

School of Art

LANDSCAPE AS METAPHOR : ARTIST AS METAPHIER

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This exegesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief this exegesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

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ABSTRACT

This research records a three year journey of exploration through the visual arts, specifically painting and drawing in relation to the landscape. The written work presented here provides a support document to my final exhibition of paintings that were exhibited in the John Curtin Gallery at Curtin University of Technology from November 24th – December 15th 2002.

The writing of this exegesis is in itself a creative piece, but it is not the same as the visual research that culminates in the paintings. I am convinced that to talk *about* creating art actually leads one away from being in the *experiencing* of that art, hence this writing discusses the processes involved and not the finished work. My primary objective within this exegesis is to present a discussion centred around some of the philosophical issues that became visible whilst carrying out my practical work. This discussion is also about process itself in art making practices and research, hence this exegesis is intended to run as a parallel to the visual body of work as presented in the final exhibition of works held in the John Curtin Gallery.

I have intentionally used my own practice as a device to question the choices and outcomes of art making generally in an effort to add a little colour to the larger discourse of creative practices. Some of the writing may seem personal (apart from the journal notes) and again, this is an intentional device in order to bring about a sense of embodiment within the writing itself and a way of mirroring the processes within the paintings.

LANDSCAPE AS METAPHOR : ARTIST AS METAPHIER

INTRODUCTION

Understanding is born not of transcendence but displacement. Metaphysics must give ground to metaphor. Rather than seek to get above and beyond the world, we seek connections between experiences and activities that belong to different places *within* the world, metaphor moving us. (Jackson, 1995 :157)

One of the difficulties for many visual artists is to write about what they do. The act of artistic creation is in itself materially productive, yet at the same time mentally elusive that to consider translating this process by means of the written word immediately and irrevocably cuts a great divide between doing and talking about the act. One is active involvement the other is intellectual distance. This creates a quandary for me personally. Like many other artists, I believe that the creative work once produced can stand alone, and does not necessarily need theorizing or embellishment via lengthy, descriptive words. I am not suggesting that written documentation is irrelevant, but for some, even giving the artwork a title can imply a significantly different meaning, hence the proliferation of 'untitled' works¹. For others, the naming of a work is an implicit part of the art exhibited, and often plays on the ambiguities and nuances of meaning between the title and the work in question.

BUT PERHAPS THE IMPATIENCE FOR A LINEAR EXPOSITION IS PART OF THE PROBLEM; IF OUR OPENING TO THE FUTURE DEPENDS IN PART ON RENOVATING OUR MODES OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE, THEN AN ATTENTION TO THE PROCESSES OF GETTING FROM ONE LOCATION TO THE NEXT MAY NOT BE SELF-INDULGENT BUT CRITICAL IN ESTABLISHING THE VALUE OF THE KNOWLEDGE GARNERED. (CARTER, 1996 :17)

In the writing of this exegesis, I have tried to run my theoretical concerns alongside the experiences of an art making practice by including my journal notes. These notes constitute a more immediate but often reflective state of being, and so that the reader may recognise the difference, I have used a dissimilar tone and font to highlight the changes. The structure of this exegesis will mimic a fluid reflecting,

paralleling and interchange between intellect, body and land by weaving my journal notes through the configuration of theoretical concerns. The quotes in capital letters are passages I wish to include that are both autonomous yet basic to the overall meaning of my theoretical research, but ironically they are also intended as a visual disruption to the body of text. Perhaps similar to the way that changing terrain seems to suddenly emerge in front of the long distance traveller whose eyes are focused on the road ahead.

My intention is to create spaces within the written work that resembles the spatial quality of being in, and moving through, the natural landscape². The word *landscape* for me implies space, and I am interested in exploring the *relationship* between the experience of my being a woman moving through the landscape and the embodiment of that experience through painting. In an effort to find a philosophical stance to interpret this relationship both verbally and visually, I found myself turning more towards phenomenology³ but I felt that it still talked *about* life rather than living it. I then looked at the narrative ethnography⁴ as espoused by Jackson, and found that both phenomenology and ethnography showed great reserve in accepting any concrete or pre-established protocol toward our understanding of being in the world. To quote Jackson,

An anthropology [to make real] of experience shares with phenomenology a scepticism toward determinate systems of knowledge. It plays up the indeterminate, ambiguous, and manifold character of lived experience. It demands that we enlarge our field of vision to take into account things central and peripheral, focal and subsidiary, illuminated and penumbral. (Jackson, 1995 :160)

It is precisely because of the need to 'enlarge our field of vision' (*ibid*) which includes the imaginative, that I turn to metaphor as a vehicle to get as close as possible to recording the veracity of lived experience⁵. Rather than remain in our inherited dualistic Cartesian thinking, where we separate ourselves from the world (as in the observer is detached from the observed), I endeavour to move into a sense of oneness within the process of writing and artmaking.

Metaphor is a word that seems inherently fluid and ambiguous, and in that way analogous to lived experience. One meaning translates as 'a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable, in order to suggest a resemblance'. (Delbridge, 1982 :780) The long recurring metaphor between the body of the land and one's own body is a point of discussion later in this exegesis, but firstly, in discovering ways of depicting the lived experience of landscape through paint, metaphor is what moves me as a vehicle through lands both chartered and unchartered.

I would like to make it clear that I am not espousing the woman/mother earth construct, even though I make some reference to these histories. I am talking about the lived experience of moving through, and being in, open spaces, wilderness, forests, rivers, clear horizons, desert, ocean edges, the natural world (building-free environments)⁶. Through visual art as a means of expression, I am discussing “being” in the world. I am looking at the external landscape as a metaphor for an internal process of understanding self, belonging⁷, and place, and I believe that all these factors are intrinsically interrelational. The ‘self’ I am referring to is ‘..not a singular separate identity progressing through life’s stages, but a self in connection. A sense of “feeling solid within ourselves” comes with neither a turning in nor shutting out of the world, but with openness.’(May, 2001:228)

As for place, although I don’t wish to explore it in this way, ‘place’ is somewhere that is usually fixed in our minds, somewhere solid to be, or go to. As Yu-Fu Tuan describes,

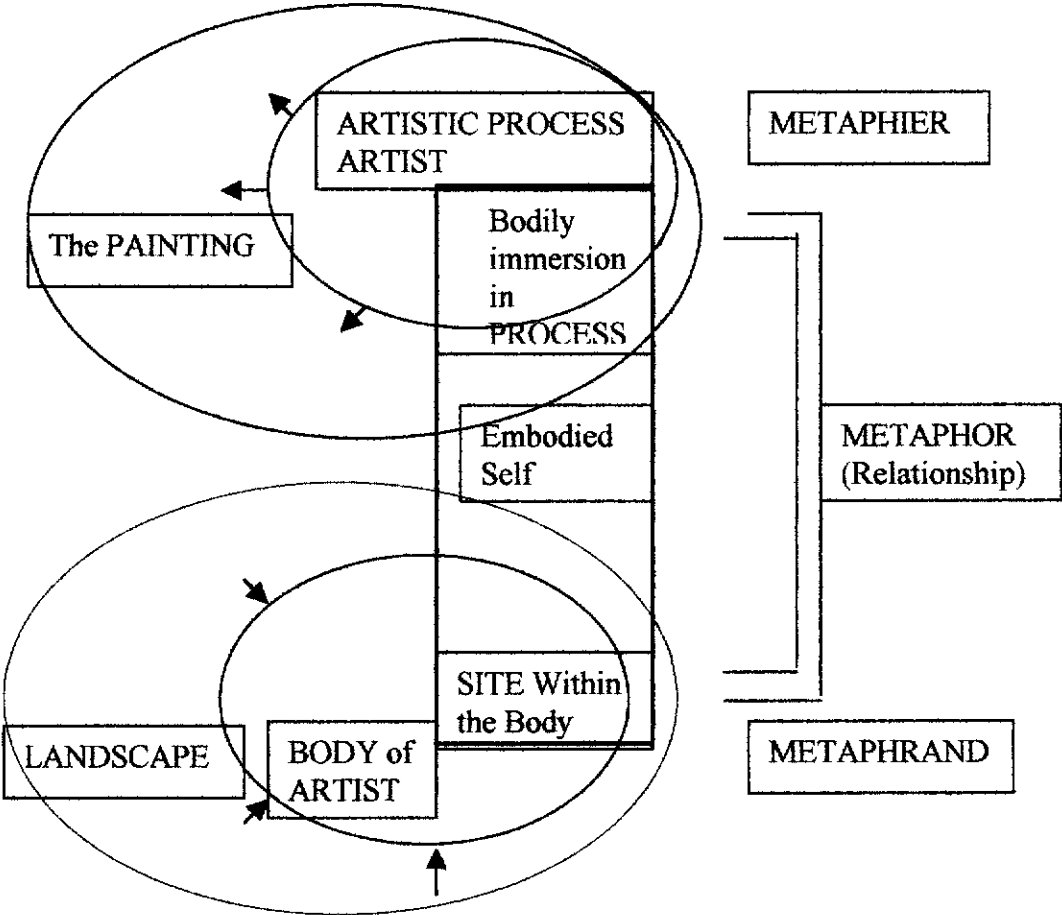
The fleeting intimacies of direct experience and the true quality of a place often escape notice because the head is packed with shopworn ideas. The data of the senses are pushed under in favour of what one is taught to see and admire. Personal experience yields to socially approved views, which are normally the most obvious and public aspects of an environment. (Tuan, 1977 :146)

The perception of place, as experienced through my body, and how to facilitate that representation will be explored further in this exegesis.

The discovery that the word metaphor is made up of two terms adds yet another dimension to the research construct; ‘These are the metaphrand, the thing to be described, and the metaphier, the thing or relation used to elucidate it.’ (Janes 1976) in (Porteous, 1990 :73). Initially I had great difficulty in fully comprehending what, in fact, was the metaphrand and what constituted the metaphier within the parameters of my own practice. To put it simply, the metaphrand becomes *what is being looked at or focused upon* and the metaphier becomes *who or what is doing the revealing or pointing*. With the body being a fluid, highly changeable and permeable entity, in this instance, the metaphrand refers to the site within one’s body (that is itself aware of location). In this sense, I am saying that the located body experience of being in the landscape is what is being sought for expression. The metaphier is the artist bringing the invisible into the visible. By disclosure of this site through the artwork, we see the results of the external landscape reverberating through the artist’s body. This body also reflects upon the landscape and the process becomes cyclical. Throughout this research, I have become more

and more interested in losing the Western dualistic way of looking at things, and have tried to understand the oneness of “what is”⁸ through lived experience.

The external landscape as a whole provides an echo to these metaphoric processes, as well as being utterly itself, that is, something that exists without any human attributes whatsoever. For further clarification, I include a diagram, which sets out clearly the relationships between metaphrand, metaphier and landscape. I must point out that this diagram implies separate functions and processes of what I am trying to say is *not* separate. However, for the purpose of clarity, I have pulled apart the processes involved in order to see how the parts operate within the whole. The painting is not a view, but a metaphor for where the artist is (or has been) bodily, a surrogate “landscape”. It is distinctly different from copying a ‘scene’ onto one’s canvas.



As can be seen, the lower half of the diagram imagines the *landscape*, with the artist’s body situated within that. I am calling this part of the process, where the

body is named as a site, the metaphrand. This is intrinsically linked to the top half of the diagram, seen as the *painting*, produced by the artist whose body is also immersed in the process of painting. I am calling this part, the metaphier. What lies in-between as the *embodied self* sits where metaphor sits. Metaphor becomes the relationship between landscape and painting, and it is this relationship I am interested in. The whole process is cyclical, in that the landscape informs the body, and the body then informs the painting, but it also happens the other way around where the painting informs the body and therefore changes the way one sits within the landscape. I stress again, that although this diagram conveys separate functions, in reality this process is a constant *presencing*. In other words, there is movement, flow, stasis, flux continually happening in the present moment, for want of better words⁹.

If we take the metaphier as being the artistic process of disclosure, then we need to look at a triad of very different sources of inspiration available; that between fleshy substance, actual places in the landmass, and the sorts of materials used as a vehicle to convey this communication into discernible visual languages. My research into these visual transformations between body, site and materiality involves looking at many possible ways of achieving this process of revelation. In the chapter entitled Bodies in Space and Memorabilia, I objectify the personal in order to question some of the preconceptions regarding how one 'sees' the land, and how that may affect the resulting artwork. The writing is set up to provide some parameters for 'Songcycle 2002'.¹⁰

To begin with, I shall briefly set the historical context from which landscape painting in Australia has emerged. I will then move on to discuss the impact of bodily responses to various sites with reference to art making and this will be enlarged in the section Womb Body, with further references to contemporary landscape art practices by artists such as Fiona Foley, and Judy Watson in the section titled No Woman No Cry, but the main thrust of this exegesis will discuss process, as shall be highlighted in Bodies in Space and Body-eographies.

Historiographies – Scene Stealing

The dominant culture of landscape painting in Australia since the early 1800s was predominately male European and has influenced tremendously the way we look at and perceive the Australian land mass now, as well as our questionable place within it. Considering that these histories can still dictate their view into landscape painting of the 21st century, my research is more concerned with contemporary art practices that relate to the land and shall engage with these issues further on through artists such as Judy Watson and Fiona Foley. Both these artists provide significant inspiration for my own practice.

The traditional landscape paintings that I grew up with were generally a *view* of an idyllic Australian feature, usually pastoral or spectacular in such a way as to be bordering on the religious or the sublime. The grandiose scenes painted in the mid 1800s by Eugene von Guerard, Conrad Martens or John Glover certainly set a precedent. These works promoted English romanticism, conservative regulation, and a certain righteousness, something brought to this land by our Colonial predecessors. As Ross Gibson notes, 'For white Australia is a product of the Renaissance mentality that is predicated on the notion of an environment *other than* and *external to* the individual ego. This is the mentality that the English Colonial Office sent to the continent.' (Gibson, 1992 :84)

These early 1800s colonial paintings¹¹ favoured a romantic focus, colours that reflected an English light and not the harsh Australian contrasts. There was often a token 'native' set into the foreground to complete the exotic illusion of this strange land that seemed to be calling out to be explored, conquered and named. A classic example being Frederick Garling's *View from Mount Eliza, 1827* (Scott, 1986 pl.7), the spears of the 'native' echoing the tall spike of the xanthorrhoea (otherwise known as grass tree or the colloquial 'Blackboy') foregrounding the distant idyllic view of river and land. The paintings of this time were in a way, a soft seduction to consider the Colonies as a favourable migration, a view that could be admired from afar. For the new settler, arriving in Australia would have sharply increased their loss for England and all that it stood for.¹²

Attachment for 'home' would have clouded most, bar a few aware individuals, of their first attempts to settle a new land free of comparisons.

THE ESSENTIAL ATTACHMENT IS NOT TO THE
LANDSCAPE ITSELF, BUT TO ITS MEMORY AND THE
RELIVED EXPERIENCE. THE IMAGINED LANDSCAPE
HAS MORE MEANING, POWER, AND IMPORTANCE IN

THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE THAN
LANDSCAPE EXPERIENCED CONCRETELY.
IS THIS POSSIBLE, THAT THE GREATER POWER OF
PLACE LIES NOT IN INHABITING IT BUT IN
REMEMBERING IT? (ALTMAN, 1992 :20)

The traditional 18th and 19th Western approach to landscape painting¹³ was to present a *view* of the land, separate and distinct from ourselves.

The colonial gaze is used to full effect to portray a panoramic affirmation of the colonial ideal – an image of the conquered (therefore tamed) land, inhabited by all those hard-working pioneers and settlers, living in the landscape that they, in effect, had “made”. Lee in (Levitus, 1997 :105)

Was this a sly attempt at the possibility of ownership? It was probably more of an ignorant and arrogant stance born of an unexpressed insecurity of displacement, hence the paintings reflected the familiar romanticism of English landscapes. In contrast, within the very different Aboriginal approach, we are invited *inside* the painting.¹⁴ We encounter a highly organized set of symbols or signposts to feel our way around and into the country. It is more of a map than a view. The paintings

do not represent a space that the viewer can stand outside of: it is not space to be confronted. Rather, it is a space to be remembered, a space in which to orient oneself because you have always been a part of it, and vice versa. (Gibson, 1992 :8)

To look back at 19th century English landscape paintings¹⁵ of Australia, it is easy to see how the projected romantic idealism was not related to the reality of the harsh Australian outback. With the unfamiliarity of the territory and an uncertainty of being, the new arrival to our shores only did what was natural. They projected the safety and familiarity of the English countryside in order to allay their fear of the unknown. Paintings such as John Glover’s *Dinas Brann near Llangollen c.1837* (Eagle, 1994:19) did not reveal the great anxiety or loss that must have come from the separation with everything they previously knew or understood. Their identity was no longer certain. Any future vision, was often based on replicating the past model, no matter how inappropriate.

For the Warlpiri of central Australia, their sense of identity is resolved through their understanding of what it is that comprises home or a sense of belonging;

Experientially, home was a matter of being-at-home-in-the-world. It connoted a sense of existential control and connectedness – the way we feel when what we say or do seems to matter, and there is a balanced reciprocity between with the world beyond us and world in which we move. (Jackson, 1995 :154)

In this way, we can see how indigenous paintings are grounded reference to things that matter, signposts and markers of their ancestors, and subsequently their own wanderings, not just a pretty picture of a charming view to sell in an art gallery. It would be interesting conjecture to ponder whether the Australian Aboriginal landing en mass in England would have tried to 'aboriginalize' the countryside by introducing kangaroos or wild grasses.

In most Western depictions of landscape, there is often a sense of separation between the observer and the thing observed, or the *view*. In Joseph Lycett's *The Sugarloaf Mountain near Newcastle*, c.1822, his own text next to the painting 'described a landscape waiting to be born' and 'He gave his subject a conventional European composition of classical symmetry and majestic movement'. (Eagle, 1994 :10) For the English colonist, to look at the Australian landscape was to experience a space devoid of any meaning to them personally, and rather than deal with the consequences of displacement, it was as if

.... space had become something to fill with multifarious systems of knowledge external to the person who was looking at it – that space was always definitively *other* than that person – the space outstripped the subjective limits of its observer/occupier. Unless the occupant of a space were to develop a nonmodern, ritualistic understanding of the location, the territory could be known only by means of an "alienated," rational engagement with space.(Gibson, 1992:6)

The view prescribed the naming process, the name becoming a small token of familiarity in an otherwise hostile environment. By a place being 'named', it created a more comfortable relationship with the land for the colonists, thereby lessening the alienation - even though the name usually evoked some other meaning than that of the land itself.

There is something foreign and forbidding about a landscape that has not been named. But in giving a name to a hill, a ridge, a bay, we bring it, an external object, into our own immediate experience. Naming is a sign that we, who have language, are able to incorporate things that lack a language for themselves into *our* world. In this way we go some way toward closing the gap between subjectivity and objectivity. (Jackson, 1998 :175)

It is interesting to note all the English names such as Tweed Range, Wilson's Promontory, St. George's Head and Byron Bay given to land features in Australia. In a similar vein, by naming artworks, especially those that present an open negotiable space, perhaps a title does indeed help the viewer to feel more comfortable, in that they have some idea to grasp whilst navigating a way (for some) into unfamiliar territory. However, not handing out too many clues can subvert

attempts by the intellect to feel knowledgeable and safe before encountering an artwork in an embodied way.

It's been a long time getting here, but finally I am roughly in the area I want to be in. There is a nice swathe of peppermint trees nestling close to the ridge from where I am sure I shall see the ocean. Just to get an unobstructed view of the sea is all I can think of, but I'm aware that time is getting on and I should make camp before the sun goes down. I see a clearing underneath the trees, perfectly situated in the bowl of the ridge, not too far to walk up and look around to get some bearings on where I am. There's a few hours before losing all light, and generally I like to have my tent up and swag ready, so I can free up time to explore, but this time I walk up the ridge first. It seems important to get a bigger picture, in case the spot I've chosen to make camp turns out to be the end point of a watercourse.

I also want to check out a few potential sheltered spots to set up the paper and paints for tomorrow; it's a pain when the wind whips everything out from under your nose and the process becomes reactive rather than active.

At the top of the ridge I see what I've been hoping for; deep cobalt blue and green ocean for miles, with a tumble of rounded rocks and shrubs meeting the whiter than white sand a few metres below me. If I could camp in the small cove on the beach, I would, but experience tells me that's not a good idea, not knowing what the tides are like in this part of the world. Notwithstanding the inevitable visit from the local ranger asking me to move on to a designated campsite. It is most definitely a sitting spot to do just that, sit and absorb and reflect.

No woman no cry

The painted views of Australia made no attempt to disguise the obvious correlation with England. Paintings that arrived in England¹⁶ offered a romantic vision of the new colony. From this remote view, one didn't have to personally encounter one's body in this strange land, or come to terms with the harsh reality until actually arriving here. It seemed that enforcing this alien template upon the

landscape would reduce the terror of accepting the reality that the land was uneven, vast, spiky, dry and in a lot of places, completely inhospitable by English standards.

It was as if the colonists set out to erase the common ground where communication with the 'Natives' might have occurred. To found the colony, to inaugurate linear history and its puppet-theatre of marching soldiers and treadmills, was to embrace an environmental amnesia; it was actively to forget what wisdom the ground, and its people, might possess. (Carter, 1996 :6)

Against this formidable backdrop of the 'transplanted' English view of Australia, emerged a litany of landscape painters, predominately male. Unfortunately the most obvious inclusion of women in the whole scheme of things was to merely compare and liken her to nature itself. Being female meant being governed, ordered and placated.

WHEN PLACE ATTACHMENTS ARE DISRUPTED, INDIVIDUALS STRUGGLE TO DEFINE THEIR LOSSES IN ORDER TO IDENTIFY WHAT TYPES OF CONNECTIONS WILL PROVIDE THEM WITH A MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD. (ALTMAN, 1992 :280)

Early Australian romantic landscape painting often *referred* through tone and light to the female body's softness and roundness to echo the hills and valleys of any given scene. The diffused light and colour in Conrad Martens grand scene of *Fitzroy Falls 1836* (Bonyhady, 1987:42) is a classic example. The soft creases and folds of the mountain scenery not only gestured toward the exotic with a sense of mystery and awe, but also depicted unknown territory to be explored and conquered. On the one hand Nature was equated with Woman in a subjective sense, yet on the other hand, women were also the *objectified* subjects of painting, representing the link to 'Mother' Nature.

The pioneer-subject looked out and saw Mother Nature and sought to reunite himself with her. He had to possess her and incorporate her. So the conquistadorial process was instigated. The Blue Mountains were "penetrated" (the word appears repeatedly in explorers' journals), and heroic energies were expended into one of the last great Other Worlds of Earth - the Outback. (Gibson, 1992 :88)

By using women as the conduit between man and nature, it seems that women were viewed with the same suspicion as a vast and uncontrollable land just waiting for the colonial template of order and law; this added link to nature became intrinsically patronising, '...it seems that constancy was thrust upon the figure of

woman. In this zone of mutability, here was one live thing which would not be granted latitude for redefinition.' (Gibson, 1996 :95)

IN (RENAISSANCE) PASTORAL IMAGERY, NATURE IS CONSTRUCTED AS A LIVING FEMALE BODY RATHER THAN AN INERT SYSTEM OF PARTICLES; HOWEVER, BOTH NATURE AND WOMAN ARE ESSENTIALLY PASSIVE AND SUBORDINATE, THEIR PRIMARY FUNCTION TO PROVIDE MATERIAL AND LIFE.

BECAUSE OF THIS SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT FOR MEN WEARY OF URBAN SLIPPAGE FROM NATURE AS 'ACTIVE TEACHER AND PARENT' TO NATURE AS 'MINDLESS, SUBMISSIVE BODY', THE PASTORAL MODE IS COMPATIBLE WITH HUMAN DOMINATION OVER NATURE (AND MALE DOMINATION OVER WOMEN) AT THE SAME TIME AS IT CONSTRUCTS NATURE, LIKE WOMEN, AS A PRISTINE SANCTUARY THAT COMPENSATES MEN FOR THE ALIENATION OF MODERN INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY. RAINE IN (POLLOCK, 1996:231) (MY INDEXES)

It was as if the comfort and familiarity with a woman's body (seen then, and possibly still now, as a territory to be conquered at all costs) led to the notion that metaphorically, the landscape and she were one, or at least interchangeable in the naming process. 'In a masculinist orthodoxy such as the explorers' code the geographical space is in place to be possessed, to be entered and incorporated by the hero. Moreover, the land is *attractive*.' (Gibson, 1992 :89) To make comparisons with the female body and that of the land in this way does not allow for the integrity of either.

Converse

Within the previous chapter the notion of women's bodies and a body of land being interchangeable is a far cry from what contemporary interpretations of landscape are about.

Contemporary artists such as Fiona Foley and Judy Watson share a mixed Aboriginal heritage and as such their culture largely informs their work. The connection to land is an ongoing concern for indigenous artists, as encapsulated by Jackson,

It is the way you come to learn, living with Aboriginal people, that the landscape is never devoid of meaning, even when it is deserted. The landscape is a social map whose legend you must learn. The human body and the body of the land share a common language. Person and place coalesce. Whatever happens to the one, happens to the other. (Jackson 1995 :125)

The powerful signification of Foley's *Sand Sculpture, 1991*¹⁷ belies the simplicity of execution. A large rectangle of sand laid out on a gallery floor with two diamond shapes (she calls paintings) at the top and centre and two angled lines or 'legs' meeting at opposite corners in the bottom of the piece show a purposeful merger across cultural histories, gender and the land.

If these works were to be judged according to the colonial mentality discussed in the previous chapter, it is possible they would be deemed unattractive and quite meaningless, yet the approach to translating something about being in the world is on the contrary, loaded with meaning and spirit. As Foley says, 'I see the "function and purpose" of my work as performing an educative role towards redressing the imbalance of Australian dominant history'. (Voigt, 1996 :103)

Judy Watson works with large canvasses laid upon the ground, so that all the shaped nuances of rock, hole and flat sand are echoed into the very surface of the work. She is primarily concerned with her relationship to the land and the history that her forbears provide to make her art pieces both about identity and contemporary issues. Both these artists translate their art with a keen sense of embodiment within the work, that is, their whole body is used in the making of each piece. I shall discuss further this process of bodily felt responses to site firstly through my own practice in *Bodies in Space*, and more generally through *Womb-body* and more specifically in *Body-eographies*.

Bodies in space

The body/land metaphor is not the same as intersubjectivity, a term gleaned from ethnographic accounts of relationship to people and things in the world. The way in which indigenous cultures related to the land was far deeper and more complex than that of the colonial visionary.

Every human encounter entails ontological risk. But from an existential point of view, what is at issue is not so much the integrity of the self but a *balance* between the world one calls one's own and a world one deems to be not-self or other. This balance is a matter of control. And it is the struggle for this control that is the driving force of intersubjective life. (Jackson, 1998 :18)

How much is my own feeling of *being at one with the land* coloured by a colonial history and by the same token how much of my own idealism enters the scene? My childhood history has provided old templates within me that I am probably still not fully aware of and may never completely dispel. I am both coloniser and colonised, a confusing perspective to say the least. It begs the question of whether or not my individual history is present within my own painting. I suspect it must be, although there is no recognisable definition as such. From the indigenous outlook, the relationship between past and present is paramount for the Warlpiri of Central Australia as it

implies a perpetual oscillation, as between day and night, remembering and forgetting, or waking and sleeping There are ways of "drawing out" the Dreaming from pastness and potentiality, and realizing it as actively embodied presence. These modes of transformative activity are simultaneously "signs," "prints," "marks," or "traces" (*yirdi*) of the circumambient Dreaming *and* ways of reanimating it – energetically bodying it forth, recreating it, uttering it, and externalising it. (Jackson, 1998 :132)

To look at traditional indigenous depictions of place, it is not about a distant view of the hills or desert; it's about being *in* a place marked by signs that point to both the history and the presence of belonging all at the same time. Activities within these places are recorded through recognisable symbolic marks, representing a deeper connection to the world for those fortunate enough to be able to gain knowledge of the language.

Within my own practice, I am constantly reminded of my culturally inherited baggage, having grown up in what was then the British colony of East Africa. As a child, the colonial outlook was something I was both unaware of and at the same time accepting of, in that I had no other comparison until reaching Australian shores

in the early 1960s. To view the 19th century English landscape paintings of Australia¹⁸ executed in the 1800s, my largely negative response was probably triggered by a need to divest myself of all colonial connotations whilst at the same time becoming more aware of the cultural and symbolic histories of indigenous Australians.

In considering my relationship to land, to the many responses that I may or may not have, it seems obvious that where I might form some attachment to a place of growing up, or a place of residence for some years, I will most certainly carry that memory with me, however unconscious. Growing up reasonably unfettered in the foothills of Mt. Kenya in East Africa, has undeniably contributed to my perception of space and my feeling of ease with wide open horizons. How much of this is relevant within my *experience* of the land also depends on how I understand the meaning of attachment.

Attachment to the landscape is not simple. It is a complex set of threads woven through one's life. Childhood's landscapes, and later attachments to landscapes, are not only sources of satisfaction in themselves but the stuff of an ever-changing interior drama within the human psyche. Specific landscape images and landscape attachments are indices to the total of an individual's solitary and social experiences. Whether attachment to the landscape is based upon biology, culture, or individual experience, it is memory that makes it more than a simple stimulus-response phenomenon. (Altman, 1992:18)

In my need for a deeper understanding, I have frequently sought ways in which to apprehend a more immediate correlation with the Australian landmass that I find myself in today. I find it interesting to note the difference in the Western approach to landscape and that of the indigenous painters of the Australian environment. The ways in which the indigenous artist depicts their country can seem baffling to the Western eye, especially if one assumes that the artist has travelled in an aeroplane to get what looks like a bird's eye view of land covering thousands of square kilometres. In truth, most traditional painters have never set foot inside a plane, but have an uncanny ability to 'see' their country as if from above¹⁹. As discussed earlier, Aboriginal depictions of land invite the viewer inside the paintings and 'are for viewers who can imagine themselves *into* the spaces referred to. They are not containers of knowledge; rather, they are visual mnemonics, catalysts to an internalised body of knowledge, a body which must be known by the viewer if the painting is to mean anything beyond its formal aesthetics.' (Gibson, 1992:7) Ultimately, the effect of encountering a painting is entirely personal to both the viewer and the painter, and within my own practice, to leave things suggestive and inconclusive is intentional.

SEEN FROM SPACE, THE EARTH DEEPENS OUR SENSE OF THE INFINITE AND UNKNOWN. BUT OBSERVED REMOTELY, HUMAN BEINGS ARE DIMINISHED, FOR UNLIKE THE MATERIAL EARTH THEY ARE CONSCIOUS OF THEIR OWN EXISTENCE, AND THIS CONSCIOUSNESS SELDOM MIRRORS EXACTLY THE BIOGENETIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL REALITIES THAT SHAPE THEIR LIVES.

THIS IS WHY THE VIEW FROM AFAR GIVES US NO PURCHASE ON HUMAN REALITY UNLESS IT IS COMPLEMENTED BY AND COMPARED WITH A VIEW FROM WITHIN. RECOGNIZING THIS INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE FORCES THAT BEAR UPON US AND PROJECTS WHEREBY WE REIMAGINE AND REWORK THOSE FORCES MAKES ANY DESCRIPTION OF HUMAN REALITY *BOTH* A MATTER OF SCIENCE AND OF ART. [JACKSON, 1998:25]

It's the height of summer, the shape of the days are long, seemingly endless windssocks of chaos with no ground....moving all the time as I am, once more, packing up the household goods. From one house to another and before that, from country to city. My movement isn't as south as I'd like it to be, but for now the city port of Fremantle will have to suffice. There's ocean yes, but it's not so clear or green blue as from where I came. I can't see through it and under it, and there's always a whiff of diesel and if the wind is blowing, the smell of petrified sheep shitting themselves on the eve of their journey to death in the Middle East. But there is a clear horizon line to rest my eye upon, and space from the tightly packed housing of urban Fremantle. The houses create a boundary wall for a mind that's full of thoughts of flight or rapid movement away from this urban-ness.

The ocean is my escape route. It's a visible connection to the wild sites of south Western Australia, one of the many spots where I feel at home with self intact yet unfettered. It is initially through the ocean that my conversions of self start to connect with my encounters of being in the land. There seems to be a direct correlation to desert or wilderness places that I am drawn to.

Perhaps it's just because the ocean is open and bigger than my eye can see, in other words there are no edges to cramp my imaginary escape route. Unlike my skin, that has a definitive boundary, I can sit and look out across the horizon and feel expansive and free from convention and social constrictions. Yet when I turn around and look back at the housing and factories I can feel a sense of diminishment, although I'm well aware that I need some place to call home, some place to belong. Maybe that's why I paint. To recreate

the sense of being inside the land as it were, as I move inside my own painting. The larger the canvas the better, so the physicality of my body can move across the space. This space, that as I paint, reflects some memory of place, where I lose all distinction and idea of my body having a boundary. There is no thought, no idle chatter, just a sense of being in a process that is not confined to the boundary of time either. It's a oneness I can't explain in words.

As a painter involved with landscape today, my interest lies in looking at the ways in which women might represent and re-present themselves in relationship to the land. I am interested in the spatial connotations of these placements, and how for me, identity is strongly linked with being 'at home in the world'. (Jackson, 1995 :110)

It is to experience a complete consonance between one's own body and the body of the earth. Between self and other. It little matters whether the other is a landscape, a loved one, a house, or an action. Things flow. There seems to be no resistance between oneself and world. The relationship is all. (Ibid:110)

My sense of place is obviously inclusive of my presence in the physical world, but is a feeling of belonging (or not) just confined within my body, or is it that I need to make a sympathetic sign of bodily interaction with the land mass to feel a sense of identity or oneness? I think that this feeling of being wholly contained within one's body and yet paradoxically, boundless, is what constitutes a sense of identity, or more precisely what I would call fluid identity²⁰. Herein lies the task of the metaphier; to hint at, to reveal or envisage some sort of outcome to these issues through the processes of artmaking.

It is not that one can physically be *at one* with the earth; that is too literal an explanation in that one would have to be dead for the decomposing body to merge with the soil. More importantly, it is more about the notion of a shared consciousness with what we perceive as the earth's integrity, but more than likely, this is merely the reflection of an inner state of being, in that it *feels* as if all things inner and outer were one. It is in this relationship between self and other (the land at this point); in the possibility of dissolving both acquired and preconceived boundaries into moments of clarity that interests me²¹. This is often referred to as *isness, suchness* or *here now* in that 'The entire world is in the present time, the right-now, not in a numerical, quantitative sense, but in the sense that there is nothing outside the right-now.(Stambaugh, 1990:111) It is in the process of becoming present that the real challenge emerges.

As I come from a Western tradition of painting, my concern with my present art making practice, is to weave a significance of meaning into my work, similar to the way that Judy Watson or Fiona Foley use 'signs' and 'marks' relevant to their reality. The meaning I am referring to is to have a personal symbolic language that can be achieved through the use of some formal structure within the loose space of the painting. This is easier said than done. As Levitus says in *Lying About the Landscape*, 'We freeze a framed view and make judgments about composition, colour, depth and so on, and although these judgments seem to be intuitive, immediate and personal, they are the result of our training and conditioning in how to look at and interpret the landscape'. (Levitus, 1997 p.11) I am not looking for a rendition of the landscape *view per se*; I am looking to translate the experience of *being* in the landscape, whilst at the same time, being aware that my memory will produce many different responses.

Memorabilia

....BEFORE IT CAN EVER BE A REPOSE FOR THE
SENSES, LANDSCAPE IS THE WORK OF THE MIND.
IT'S SCENERY IS BUILT UP AS MUCH FROM STRATA OF
MEMORY AS FROM LAYERS OF ROCK.
(SCHAMA, 1995:6)

It is extremely difficult to pinpoint where memory does come in to play when the desire is for clear, unbiased seeing. I am sure that it is highly improbable to be free of all historical influences, no matter how relevant (or irrelevant) they may be to the painting process. What I see and feel combines with what I know, to provide momentum for my attempts to depict *being* in the world, and it is precisely why I chose to use a metaphorical mode of exposition for both the journal and visual work. This is the job of the metaphier. To point, to reveal, to expose something tangible from the realm of the unseen. Or perhaps, more to the point, to provide the means by which a painting can imbue life itself.

The act of painting in situ producing reams of visual note taking and journal entries, gives me enough vigour to return to the studio and let the sensation unfold. *To let the imprint in my body memory flood the canvas as it were. The passage of time revealed as I gesture my way across an unchartered expanse of canvas. I have no way of*

knowing exactly what the outcome will be. That is the whole point of the exercise, to let the place-body-mind manifest as it will, to let an unseen thing come into being.

Where we come from or where we have spent long periods of time (years or more) give us some measure of identity which is, more often than not, maintained by memory. Whether we still live in that locale or not, it is still very much descriptive of who we are. As a living subject moving through the spatial configurations of, let's say, a desert landscape, I am led to ponder the implications of memory adding its own props and sets in order to placate the desire for a consistency of self²². The unaccountable space of desert country can frequently cause the most stable of characters to come unstuck as it were, and create the need to cling to a sense of identity that is often completely inappropriate.

WE COME TO LIFE, OUR PAST COMES TO LIFE, WHEN
OUR PARTICULAR MEMORIES MIX WITH THE
IMMEMORIAL. OUR LIVING PAST (AND PRESENT) IS
ARCHETYPAL OR TRANS-SUBJECTIVE. AND SO IT IS
THAT WHEN, LIVING RELATIONALLY, WE LOSE OUR
SELF, THAT WE ARE MOST ALIVE. (GAME, CH. 12)
(MAY, 2001:230)

Womb-body

Whilst I looked at conventional ways that women might represent their *being* in the landscape, I found the early colonial impressions of Australian landscape were heavily stacked towards male representations. They were idealistic, often inaccurate in terms of the actual topography, and exotically placed in a romantic way. The views tended to lean towards the monumental.²³ They had more to do with the explorer's code of naïve possession. A kind of possession through seeing and naming.²⁴ From what I can see, the few women painters of this time merely followed protocol in terms of accepted images.

My initial focus was with paintings executed in the early to mid 1800s, but it was later in my research that interesting tangents started to appear. As I encountered the Heidelberg School depictions of lost children, stoic pioneering woman or idyllic beach scenarios, I didn't really find that sense of embodiment that I was looking for within the painting. What I did find was a lack of women making representation for and of themselves. There was definitely a more visible male interpretation, though I am not disputing the skill and beauty with which the Heidelberg School of painters captured the quintessential Australian light. They were the first of a long line of landscape painters who started to change the colonial way we looked at this land, but it was not until the late 1800s to early 1900s that more women painters such as Clarice Beckett, Grace Cossington-Smith and Elizabeth Colquhoun started to appear on the scene. I shall discuss Clarice Beckett in more detail later.

For most women in the early 1800s who showed the inclination to pick up a brush, their subject matter was already dictated, that is, the accepted genre was to produce intimate domestic interiors, botanical studies or scenic depictions of the farmhouse and its immediate vicinity. How was one to respond truthfully to one's feelings of being in an alien place? There wasn't much allowance made for the possibility of a unique interpretation of place that came from being a woman, but there was one who dared to record the landscape as it was without references to the monumental or the exotic. Jane Currie was married to a ship's captain by the name of Mark John Currie, and arrived in the new Swan River Colony in 1830. Although her painting was a view of a newly settled land, the repeated low hills and rather dull green reflected abstract sensibilities. Her *Panorama of the Swan River Settlement 1830-32* (Kerr, 1999pl.314:188) was painted without exaggeration and a certain pride of place. Small details, like the washing line, and the predominance of unconvincing green would not have attracted the big buyers in London. This was a

painting of modest sentiments and conveyed the humanness of everyday life in the struggling British settlement.

Another painter who came closer to the sort of representation I was looking for was Clarice Beckett. Beckett's work wasn't really noticed until the late 1900s, and was not hugely popular because of the very reasons I find her work of interest. 'Her work was continually attacked for weak and inadequate drawing, her reviewers missing the impressionistic essence of her work . . . and had she chosen to detail her work in oil the originality and sensitivity would have been lost to convention'. (Hollinrake 1979:22) Her soft, blurred images of the local streets and landscape around where she lived seemed more real to my senses than an accurate description of place, even though some of her paintings are quite recognisable²⁵. The lightness of brush and distinctly airy mood created sensations in my body rather than just a mental response. Her tonal colours and lack of distinction in a pictorial sense, gave space and breadth for these inner responses to engage with. I could play with multiple identities (which I believe are fluid and interchangeable) whilst looking at the work. These ideas are elaborated further in *Body-eographies*.

The title of a recently published book *Politically Incorrect*, very aptly sums up public opinion of the time, in that the paintings weren't picturesque, they lacked real form, and the colours were dull and tonal. This is particularly evident in paintings such as *Beach Road Beaumaris* (1919), *Silent Approach* (1928), and *Wet Sand Anglesea* (1929). (Hollinrake, 1999 p.34,37,56) Beckett of course, painted in a time when feminist discourse was not the top item on the public agenda and for her to contemplate conceptual diversity in her painting would have seemed incomprehensible and possibly odd.

No previous Australian artist had rendered the countryside in this manner before. The vast open expanses of dry bleached grass she handled as she did the sea – fractional tone placed by tone, with the high key of the landscape providing a vivid tonal contrast to the soft forms of the dark gum trees. (Hollinrake, 1979:22)

Feminist discourse has questioned at length the meaning of what it is to be female in an inherited patriarchal world. It is not until further reading of feminist writers such as Battersby, Kaschak, Pollock or Probyn that one fully understands just how deeply ingrained taking the male subject-position as normal, really is. Even though we may vigorously join the debate, in our deeper unconscious conditioning we still accept, in many cases, the patriarchal position as the standard point of reference. Just for a moment, if we switch that around as Christine Battersby²⁶ has done and take the female subject-position as normal, then her interpretation of Kierkegaard's model of identity seems plausible.

(Thus) Kierkegaard refuses the notion of a free or autonomous and the individualized “soul” or “mind” that merely inhabits the flesh, as well as the notion of a “me” that is constructed (in Kantian fashion) by a “synthesis” of temporal moments performed by the “I”. Instead, Kierkegaard offers a model of identity that is non-hylomorphic: identity is configured by patterns of becoming, and is not a form imposed on matter by the mind in a top-down way. (Battersby, 1998 :202)

The implication of living within the mind as an imposed order overseeing the body as a separate entity, dismisses both bodily knowledge and intelligence, and is ultimately patriarchal. We can be thankful for the lengthy deliberations that feminist writing and philosophy has provoked with regards to the Cartesian body/mind split, in the re-interpretation and validation of the body having intelligence.

BODY-CONSCIOUSNESS COMES FROM THINKING ABOUT THE BODY AS A BASE OF KNOWLEDGE AND USING IT AS SUCH. MIND IS INHERENT THROUGHOUT THE BODY. TO PERCEIVE BLOOD, HAIR, FLESH, SENSES AND THEIR EXISTENCE IN A NETWORK OF INFORMATION — SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECOLOGICAL STRUCTURES THAT ARE THE WORLD — IS TO KNOW THAT THE BODY IS NOT DUMB. (FRUEH, 1996:11)

How did the few female landscape painters in the early to mid 1800s embody their own understanding of being in the world? I’m not talking about a literal depiction of body, but rather, how the body is gestured through the paint.²⁷ Something that struck me more about women painters such as Louisa Ann Meredith or as in Mary Morton Allport’s painting *Opossum Mouse c.1843*²⁸ was an apparent lack of their own *embodied presence* within the scene. Griselda Pollock argues,

We try to endow women artists with the canonized artistic subject-hood enjoyed by some men, using a logic of identification to try and render women artists, if not the same as men, at least equal in terms of recognition and respect. Yet the meanings of works produced by women will only become vivid to us when we can articulate what is particular to them, what makes them different from the existing norms, and when we define signifying temporalities quite other than those of styles, movements, avant-garde innovations and so forth. We are searching for ways to acknowledge the ‘spaces of femininity’ and its subjective temporalities in the rhythms of women’s lived experience within and against the hierarchies of sexual difference as that is configured in complex social formations of class, race and sexuality. (Pollock 1996 :8)

Isolating what is particular to the works produced by women presents a formidable and on going task, something that interests me enormously, but unfortunately is

beyond the limits of this exegesis. Feminist theory has provided useful tools and filters through which to look at this conundrum, but the earlier questions of how one can visually translate being 'at home in the world' (Jackson, 1995) are my primary interest.

I love colour. The slightest tonal change of the same colour can be mood altering, but how dramatic to add another shade altogether. The temptation to use more and more colour is always with me, so today, with this restricted palette of earth colours, I find the restraint a touch unpleasant, but its something I need to do. The focus is revealing. Its like eating only brown rice for two weeks, only to discover that the intricacies of flavour lead to nuances of things other than rice.

Body-eographies

Following the traditional scenic landscape approach has not given me what I'm looking for. The term *landscape* itself is so loaded and broad, that I am almost reluctant to use it, yet at this point in time, I have not found a meaningful word or words to describe *the act of painting from a site within one's body that is itself situated and responsive to a particular locale*. The locale could be anywhere, but in this context when I use the term landscape, I am primarily referring to wilderness²⁹ or that which comes close. As formerly stated, my exploration of the materiality of visual transformation refers to the unlimited space of predominately building-free horizons, places I have spent time in and places that I want to spend more time in.

As I encounter the external landscape, there are many visual triggers for my body to engage with and it is often easy to miss how one's body stores a *memory* of place that somehow lingers within as a physical feeling. These bodily "places" can seem as real as salt in a wound, in that they impact physically, emotionally and intellectually. These emotional "places" in the body can stay with us for years, eventually being triggered by memory, or by returning to the actual physical location. Sometimes a different but similar physical location can be enough to bring forth a bodily feeling from the past that competes with present reality. A strong memory from childhood can provoke a bodily response that may appear incongruous with one's day to day adult experiences. This rings true for Binnie Klein when she writes about lost places/spaces in her childhood. She recalls the despair of her mother's loneliness infiltrating and encoding her own life, in that 'The atmosphere left a residue, and the imprint of these fossilized moments remains on my body. The pain of this inheritance becomes a place that is a bodily feeling; pain itself is a place.' (Nast, 1998 :76) In order to investigate the spatial relationships associated with physical place, my aim has been to consider my own history of emotional sites or "places" within my body to give some clue as to my bearings today. These embodied places can also affect the choice of material, and I shall discuss this a little further on.

The task of tapping into these sites becomes easier to facilitate when my body encounters wilderness. From experience, these sites have a more intense affect upon my being, hence focus becomes clearer and easier, for there is ultimately less distraction from the chaos of city and suburbia. This is not just about latitude and longitude, or location, it is also about an equal reflection of self to other (other, in this case being landscape) and vice versa, manifesting and translating through the

visual. When I refer back to Clarice Beckett's paintings from the previous chapter, this is where I see the earliest beginnings for the viewer to engage with sensations other than purely visual. Jenny Bell, the curator for *In a Certain Light*³⁰, comments on Beckett's work, 'She gives us just enough information to convey what it is we are looking at and not an ounce more, so that we become embroiled in the scene conveyed, mentally embellishing the barest details, absorbed in the atmosphere created.' (Kerr, 1999:150)

The longer I spend time in wilderness type sites, the more I lose a separate distinction of my self, in other words, the gap between self and other disappears as an un-self-consciousness takes place. Judy Watson works on unstretched canvas laid straight upon the earth, so each canvas reflects the contours of ground, pools and any prominences of the land. Some of these contours are reminiscent of body shapes and reveal a highly complex range of feeling within the works. Watson uses earth colours predominately and has a bodily involvement with each piece. Feelings, materials and process inform her work. She will often spend weeks researched a site before actually placing herself and her materials on site.³¹

So how, in the process of art making can this bodily response be articulated through the use of different materials? The articulation can take many forms, but in terms of writing³² or art making, instead of abandoning the body with a dismissive wave of separatist thinking, women are showing that the body has a complete unity of expression and intelligence; it's a matter of finding the most lucid exposition. Situated within my body, I have to accept that the external stimulus also dictates a certain response and this in turn affects my choice of materials. By that, I mean the difference between wet or dry media, brush or stick or charcoal, paper, board or canvas, or just my bare hands, let alone the method of implementation. I admit, that for me each of these things triggers an emotional response or a mood. Before any consideration of colour or combination of elements can happen, I have to merge these nuances of mood with the external stimulus. (Refer diagram on p.4) I realise more and more how the choice of material becomes an important factor in determining how the creative work will relate to something personal that has no previous language. By the same token, the *emotionality* of material can also re-create something felt or seen elsewhere, such as the memory of places that lie in the body. It is not an intellectual process as such.

I'm looking at the artwork wondering how on earth my body resonates here. The paper I use to stick on to the board – which is already layered with oil pigment in ochres, blues and reds – is like tissue. Very fine, shiny on one side and slightly rough on the other. It's paper generally used for wrapping bread. There are reams of it making an appearance in my studio, and my first impulse is to put it to good use.

I start to think of skin; taut, soft, flaky, peeling – like sunburn. I peel the layer of tissue off the painted board. Its slight reluctance to come makes the parallel with skin all the more poignant. As I peel, I remember my own skin coming off in large pieces after a particularly nasty bout of sunburn.

The pieces of 'skin' are freed in two parts. I re-position them to another board. My feeling is with shadows and mirror images. There are two pieces on each board. An above and a below, if you see it this way; then I turn the piece vertical. What's more interesting is the gap. The space between the two sheets of 'skin'. The space of potential meeting – always only possible because the gap exists. Without the gap the potential becomes met and there's no room left for these racing thoughts to enter.

Site Effects

My practice as a painter has mostly revolved around the tactile application of paint as a medium as well as the mood and distinctiveness of place, that is portrayed through colour, form and texture. Abstract windows, if you like, through which to enter another universe; a space of my own making.

My response to the external landscape developed through 20 years of living and working in a small coastal town in the south west of Western Australia. Such was the splendour of the scenery around me that I felt compelled to try and record something of its essence. The word "record" I think, gives a clue to the dilemma of even calling oneself a landscape painter. How to paint the feel of autumn light upon my skin? How to interpret visually the flow of tide as it moves to meet the ever changing and shifting sand? Is the interpretation of my own flow of emotive responses to the site, a valid one?

WITNESSING IS SEEING; STANDING PUBLICLY
ACCOUNTABLE FOR, AND PSYCHICALLY VULNERABLE
TO, ONE'S VISIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS.
(HARAWAY, 2000: 155)

My concern at the time was to make present the specifics of the locale I was painting on my paper, not exposing the internal state of my body knowledge.

Feeling overwhelmed by the magnificence of my environment, my desire to respond in an embodied way (incomprehensible at the time) gradually fell into recognisable depictions of famous surf breaks and dunes. However, in the background there was always an on going questioning of the places I found myself in and how I could best relate to them. Did I belong here - or not? And if I didn't feel as if I belonged, then why not? The answer wasn't simply tied up in my migrant history or the feelings of estrangement accompanying such a move. The feeling of dislocation went far deeper and as I realised later, more profound. The not belonging gave a sense of displacement that strangely enough produced a more critical eye.

How often we hear the words of those who have encountered war, that we know nothing of the meaning of suffering, of making do with very little, of having fewer options. It seems true that the diminishing of one's resources very often produces a keen wit and a sharp eye, possibly through the act of an enforced focus or limited choice, or perhaps it is simply a survival instinct. Alienation is often the

outcome of the internal construct that sets apart and distances self from other, in that one feels no immediate empathic response. Paradoxically, the desire to find similarities from one's past to the present location, often propels an even greater separation.

From the Western viewpoint, the concern for self-meaning and individuality takes precedence over the more anthropomorphic slant of linking the human body to the body of the earth, such as that found within tribal indigenous systems of living. This is not the same as equating the earth with women and women with the earth as discussed earlier. Having a more collective consciousness of identity through the earth, an interdependency, certainly enables one to feel more 'at home', or to at least grasp the relevance of place to self and vice versa. I am almost envious of the simplicity this suggests, such as that of rivers flowing upon the earth being synonymous with the flow of my blood. This belief in the land as being so intrinsically linked to one's own sense of self is especially true for the Warlpiri of Central Australia, as Jackson cites;

Relations between person and country are couched in terms of organic processes such as sleeping and eating, digestion and defecation, procreation and parturition that Western bourgeois poetics shuns in its attempt to separate humanity, animality, and physicality into discrete domains. (Jackson, 1995 :162)

If I had been brought up to believe that a simplistic body/earth relationship was the only world to live in, my choices in life would already be prescribed to some extent. My living might be a little less confusing without the distraction of mass entertainment technologies so prevalent in our society today.

On a practical level, the ritual of sitting outside painting, in all sorts of weather (preferably fine) has, in my experience, produced a need in me to belong somewhere, or to at least feel comfortable in my surroundings. Perhaps it is more of an attempt at naming something and therefore, a kind of tenure or a personal 'knowing', the same sort of need to feel akin with what we call home, something to make me feel comfortable in my body whilst at the same time absorbing a response from the locale; feelings that could be either positive, negative or neutral. Or perhaps it is simply a need to feel at home within my body, wherever I may find myself externally. Is home as much about being as place? Jackson comes to the feeling '...that a sense of home is grounded less in a place per se than in the activity that goes on in a place.' (Jackson, 1995 :148) but as Riley (in Altman) says,

Home is often identified as *the* archetypal landscape, standing alone or joined with journey, with road, shrine, and garden. Home is magical. The idea of home matches what seem to be our instincts, but how far

have these instincts been conditioned by culture and even cliché?
(Altman, 1992:25)

Am I today merely performing a projection of some other place I've felt at home in at a previous location and time, as I paint *my impression* of being in the land? Effectively, if I can embrace wholly the notion of body-as-site and let go of the old ways of seeing, the alterations of place and space are free to take shape upon the canvas without the interference of a particular mind-set.

KNOWING WHERE ONE IS, KNOWING ONE'S PLACE, UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF REAL PLACES IN THEMSELVES REQUIRES FIRST A CENTERED SELF, GROUNDED, EMBODIED IN DEEPLY IMPRINTED MAPS THAT RECORD THE MEMORIES OF OUR HISTORY OF HUMAN CONNECTIONS. LIKE TETHERS TO A DOCK OR A LIFELINE TO SHORE, THIS LIVING, INTERNAL HISTORY PROTECTS US FROM FORGETTING WHO WE ARE, HELPS US TO RECONSTITUTE WHEN LOST. WITHOUT THAT SECURE HOUSING FOR SELF, PLACES CAN BE SEEN ONLY AS A THREAT TO THE STABILITY AND COHESIVENESS OF THE PERSON. PLACES BECOME METAPHORS FOR STATES OF MIND. (NAST, 1998 :89)

While I can highly appreciate the Aboriginal artist's approach to painting, I cannot "use" these devices, for they are not my own, yet they make perfect sense to me, in the way that I am trying to translate something about the atmosphere of *being* in and on the earth. More and more, I come to the same conclusion, that it is in the *process* of creating art that I find I can more readily understand the meaning of being at home in my body, and ultimately at home in the world.

I am in the strangest place. The ground appears to be shifting underneath me, the colour changing as I move around. I can smell the green of new mown grass, a paddock that's been disciplined with mechanical blades. The light is soft, tranquil and slightly blue. There's a distant horizon flecked in deep vertical greens cushioned by round puffs of even darker green-grey. Lots of space, room to move and room to rest the eye atop a glimmer of water nesting by the rocks to my left. And as vivid and brief this vision, the intensity remains as I suddenly find myself staring at the huge canvas stretched out on the floor in front of me. Its all there, I can see it, but no one else can just yet. Perhaps all I can hope for is an impression, a mere stain of having passed along some way. Like a shadow - one minute its there and the next, its gone or changed shape. Past

and future, with only the present instant a reality. Even the musings of phenomenology cannot grasp the moment as is, for that is theoretically impossible. The moment itself refuses arrest. Like the absurdity of trying to watch one 'bit' of water bubbling over rocks as it flows down river, assuming that you are watching something that stays recognisably the same.

Atmospherics

Buddhist philosophy maintains the idea that all we perceive as fixed and permanent in the external world is mere illusion, and to not be lured into desiring that which we cannot have or hold on to, that to operate from a ground of *emptiness* is where the true self exists³³. This concept seems paradoxical to my Western mind, and it certainly doesn't curb my desire to make meaning of my place in the world. My thinking is visual, and somehow for me to gain an understanding of what it is to be human, the *unseen* things ask to be *seen*.

Towards the culmination of my research, I now realise that what I have been trying to write about sits far closer to some eastern philosophies, particularly Zen Buddhism. I realise that my struggle to come to terms with Western Cartesianism and our dualistic way of thinking has indeed made the discussion of the process of artmaking very difficult.

PHILOSOPHERS HAVE ARGUED OVER WHETHER THE SELF IS UNITARY OR MANIFOLD, WHETHER THERE IS ANYTHING ABOUT A *YOU* OR A *ME* THAT IS AS CONSTANT AS THE NAMES WE CARRY OR THE THINGS WE CALL OUR OWN. BUT A PERSON IS AS VARIOUS AS THE EXPERIENCES HE OR SHE HAS UNDERGONE. THERE IS NO ESSENTIAL SELF, NO CONSTANT THAT CAN BE MADE THE MEASURE OF WHO WE REALLY ARE. WE ARE MANIFOLD FIGURES, CONTINUALLY SHIFTING OUR GROUND. WHEN ONE SIDE IS IN SHADOW, ANOTHER IS IN LIGHT. A PERSON IS BOTH ONE AND MANY.(JACKSON, 1995:161)

Every time that I am fortunate enough to be in a wilderness landscape, I often wonder what it is that gives rise to a more innate sense of self as opposed to a feeling of discomfort or dislocation. The answer is probably obvious, if it were not so immediately intangible, for I know I feel strong and powerful in places that seem untouched by human greed or exploitation; places that are wild and untamed. Places where the breeze speaks inside your head; that urge you to grow at your own speed and places where your heart stops still to hear the next beat.

The desert has no distinct edges to it. Even the slightest sound or change in atmosphere becomes vivid to the lover of wide open space. This is the place to observe the weather and become familiar with the earth's cycles, ultimately tuning

one's body to be compatible to this tempo. For the early European settlers, this space, this desert, spoke of the unspeakable horror of the Other with no possible notion of any comfort predetermined by safe boundaries, familiar names or even a proximity to fertile ground. One can understand how their need to replicate the safety of the familiar echoed through their paintings of Australia. For me personally, I love the space of no-name, the endless horizon that lets me forget my small petty self and instead, expand to the edges of all that I can see before me. The works produced in the studio become a very tangible way to reconnect with these spaces of wildness, metaphorically re-producing a sense of freedom and stillness that is harder to encounter within a city environment. What I have named the metaphier (the artistic process that drives the invisible into the visible) still cannot see what is yet to emerge until it is there before me.

It is within the very act of painting, right inside the process that the artist lives and dies a thousand times. There's an eternal instability between taking control and complete surrender, yet in this 'between' space there is the clarity and calm of always returning to somewhere that feels just right. And I feel compelled to wonder, if that 'rightness' is indeed a state of emptiness, a state that is not bound by the changing fashion of time.

What we're talking here is occupation. Occupation of a place, space which is more than habiting one's body.....why the need to go beyond skin? Is body awareness just altogether too disturbing because we then have to feel our restrictions or parameters? Somehow the edge of my skin doesn't seem to be the end of all that I know. My thinking moves out and away, almost like smoke curling upwards takes on whatever shape it so moves in. Does that mean that this is still me as I know myself (as limited as that is)? What if my consciousness is aware of the cloud above me and yet I feel as if I am the cloud, in that I am not aware of any distinct separation between my body and my thinking I am cloud.

It's interesting how this conjecture leads me back to my observation of landforms and the question that is not made of words in my head, as I look out on places familiar and unfamiliar. A good example of just this, as I find myself driving through wheat and sheep country north east of Perth (about two and a half hours away), I'm initially appalled at the large scale clearance of trees from early farming practices. I stop and look at the huge open paddocks with hardly a tree in sight apart from rocky outcrops where the

tractor can't reach; deemed useless land because it wasn't productive. Over the years, the winter rains poured off these huge open tracts of land taking more and more topsoil each year. The water ends up in the lowest lying area, mostly small scrub and lots of white looking stuff. Bend down and look closely, dab a wet finger to the surface and bring it to your mouth. It's salty. Very, very salty. And the more I look, the more I see.

Now, as an artist I can relate to this alien looking place (to my mind) by virtue of the colour and textural implications that could be translated to paper. Lovely broad sweeps of honey-sunburnt straw, rich deep umbers, some deep olive greens and of course the dazzling salt white; crisp and visible amongst the restricted palette of beige's and browns. What was it that Levitus said about an artist's so-called intuitive response to the landscape? I need those words to come to me now!

Hum, swirls of these colours in gouache on my paper, no, its landscape I'm looking at so horizontal I must be! It's habitual to list the colour in horizontal lines down the page. It's just colour notes I tell myself so it doesn't matter what the format may be, but as I struggle to capture the bleached colour in this harsh light, I realise that my body is also part of this play. My body is sitting in this place feeling dry, parched and ravaged by the hot nor-easterly that hasn't stopped blowing in my face all morning. I start to feel as old as this land, desolate and devastated by the farming practices that have helped to create the salt cancers that grow bigger every year. Every year, more viable land gets eaten away by the brilliant, dazzling white crystals. I'm reminded of the explorer Eyre as depicted in Miriel Lenore's poem,

the wild sad cry of swans
brings Eyre from his tent
their northward flight
promising that inland sea
whose glitter would be salt

Lenore, Miriel (Crisp and Lenore, 1998:108)

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¹¹ Judy Watson purposely does not have titles on her work when exhibiting. The viewer is only able to see them once a catalogue is referenced. She prefers the viewer to have no bias before feeling what the work is about. (From Judy Watson floor talk, John Curtin Gallery 29.9.03)

² I use the words natural landscape and wilderness, in much the same way, by referring to the definition of wilderness found in Hall, C. M. (1992) *Wasteland to World Heritage - Preserving Australia's Wilderness*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, Australia.

Wilderness is land which is remote from, and undisturbed by, the influences and presence of settled people. The concepts of remoteness and primitiveness (naturalness) are critical to the definition of wilderness. For example, the Australian Institute of Foresters (1979) stated:

"an area of wilderness is a large tract of primitive country with its land and waters and its natural plant and animal communities ideally unmodified by humans and their works. This tract must be large enough to survive as wilderness, and ideally must be extensive enough to require more than one day's walk to traverse".(1992:4)

³ For an interesting discussion on phenomenology and self-awareness, see Chapter 6 and 9 from Zahavi, D. (1999) *Self-Awareness & Alterity : A Phenomenological Investigation*, Northwestern University Press, Illinois, USA.

⁴ Traditional ethnography has been more about scientific description and classification, but in reading Jackson, I was drawn to his writings as a wonderful example of how to write about lived experience, such as

Recounting in detail the lived truth of an event may convey less data with less jargon than the scientific treatise, but what it sacrifices in impressiveness and authority it may recover in immediacy, economy, and craft. The minimalization of ethnographic fact is not, therefore, evidence of a disenchantment with the empirical but rather an attempt to radicalise empiricism by emphasizing verisimilitude and contingency over system and structure'.(1998:36) Jackson, M. (1998) *Minima Ethnographica - Intersubjectivity and the Anthropological Project*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, USA.

⁵ By 'lived experience', I am trying to talk about that which is impossible to really talk about, because the moment of life as it is lived, has already shifted once it is conveyed in words. This has certainly propelled my interest in Zen Buddhist philosophy as a way of trying to understand this paradox.

⁶ Obviously, there are open paddocks of farmland that fit this description of open horizons, and I do use this example within my journal notes to juxtapose how the different landscape sites produce different responses within my body, as opposed to the 'wilderness' sites.

⁷ I refer to 'belonging' as a 'here now' experience, more to do with being in a temporal space that is outside of linear duration. See Ann Games essay *Belonging: Experience in Sacred Time and Space* from May, J. T., Nigel (Ed.) (2001) *TimeSpace: Geographies of Temporality*, Routledge, London.

⁸ The "what is" refers to life as it is lived. Not a separate self talking about a separate existence suggested by intellectual concepts, but a self that has a sense of no separation from the external world. For further reading, see Muller, R. J. (1998) *Beyond Marginality : Constructing a Self in the Twilight of Western Culture*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, CT, USA.

⁹ I quote the Zen experience here,

We live by words and concepts. We cannot do without them, but these words and concepts often take us away from ourselves. Zen, which tries to break through and return to the original experience words and concepts distort, has no choice but to use these abstractions (though with a lesser degree of abstraction) in the process, not to a rational or logical end, but to open up a different way of experiencing and ultimately of living. This is the goal of Zen. Ibid.(1998:19)

¹⁰ *Songcycle 2002* is the body of paintings that were presented in the John Curtin Gallery as the major part of this research degree.

¹¹ See Plate 19 Conrad Martins *View from Rose Bank c.1840*, Sayers, A. (2001) *Australian Art*, Oxford University Press, UK.

¹² Joseph Lycett was known to advertise his landscapes in London as sites for British settlement. 'Like virtually every other early European landscapist, he completely ignored the Aborigines' forms of occupancy, both their practical uses of the land and their visual representations of it'. (Eagle, 1994:8) Eagle, M & Jones, J, 1994, *A Story of Australian Painting*, Pan Macmillan Press, Sydney, Australia.

¹³ A good example is John Glover's *Dinas Brann near Llangollen c.1837* which was painted in Van Diemen's Land from his notes and imagination, but was actually a memory of Welsh scenery. (Plate 7:19) Eagle, M & Jones, J, 1994, *A Story of Australian Painting*, Pan Macmillan Press, Sydney, Australia.

¹⁴ I am talking here about traditional Aboriginal paintings, such as Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri's *Yuelamu Honey Ant Dreaming c.1980* and Ada Bird Petyarre's *Awelye for the Mountain Devil Lizard c.1994*, McCulloch, S. (2001) *Contemporary Aboriginal Art*, Allen & Unwin, NSW, Australia. The art is not about depicting a scenic view, it is more about the viewer entering into a spatial relationship with the work.

¹⁵ See endnote 11.

¹⁶ See illustration 9, after William John Huggins, *Swan River 50 Miles Up, c.1834*, Scott, John 1986 *Landscapes of Western Australia*, Aeolian Press, Claremont, W.Australia.

¹⁷ Plate 34 p.96, *Sand Sculpture, c.1991*, from *New Visions, New Perspectives*, Voigt, 1996, Craftsman House, NSW, Australia.

¹⁸ Especially the likes of Nicholas Chevalier's *Mount Arapiles and the Mitre Rock c.1863* and Eugene von Guerard's *North-east view from the northern top of Mount Kosciusko c.1863*. Thomas, D. R., Ron (Ed.) (1988) *Creating Australia - 200 Years of Art 1788 - 1988*, International Cultural Corporation of Australia in assoc. with the Art Gallery Board of SA., Adelaide, South Australia.

¹⁹ This was conveyed to me through personal discussions with indigenous elders in the Murchison region of Western Australia, 2001.

²⁰ This concept refers to Christine Battersby's definition of female identity:

Identity is not created by mirroring a pre-existent reality (as in Plato); but neither is it simply constructed by living through a succession of finite moments. Instead, identity depends on a repetition that brings into existence (births) an order of events that was already potentially there in the past; but that is brought into existence in the 'nook' of the moment.(1998:173)Battersby, C. (1998) *The Phenomenal Woman - Feminist Metaphysics and the Patterns of Identity*, Routledge, New York.

²¹The ongoing problem of seeing the self as a separate entity within the world is a very Western notion and is the primary reason for my interest in Buddhist philosophy as a way of living, but there is neither the room nor the scope within this exegesis to provide a fuller discussion of Buddhism per se, even though I do make mention of Buddhist doctrine as an example, further into this paper.

²²A consistency of self implies a linear time space, a flow of ordered events one after the other, from which the self can be constructed, but I am more interested in David Loy's explanation of the ending of time:

A genuine end to objectified, commodified time – as opposed to a postmodern fragmentation that merely heightens anxiety and makes us more compulsive – implies a 'new' understanding of life as play. That is because play is what we are doing when we do not need to gain something *from* a situation – in particular, when we do not need to use a situation to end our sense of *lack*. When we do not need to extract something from this time-place, we will not continue to devalue it by contrasting here-and-now with some other location (e.g. heaven) or time (the future), or with homogenised Newtonian/Kantian space-time generally. That would resacralise the world, not as something objective and abstract, but as this here, this now.(2001:279)

Saving Time – A Buddhist Perspective on the End. May, J. T., Nigel (Ed.) (2001) *TimeSpace: Geographies of Temporality*, Routledge, London.

²³ Such as Nicholas Chevalier's *Mount Arapiles and the Mitre Rock c.1863*. Thomas, D. R., Ron (Ed.) (1988) *Creating Australia - 200 Years of Art 1788 - 1988*, International Cultural

Corporation of Australia in assoc. with the Art Gallery Board of SA Adelaide, South Australia.

²⁴ Joseph Lycett's success in advertising the views in Australia produced a series of places named after well-known places back home. 'Ravensworth', 'Barnard Castle', 'Kelso', 'St. Boswells', 'Jedburgh', 'St. Aubyn', 'Hexham', 'Butterwick', and so on. (Eagle, 1994:10) Eagle, M & Jones, J, 1994, *A Story of Australian Painting*, Pan Macmillan Press, Sydney, Australia.

²⁵ This is particularly true of *Naringal Landscape, c.1925*, *Summer Fields, c.1925* and *Smoke Haze Beaumaris, c.1931* (Hollinrake, 1979:37,39,54)

²⁶ See Battersby, C. (1998) *The Phenomenal Woman - Feminist Metaphysics and the Patterns of Identity*, Routledge, New York.

²⁷ Judy Watson uses her hands, feet, and the entire body to convey what I call an embodied sense within her paintings. One might actually see concealed histories or one might only feel them. (From Judy Watson floor talk, John Curtin Gallery 29.9.03)

²⁸ This painting of a Tasmanian marsupial includes a landscape background. Allport's entry into the world of art revolved around the scientific or botanical depictions. Sayers, A. (2001:pl.26:45) *Australian Art*, Oxford University Press, UK.

²⁹ See previous footnote #1, regarding 'wilderness' definition.

³⁰ *In a Certain Light* Ivan Dougherty Gallery, University of NSW College of Fine Arts, 8 March – 15 April 1995. Curators Jenny Bell and Felicity Fenner. Kerr, J. (Ed.) (1999) *Past Present: The National Women's Art Anthology*, Craftsman House, Sydney, Australia.

³¹ This information was conveyed through a floor talk given by the artist herself during a mid-career retrospective *Learning from the Ground Up*, John Curtin Gallery, Curtin University of Technology, 29.09.2003.

³² Refer Witzling, M. R. (Ed.) (1991) *Voicing our Visions: Writings by Women Artists*, Universe, New York.

³³ Similar paradoxes such as we are everything and we are nothing, are particularly hard for the intellect to grasp, and that is exactly the point. From a Buddhist perspective, there is no separation between life and living. See Muller, R. J. (1998) *Beyond Marginality: Constructing a Self in the Twilight of Western Culture*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, CT, USA.

Note: The illustrated sheets that divide each section are details taken from my final exhibition of works 'Songcycle 2002' presented in the John Curtin Gallery at Curtin University of Technology from November 24th – December 15th 2002.

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