

SPIRIT OF PLACE:



SOURCE OF THE SACRED?



Spirit of Place: Source of the Sacred?

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**www.acu.edu.au/rla
email: rla@mary.acu.edu.au**

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PREFACE

The 1998 Australian International Conference on Religion, Literature and the Arts brought together some sixty papers and over two hundred participants to focus on "Spirit of Place: Source of the Sacred?" This question engaged artists, writers, academics and ecologists in investigating the experience of place as a ground for the sacred. The papers selected for this volume are a result of that investigation.

From the opening Aboriginal smoking ceremony, followed by keynote speakers and some moving personal reflections on special places, to academic and artistic studies, there emerged new and interesting understandings of the conference theme. Exponents of the history of religions, of literature, of Australian studies, of the lives of women, and of visual arts and crafts, all developed exciting readings of the subject. The conference was privileged to have attracted outstanding keynote speakers – Alicia Ostriker (Rutgers, USA), Stephen Prickett (Glasgow, UK), Jamie Scott (York, Canada), Veronica Brady (UWA) and David Tacey (La Trobe).

The conference was particularly grateful to Dr Jamie Scott for attracting and organising the presence of a number of North American scholars. Other features were the paintings of the Irish Bogside artists, the hanging of Annabelle Soloman's tapestries and the gift of the Francis Webb paintings of Peter Solway by the Centre for Studies in Religion, Literature and the Arts to the ACU library. The presence of the distinguished South Australian stained glass artist Cedar Prest was especially welcome through her contribution at the conference dinner and at the Museum for Contemporary Art. Nigel Butterly's presentation with the soprano Rose Saunders of Margaret Sutherland's setting of Judith Wright poems was part of a festive occasion at the MCA. On this occasion ACU Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Sheehan launched the RLA Centre and the Society.

This volume has been produced with the editorial assistance of Dr Mark Byrne. All academic papers have been refereed.

Michael Griffith and James Tulip