

TERRA MORTIS: THE DEATH OF THE EARTH

A JUNGIAN AND INDIGENOUS VIEW

PART II: ALL THE ROUGH BEASTS

MICHAEL OWEN



Western science, following Roger Bacon, believed man could force nature to reveal its secrets;
the Sioux simply petitioned nature for friendship.
—Vine Deloria Jr.

If it keeps on raining, the levee's going to break
When the levee breaks, have no place to stay
Crying won't help you, praying won't do you no good
When the levee breaks, mama, you got to move, ooh
—Kansas Joe McCoy and Memphis Minnie, "When the Levee Breaks."

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PREFACE

The first sentence of every novel should be: “*Trust me, this will take time but there is order here, very faint, very human.*” Meander if you want to get to town. —Michael Ondaatje, *In the Skin of a Lion*, 1987.

So meander with me through this collection of essays written over the last thirty years. They never wanted to be a book and should not be read as a book with a narrative arc or some well-structured, reasoned argument. I’m not trying to sermonise or convince any one of anything. Rather, they are updated snapshots of my thinking at the time, whenever that was.

Only recently have they come out of the writer’s closet. Some are pretty much in their raw state, still stunned by the daylight, others have been scrubbed up a bit for polite company. They are neither a work of scholarship nor are they twittery and tabloid. Hopefully I have found a middle way that reflects my own voice.

Over the years the emergent theme has not been the collective narcissism of “the end of the human race” (which would solve the problem in one swell foop) but something more difficult to think about—the death of the Earth itself.

Nevertheless, I have tried to herd some of the cats. Terra Mortis: Part I contains chapters on indigenous consciousness; ancient and modern oracles that foresaw the coming events; hubris and growth; spiritual and geographical colonisation; and watching America self-harm.

“Shadow” is the central theme of the book—the narcissistic aberration of monotheism that is the opposite of indigenous consciousness, with particular reference to Jung’s *Answer to Job*.

“Matter”, concerns our relationship with the world of substance, and the consciousness of matter.

“Body” considers the connection between the health of the Earth and the health of the human body.

“Disorder” is about psychological states such as Pre-traumatic Stress Disorder (yes, you read that right), depression, despair, and the pathology of hope.

“Science” addresses the rise of scientism and reason as contributory factors to our planetary illness.

In “Earth and Self” I focus on the twinship of the Earth and Jung’s “God-image within”, as well as the emigration of the Self.

The last section “Apocalypse anytime” is a look at some far-fetched and aspirational remedies for our predicament.

In the interests of full disclosure and to dispel any assumptions of bias: Scientifically, I am neither optimistic nor pessimistic about the Earth’s future. The jury for either position is still out. But I do wish to write about the unthought known—the potential death of our planet. Spiritually, I was not raised in a religious family (barely detectable Anglican, Easter service once maybe, and very occasional Christmas services for the carols). Neither have I taken any vows, belonged to a cult, affiliated with a religion, or followed a guru. However, I’ve had the good fortune over many years to be associated with a group of indigenous elders. They have asked not to be named but I will refer to them generically as the elders. I am deeply grateful to them for their continuing wisdom.

Michael Owen
Tauranga and Maenam