has maintained its currency as a favourite advertising icon, since advertisers can now be assured of attracting the market's attention to a client's product.

Much of the symbolic power attributed to the Rock by the advertising and media industries stems

from the historical awareness that Uluru was one of the last places to be colonised by Europeans, and also one of the first major sacred sites to be handed back to the traditional owners.

The Koori activist and writer, Burraga Gutya, sheds further light on the political importance of Uluru for Aboriginal people:

> It is here we find the reason that Uluru is extremely significant to not only the rightful owners but to all Aboriginal people in Australia. Given the vicious cultural bludgeoning the rest of us had been subjected to since 1788, it is little wonder that we embraced the Centre as being symbolic of the life that had been so callously denied us (Gutya, 1987: 5).

While Ayers Rock remains the most recognisable Australian landmark overseas, Uluru remains the most mysterious, unknowable and mythologised cultural icon for non-Aborigines at home.

If the centre of Australia is today symbolic of a life denied to Aborigines Australia–wide, then historically the centre was also a symbol for European settlers of all that was alien, different and fearful about the Australian continent. Up until the early twentieth century the centre was the place where people lost their dreams, had their hearts broken, died of thirst or were murdered by 'wild savages'. Throughout the nineteenth century sun-bleached skeletons silently populated the landscape as a legacy to failed visions. Newspapers still run stories of those early colonisers who perished while invading Aboriginal lands. In 1958, after Harold Lasseter's grave was discovered, the Telegraph retold the stories of other deaths including that of C. W. Kraeger, a telegraph operator who died of thirst:

> He was found at the foot of an iron telegraph pole which had salvation in the wires on top. He had tried to climb the pole to tap the line but was too weak and fell down. Two of his mates, Muller and Watson, were also dying of thirst, but they killed a horse, drank its blood, and survived (Lockwood, 1958: 5).

**2.2 Plato's Vision Imported**

Anxieties of an empty Australian interior have their roots in European mythology dating back to the Plato's mythical vision of Atlantis and the land-locked globe. Plato's theory, maintained that everything was relatable to a centre (located in Greece on the top of the world) that was balanced at the periphery (of the Antipodean great south land) according to a weights and measures principle:

> The power of the Antipodean image remained unassailed throughout the period stretching from the sixth century BC up to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when it began to stabilise as a locatable geographical identity (Foss, 1981: 27).

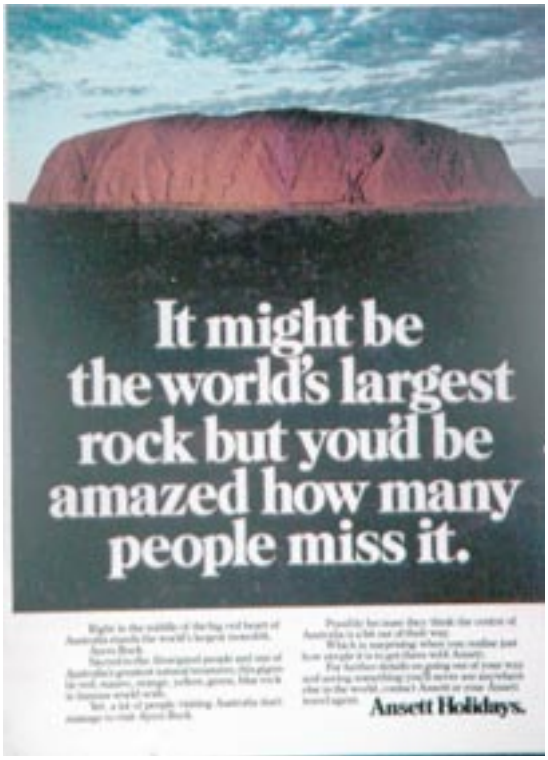
The dream of a utopian centre in a land-locked continent to the south, that could mirror the northern Paradise, was largely shattered long before the inland of *Terra Australasia* was sighted by Europeans. The further the boundaries of the known world were pushed back, the faster European optimism about the Antipodes waned. As Foss explains, the antipodean myth locates the *dead heart* as a suitable site for the disappearance of a nation's hopes, desires and fears:

> The power of this image is legendary, threatening to draw everything (men, artefacts, ambitions) into its orbit of annihilation. From the very first moment of "discovery", no typography even to break the silent stretch of nothing. Just a fiery vacuum, smokes on the horizon. Whoever challenged it was enthralled by the delirium of disappearance: its, as well as their own. Even today, as you drift across

its monotonous terrain, words fail, hope fades and visions flee into the distance (Foss, 1981: 17).

Colonial images of an empty interior or *void extent*, as Foss has termed it, can be traced to comments made by the first European explorers to reach the Australian coast, including Jansz & Roossengin (1606); Carstensz & Joosten (1623); Pelsaert (1629); Amsterdam & Wesel (1636); Tasman (1644); Dampier (1688) and Vlamingh (1696). Each of these men spoke of the strange new country as a waste-land made up of vast desolate regions stretching as far as the eye could see. Back in Europe the first reports on the nature of the great south land failed to match any promised Arcadian or Edenic visions. Returning abject images only served to fuel images of inversion already attached to the upside-down underworld of Terra Incognita (Ortelius 1570, Plancio 1594). The meaningful centre became instead the meaningless void.
To them the land appeared silent. No familiar signs of habitation or civilisation could be found along the endless reaches of a featureless coastline. The few Aborigines to be sighted were, according to Vlamingh, savage, naked beach runners who without riches seemed ignorant of cultivation and industrial enterprise. All anxieties need feeding, and fears concerning the empty centre were strengthened during the early days of colonial settlement by the perceived absence of any site of economic significance such as inland sea ports, mountains, or rich pastoral tracts. These severe impressions of the country and its inhabitants laid the ground for later 19th century explorers who attempted to find something of worth in the centre. *Terra Australis* was a land that had to be rewritten and reimaged.


2.1 1988. - T Shirt souvenir: Yulara Resort Newsagency.




2.2 1988. - Print advertisement.
Client: Ansett Holidays.

## 2.3 "Somewhere in Australia."

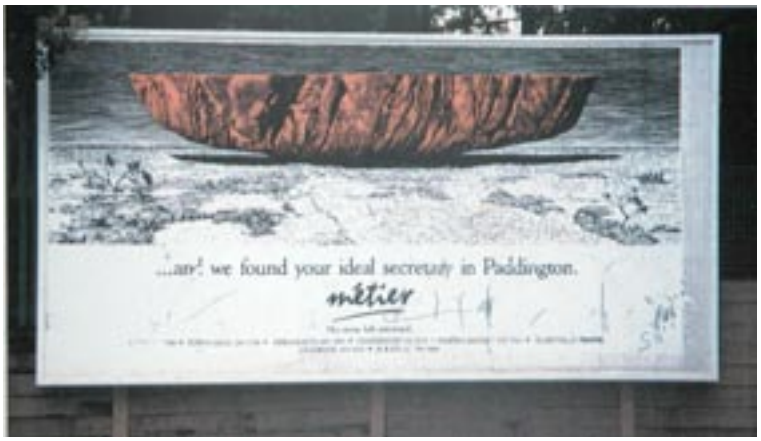
Since its invention, Ayers Rock has at different times become a suitable symbol for all imperialist dreams in need of a geographical anchor and a symbolic objective. One of the more graphic illustrations of the empty centre anxiety complex can be found in the tourist souvenir market.

The popular souvenir T-shirt (**Fig. 2.1**) ironically foregrounds the fear that Ayers Rock has been lost "somewhere in Australia". This phrase comes from the a poem of the same title written by a soldier stationed in the centre during World War II:

> Somewhere in Australia where the sun is like
> a curse,
> And each long day is followed by another slightly
> worse,
> Where the brick–red dust blows thicker than the
> shifting desert sand,
> And all men dream and wish for a fairer, dearer
> land (Flynn, 1964: 2).

In the T–shirt design the rock-solid position of Australia's central marker is rendered like the shifting desert sand geographically uncertain. Maybe the world's largest monolith only existed as a fictional construct. Within this drama of shifting signifiers, Ayers Rock threatens to disappear into the void along with Leichhardt's bones and the failed dreams of golden investments.

The airline industry has also felt nervous on occasion about Ayers Rock's geographical location. The campaign for Ansett Holidays (**Fig. 2.2**) produced during Australia's Bicentennial year is an example of searching for a national identity through concrete markers. The Ansett advertisement plays on the anxiety of an invisible or unlocatable centre, by contrasting the huge size of the rock with its isolated position. Ansett Travel also fear missing out on potential customers, because, as their advertisement copy states, tourists "think the centre of Australia is a bit out of their way." Australia's "big red heart" is so remote that the anxiety of isolation is extended through the hyperbolic play on the spatial insignificance of a traveller moving through the vast outback. Lying on the edge of the cultural unknown, Ayers Rock functions for most suburban tourists as a metaphoric heart where all other comforting signs have failed to appear.




2.3 1990. - Billboard poster. Client: Metier. Agency: Austin Knight.

If the desert is symbolic of various ecstatic tales of disappearance, then Ayers Rock is also that imaginary place to which all disappearing cultural images gravitate. Even office secretaries are contrived to lie dormant under Ayers Rock, waiting to be reborn as office workers, as the Metier billboard advertisement **(Fig 2.3)** ironically suggests. As the Metier copy quips, no stone has been left unturned in the search for "your ideal secretary." The ad message plays on the saying "no stone left unturned" to carry the visual joke. The word *secretary*, however has been cleverly edited by some passing commuter to read instead: as "we found your ideal *secret* in Paddington." The graffiti-subverted message rhetorically inverts the flow of connotations back towards Paddington, whence the Metier fantasy of an ideal secretary came from, along with the ideology of its initial appearance.

The anonymous commuting critic was also right to say that deserts are also places where secrets are thought to reside. This myth of the desert secret is connected to the Biblically drived image of the Wild Man who "knew certain secrets of nature that had been lost to men in the process of civilisation" (Turner, 1983: 205). The aim on the part of the first Europeans to enter the New World, was to capture one of these wild men in order to learn and retain those portions of the lost human heritage. The Metier secretary metaphorically found under Ayers Rock conforms to this myth by signifying both wild woman and lost secret of order and efficiency. For the client the where abouts of feral secretaries is a mystery known only to Metier. Ayers Rock symbolises the myth of mysterious origins. Ross Gibson mentions that the centre lies in "that region which would retain its mystery longer than any other" (Gibson, 1984: 34). Notions of the mysterious are, in the case of Ayers Rock, bound to those phenomena which can not be contained by history, science or language, and, as a consequence, descriptions or interpretations of the nature of Ayers Rock tend to be characterised by images of excess or lack.

Given that the centre is replete with stories of dramatic losses, disturbing illusions and extreme states of being, the urban imagination is also drawn to the outback as a space of adventure, release; and even meditation. As Fiske suggests:

> the limitations of white urban society, symbolically as well as geographically on the fringe of the nation, underlie the awe at the vastness and emptiness of Australia's centre. The more crowded and confining our cities appear, the greater the significance of the empty interior (Fiske et al, 1987:129).

Any image of an empty land where no one can live without going crazy cannot escape the dramatic history of those explorers (Burke and Wills, Leichhardt, Gibson) who died trying to pass through the red hole of the centre. On those occasions when exhausted and delirious men did miraculously return, it was to tell a shocked public that nothing of value could be found out there amongst the endless sandhills of spinifex and saltbush.

This melancholy image is reinforced by David Ireland, who sees the centre, in his novel *A Woman of the Future*, as a dangerous place where "everyday the quiet tides of darkness roll over us from the menacing interior" (Ireland, 1980: 310). Yet it is to the centre that people have repeatedly gone, like Biblical ascetics, Odysseus or volunteers for The French Foreign Legion, to lose themselves or alternatively to find out who they really are. Within this purging occupation of going to the desert to dry-out, all the cultural wetness of the symbolic social "I" is burned off the city-regulated self. The dry-cleaned psyche is stripped down to a *tabula rasa* "me", upon which can be inscribed a new imaginary, born out of this ascetic existence. Robyn Davidson, who trekked by camel across the centre in the footsteps of the early explorers, made the comment that "the self in a desert becomes more and more like the desert" (Davidson, 1979: 197). However much the traveller desires to leave all cultural and political baggage behind when entering the desert, the expedition is

always a strategic mission, a reconnaissance beyond the limits of the known world. All too often the goal of these missions and quests is to return home with enough evidence to support or disprove some image of the centre constructed before they ever left the coast.

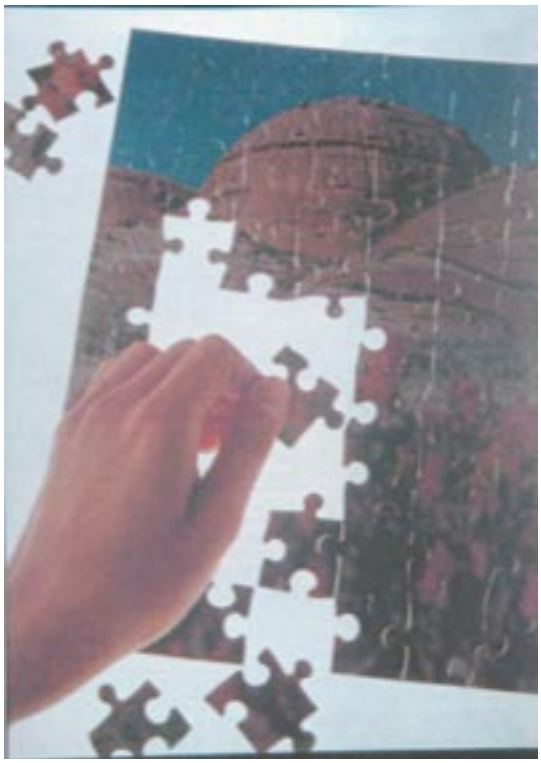
**2.4 Scopic Regimes of Space**

The immense space of the outback was divided into regions by the first surveyors in order to harden the reality of its appearance and control its vast undifferentiated emptiness. The Aborigines before them had also divided up the land into territories governed by language, law and the practical limitations concerning supplies of food and water. Yet the two cultures possessed radically different ways of seeing and relating to the country they lived in.

While a detailed analysis of Anangu methods of perceiving the land is not within the scope of this thesis, the *scopic regimes* (to borrow a term from Christian Metz – *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*) employed by European settlers to control the flows of power, information and cultural diversity, deserve further scrutiny.

The outback was carved up by the first European cartographers, using Cartesian principles of spatial order: within hierarchies and binary oppositions based on Euclidean geometry, grid structures, classical perspective and the panopticon system of controlling lines of sight. As Elizabeth Ferrier outlines, "the viewing subject is discretely positioned at a superior and central vantage point, separate from and having command over the totality that is observed" (Ferrier, 1990: 38). Working physically from the outside in and imaginatively from the inside out, surveyors built up a system of radial straight lines that joined the centre to its circumferential points. The coastal reaches then continued to refer to, and be assured by, that imaginary central marker. A testament to this cartographical practice can be found on top of Ayers Rock (**Fig. 2.4**).

2.4 1958. - Survey marker on top of Ayers Rock showing geographical locations. Installed by the Division of National Mapping, Department of National Development.



2.5 1988. - Graphic illustration from Australian Airlines brochure. Mt Olga ( Kata Tjuta) jigsaw puzzle.

The Ayers Rock Geographic Survey Marker was erected in 1957 by the Department of National Development. A cartogram drawn in bronze shows a number of sighting lines radiating from the cairn on top of the Rock in all directions. The erection of the marker was as much a geopolitical gesture as a geographical one. All Australian tourist maps (marking economic and cultural lines of flight) feel the pull of the Red Heart. The advertisement for the multinational United Airlines begins with a pullout zoom shot from the top of Ayers Rock. The centre of Australia is constructed as a launching pad for all other flight paths "across the friendly skies" as the voice over suggests.

From Gosse and Giles through to contemporary advertising agencies, the same political viewpoint has framed the centre as a blank space to be filled in, rather like some giant jigsaw puzzle. The Australian Airlines travel brochure (**Fig. 2.5**) transposes a jigsaw grid over a view of Kata Tjuta. The company asks the tourist to "Design Your Own Holidays" by constructing key activities and views as pieces of a universal tourist puzzle. As one piece of the outback jigsaw puzzle, Ayers Rock must be first created, shaped, then fitted according to particular strategies of controlling the play; be they of an economic, tourist or advertising imperative. Ayers Rock is a major piece of the outback advertising puzzle, and its currency is largely as an object that has faithfully maintained its shape since its creation millions of years ago.


2.6 1989. - Cartoon by Matthew Martin in The Good Weekend. S.M.H. March 4, p9.

The idea of filling in the geographical and cultural outback as an empty centre jigsaw puzzle, presupposes that there exists some real external land waiting to be discovered, imaged and pieced together to build a unified seamless picture. The Australian writer Frank Clune, who wrote for the leading popular magazines *Walkabout* and *Australia Today* during the 1930s and 1940s, made clear his motive for travelling into the empty centre: "I wanted to fill in some of the blanks on the map at Australia's heart...the mysterious Red Heart of the continent" (Farwell, 1950: 224).

Clune adopts chapter headings such as *Phantoms of the Plain, Probing the Blank Space, Filling in the Blanks, Lakes in the Land of Loneliness* and *Adventure's End* in his book *Last of the Australian Explorers*, published in 1942, detailing the exploits of Donald Mackay, who, amongst other things, carried out the first aerial survey of the centre during the 1930s. In his biography of Mackay, Clune sought to employ images of a land waiting to be discovered, written down, mapped and opened up for exploitation. According to Clune, it was through the actions of these early explorers who ventured into the desert that "a few more names were added to the official map, and one more patch of *terra incognita* had been unveiled"

(Clune, 1942: 235). Clune refers here to a 'Desert Without a Name' which reinforced the need for explorers such as Mackay to name the emptiness in order for it to exist as a real desert; or to use Clune's words, to lift the veil of the unknown, to reveal the object of desire (or at least lay the ground for its appearance), not only as a manageable piece of property, but also as a naturalised spectacle of wonder.

The birth of Ayers Rock as a unique object is transferred at the level of myth to the launch of new products. Two prominent TV advertisements begin with creation images of Ayers Rock. We are taken through a geological time-travel fantasy in the case of the United Permanent Building Society, and a corporate *dreamtime* revisionist story for Yulara Corporation. A parodic interpretation of European myths surrounding Anangu creation laws concerning the origins of Uluru is concisely handled in Matthew Martin's cartoon (**Fig. 2.6**). Jean Baudrillard travelled through the outback and concluded that "a race come here to live must invent sacrifices equal to the natural cataclysmic order of the surroundings" (Baudrillard, 1987b: 48). A harsh country produces tough people who must suffer the revenge of nature. The politics of landrights has invented sacrifices and gains for both immigrant and indigenous peoples. The so called empty centre has become a hot house of political and legal struggle by Aborigines for landrights, economic and cultural independence. With the recent Mabo case causing major divisions within and across Australian society, it is clear that strong fears and prejudice still exist at the top of conservative politics, mining industries and the media.

The treatment of politically sensitive issues by the comic media is always a good indicator of public opinion since cartoonists and comedians have the greatest licence to voice what people are thinking but can't always say in public. During the Bicentenary in 1988, the popular television series *The Comedy Company* depicted Uluru as a huge rock built out of chicken wire, housing a very old man who is angered because the Dreamtime has now turned into a nightmare reminiscent of the imprisoned old man in William Blake's *The Book of Urizen* (1794), the a counter–myth to the Bible and the story of Genesis:

> Restless turn'd the immortal, inchain'd
> Heaving dolorous! anguish'd! unbearable,
> Till a roof, shaggy, wild, inclos'd
> In an orb, his fountain of thought (Chap: IV-5).

Whereas Blake's *Urizen* is satire on the Bible, the Comedy Company sketch is a parody of an Anangu creation myth ritually recounted by coach drivers to tourists at Ayers Rock. Here the story is told by Derek Roff, a Park Ranger at the Rock for over fifteen years with the Northern Territory Tourist Commission:

> ... the old Mala man who, when his people had reached Uluru, sought a sign to impress upon them the importance of the site. He had piled the sand of the desert into a great heap. To make it solid and enduring, he had opened the veins of his arms and poured his blood over the sand. At the end of the dreamtime, the pile of sand became the Rock (Roff, 1979: 19).

Martin's cartoon draws, in turn, on the idea of falling soft objects (a red handkerchief) made solid by the cooling of time. An earlier version of this celestial conception theory can be found in the writings of Ericksen, who found in Ayers Rock:

> a mystical sense of Trinity evoked ... one can almost understand why a few people deny geological authority and accept a miraculous belief that these rocks fell from the sky, hit the earth with a colossal thump, buried their undersides deep in the sand, and stuck where they fell like pebbles dropped on a soft pad of putty (Ericksen, 1972: 175).

Ayers Rock here strikes Ericksen as an alien geological phenomenon that can only be fully explained by resorting to theories of comet-born creation.

As a practicing Anangu sacred site, Uluru has been appropriated by advertisers and tourist agencies alike as an Australian Rock of Ages, as a Northern Territory Tourist Commission pamphlet of 1979 illustrated. Ayers Rock is that one "place in the world where the enormity of nature and the antiquity of the earth that supports it is most evident" (NTTC, 1979:2). Time and space at the centre are at once held in place by the presence of Ayers Rock and yet, paradoxically, like some giant magnet, seems to bend temporal and spacial logic to affect what visitors have called a "strange spiritual experience of being in its presence" (NTTC: 2).

## 2.3 Bending Time at the Centre.

Ayers Rock is also symbolic of the inexorable passing of time. Alternatively, Ayers Rock symbolises the incommensurability of change in the outback. Ayers Rock holds time in suspended animation. These popular myths reinforce the view that Aboriginal culture has been frozen in some European ethno-cryonic fantasy of its own origins. The travel writer Z.V. Webb visited Ayers Rock in 1957, and was overcome by a "strange spiritual experience." Webb explained his experience by recourse to the myth of primitivism. In an appeal to anthropomorphism Webb connects the image of The Rock to Father Time:

> It was dusk when we came to the Rock and it loomed before us, huge and primitive - old as Time (Webb, 1957: 9).

Its huge size, unusual shape and relative isolation in the landscape qualify *the Rock* as a major index of a time beyond culture. Inside this time zone things are frozen, asleep; or in fast or slow motion. Time becomes spatial, eternal and spread out flat to the horizon. For Errol Coote, Ayers Rock is a marker of time, a metaphorical hourglass through which pass the "sands of eternity" (Coote, 1934: 215). Similarly, for Jean Baudrillard, the desert is a place of "suspended eternity in which the year is renewed every day, with the certainty that it will be like this each day" (Baudrillard, 1987a: 135). Yet this inexorable passing of outback time is fatiguing for Baudrillard, who finds the centre energy–sapping

> not so much from the fatigue that comes from the distance and heat, from an advance into the visible desert of space, but from the fatigue born of the irreversible advance in the desert of time (Baudrillard, 1987b:50).

Baudrillard's view of Ayers Rock as the beginning or end of time, is at variance with the image projected by Harold Groom. In his travel novel, *I Saw A Strange Land*, Groom declared that Ayers Rock could not be bound by conventional notions of time. The closer one gets to the Rock, the further away it appears to be: it "seemed still years away as a reward only to be gained at the end life's span" (Groom, 1950: 159). The reward of reaching the Rock is a Holy Grail metaphor faithful to the Christian pilgrimage trail. This revelationary aspect of a continually deferred arrival is also an attempt to engage with the greatest of all myths: the origin of the world. The frustration experienced by Groom is a recognition that the nature of time cannot be determined apart from physical spatial events. In other words, reality is always bigger than any actual lived experience of it.

Most people who spend any length of time travelling by foot in the outback have tended to agree with Ernest

Giles, who admitted to losing track of time during his own odyssey up and down the hypnotic rolling sands.

Losing a sense of time in the desert is exactly the reason why so many tourists are attracted to the centre. In the late 1970s, the outback adventurer, Robyn Davidson, found when she crossed the outback by camel in the footsteps of Giles and Forrest, that her city time had been turned inside out:

> I had realised that in the desert time refused to structure itself. It preferred instead to flow in curlicues, vortices and tunnels, and besides it didn't matter (Davidson, 1979:201).

When the traveller enters the centre, she steps outside of city deadlines, routines and a lifestyle built on a poverty of existential pleasures. The promised benefits can only be gained at the end of life's span (in retirement) and is traditionally embodied in the round-Australia-retirement-holiday. This superannuated Odyssey was completed in a caravan, although nowadays the four wheel drive land cruiser has stepped up the pace. Bound by the pressures of mortality, this journey itself seems to take a second lifetime to traverse *The Land Which Time Forgot,* to borrow the title of the popular 1971 Hollywood cult film. This idea, of a dormant Ayers Rock, is also alluded to by Harris, when he writes of "a land where time seems to stand still" (Harris 1968: 21). The difference between the speed of time in the city versus the timelessness the *never–never,* is difficult to deal with for the most tourists entering the centre. The first Park Ranger at Uluru, Bill Harney, was fond of telling tourists in 1958 that

> in no other place is so much ritual, so much myth concentrated in one mountain. Ayers Rock is Uluru, the Uluru of the tribes-people. According to the tribal lore, Uluru was created by the Earth-mother and her Heroes in the dawn of time. Now they are all asleep in the mountain - asleep, not dead, for they are revitalised at each ritual time of their Aboriginal people (Rees, 1970:79).

These images of sleeping Aboriginal spirits match closely European myths of sleeping giants. This loss of meaning in translation in turn produces a new text and a new set of myths. Frank Flynn attempted to contain the excess of meaning he read from Ayers Rock by giving it an anthropomorphic nature. The Rock was an untameable thing beyond the control of culture, so that

> when perhaps Alice has gone, Ayers Rock still will brood in its desert, mighty in size, changing so slowly that a million years would make little discernible difference; dwarfing man and his puny efforts to tame a timeless land (Flynn, 1964: 77).

If the romantic image of a timeless land unchanged by human intervention was a fantasy entertained by Flynn, then this same image has already become a cliched advertising ploy justifying the cultivation of commodities in the marketplace by making them appear innocent. Advertisements constantly play on this connotation of Ayers Rock's timeless nature. In a testimonial appearance, the Rock is visually and/or linguistically linked, rhetorically, to a product's unique selling proposition. The result is often a crude parody of Anangu creation myths. In an advertisement for a car polish, the Rock appears as a huge car washing sponge. The Kitten Car Polish advertisement (**Fig. 4.11**) draws on connotations of durability ( duco made tough as the Rock) and permanence of colour and finish, when the voice over states that the polish "shines through time after time." Here the decay time is slowed down by the protective actions of the polish. The shine lasts for ages.

A next few advertising examples have linked their product (benefits) to notions of millennial time, durability, safety trustworthiness or dependability.

The United Permanent Building Society Advertisement of 1984 began with the statement: "Fifteen hundred million years ago a symbol was born - a new symbol for United Permanent." Yulara Corporation

promoted its new resort town as "a place where the sands of a million years stood still and the comforts meet every whim of today's visitors. A place unobtrusive in one of the world's last true sanctuaries. The dream is reality in the concept of Yulara Village" (Kitchen, 1981: 4). Both campaigns sought to naturalise the commodification of Uluru by constructing their enterprises as an innocent consequence of time and progress.

This dream–like advertising scenario was replayed at the Sheraton Hotel in Yulara during 1988. Playing on the linear Newtonian concept of time, the print advertisement caption suggested that: "It took me 5 million years to find it [Ayers Rock]." The narrative imperative here drives the tourist (on a pilgrimage in search of the Holy Grail of hotels) through a time governed by destiny. Arriving at Ayers Rock by camel, the metaphorical ship of the desert and signifier of Biblical times, this is also a parody of the early outback explorers. In this instance however, the tourist is being led by a servant/chauffeur instead of an Aboriginal or Afghan driver. The camel has also been pressed into service advertising American cigarettes as well as American owned tourist resorts. Even in the farthest reaches of the outback there is no escape from the commodification of nature as the Sydney poet, John Forbes suggests in *The Search for the Golden Boomerang*. Forbes paints a hyper–real picture of the centre built on Camel cigarette packets, tourist place names and images drawn from advertisements (including Malibu, **Fig. 4.51**):

> A packet of cigarettes lies on the sand
> outside a hotel. Thrown away it comes back
> & I can spend on beer what would've gone
> on cigarettes. The hotel is on the back of
> the pack. It's like a Hollywood Arabian nights
> version of the Hydro–Majestic plonked down
> on the Birdsville track. The sun's so hot
> a match dropped on the sand flares like a
> dirty weekend. I light my cigarette & go in
> - it's cool inside our best inventions; my
> favourite ad asks, 'I made this, could you?'
> But I can't relax & let myself imagine
> Ayers Rock as just a huge lump of hash.
> Before that the Mirage Bar must blur to meet
> the Cafe Oasis & the camels of the parched
> explorers must graze & drink on the shores
> of a beautiful Inland Sea. Its breezes cool the hotel veranda & the schooners ride, gently
> before my eyes. Before I can buy another
> drink there must be 15c in spare change
> cellotaped to the front of the CAMEL pack.

Yulara Corporation's 1990 billboard and print campaign (**Fig. 2.7**) also played on the always–already–there (boomerang) aspect of their product in an attempt to naturalise the sudden appearance of a high tech resort complex into the environment. The Yulara slogan encouraged tourists to "spend a few days in the resort that's taken 600 million years to create." Within this rhetorical hyperbole, Ayers Rock was always been destined to be the showcase exhibit of Yulara corporation, as natural and innocent as the land. The politics of tourism, and Yulara's role in the flow of visitors and dollars within Anangu culture, is elided by the


2.7 1990. - Billboard (also T.V. and print campaign) Client: Yulara Corporation. Agency: Saatchi & Saatchi

2.8 1988. - Bicentennial watch souvenir. Bicentennial Merchanising Catalogue p.4.

absence of any Anangu from the picture, either pictorially or textually. If it took 600 million years to create Yulara resort, then it only took 200 years to construct Ayers Rock as the national time keeper. The appeal here is to always push back the mists of time towards some beginning of truth, some origin of European (or Aboriginal) culture and history. As though the difference between 50,000 and 100,000 years means the difference between legitimacy and illegitimacy. This positivist myth was celebrated in a small way by the official merchandising of The Ayers Rock Bicentennial Souvenir Watch (**Fig. 2.8**).
The hands of Australian time turn at the centre of the Rock's base, denoting the symbolic point and political 'standard' of Australian Bicentennial time.

The concept of Ayers Rock as a marker of temporal and spatial difference was given a physical representation by Frank Clune, who used the metaphor of a sun-dial to characterise Ayers Rock as a central keeper and marker of time. Clune read the Rock's "shadow across the sands relentlessly marking the passage of the days-the years-the centuries" (Clune, 1944: 24).

These early constructions of Ayers Rock as a huge sun-dial; or a living or dead heart of the continent, have led to a range of rhetorical images of the Rock being moulded into advertising strategies for various commodities and services. More often than not, these campaigns have wandered into the realms of fantasy to sell their messages to a market hungry for new fictions.

## 2.4 Rock Fantasies.

Even fantasies can be packaged. Fantasies sell commodities and commodities sell fantasies. The fantasy weaves together the imaginary of a spiritual unity with nature and a certain sensualism drawn from the referent. The first commodity fantasy directly attached to Ayers Rock was mineralogical. Besides any utilitarian value of empirically confirming or denying the presence of gold and other minerals, mineralogical fantasies gain value on the level of the imaginary. A fantasy of an enormous gemstone inspires and legitimates the flow of investors and prospectors, both material and cultural, into the outback. An imaginary

place lends the traveller an ideal goal, a direction and a rationale (Carter, 1987).

The dream of Ayers Rock as a huge gold nugget or a gemstone sets up The Rock as a transcendent value, an ideal which can then be transferred onto base objects and enterprises in need of motivation. The following quote from Bill Harney paints Ayers Rock in just these terms:

> 'Tis morning and the eastern walls of the mountains gleam as a ball of gold with the rising sun. In a flash the scene changes to the blood-red of rubies then through a range of shades which remind me of some giant pedlar of gems who is displaying his wares upon a platter of grey-green tree shades (Harney, 1963: 185).

The desert is a popular site for both prospecting and psychological self searching. Both involve hardship bordering on self sacrifice and both activities promise a transformation of one's lot in life. The ancient art of alchemy combines the search for gold and spiritual self perfection. The symbol for gold in alchemical language is the sun - a circle with a dot at the centre. The transmutation of base earth into gold is a metaphor for turning the imperfect soul into divine perfection.

Australian prospectors are faithful to this ideal and the comparison can be stretched to say that their philosophers' stone is a projection of the redeemer image onto Ayers Rock. While the prospector seeks to relieve the earth of its precious metals, the alchemist labours "in the cause of the divine world soul slumbering and waiting redemption in matter" (Holmyard, 1968: 164).The prospect of mining Ayers Rock is well outside the legal and cultural boundaries of the National Park. The tourist and advertising sponsored alchemical labourers of today's Ayers Rock are concerned more with dollars than with any divine redemption. Yet, the current policy doesn't lessen the power of the Rock to function as an imaginary signifier of some secret, unknown, and condensed wealth that can then metonymically point to all buried treasures (secrets of wealth) hidden in the centre as a whole.


2.9 1969. - Print advertisement. Client: Commercial Bank of Australia. In Australia Today, October 3., p.13.


2.10 1988. - Shopping mall promotional traveling installation where customers pay for the chance to "dig for a diamond" in a box of "outback desert sand".

In **Fig. 2.9** the Commercial Bank advertisement shows a mock eighteenth century map of New Holland with the title *The Treasure Island Continent* and the caption "we dig it here" referring to the many sites of mining in Australia financed by the Bank. The body copy of the advertisement states that

> For over a 100 years, The Commercial Bank of Australia Limited has assisted the pioneers and their successors to develop this vast continent and will continue to take an active part in the promotion of trade, industry and investment.

The adventurer and journalist John Bechervaise speaks of hearing "whispers of fabulous reefs where gold lay gleaming in the sun" (Bechervaise, 1967: 124). One of loudest siren-like whispers heard from the mythical gold reefs around Ayers Rock is the famous story of Lasseter's Gold played out in 1930. In his preface to Errol Coote's account of his role in the Lasseter expedition, the famous Australian aviator, Sir Kingsford Smith, saw the promise of gold as adding some excitement and purpose to "the dreary sun-baked solitudes of our little-known interior [that] beckon adventurous souls on and on, with the gold that must be there" (Coote, 1934: 17). Ayers Rock was an important base for Lasseter's gold prospecting trip, as is recorded by the team pilot Errol Coote in his book *Hell's Airport*. Lasseter initially gained support for his vision of a mountain of gold in the desert, telling a tale that had an uncanny resemblance to the plot of John Sayces' *Golden Buckle* novel published some ten years earlier. In Sayces' *Golden Buckle* there is also mention of "Toolooru", possibly a link to Uluru. Both tales tell of a lost reef, and prophetically of a prospector dying of thirst and being revived at the last moment. Lasseter's story, of how he had previously found gold, convinced the union bosses in Sydney to fund his search for the reef which lay beyond Ayers Rock. After fighting with his companions, Lasseter struck out alone into the desert west of Ayers Rock. Lasseter died in 1930 of exhaustion and starvation while being cared for by local Anangu, west of Ayers Rock, after his camel had bolted with all his provisions. Lasseter's death prompted Frank Clune to note that gold was "the metal of madness" (Clune, 1942: 26). Lasseter's diary found next to his body has continued to inspire prospectors (including his own son in the early 1980s) who hear those voices of gold.

Bill Harney believed that Lasseter's real mission was not for gold, but "man's eternal quest for the elusive" (Harney 1963: 183). The fact that no gold was ever located, even though Lasseter himself wrote in his diary that he had marked out the site just prior to his death, only added weight to the myth of a hidden mountain of gold waiting to be discovered by someone with an imagination big enough to match such a vision.

Having been mythologised as the touchstone/talisman of the outback, Ayers Rock is then invested with magical properties not unlike the alchemic connotations of gold. In this rock fantasy, the rock glows with golden lights and draws, like moths to a lantern, all dreams of ownership towards it. The immediacy of wealth is for most prospectors, though, continually deferred, and instead these metal–fatigued prospectors find its substitute in visions of excess: delirious images of a gigantic diamond or ruby, as Frank Clune saw in 1942:

> all day they travelled towards this strange giant monolith squatting in the desert like an immense precious stone" (Clune, 1942: 228). And two years later Ayers Rock was metamorphosed as "an amethyst jewel breaking the monotony of the plain (Clune, 1944: 23).

Just as Ayers Rock breaks the monotony of the endless outback horizon, so too does it serve to break the monotony of the suburban shopping centre in Sydney, as **Fig. 2.10** shows. Built as a customer incentive, this *Dig for a Diamond* installation involved shoppers shifting through a sand-pit of outback sand for a buried diamond. This mock gold rush is acted out in front of a painted backdrop depicting Ayers Rock with striated folds connoting a growing mountain of profits. There are a number of myths concerning growing

stones, particularly from England, where conglomerates or pudding-stones were often called mother–stones, breeding–stones, or quick–rock. Pebbles from such sources were considered seeds and, if left undisturbed, would slowly develop into huge boulders (Radford, 1961: 176). Anthropomorphic changes to Ayers Rock depend on metaphorical images connected to the centre image to evoke specific cultural and political messages.

## 2.5 Dead Heart / Red Heart / Red Centre / Navel

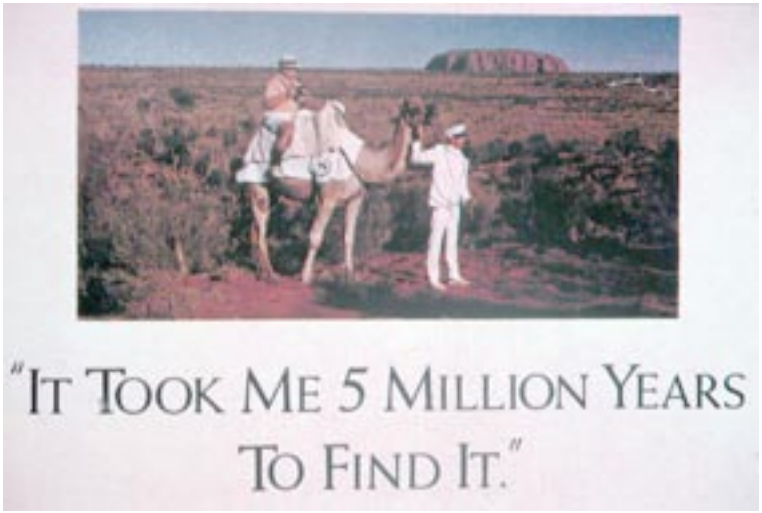
The term *dead heart* was first made popular by Professor J.W. Gregory in his book *The Dead Heart of Australia* published in 1906. This image of central Australia as a dead or dying heart gained a grip on the popular imagination to such an extent that in 1944 Frank Clune wrote that "many people believe that Australia is an anatomical impossibility- a living land with a dead heart. It would be better if geographers left medical metaphors strictly alone" (Clune, 1944: 2). Yet Clune himself included in his book *The Red Heart*, a woodcut (**Fig. 2.11**) showing a huge heart in the centre of a map of Australia supported by the caption *red or dead?* For T W Erskine, "the country out there is a land of no second chances...it continues to cast a magnetic spell over [adventurers], and again draws them into its red centre" (Erskine, 1951: 28). via the umbilical cord of Ayers Rock. The heart attack anxiety is projected onto the oldest continent trying to keep up with the youngest country.

When Queen Elizabeth II made a flying stop over to Alice Springs in 1963, she told the local gathering at the airport, that the centre had:

> a magnetic effect upon those who want more out of life than humdrum security and the tidy rules of a comfortable suburbia. After this visit, no one will be able to suggest to me that Central Australia is a dead heart. From now on, I shall always look upon it as a living heart, beating with confident energy... (Queen's Reply in Flynn, 1964: frontispiece)

The *living heart* is here given a slightly anarchistic twist by The Queen who saw a little bit of untidiness and outback law as a good thing. The tables have been turned on the suburban aesthetic: boredom in the 'burbs is contrasted with the heady rush of frontier life.

2.11 1944. - Woodcut illustration from The Red Heart by Frank Clune.




2.12 1988. - Print advertisement. Client: Sheraton Hotel, Yulara Resort - Ayers Rock.


2.13 front cover of The Bulletin, Designerd by Leo Robba.

The current push towards an Australian Republic and the breaking of Royal English ties finds the Queen left out in the political desert as represented by *The Bulletin* magazine (**Fig. 2.13**). The surreal montage marries the conventional cosy interior portrait of the Queen with the extreme outback landscape setting of Uluru. The symbolism of this bizarre marriage highlights the current perception of the majority of Australians that an English monarch is out of place in the heart of Australia.

Choosing another anatomical signifier, the Japanese refer to Ayers Rock as the earth's belly-button (*tikyuu no heso* ) or as the earth's navel (*chikyuu no heso* ). Also connecting heaven and earth, Gods and mortals, the Australian novelist and social critic Thomas Keneally agrees:

> It has always been my fancy to think of it as a kind of continental navel, the point at which the aboriginal demigods, the ancestor-heroes, half human and half animal, cut the umbilical cord connecting earth to heaven (Keneally, 1986: 60).

In various religious philosophies (Hindu, Muslim, Navaho, Buddhist and Christian) mountains have been venerated as navels of the cosmos or some conception of an Earth Mother. Sacred mountains tend to be the home of patriarchal figureheads, however, with Mt. Olympus the adopted home of Zeus; Mt. Sinai where Moses received the Tablets of Law; Mt. Hera where Mohammed was handed the Koran from the Angel Gabriel or Mt. Kailas where Shiva, the Lord of the World, dwells. Wherever a holy mountain is found a sacred spring is not far away. Uluru is no exception: its spring is called Mutitjulu or Maggie Springs.

As continuous water sources, springs are symbols of animated fertility spirits and creation beings. Religious historian, Richard Clifford cites a number of creation myths where "out of the waters of chaos rose the primeval hill from which rose all life" (Clifford, 1972: 6). During the 1940s, Evans-Wentz, a Jungian ethnographer, regarded sacred mountains as "centres or repositories of psychic energy upon which

mankind might draw" (Evans-Wentz, 1981: xxvi). Keneally also condensed the universal into the particular when he visited Ayers Rock and thought "a cosmos is contained within a single place... making a visit there is something akin to a visit to another planet, the Aboriginal planet" (Keneally, 1986: 80).

Keneally's Aboriginal planet constitutes the Other (culture, language and law) to his own European–launched planet. A nation within a nation is always a politically unstable situation. National identity depends upon a sovereignty of differences, boundaries and government. One of the important national markers in Australia is Uluru/Ayers Rock since it clearly demonstrates the schizophrenic nature of self image. For, as Fiske, Hodge and Turner have already pointed out, the prominence of Ayers Rock as a national symbol is "as much a function of Australia's need for a national identity as it is of the identities that the Rock offers" ( Fiske et al, 1987: 123).

Notions of identity are largely born from adversity and crisis, and the second world war sparked a second wave of settlers to the centre. The war brought with it a massive increase in the number of people to the outback. Soft city boys were turned into outback fighting men and Alice Springs was transformed into an American military base. When General Douglas Macarthur visited Alice Springs in 1942, the centre was preparing to defend the top end of Australia from the advancing Japanese. Ayers Rock stood as a boundary marker: a fortress beyond which the Japanese would not allowed to cross. Frank Clune was one of the defenders:

> the war has put the Red Heart on the map. It's been here all the time, but city-dwellers weren't interested in Gibber Land, Saltbush and Mulga Land, Spinifex and Abo Land, the Land of the Never-Never, until they were clapped into khaki and plonked down in the middle of it (Clune 1944: 2).

Clune saw the influx of American and Australian soldiers and the impact General Macarthur had on the public imagination when he "touched Australia's Heart as it has never been touched before or since" (Clune: 2). Touching the symbolic national heartland meant also filling in the empty centre with bases, fortifying and defending them against the Japanese. As the Bishop of Darwin said in 1943 "the war knocked Darwin sky–high and put Alice Springs on the map" (Flynn, 1964: 1). The dead heart started beating again, since it was being overwritten by a more productive narrative of national freedom and economic progress, which the urban majority of Australia could more easily identify with. In The Living Heart Frank Flynn announced that the future of the centre seemed bright. Alice Springs was "set like a green jewel in the middle of a red, bare and timeless land" (Flynn, 1964: 5). The new highway from Darwin to Alice Springs and later the Pine Gap spy satellite base outside Alice Springs both grew in part from the World War II military occupation and the vision of bases, communication links and lines of flight that the war projected onto the centre.

## 2.6 Outback Orientalism

While the Pine Gap domes have become monuments to cold war surveillance strategies, Ayers Rock remains anchored to myths of an exotic past - a past with no connection to the present or future. Many of these myths cite Oriental references, particularly to the pyramids of Egypt.

The projection of Egyptian analogies onto Ayers Rock allows those readers who have never made the trip out to the Rock to construct the meaning of the sacred Anangu site in conventional western terms. At the time Gosse discovered Ayers Rock, images of the pyramids were being circulated as romantic oriental monuments to a lost civilisation. The discovery of Ayers Rock allowed the early explorers including Ernest

Giles to project fantasies of an ancient Oriental-like culture that would fit comfortably into established views of race, history and civilisation. Drawing analogies between Uluru and a giant pyramid allowed explorers and travel writers to feel reassured in their colonial relationship to the exotic, since they could feel they had already always been there.

A contemporary example is the Sheraton advertisement (**Fig. 2.12**) that parodies the English colonial traveller in Africa or India. The visual pun of Ayers Rock turned pyramid is motivated by the caption *It took me 5 million years to find it,* Every Sheraton guest is treated like a Pharaoh while at the Rock. Time is not a problem for the post-colonial tourist. Not only does the Sheraton guest feel like a God, but the landscape is made fantastic and friendly as an Oriental fantasy. Immersed in this play, the tourist can act out the role of the Arab sheik without having to deal with any of the politics of lording it over the locals.

For Edward Said, Orientalism is "not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice ...that depends for its strategy on a flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand" (Said, 1978: 6).

In a quest to halt time and seek immortality, generations of romantic travellers to Uluru have evoked the great Oriental rock monument, the pyramid, as a sign of equivalence. Where as Uluru was semiotically opaque, the Egyptian pyramid signified "the surest and most durable obstacle to the drifting away of all things" (Bataille, 1985: 215). The pyramid is a sign of order, unity and permanence or, as Georges Bataille suggests, of the "calm triumph of an unwavering and hallucinating resolve." Like the pyramids, Ayers Rock takes on "the immobility of stone" and "watches all men die one after the other" (Bataille, 1985: 216). The Rock pyramid image crystallises history into Ages: it monumentalises every event that touches it.

It is this connotative (mythic) power of an Orientalist referent, Uluru, to monumentalise products or turn them into exotic fetishes, that appeals to advertisers. The image of an exotic object or fetish object brings with it a sense of taboo. Not everyone can have direct access to the pleasure the myth brings. The pleasure is reserved for only those consumers who buy the product. Still, not only advertisers bought into the idea of some taboo access to the pleasures of Uluru.

The experience of gazing at the Rock took on a taboo for Harold Groom: "its solitude was real, and there were times when I felt I was approaching the immense coloured tomb of a dead age into which I had no right to look" (Groom, 1950: 158). For Bataille, sacred tombs store the spirit in a funereal sun-dried suspension. Tombs are built to maintain what escapes from the dying man in the desert. Both monolithic monuments "transcend the intolerable void that time opens under men's feet, for all possible movement is halted in their geometric surfaces" (Bataille, 1985: 216). While the pyramidal form connotes power and control (over mortality, time and chaos), the rounded organic form of Ayers Rock with its flying– buttress–like 'arms' connotes the sublimity of a Gothic cathedral. The artist Lloyd Rees was drawn to Uluru (and Kata Tjuta) in the late 1970s for its likeness to one of his favourite subjects, Chartres Cathedral. Rees' centre is a mystic's landscape in which he has "made cathedrals of the rocks and rocks of the cathedrals, using pastel lights which stream from an abundant heaven" (McGrath & Olsen, 1981: 98).

The organic sculptural forms of Uluru/Ayers Rock (also reminiscent of the work of artist Henry Moore) together with Kata Tjuta/The Olgas, have prompted numerous Oriental comparisons. One of the last Government explorers, Herbert Basedow, commented that "when the moon rose to-night Mount Connor lay like a monster against the sky, and reminded one of pictures of pyramids in the Egyptian deserts" (Basedow, 1914: 167). On the other hand the anthropologist Charles Mountford saw Ayers Rock as beyond comparisons with any recognisable cultural site: "One might liken Mt Connor to a walled, medieval city;

or Mt Olga to a ruined temple or palace of a bygone Pharaoh. But there seems to be nothing to which Ayers Rock can be likened. It is an enormous pebble"(Mountford, 1950: 91). All these rock analogies: be it an enormous pebble, pyramid, sphinx, marker of the empty centre or phallic navel, gain their strongest currency by being associated with Anangu culture. That is, by being connected at the level of meaning with an ancient people and land who can demonstrate that they have links to the past through the land and therefore a sense of belonging. The economic and cultural role of advertising is to make sure that its product promotions can be linked to the consumption flows at the centre of the market place. By tapping into the semiotic meanings of The Rock, products can be recharged with cultural significance.

The complex web of what be termed advertising 'songlines' connecting advertisement to products and brand names to logos across the commercial marketing landscape must be continually 'sung up' by the various media voices in order for the cultural 'law' of Australian advertising to remain jingoistically potent. The viability of Ayers Rock as a sign to the advertising industry depends on how successfully the market joins in the chorus at each and every stage (sacred consumption site) be it at the supermarket, on TV or in the souvenir shop.

While Ayers Rock marks out the geographical and psychic centre of Australia, it also signifies the symbolic centre of the Aboriginal land rights movement. The next chapter analyses the representation of the Anangu connection to Uluru/Ayers Rock.