

**School of Design & Art
Department of Art**

Her Beauty & Her Terror: Portrait of an Archetypal Land

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DECLARATION

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

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In memory of those who disappeared into the Void: Nathan Drew who slipped; *Melusina* and *Jay* who jumped; my father John who fell.

ABSTRACT

This studio research project is comprised of two complementary elements: a discursive exegesis and a production of artwork. It explores the idea that Jung's method of 'active imagination' can be applied to image-making as a *practice for consciousness* that leads to the discovery of new insights into the nature of reality. The discussion is based on the idea that 'unconscious' images (appearing as dreams or in the imagination) not only have meaning but the potential to effect change on a deeply psychic level. The role of images in Western consciousness is also examined, specifically their potential to alter perception and thereby enrich humankind's relationship with the world it occupies.

The visual or 'studio' research was carried out at a spectacular wild-site on the south coast of Western Australia known as The Gap. Inspired and informed by Jung's archetype theory, I set out to test the following: if both the human psyche and the landscape are defined according to an imaginal (archetypal) matrix as Jung suggests, it should be possible to communicate with the 'spirits of place' through imaginative inquiry and the practice of making images. This core idea drives both the theoretical discourse and the visual research.

The underlying motivation for this project, and my practice in general, is to formulate a 'model for consciousness' within which both human and non-human existence can be reconciled. This is reflected in my interdisciplinary approach to research where I have drawn equivalences across several theoretical models: the 'Romantic sublime' in landscape painting, the Void of Eastern religion and Western philosophy, and Jung's imaginal realm of archetypal myth-motifs.

PROLOGUE

On September 14, 2003 a fifteen year old boy¹ I did not know called Nathan drowned at *Salmon Holes*.² Two days later I went there to surf - they were still searching for him when I spoke to his sister who was still hopeful of finding him. She was doing a survey of near-miss and actual drownings on the south coast and talked about how she had watched her brother slip into the sea, wave to acknowledge he was alright and calmly prepare to swim back to shore. He never got there alive.

I imagined what might have happened to Nathan. I was inundated with mental images about drowning, sometimes poetic, always vividly compelling and often disturbing. Eight days after he went missing his family found his body lodged under a reef. Months later I still could not reconcile myself with his death. I continued to dream about him - peacefully asleep and iridescent blue - tucked beneath the ocean granite, in watery caves being resuscitated. I did some paintings and drawings with lots of blue in them.

I was already familiar with the 'drowning' motif - it surfaced in a dream when I was a small child and never left. An apocalyptic but distant dark red tidal wave advanced towards me as I froze in awe-struck wonder and fear. I always woke terrified and sweating before it engulfed me. As an adult it loomed closer until I was right inside a hovering cathedral of blue water where it threatened to hurl me to the deep. The image resurfaced with intensity after several open ocean voyages in the 1980s, one

¹ Jonathon Beal, 'Family Campaigns After Albany Teen's Drowning', Broadcast: 26/09/2003, <http://www.abc.net.au/stateline/wa/content/2003/s957006.htm>; Nathan Drew Memorial Trust for Coastal Safety. <http://www.coastalsafety.com.au/> (site now seems to be defunct) 26 April 2014.

² *Salmon Holes* is a small bay dwarfed by shelves of massive granite that slide into the sea only a few kilometres from the Gap. It is notorious because it is regularly mentioned in current affairs programs when fisher folk repeatedly ignore warnings and are swept into the sea. Nathan Drew was an experienced rock fisherman, took no risks and was in no obvious danger on that day.

involving eighteen hours of sheer terror in the dark, three kilometres from a notorious stretch of coast on a lee shore in a force eleven storm.³

When the drowning dreams returned with urgency after Nathan's death I decided it was time to make peace with the ocean that had ended his short life and continued to dominate mine. I wanted to know why these images persisted and what they signified. In the early stages of the research an acquaintance suicided at The Gap. Her death had a powerful impact on me, perhaps because she was an artist. Not long after that another artist I knew suicided there, after which my focus turned more directly to the connections between art, death and the tragic sublime which I knew was a traditional theme in Romantic poetry and painting.

The phenomenon of 'drowning' did not appear to be specific to any particular culture so I assumed it was archetypal in human consciousness. I was familiar with Jung's theories about the 'collective unconscious'⁴ and use of 'active imagination' to access archetypal myths, motifs and images. Based on my own responses to The Gap and the topography of the south coast, there seemed to be a connection between archetypal landscapes and the mental images they evoked - more specifically - interaction with the 'tragic sublime' had the potential to elicit certain imaginary responses in the human psyche. I asked myself: might it be possible to make archetypes visible through art practice and if so, could this method provide further insight into our relationship with place? The following is a brief summary of the research I undertook as I set out to answer that question.

³ The Dutch ship Zuytdorp perished on the same stretch of coast. A lee shore is particularly dangerous if close to shore because the boat is pushed onto land by the wind. On the Beaufort Scale, Force 11 indicates 'wind speeds of 56-63 knots (103-117 k.p.h.) (...) Exceptionally high waves (small and medium size ships might be for a time lost from view behind waves); sea is completely covered with long white patches of foam lying along the direction of wind; everywhere the edges are blown into froth; visibility affected'. (Echelle Beaufort Scale)

⁴ See explanation of 'unconscious' in footnote p. 10

Chapter one - 'A Practice for Consciousness' - introduces imaginal practice and explains my reasons for linking art making to Jung's archetype theory. It provides an overview of the theoretical models that underpin the discussion and identifies the specific field of psychology in which the research has been framed. 'Landscape as God' explores the connection between the Romantic sublime in Australian landscape painting as an archetype in human consciousness and Jungian theory.

'Imaginal Practice' includes sub-chapters 'Active Imagination', 'The Gap' and 'Welcome to the Edge'. Here I discuss the relationship between archetypal psychology's imaginal method, the Romantic imagination, the sublime in nature and the value of 'subjectivity' as a research methodology. 'Active Imagination' outlines imaginal psychology's rationale for engaging archetypal images through imagination, its application in art practice and ability to facilitate entry into the sublime dimensions of consciousness. 'The Gap' invites the reader to the site at which the visual research (art-making) takes place. It sets the 'physical' stage by linking art practice to a specific landscape. I also introduce the idea that one of the defining motifs of the Australian landscape is the Void and briefly compare Eastern, Western and Aboriginal perceptions of it. 'Welcome to the Edge' links the sea as a symbol of the Void in Australian culture to the archetypal unconscious in Jungian theory.

From here I move on to the art theoretical 'Painting Against Death', specifically the tragic sublime in an Australian setting by comparing the work of Australian artists Rick Amor and Lawrence Daws and their depiction of the Void as an awe-ful but sublime experience in the landscape. I also suggest the Void's capacity to be simultaneously creative and destructive influences the ways in which it is imaged, particularly in relation to how Yves Klein and Mark Rothko experienced it as a 'transcendent possibility'. 'Into the Blue' is a personal account of my encounter with the Void through imaginal art practice in response to The Gap. 'The Imaginal Void' outlines two distinct

models of the Void, its relationship to the human psyche and how these have influenced the ways in which artists have portrayed it.

Finally, in 'Living on the Edge of the Void', I evaluate imaginal (art) practice as a methodology and present my findings. I also share some of my insights into the relationship between the Void as a recurring motif in Australian culture and its archetypal role in the evolution of consciousness as humankind continues to balance precariously between 'Her Beauty & Her Terror'.

A PRACTICE FOR CONSCIOUSNESS

There's a 'body' on the rocks
I don't know what it's doing there
It's not dead, but it's not alive either
So I guess I'll just paint it
It's all I know to do.

(Frantom, Journal entry, 2011)

Depth psychologist Dr. Stephen Diamond argues that making a distinction between subjective and objective realities is a 'false dichotomy' because, as Jung discovered, 'what we collectively agree to call consensual reality is no more important(....) than our subjective, inner reality'. (Diamond, 2010: n.p.) As a visual artist concerned with human perception I have learnt to appreciate there are as many unique views of reality as there are people. To make sense of how this complex assortment of individual perspectives functions collectively in the 'real' world I surmised two things: first, that *my* view of reality must be as valid as anyone else's; and secondly, there must be some kind of matrix that prevented it all from completely falling apart - a set of 'givens' or 'constants' out of which the many differences arose. The existence of a singular objective reality seemed unlikely, in which case this metaphysical structure also had to be flexible enough to accommodate all conscious beings and their unique views of reality. The theories of archetypal psychologist Carl Jung offered such a framework.⁵

⁵ Jung's archetype theory is based on his contention that there is a psychological field of archetypes underpinning the consciousness of humankind. He initially referred to it as the 'collective unconscious'. Jung originally chose the term 'unconscious' to suggest that it was located 'under' everyday awareness because it is 'of an *a priori*, general human character rather than merely the precipitate of personal repressed material'. (Whitmont, 1978: 41) The 'collective' unconscious differs from the 'personal' unconscious which carries the hidden, mostly unrecognised aspects of *ego-personality*. (The unconscious aspect of the *individual* psyche or 'personal unconscious' is not discussed here). The collective or objective unconscious on the other hand contains archetypal motifs that underpin human consciousness. Because Jung's choice of the term 'collective' generated some confusion by suggesting the unconscious was a *shared* realm, and the potential that it could be misinterpreted as a kind of 'mass psyche', he came to refer to it as the *objective* unconscious. (Whitmont, 1978: 42) His later use of the term 'objective psyche replaces and enlarges the earlier concept of the collective unconscious'. (Whitmont, 1978: 41) Jung used 'objective psyche' or 'objective consciousness' to indicate 'spirit' whereas the 'personal psyche' equates to 'soul' ('psyche' in archetype theory retains its original meaning as 'soul' rather than 'mind' or 'intellect' which has different associations in other schools of psychology).

Groups of individuals with shared experience can agree on a number of attributes that define an object, experience or phenomenon. Although superficial details vary, an underlying pattern or framework can be detected - this is the basis of an archetype. Jung's biographer and colleague, Aniela Jaffe, describes an archetype as a 'prime imprinter', an original or 'basic form' for later copies. In Jungian psychology archetypes underpin the patterns of human life and are only made visible

through the arrangements they produce in our consciousness: through the analogous motifs exhibited in psychic images and through typical motifs of action in the primal situations of life - birth, death, love, etc. (Jaffe, 1984: 15)⁶

Although they form the basis of images and ideas, representations of archetypes should not be confused with the archetype itself. (Jung, CW 8: 213) Even though they cannot be directly represented, archetypes become visible when they are expressed as images; for this reason, and because the image is fundamental to both Jungian theory and visual art, I have brought them together in 'imaginal (art) practice'.

My basic premise is that when approached in a particular way, the image has the potential to become a *practice for consciousness*. I developed this idea from Christopher Allen's⁷ comment:

Consciousness appears first in practice, but without self-consciousness; theory tries to catch up, to impose its own interpretations and to simplify the ambiguities of practice(...) art is a form of practice(...). It articulates the consciousness of practice in concrete terms. (1997: 12)

Just as art practice can articulate the consciousness of practice, it has the potential to articulate consciousness itself. In addition, while the practise of making images articulates its expression, it is also a vehicle for its evolution. My research has been based on the idea that making images is both a way of *being* conscious and a way of *exploring* consciousness. Imaginal practice turns a consciousness of practice into a *practice for* consciousness based in the imaginal and facilitated through art-making.

⁶ 'In the course of time Jung broadened his concept of the archetype' to recognise it as the 'creative unconscious foundation of abstract ideas and scientific theories'. (Jaffe, 1984: 15)

⁷ Dr. Christopher Allen is an Australian art historian and author.

Although this study had its genesis in an imaginary realm of dreams and inner visions, consciousness is both a physical and a psychological construct. Therefore I needed something external and material on which to project these images.⁸ I chose the wild coastal landscape of The Gap because it evoked similar emotions to the drowning and tidal wave images. I had been going there since I was a child - it epitomised all that was sublimely beautiful, awe-inspiring and terrifying about the sea. Projecting the internal visions and dreams onto this landscape I made images, with the corporeal body and art materials. This primordial landscape grounded the abstract and numinous in a concrete setting in which I could explore the sublime in nature through art making. To consolidate what I had envisioned as imaginal (art) practice I set out to investigate the relationship between my dream images, Jung's archetype theory, art-making and the tragic sublime in nature.

My approach to research has something in common with Jillian Hamilton's 'connective' thesis model. I have endeavoured to link practice (in this case the Romantic sublime in visual art) to an 'established field of research' (Jung's archetype theory) and weave them into a 'unified, coherent and flowing text'.⁹ (Hamilton, 2011: n.p.) I have also woven them into a practice made up of two complementary components where the 'physical' work (art making) supports the 'spiritual' work of being (exploration of consciousness) in much the same way that rituals like meditation, chanting or body movement work in tandem with, but are not directly representative of, particular states of consciousness. Because I am committed to developing a holistic model for life,

⁸ In *Edge of the Sacred*, David Tacey applies Edinger's (1984) definition: 'the word *consciousness* actually means "knowing or seeing with an other" Edinger points out that the word *science*(....) means simple knowing, or knowing without "withness". The point of consciousness is that it is "the experience of knowing together with an other"(1984: 36)'. (Tacey, 2009: 55)

⁹ In her paper "The Voices of the Exegesis" Jillian Hamilton outlines the connective model and explains its function: 'Avoiding a fractured thesis, that simply conjoins two awkwardly juxtaposed or divergent parts, or abruptly shifts between expressive forms, requires the development of strategies that allow the author to reconcile differently situated perspectives and subject positions, and to transition effectively between the intimate 'I' and 'my' (methodology, practice, reflection) and the objective 'it' (the field, the data)'. (Hamilton, 2011: n.p.)

I have tried to present an integrated body of visual and written work - in essence a connective thesis.

To give voice to what Hamilton refers to as 'multi-perspectival subject positions' I have structured the exegesis in a particular way. As this is a creative enquiry and assigns considerable value to the imaginal in its various forms of expression, I have included written extracts from my personal journals where directly relevant to the discussion, but also to stimulate the reader's imagination at the beginning of some chapters. When visiting a site or when profound dreams or inner visions appear I draw or record my impressions in text first. The journal entries are an integral part of my creative research methodology and provide insight into how imaginal (art) practice works 'in practise'.

Where I have discussed the work of other artists I have included images in the main text where possible. Although I have referred to my own work it is generally not intended to illustrate the written content but to provide a link between theory and visual art practice, between psychological and physical ways of being. One of the aims of this study was to demonstrate how the integration of theory and practice offers strategies that enable humankind to develop a more harmonious relationship with the physical world it occupies. In the next section I explore the idea that because all manifestations of existence are sacred, landscape too has a 'consciousness' of its own.

Landscape as God

I love a sunburnt country, a land of sweeping plains,
Of rugged mountain ranges, of droughts and flooding rains,
I love her far horizons, I love her jewel sea,
Her beauty and her terror(....)¹⁰

Dorothy Mackellar (1911)

Like knowledge, consciousness grows in tiny increments and builds, layer upon layer. I used to dream that one day I would have an epiphany and instantly know everything there was to know about existence. In my hunger for knowledge I often fantasised about standing in a thunderstorm, enticing the lightning to strike me 'sensible'. Instead there have been many less dramatic episodes which, though not delivering full enlightenment, have convinced me there is an all-pervasive, all-knowing realm of consciousness beyond the 'ordinary', or what I generally experience on a daily basis.

Reasoned intellectual insights sometimes occur when I am researching spiritual psychology and philosophy. More often than not these just confirm what I have already experienced or intuited, for example, a theorist articulates something I am familiar with but been unable to pin down. Original or 'primary knowledge' (Anne Boyd, 2002: 50) - what I understand as a holistic body/mind epiphany – usually happens when I am in nature, when sensation is heightened and I am suddenly aware of something non-ordinary, supra-ordinate and infinite.¹¹ I feel exhilarated¹², completely alive, as though I am 'nothing', yet at the same time 'everything'. I am the centre of the universe and

¹⁰ Mackellar, D. 1911, *My Country* (Hoorn, 2007: 234)

¹¹ According to Professor Anne Boyd, Dr David Tacey says that "'The main language in Australia is earth language'". Boyd adds: 'Earth language is a meta-language of the spirit which arises as right-brain activity based upon an intuitive connection with our natural environment, the language of place. Earth language has little to do with the left-brain language of human intellectual discourse. It is the territory of the sacred, long known to artists and deeply intuitive creative thinkers from all cultures through all time. It is the territory put off-limits by the European Enlightenment with its tendency to remove mystery from matter'. (Boyd, 2002: 50)

¹² Art critic Peter Schjeldahl describes similar feelings about 'beauty': 'In my experience, an onset of beauty combines extremes of stimulation and relaxation. My mind is hyperalert. My body is at ease(....). My mood soars. I have a conviction of goodness in all things. I feel that everything is going to be all right. Later I am pleasantly a little tired all over, as if after swimming. Mind and body become indivisible in beauty. Beauty teaches me that my brain is a physical organ and that "intelligence" is not limited to thought, but entails feeling and sensation, the whole organism in concert'. (Schjeldahl, 1994: n.p.)

have the ability to extend my awareness beyond its furthest reaches. Paradoxically, although this feeling is non-ordinary it is also strangely familiar, there is a recognition that this is who I really am, that my true being is actually open and empty. While something indescribable and wonderful is present, something else is missing - a veil, a fog, an illusion - I see the world as it really is. Clarity and focus co-exist with a purposeful non-purposeness; there is absolutely nothing more to know, nor anything else to do.

Lecturer and Jungian analyst Robert A. Johnson, says glimpsing the 'true unity, beauty and meaning of life' has a powerful impact on the human psyche¹³ and that even though the 'intensity of revelation diminishes(...) the memory of these visionary experiences works on unconscious attitudes at a very deep level' bringing 'a sense of faith that wasn't there before'.¹⁴ (Johnson, 1986: 217) Although these moments are too rare in my life, I feel it unwise and probably impossible to deliberately seek them out because they occur naturally and 'unconsciously'.¹⁵ Even so, each encounter is filed away in my memory where it adds to a number of experiences that together convince me of the existence of a supra-ordinate being, or what many might know as 'God'.¹⁶

Jung asserts that to have a relationship with God, every individual must hold an image of it in their imagination - the God-image is therefore central in archetype theory. Jung named this image the 'self', defining it as the manifestation of a divine consciousness

¹³ In this discussion psyche holds the central position in human consciousness i.e. that which knows its own existence.

¹⁴ Johnson goes on to say that this type of 'visionary experience' is a 'unitive vision into one's consciousness. An image(...) seizes one through the imaginative faculty with such power that one really knows and experiences the unifying truth of the self'. (Johnson, 1986: 217)

¹⁵ Johnson cautions that these experiences should never be actively sought because doing so can lead to 'ego-aggrandizement' or 'occultism'. (Johnson, 1986: 217)

¹⁶ Jung was adamant that the 'existence of God was irrefutable' (Bento, 2012: 2) Bento quotes Jung: "I make no transcendental statements. I am essentially empirical, as I have stated more than once. I am dealing with psychic phenomena and not with metaphysical assertions. Within the frame of psychic events I find the fact of the belief in God. It says: 'God is'. This is the fact I am concerned with. I am not concerned with the truth or untruth of God's existence." (Jung, C.G., 1975, *C.W. Letters, vol. 2*, p. 570) (Bento, 2012: 2)

that incarnates in the psyche of every individual. Accordingly the self is a psychic phenomenon that must be made visible before it can be recognised and integrated fully into consciousness. When linked to the Romantic sublime in art, the image (as the potential self) mediates between the psyche (individual consciousness) and the *numen* (objective or 'Divine' consciousness) during an encounter with nature. The sublime is a quality inherent in certain artworks that, in my view, are intuitively familiar and have universal appeal because they contain archetypal content.¹⁷ When human beings come face to face with the sublime, whether in the natural landscape or in a work of art, they are reminded that the material world is both an incarnation and a reflection of the Divine.

While all individuals have the capacity to experience sublime revelatory moments in nature it might be easier for those with a romantic disposition. As art curator and author Simon Gregg points out, the Romantic artist in particular suffers a 'nostalgia for God', always on a mission to discover a 'Divine and a deeper meaning'. (Gregg, 2011: 8) As a consequence, the numinous in nature often finds its way into the Romantic sublime in landscape painting, a genre that continues to flourish in Australian art today.¹⁸ Gregg's question: 'Why Romanticism, why Australia, why now?', and his observation that 'our artists are retreating into their own psyches', suggest some avenues of enquiry. (Gregg, 2011: 3) 'Why Romanticism' can be given a Jungian context - the sublime is a naturally occurring and everpresent quality in human consciousness. In which case Australia is just witnessing another cycle of an archetypal theme. The fact that many Romantic artists are unaware of its historical antecedents supports this position because it demonstrates that these influences operate at an unconscious level. (Gregg, 2011: 2) Because the Romantic sublime continues to capture the Australian

¹⁷ Jung defined archetypes as the 'most ancient and(...) universal "thought forms" of humanity'. (Jung, 1966: 66) An archetype is a 'structure or "form" (not an image or "content")', distinct from and prior to experience, although dependent on experience for its expression as a particular "image". (Adams, 2004: 48) Archetypes make up the non-physical matrix upon which everything we know is laid; because they have no form of their own, they take the form of images.

¹⁸ 'The sublime, more than any other single element, unites the Romantics with the artists of today, but in Australia it has found a new and altogether more intriguing form.' (Gregg, 2011: 21)

imagination Gregg's second question, 'why Australia?' is far more intriguing and therefore discussed in depth in 'Painting Against Death' (p. 65).

Early interest in the Romantic sublime in Australia is often attributed to the European psyche's antipodean vision. According to art historian and curator Jeanette Hoorn, Governor Macquarie's reference to the sublime in his journal description of the Blue Mountains is notable:

This table land is extremely beautiful and has very fine picturesque and grand scenery(....) we halted for a little while to view this frightful, tremendous pass, as well as to feast our eyes with the grand and pleasing prospect of the fine low country below us(....). (Hoorn, 2001: 36)

One hundred years later poet Dorothy Mackellar (1911) supports Macquarie's assertion that the landscape is both pleasing and terrifying. The phrase 'her beauty and her terror' is an accurate and enduring summary of the paradoxical relationship many Australians have with their homeland. It is a sentiment still echoed by many, including contemporary poet Antigone Kefala:

You can feel it when you go out bush, these forces that unnerve you in certain landscapes. It is a very powerful landscape, a magnificent landscape, a country full of light and colour(....) a place full of terrible things(....). (Kefala, 2011: n.p.)

In a similar way, much of Lawrence Daws's artwork has been inspired by this resonant and clearly detectable discomforting presence or, in his words, 'certain unease about the landscape'. (Julie Copeland, 2008: n.p.)¹⁹ Many non-indigenous artists are in awe of this numinous quality²⁰ and its spiritual significance, however Gregg notes that for millennia Aboriginal people have used it as the basis for artistic expression as they gave form to the "'Dreamtime" - a vast and indefinable prehistory in which mythology of the

¹⁹ Julie Copeland is a cultural theorist and was a radio presenter for ABC Radio until 2009. <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/legacy/programs/artstalk/copeland.htm>

²⁰ References to the sublime qualities of the Australian landscape were recorded early on in its colonial history. Although pioneer artists like James Taylor paid their respects to the practice of empirical observation of rocks and vegetation, their main intention was to 'employ the conventions of the sublime to convey a sense of grandeur and to emphasise the power' of those natural forms. (Hoorn, 2007: 43) These artists were focused on capturing a quality in the physical landscape and conveying it through aesthetic activity.

land(...) was born'.²¹ (2011: 27) The spiritual beliefs of Aboriginal people cannot be separated from their art practices because they are embedded in the land. Aboriginal elder, Wandjuk Marika explains:

I am not painting just for my pleasure; there is the meaning, knowledge and power. This is the earthly painting for the creation and for the land story. The land is not empty, the land is full of knowledge, full of story, full of goodness, full of energy, full of power. Earth is our mother, the land is not empty. There is the story I am telling you – special, sacred, important. (Marshall, 2003: n.p.)

It is possible non-indigenous Australians have been unconsciously influenced by Aboriginal mythology, or by the spirits of the land itself. Based on his knowledge of both Jungian and literary theory, humanities professor David Tacey suggests the earth 'makes its presence felt through various cultural disturbances and psychological complications'. (Tacey, 2009: 34) He cites the film, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, as evidence of the 'grinding tension between the colonial overlay of society and the unconscious substratum of ancient and denied realities'. (Tacey, 2009: 34)

In time, the land has to be respected as having a life and will of its own(...). Gradually, a second or alien will begins to impress itself upon the society, and make its presence felt with peculiar and unerring force. (Tacey, 2009: 34)

It is my view the denied reality Tacey refers to has links to the field of psychic energy Jung identified as the collective unconscious. A comparison between Aboriginal cosmology and Jung's mythical realm reveals some profound similarities: both are imaginal in that they are comprised of archetypal images, motifs and stories accessible to those who know where and how to look for them. There is also a correlation in the importance both ideologies assign to the relationship between body and psyche because although the sublime is a transcendent reality, it is channelled through the corporeal body. Respecting this and maintaining a connection to the physical landscape is therefore critical - something I confirmed for myself and which I discuss in depth in

²¹ I understand Aboriginal people prefer the term 'Dreaming' to 'Dreamtime' because the Dreaming in traditional Aboriginal culture is still and always present - it cannot be confined to a particular 'time'. 'Aborigines see time as a circle rather than a line, in which the past exists with the present and future: everywhen (Stanner)'. (Marshall, 2003: n.p.)

'Welcome to the Edge' (p. 58). When humans engage imaginatively with the spirits of place, landscape shows itself to be a supra-ordinate being; not only do we experience God *in* the landscape, we experience the *landscape itself* as God. Aniela Jaffe's comment supports this:

The postulate of a transcendental spiritual order has brought the physical sciences face to face with the religious factor. The same is true of the psychology of the unconscious: the manifestations of the transconscious psyche and of the archetypes(...) bring with them an aura of numinosity and are described as experiences of a religious nature. (Jaffe, 1983: 37)

Although the sublime is often associated with aesthetic beauty and light, I am far more interested in how it operates in both creative and destructive ways as an awe-ful and awe-inspiring presence in the Australian landscape. What intrigues me most is our attraction to it because I have observed that even when it is life-threatening, or perhaps precisely because it is, we are drawn towards it by an irrational impulse. This was known to eighteenth century philosopher, Edmund Burke²² who notes that when physicist Isaac Newton was confronted with the powerful attracting presence of nature, he:

seemed to have quitted his usual cautious manner of philosophising;(.....) I think it leaves us with as many difficulties as it found us. That great chain of causes, which, linking one to another, even to the throne of God himself, can never be unravelled by any industry of ours. When we go but one step beyond the immediate sensible qualities of things, we go out of our depth. (Burke, 1757: Part IV, Section I)

Burke goes on to give his views on the mechanisms that drive human responses to the awe-ful sublime in nature.²³

²² For earlier discussions on the sublime I refer the reader to essays by Longinus, "On the Sublime", (Greece 3rd century AD); Edmund Burke's "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful" (1757/58) and Immanuel Kant's "Critique of Judgement" (1790).

²³ 'The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment: and astonishment is that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. (Burke, 1757, Part II, Section I) I have before observed that whatever is qualified to cause terror is a foundation capable of the sublime; to which I add, that not only these, but many things from which we cannot probably apprehend any danger, have a similar effect, because they operate in a similar manner'. (Burke, 1757, Part IV, Section III)

Engaging with the tragic sublime in the landscape is a 'direct *participation mystique* in nature' because imagination is most vivid when we are responding to nature instinctually. (James Hillman, 1991: 98)²⁴ This is based on the concept of 'panic', a term originally linked to the Greek god Pan.²⁵ The kind of overwhelming awe associated with the tragic sublime comes about because we are scared to death which Hillman says is a 'fundamental, even ontological, experience of the world as alive and in dread'. (Hillman, 1991: 98) When life is experienced on an instinctual level, existence is alive with animism - humans find themselves in a divine world inhabited by archetypal deities. (Hillman, 1991: 98) Aniela Jaffe observes that the fear associated with this type of event is a common 'first reaction to an encounter with an archetypal content, which(...) cannot be consciously accepted as a content of one's own psyche'. (Jaffe, 1984: 21) When feelings of panic fling open a door into the imaginal, fear, dread and horror force the psyche to confront the spectre of physical death. (Hillman, 1991: 98) As a result, an encounter with the tragic sublime can provide a deeper understanding of reality based on a holistic appreciation of both life *and* death.²⁶

Pan, or his cultural equivalent, is only one of many archetypes that together form the psychic heritage of humankind. This matrix of image-ideas is not only the foundation of human personality and culture, but physical matter, energy, and the *numinous* manifestations of the Divine as well. (Jung in Corbett, 1996: 15) Archetypal forms are always present, eternal, constantly in a state of flux and not confined to any particular time. (Jung, 1976: 498) The unique relationship between these myth-motifs and the always, ever-present timeframe in which they continue to operate suggests there are qualitative similarities between Jung's collective unconscious and the Australian

²⁴ James Hillman is a post-Jungian psychologist and author. He developed the school of archetypal psychology which recognises the 'primacy of the psyche and imagination'. (Tarnas, 1996: 425)

²⁵ 'The Greek god Pan is one of western culture's most enduring and ubiquitous trickster figures. Half-man, half-goat, Pan dwells in forests and glades trying to seduce nymphs, despite his grotesque demeanor. Born in Arcadia, he has thus become an icon for those who lament the Fall into civilization'. (Pettman, 2002: 25)

²⁶ In 'The World as Will & Idea' (1819) Arthur Schopenhauer gives a positive view of the awe-ful sublime, will, death and their roles in promoting a fuller appreciation of life in harmony with archetypal theory.

Aboriginal Dreaming. In Aboriginal culture the Dreaming or '*aljira* means "dream" as well as "ghostland" and the "time" in which the ancestors lived and still live'. (Jung, 1976: 498) I am not saying they are the same, rather that these structures serve a similar psychological function in connecting human beings to the world in which they live through myth and symbol. Held within an every-time, archetypal dream images continue to shape the Australian psyche, its unconscious Dreaming and perceptions of this ancient landscape.

The uncanny sensibility and sublime quality of the Australian landscape is based on an aesthetic in traditional Western art that arises out of a "'natural impulse" to contemplate the astounding universe from our position of frail mortality'. (Steven Z. Levine, 1985: 12)²⁷ Levine contends that

the sublime is not an ontology but a phenomenology, not a special essence of certain things but rather an experience of a particular kind, born out of the encounter between consciousness and the world. (Levine, 1985: 2)

Unconscious recognition of archetypal forms in the landscape makes the individual aware of the presence of the sublime - its deep rootedness in the psyche as an archetype of human consciousness explains why it feels extraordinary yet strangely familiar at the same time. Archetypal motifs reflected in the Australian landscape regularly emerge from the unconscious to be transformed into myth, painting, poetry, song and dance.

Although their styles and techniques are different there is a group of artists who share a fascination for the sublime in the Australian landscape, particularly its dark face. Whilst it features predominantly as a real place in the work of artists like Peter Booth, Rick Amor, Tim Storrier, Lawrence Daws and Andrew Mc Ilroy, landscape is equally an expression of their relationship with the numinous forces that shape it. Later I will discuss how some of these artists tap into the archetypes of the unconscious psyche to

²⁷ Steven Z. Levine is an author and Professor of Humanities and Art History at Harvard University.

explore a common universal theme – the anxieties associated with maintaining a balance between the psychological and physical dimensions of being human.

As one of the archetypes of human consciousness, the qualitative state we know as the sublime is projected onto 'other' external structures and phenomena. Conversely, in symbolic and abstract ways, images created in response to the sublime give this irrepresentable quality a degree of visibility. It is my view that the desire to engage with this presence in its negative form can prove fatal - that an overwhelming attraction to the tragic sublime compels some individuals to choose locations like The Gap at which to end their lives. Although it is acknowledged 'the primordial psyche is capable of(...)eroding our humanity if we give into its seductive power and archaic attraction', it is perhaps less appreciated how closely aligned the human psyche is with specific sites that hold this level of psychic energy. (David Tacey, 2009: 56)

I agree with Christopher Allen that the 'spatial experience of Australia, at its most hostile, alternates between claustrophobia and agoraphobia' and, in the end, we are inevitably forced 'back on ourselves'. (Allen, 1997: 11) Although individual responses to this experience could be dismissed as purely subjective, ways of knowing based purely on logic and the material are not comprehensive either. In the process of coming to terms with our place in the natural world the psyche's capacity to rationalise is only partially useful because no matter how much we know *about* physics and the science of weather and nature, we still struggle to understand *why* our home is flooded or burnt down. Asking 'why' rather than 'what' or 'how' moves the psyche into spiritual territory. The following observation Martin Leer²⁸ makes about David Malouf supports this:

The perceiving consciousness in Malouf always finds itself on the edge of an overpowering presence, often felt as an absence, which was there from the beginning, which the narrator or persona cannot conquer or subdue, but must come to terms with; and the only way seems to be through something resembling

²⁸ Dr. Martin Leer is an Australian academic who writes about the links between geography, history and literature.

the *via negativa* of the mystics. (Leer, 1985: n.p.)

Such a position confirms the sublime is a mystical and sacred phenomenon - subtle, qualitative, irrepresentable, numinous and abstract.

In the context of Jungian theory, the sublime in nature is an expression of the *numen* or *numinosum* - a supra-ordinate entity, being or force commonly referred to as the Divine or Spirit.²⁹ Jung originally borrowed the term *numen* from Rudolph Otto (1958) who defined it as the 'essence of holiness, or religious experience(...) a specific quality which remains inexpressible and "eludes apprehension in terms of concepts"'. (Lionel Corbett, 1996: 11)³⁰ In religious literature this supra-ordinate entity is known as spirit - spirit and psyche are operationally similar because they are made of the same stuff. (Corbett, 1996: 15) Because it too is archetypal in human consciousness, the *numen* elicits feelings of awe and reverence similar to those experienced in the presence of the sublime.

Numinous experience is synonymous with religious experience. Translated into psychological parlance, this means the relatively direct experience of those deep intrapsychic structures known as archetypes. (Corbett, 1996: 15)

Based on his observation that archetypes are apprehended as images in the psyche, Jung argues that the most important function of psychic images is to assist the individual to transcend the conscious mind and its usual ways of knowing. According to Jung, 'psychic images provide a bridge to the sublime, pointing towards something unknown beyond subjectivity'. (Jung in Polly Young-Eisendrath, 2008: 89) Although the archetype is an image in its own right, its numinosity is experienced as a powerfully dynamic and fascinating force that indicates the presence of something non-ordinary in consciousness - spirit.³¹ (Jung, CW 8, 1969: 211)

²⁹ In Jungian theory 'Spirit' is not God because God is only an 'image' of the Divine. Those unfamiliar with Jung's theories may understand God as the omniscient divine Being I refer to here as *numen*.

³⁰ Dr. Lionel Corbett is a psychiatrist, Jungian analyst and author primarily interested in the religious function of the psyche.

³¹ I construe the term "image" not in its usual meaning - i.e., as a pictorial form of imaginative presentation - but rather as the mode of presentation with which imagined content is given to the

For the reader to fully appreciate the connection between the image-archetype and the collective unconscious it is important that I clarify the term 'soul' (psyche) and its relationship to spirit. Soul is the *embodiment* of spirit (or *numen*), reflected in the consciousness of every individual. Jung referred to this image as 'God'. Basically, soul is the vehicle through which human beings receive spirit because they are made of the same substance. (Corbett, 1996: 16) Even though humans identify with spirit through many different gods according to their cultural background and personal experience, the phenomenon of spirit itself is archetypal. Spirit is integrated into consciousness through the soul (psyche) which, in imaginal practice, relies on the psyche's ability to 'think' in images.

The *numen*³² makes its presence known in various ways, as 'a numinous dream, a waking vision, an experience in the body(....) in the wilderness, by aesthetic or creative means(....).' (Corbett, 1996: 15) It is recognised by its 'affective intensity' or what Jung also referred to as a 'gripping emotionality'. (Corbett, 1996: 16) Corbett explains why:

The degree of affect indicates the degree of embodiment of the archetype, since affect is felt in the body. Unless embodiment occurs in this way, the experience usually has little meaning(....) the presence of intense affect always indicates the presence of the archetype. (Corbett, 1996: 16)

The emotional content of an archetype is always embedded in 'a precisely qualified context, mood and scene'. (Hillman, 1991: 21) Acknowledging the affect of an image is vital in imaginal (archetypal) practice because emotion is the 'chief source of consciousness. There is no change from darkness to light or inertia to movement without emotion'. (Jung, 1990: 96)

The *tremendum* form of the *numinosum* is 'a kind of holy terror, awe or dread, commonly expressed as a paralysing fear of God'. (Corbett, 1996: 12) Because this also

imaginee's consciousness. The image is not what is present to awareness - this is the content proper - but how this content is presented'. (Casey, 1991: 39)

³² Corbett used the term '*numinosum*'.

describes a confrontation with the tragic sublime, I have surmised that there is a close relationship between the sublime and the *numen*. More precisely, I consider the sublime to be the affective content of an experience of the *numen*, in this case nature - a response to an essential energy that animates human existence and constantly brings it *into* being. As the archetypal creative principle the sublime is experienced as something sacred because both holy terror and awe are associated with forces overwhelmingly greater than the individual. The *tremendum* is necessarily linked to the *mysterium* because fear and dread make the individual aware of the existence of a "wholly other" – something beyond the sphere of what is usual, intelligible and familiar that fills the mind with 'blank wonder and astonishment'.³³ (Otto in Corbett, 1996: 12)

I prefer the term '*numen*' to 'God' as a way to identify the sacred quality of the sublime because it is not as common and less loaded with meaning. It is important to note too that in spiritual psychology, *numen* is not God - it is related to it but not the same. More precisely, although the *numen* manifests as God, God does not represent the *numen* in its entirety. The term as I apply it distinguishes '*the* God' as all-pervading omniscient irrepresentable entity from 'God as image' that appears in many different forms according to individual and cultural perceptions. In archetype theory God is only a reflection of the Divine because the Divine has no image. Critically, in order to have a relationship with the *numen*, the psyche needs an *imago dei* to reflect the essence of the holy and eternal aspect of itself in each and every one of us.

When the *numen* manifests as the sublime in both nature and art, it is not uncommon for it to be expressed in the form of landscape painting. (Robert Rosenblum, 1961:

³³ Otto's assertion that the "void" of the Buddhists and the "nothing" of the western mystic are ideograms of the "wholly other" supports the conclusions I have drawn from my encounter with it. (Corbett, 1996: 13)

72)³⁴ As it is filtered through the body's senses, in a dream or waking vision, the numinous is transformed into an aesthetic experience. In the Romantic sublime this aesthetic is often accessed during interactions with nature and 'commonly associated with the language of awe: brooding landscapes and sublime mountains, oceans and atmospheres'. (Gregg, 2011: 1) The sublime aesthetic may be detectable in a work of art because it contains archetypal content. Philosopher and Jungian psychologist Erich Neumann suggests archetypal images have a sublime quality. (Bjarne Funch, 1999: 225)³⁵ He notes this attribute in a painting is visible and interpreted as an 'authentic reality' regardless of the way it was created or what it represents. (Funch, 1999: 225)

Art critic and writer Keith Patrick maintains that in Romantic painting the landscape, or figure in landscape, is the dominant image and that this genre is 'invariably placed at the service of spiritual questioning.' (Patrick, 1988: 47)³⁶ Images that encourage exploration of complex issues like being and spirituality offer a direct route from the individual psyche (that can think in images) to the archetypal (imaginal) realm of existence, both of which, because they are fundamentally creative, also have links to the *numen*. Corbett maintains that numinous and spiritual experience are synonymous and, in spiritual psychology, evidence a direct encounter with archetypal content. (Corbett, 1996: 15) When the sublime is detected in either a work of art or in nature the sensory body is aware of the spiritual energies that shape all creative endeavours, including existence itself.

³⁴ '(...) the sublime could be extended to art as well as to nature. One of its major expressions, in fact, was the painting of sublime landscapes'. (Rosenblum, 1961: 72) Robert Rosenblum was an art historian and curator.

³⁵ Bjarne Sode Funch is an author who writes about the relationship between art and psychology.

³⁶ Rosenblum observes a 'translation from the sacred to the secular' around 1760 when Romantic artists 'suddenly turned to specific sites in wild nature that seemed to elicit(...) divine revelation'. (Rosenblum, 1975: 17) The Romantic movement in painting at this time expressed the 'curious new Romantic amalgam of God and nature'. (Rosenblum, 1975: 19) Many artists chose to study the awe-ful in 'nature's terrifying grandeurs *in situ*(...) (they) tried to expand their pictorial imaginations and, like Ward with "Gordale Scar", even the actual dimensions of their canvases in order to encompass such sublimities'. (Rosenblum, 1975: 18)

The Romantic aesthetic in art can be felt because of the presence of certain constants that are also associated with the Romantic's psychological disposition. John Griffiths lists these qualities as:

anti-conformism, preference for spontaneity, the sudden inspired impression, and vibrant, even violent colour rather than perfect finish and line(....) a passionate desire to exceed limits, a longing for liberty, an overreaching without anxious scrutiny of the bonds of love and passion. (Griffiths in Papadakis, 1988: 29)

Many of the first immigrant European artists were already part of a Romantic tradition when they arrived in Australia, this tradition is still present and meaningful today because it 'corresponds to something basic in our shared experience'. (Griffiths, 1988: 29) The privileging of emotion in Romantic art betrays a fundamental need to find meaning and engage with the numinous realms of existence - to experience non-ordinary consciousness. The drive to uncover the archetypal connections between the human psyche and the physical manifestations of reality continues to find expression through imaginative engagement with the world in the form of visual art.

In the process of carrying out my studio research at The Gap I uncovered several parallel models. When I compared Jung's spiritual psychology (and its approach to consciousness) with the Romantic sublime in visual art I noted that the sublime and the *numen* share common characteristics which, when brought together, have the potential to further the evolution of consciousness. As a result of these interlacing concerns, this research is grounded in the following considerations. I locate myself as a Western Romantic visual artist whose study into the nature of consciousness revealed links between the *numen* and the sublime in nature. More specifically, and based on my observation that many people in Australia still experience nature as an 'agreeable kind of horror' (Simon Morley, 2010: n.p.),³⁷ the sublime naturally manifests in its tragic form as the Void which has been, and continues to be, a significant motif in the

³⁷ Simon Morley is a British artist and art historian who has contributed to several international art journals.

Australian psyche. My reasons for coming to this conclusion are discussed in the final chapter, 'Living on the Edge of the Void' (p. 112).

With their privileging of imagination and emotion, archetypal psychology and the Romantic sublime in art share a preference for exploring consciousness from a subjective position. I have therefore linked these two disciplines through 'imaginal (art) practice' as a practice for consciousness.³⁸ As a Romantic I am confident that this subjective research methodology has not only deepened my understanding of my place in the world, but given me greater insight into the nature of reality.

In the following section I provide a basic overview of Jungian theory and its derivative, Hillman's imaginal practice, because it is essential for the reader to familiarise themselves with certain terms and concepts. I have tried to supply enough information to support the discussion without altering the main focus of the research. Although this study is based in visual art rather than psychology, archetypal theorists respect the imagination, images and the Romantic approach to the evolution of consciousness and this resonates harmoniously with the creative psyche. Imaginal theory adds value to art practice because it offers a working methodology and a theoretical framework in which the development of the psyche can be tracked through images, which in essence, is the core of imaginal (art) practice.³⁹

³⁸ 'Imaginal practice' is a term used by Jungian, archetypal and imaginal psychologists. However as far as I know I am using it in an original way by linking it to art as 'imaginal (art) practice'.

³⁹ 'Imaginal practice' is a term used by Jungian, archetypal and imaginal psychologists, however as far as I know I am using it in an original way by linking it to formal art practice, hence 'imaginal (art) practice'.

IMAGINAL (ART) PRACTICE

This is what I fear the most. I walk down to almost sea-level. It is big today. The rocks first. Very big these rocks. And then the sea. Rolling swells, like some lumbering leviathan, lifting, breathing, threatening to swallow the land - subsiding into aqua-white. Disappearing under the earth-shore. Small waves dancing on the serpent's back. My God. Crystal light shattering off the crests - all moving, all dancing. Shiny scales. A moving skin. What stops these two from colliding - the rock and the sea - into oblivion? The subtle balance of a wild dance - back and forth foaming - in and out of existence.

The calm pond dozing in the sunlight. And the serpent carving rainbows in a steel-grey sky.
(Frantom, Journal entry, 2009)

I have often been accused of having an overactive imagination. I concede my orientation to life in general is predominantly subjective, perhaps even overly emotional at times. I am quick to point out that emotionality is not unusual in the Romantic who traditionally approaches consciousness from that position. I agree with cultural historian Richard Tarnas, that Romanticism in contemporary art practice continues to be motivated by a need to 'explore the mysteries of interiority, of moods(....) love(....), fear and angst(....), memories and dreams', in effect, to 'experience extreme and incommunicable states of consciousness(....) to bring the unconscious into consciousness' and 'to know the infinite'. (Tarnas, 200: 368) Although there are real drawbacks to being emotional in a culture that favours logic, my Romantic temperament has turned out to be a valuable portal to non-ordinary states of consciousness.

If it is true that the sublime and the Romantic in art are not one and the same as Gregg (2011: 22) argues, then they are at least closely linked. The peculiar psychology of the Romantic contributes considerably towards their capacity to access the sublime, given that one of its main requirements is that we are overwhelmed by events that thwart our capacity to rationalise. (Gregg, 2011: 22) In addition, if the indefinable and immeasurable sublime are beyond comprehension as is commonly accepted, a predominantly rational mind is more likely to dismiss rapture as a useless aberration.

Conversely the Romantic's overactive imagination and emotional nature makes them more receptive to an experience that involves the sublime.

I resonate with philosopher and psychologist Edward S. Casey's comment, that 'imagination has been assigned a distinctly minor role in many psychological portrayals of mind' and 'fared little better in the hands of philosophers'. (Casey, 1991: 31) Archetypal psychologists defy that trend because they, like the Romantic art movement, attach significant value to the creative imagination. (Hillman, 2004: 13) Evolving from Jung's theory of archetypes,⁴⁰ Hillman's imaginal psychology is not concerned with the physiology of the brain, the structure of language or social behaviour. (Hillman, 1991: 22) Hillman's own texts on the subject of psychology betray his Romantic leanings because they are poetic and liberally laced with mythical and symbolic references. Jung, Hillman and other archetypal theorists regard subjectivity as fundamental to the evolution of consciousness based on the idea that it upholds the individual's right to develop a unique relationship with existence through direct personal *gnosis*.⁴¹ (Hillman, 2004: 44) Their method suits a Romantic artist like myself who prefers to discover the world on their own terms.

If, because of its tendency to privilege subjectivity, imaginal practice is criticised for being purely solipsistic, so Romanticism must also be judged. The Romantic sensibility is after all essentially based on what Michael Greenhalgh calls the 'untrammelled *diversity* of the individual human spirit rather than on the views of any particular group.

⁴⁰ Jung's theories about the evolution of human consciousness were based on his 'rediscovery' of a realm he named the 'collective unconscious'. (Jaffe, 1984: 14) Hillman developed his ideas about an 'imaginal realm' of consciousness from Jung's unconscious. The collective unconscious and Hillman's imaginal realm are the repository of archetypes common to human consciousness. Although he acknowledged its role in the evolution of human consciousness, Jung was less focused on 'ego-consciousness' (individual psyche) than on the collective unconscious. This was because he was more concerned with 'the psychological malaise of humanity and its underlying structures' than with the 'relatively limited sphere of the repressed and forgotten' aspects of the 'personal unconscious'. (Jaffe, 1984: 14)

⁴¹ Roberts Avens argues that 'archetypal psychology' is a 'parallel formulation of certain Eastern philosophies. Like them, it too dissolves ego, ontology, substantiality, literalisms of self and divisions between it and things(...) into the psychic reality of imagination experienced in immediacy. The "emptying out" of Western positivism comparable to a Zen exercise or a way of Nirvana, is precisely what archetypal psychology has effectuated(...).' (Hillman, 2004: 44)

Romanticism is inherently *subjective*'. (Greenhalgh in Papadakis, 1988: 23) The proponents of an imaginative approach to knowledge concede there are weaknesses in a method that is both self-generating and self-referential. Edward Casey notes that in the Romantic movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, 'imagination became a mesmeric term that meant so much in general(...) that it came to mean nothing in particular'. (Roberts Avens, 1980: 17)⁴² However, even though science initially 'rejected the Romantic belief in the creativeness of the Self as outright nonsense' the value of imagination was partially restored once it was realised that attempts to 'subject the whole of nature to man's(sic) technological control' was equally ridiculous. (Avens, 1980: 17)

Although undeniably subjective, the imaginal methodology I outline in this exegesis should not be considered purely solipsistic because its ultimate goal is to push the individual beyond the personal. I am motivated by a desire to explore consciousness in its broadest possible sense because I fully acknowledge that 'my' self is not the only and final reality. Paradoxically, what knowledge I have of an objective reality has been gained by following my subjective impulses. Hillman's comment supports this:

Archetypal psychology maintains(...) that we can never be purely phenomenal or truly objective. One is never beyond the subjectivism given with the soul's native dominants of fantasy structure. (Hillman, 2004: 36)

Hillman makes his assertion based on Jung's theory that fantasy images are the 'primary data of the psyche' because the soul is the

imaginative possibility in our natures, the experiencing through reflective speculation, dream, image, and fantasy - that mode which recognises all realities as primarily symbolic or metaphorical. (Hillman, 1991: 21)

In my experience reality continues to be a subjective construct because I am unable to stand outside of my own psyche to make judgements about it and, to my knowledge, have never met anyone who claims they can.

⁴² Dr. Roberts Avens is a poet, author and professor of religious studies.

Before I proceed it is vital I clarify the fundamental differences between the various schools of psychology for reasons that will become obvious. Hillman's identification with archetypal, and later imaginal, psychology is deliberate and intended to distance himself from analytical psychology which he says 'attempts to solve psychological problems' with 'scientific models'.⁴³ (Hillman, 2004: 13) Hillman has been quite scathing in his criticism of psychoanalytic theory.⁴⁴ His ideas and methodologies are clearly located at the spiritual end of the psychology spectrum rather than the analytical. Jungian theory and its offshoots are primarily concerned with the 'ontology of the soul'. (Hillman, 1999: 12) As part of that tradition Hillman's imaginal psychology is a derivation of the Jungian school whose mission has been to re-vision 'psychology'⁴⁵, psychopathology, and psychotherapy in terms of the Western cultural imagination'.⁴⁶ (Hillman, 2004: 13)

Another major difference between depth (imaginal, archetypal) and analytical psychologies (psychoanalysis, psychotherapy) is their attitude to psychic phenomena, in particular, fantasy. Imaginal psychologists argue that fantasy, neurosis and psychosis have intrinsic value because their role in the life of the individual is to offer a way through by working with the images that present themselves. I take my lead from archetypal psychologists who contend this is precisely the role of imagination and

⁴³ This discussion sometimes refers to the work of 'psychoanalysts', however, their contributions should always be taken in light of this qualification. The demarcation I am making here is recognised in varying degrees by theorists in this field. However, it is a significant distinction in the context of this discussion.

⁴⁴ 'While other nineteenth-century investigators were polluting the archaic, natural, and mythic in the outer world, psychology was doing much the same to the archaic, natural, and mythic within. Therapeutic depth psychology shares this blame, since it shares nineteenth-century attitudes. It gave names with a pathological bias to the animals of imagination'. (Hillman, 1991: 30) This is only one of Hillman's many criticisms of analytical psychology.

⁴⁵ 'Psychology' here is that 'which arose within the context of psychotherapy and has been called "depth psychology". Although it first appeared as an empirical field, it ultimately became, through Jung, an ontology of the soul based on archetypes. Because this psychology takes into account the depths of the soul at its most subjective, transcendent, and impersonal level and assumes that personal behaviour is derived from something beyond the personal, it attempts a true *logos* of the psyche'. (Hillman, 1999: 12)

⁴⁶ 'The modern vision of ourselves and the world has stultified our imaginations. It has fixed our view of personality (psychology), of insanity (psychopathology), of matter and objects (science), of the cosmos (metaphysics), and of the nature of the divine (theology)(...). What is needed is a revisioning, a fundamental shift of perspective out of the soulless predicament we call modern consciousness'. (Hillman, 1992: 3)

fantasy in human consciousness. In contrast, analytical psychology operates as a product of a 'rationalistically ordered civilisation' which views suffering in terms of 'sickness' rather than an avenue for 'soul-making'. (Hillman, 1999: 5) Hillman challenges mainstream analytical psychology's negative presumption of pathology by saying,

suppose the fantasies, feelings, and behaviour arising from the imaginal part of ourselves are archetypal(...) and thus natural(...). Then what is there to analyse?(...). If there is one primary lesson we have learned in seventy years of analysis, it is that we discover a sense of soul in the sufferings of psychopathology. (Hillman, 1999: 4)

Under many forms of *psycho-analysis* the psyche is divided into normal and peculiar, secular and spiritual. (Hillman, 1999: 4) In defence of the soul Hillman makes an impassioned plea to value these so-called peculiarities⁴⁷ and let them 'into life', thus freeing the psyche from psychotherapy and what he refers to as the 'curse of the analytical mind'. (Hillman, 1999: 3) Archetypal and imaginal psychology's aim is 'neither social adaptation nor personalistic individualising' - instead their intention is to restore and develop a 'sense of soul by cultivating the imagination'. (Hillman, 2004: 15) The aim of psychologies based on Jungian principles is less focused on improving the individual's functionality in society than on the process of 'individuation'⁴⁸ and the evolution of consciousness.⁴⁹ As Hillman points out, psychological difficulties are an inevitable part of life and should be seen as an avenue for discovery (or 'soul-making') rather than a problem to be fixed; they are central to the process of individuation itself.

⁴⁷ 'To be individual means to be peculiar, to be peculiarly what one is, with one's own odd patterns of archetypal responses'. (Hillman, 1999: 5)

⁴⁸ Jungian (archetypal) psychologists consider that individuation is an involuntary evolution of consciousness towards a holistic state of being. The full experience of 'being' human involves multiple ways of being and knowing - body, soul (*psyche*) and Spirit (*numen*). They argue that the process of individuation occurs naturally as a result of living one's life.

⁴⁹ Jung qualifies this statement by saying: 'The difference between the "natural" individuation process, which runs its course unconsciously, and the one which is consciously realised, is tremendous. In the first case consciousness nowhere intervenes; the end remains as dark as the beginning. In the second case so much darkness comes to light that the personality is permeated with light, and consciousness necessarily gains in scope and insight'. (Jung, 1976: 647)

Richard Tarnas suggests that subjective and Romantic approaches to consciousness have defined Western culture since the Renaissance. (Tarnas, 1996: 388) Yet although it promotes 'a particular self-consciousness', the Romantic psyche is really seeking a universal realm in which its uniqueness can find completion. (Griffiths in Papadakis, 1988: 31)⁵⁰ Working subjectively has the potential to uncover links between our own images and the vast store of archetypal images held in the collective unconscious of humankind. What begins as a concern for one's-self paradoxically connects us to others because by recognising our deep archetypal connection to the whole, a sense of individual peace can eventually be realised. Art historian Griselda Pollock, suggests the fantasy image in art practice has a similar potential to be universal.

The power of fantasy in art is not that the art work expresses the private and singular fantasies of its author. This would be boring to any one else. Rather, the art work achieves its general effect at the conjunction between general structures of psychic life and the contingent elements derived from particular individuals. "If fantasies were personal in this way, how can they work for a general public, for a mass audience? (...) fantasy scenarios involve original wishes which are universal". (Pollock, 1997)

Because all images ultimately derive from the collective unconscious they have the ability to speak for one and all - which is not only acknowledged by archetypal theorists but forms the core of their practice. An interdisciplinary study like mine brings different theoretical disciplines together and in this case, the centrality of the image in both archetypal psychology and visual art encouraged me to explore the relationship between them. Edward Casey's comment supports that decision.

Images provide the primary places in which imagination and remembering, archetypal psychology and phenomenological philosophy, and finally psychology and philosophy themselves, come together. (Casey, 1991: xxi)

⁵⁰ 'The Romantic urge is to connect or reconcile its special individuality through ideas, or literature, or art, with nature;(....) or with the totality of things(....) The Romantic ambition is to be complete, to repair the deficiencies of our present incomplete state(....)' (John Griffiths, 1988: 31)

The term 'image' needs clarification because it can be interpreted in many ways. In archetypal psychology image is not simply a 'memory or after-image or a reflection of an object or a perception(....) [but] an irreducible and complete union of form and content(....)'. (Avens, 1980: 35, 37) As an artist who works primarily with the visual and imagination though, I concede: 'Most acts of imagining occur as imaging(....) as the projection and contemplation of imagined objects or events(....) most frequently in visual terms'. (Casey, 1991: 36) This includes images that arise during meditation.

Imaginal practice begins in the psyche of the individual as a dream, an envisioning, or an image that has found its way into consciousness as a result of an emotionally charged experience or event. As a research methodology it has more in common with gnostic spiritual practices than with traditional psychological methodologies. I agree with religious studies lecturer Angela Voss, who points out that

true imagination [from *im-ago*, "I act from within"] whether one considers it from neoplatonic, Romantic or archetypal psychological perspectives, is the mode in which the soul [psyche] reveals its nature through the language of symbol and metaphor. (Voss, 2009: 40)

Contemporary archetypal theorists continue to value the image's critical, mythical and symbolic place in human consciousness because it gives 'psychic value to the world'. (Hillman, 2004: 25) According to Hillman, unshackled from its association with pathology, the imagination is free to lead us back to our souls. (Hillman, 1991: 21) Having worked with dreams for decades I agree with Edward Whitmont that psychic images speak in the 'archaic symbol-language of the objective psyche' and, rather than being symptomatic, they are deeply symbolic. (Whitmont, 1978: 37)

Another practical point of difference between analytical and imaginal⁵¹ psychological methodologies is that the former assumes images (as symbols) have a "'real" or latent meaning'. (Avens, 1980: 36) Archetypal theorist, Erich Neumann notes that the

⁵¹ Jungian, archetypal or depth psychologies.

'comparative' method of analytical psychology collates the symbolic and collective material (in this case images) found in individuals with the corresponding products from the history of religion, primitive psychology(...) and in this way arrives at an interpretation by establishing the 'context'. (Neumann, 1971: xvii)

Analytical psychologists evaluate images in relation to their time, immediate culture and social milieu which can restrict meaning to one that is already known. In contrast, Jungian psychology assesses psychic images based on a person's stage of psychological development (or individuation) and the ego's relationship to the unconscious. (Neumann, 1971: xviii) Although images still carry meaning, the difference lies in the way it is uncovered. Imaginal psychology encourages the individual not to link images to established symbols or confine them within a predetermined context but to search for a meaning that feels appropriate for them. An open reading of images, including waking fantasy and dreams, allows the imagination to make its own connections, to tell its own story based on the idea that meaning is specific, relative and unique to the individual. Imaginal theorists value images as primary data and, rather than dismissing them as fantasy, consider them to be essential in the evolution of consciousness. (Hillman, 1991: 21) Judging an image as irrelevant or insignificant may prevent important data from reaching consciousness – using imagination as a research tool rejects a formulaic analysis of *select* images in favour of a creative methodology for working with *all* images.

Archetypal theorists⁵² work under the assumption that humankind's ability to imagine gives it the means to explore the phenomenon of consciousness. Their focus therefore, is not matter, the brain, the mind, intellect or metaphysics but images reflected in the psyche.⁵³ (Hillman, 1992: xvii) Imaginal psychologists value all images because they

⁵² James Hillman, Michael Adams, Erich Neumann, Roberts Avens, Lionel Corbett, Angela Voss and Edward S. Casey among many others.

⁵³ The term psyche encompasses the 'totality of all psychic processes, conscious as well as unconscious'. It is used instead of 'mind' because 'mind' generally refers to those aspects of mental functioning that are *conscious*, excluding those that are *unconscious*. Jung says: 'In the East, mind is a cosmic factor, the very essence of existence(...). (Jung, 1976: 485) Also: 'It is safe to assume that what the East calls "mind"

perceive them as fundamental expressions of archetypes that have emerged into consciousness from the collective unconscious. Hillman (2004) says that '(....) any image can be considered archetypal, not because it can necessarily be empirically understood or defined as such, but because of its inherent quality in being an image'. (Hillman, 2004: 25) He defines an archetypal image as one that is 'immediately valued as universal, trans-historical, basically profound, generative, highly intentional and necessary'. (Hillman, 2004: 25)

Imagination has a critical role in driving the psyche's evolution through the individuation process because it allows the individual to meet the archetypes according to their own unique personality. In this context, images function as personal myths that help make sense of the experiences encountered throughout life.

A myth is a large, controlling image that gives philosophical meaning to the facts of ordinary life(....). Without such images, experience is chaotic, fragmentary and merely phenomenal. It is the chaos of experience that creates them, and they are intended to rectify it. (Maureen Murdock, 1990: 143)⁵⁴

Mythologising events gives ego-consciousness the opportunity to evolve 'by passing through a series of "eternal images"' that reveal essential truths about existence.⁵⁵ (Neumann, 1971: xvi) Engaging imaginatively with archetypes involves working with images that spontaneously make themselves known through various means, one of which is Jung's active imagination. In the following section I outline this practice as Jung defined it, as it has been developed since and how I apply it to art-making in imaginal (art) practice as a way to 'reach for truth'.⁵⁶

has more to do with our "unconscious" than with the mind as we understand it, which is more or less identical with consciousness'. (Jung, 1976: 491)

⁵⁴ 'Myth usually takes the form of an unusually potent story or symbol that is repeated in the dreams of individuals(....). "Once a myth is in place it is nearly impossible to dislodge it by exclusively rational means. It must be replaced by another equally persuasive story or symbol"'. (Murdock, 1990: 144) Maureen Murdock is a Jungian based psycho-therapist, photographer and author.

⁵⁵ 'The collective unconscious(....) appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images(....). In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious(....). We can therefore study the collective unconscious in two ways, either in mythology or in the analysis of the individual'. (Jung in Hillman, 1972: 17, f.n.)

⁵⁶ Milech, B. & Schilo, A., 2004.

'Active Imagination'

I never leave without peering into the abyss,
the immense fissure in the granite.
And there I am - drowning.
I listen, I hear
Over and over, and in my own head:
'Imagine'

(Frantom, Journal entry, 2007)

According to Jung, images that appear spontaneously as dreams, envisionings or by actively using the imagination are proof of the existence of a primordial realm of archetypes. (Jung, 1990: 49, 215) Those accessed during active imagining differ from dreams because they emerge during waking consciousness, however both ultimately derive from the collective unconscious. (Jung, 1978, CW 8: 211) The methodology of both Jung's archetypal and Hillman's imaginal psychologies⁵⁷ use imagination as a conduit between conscious awareness and this realm of archetypal images.

Jung's active imagination involves concentrated observation of either a powerful and incomprehensible dream-image or a spontaneous inner waking vision. (Jung, 1990: 190) It is both a visionary method of meditation that taps into fantasy images (Jung, 1990: 190) and a dialogue between the individual psyche and the archetypal figures of the unconscious. (Jung in Adams, 2004: 16) Robert A. Johnson explains that during active imaginal engagement, the conscious ego-mind participates in the drama, adventure or conflict that is unfolding in the imagination. (Johnson, 1986: 24) Although Jung held dreams in high regard, he considered waking images that resulted from this form of dialogue were more effective because they involved the conscious mind as well.⁵⁸ (Johnson, 1986: 139)

⁵⁷ It was Jung who first identified the psyche's ability to reflect 'simple processes in the brain' as images. (CW VIII, 1978: 323) Imaginal and archetype theory are based on the idea that archetypes emerge from the collective unconscious and present to the psyche in the form of images.

⁵⁸ During an early imaginal encounter Jung experienced a 'profound interaction between his conscious mind and the images that appeared to him from the unconscious'. (Johnson, 1986: 138) He describes being fully awake at his desk, thinking over his fears, when he suddenly felt himself drop into the 'dark depths'. He goes on to explain how he found himself at the entrance of a dark cave, encounters various

Not all dialogue or all images are verbal or spoken. (Johnson, 1986: 138) In psychology and philosophy the image does not necessarily equate to visual. Casey uses the term to indicate a 'mode of presentation with which imagined content is given to the imaginer's consciousness', that is, not just *what* is presented but *how*. (Casey, 1991: 39) How is concerned with affective content which is critical in determining what an image means personally. Events themselves, or what happens, is less important than how we feel about them - which explains why emotion is so important in imaginal thinking, and why these practices are in harmony with the Romantic movement in visual art. Linking emotion with imaginal perception brings internal and external realities together in the psyche, resulting in a deeper appreciation of how they are connected. (Angela Voss, 2009: 37) Actively imagining on a conscious level is a way of seeking knowledge through *gnosis* by providing direct access to intuitive wisdom.

Active imagination is more dynamic than everyday imagining because the individual consciously participates in the imaginal event; an intentional act that Johnson says 'transforms it from mere passive fantasy to *Active Imagination*'.⁵⁹ (Johnson, 1986: 25) By actively imagining, rather than passively, as in daydream and fantasy,⁶⁰ the psyche's function in bridging the divide between the material and non-material is realised. This occurs because the phenomenon of imagination is '(...) a sort of "subtle body" of psychoid nature' that forms 'an intermediary realm between mind and matter(.....)'. (Avens, 1980: 3) Johnson describes this imaginal realm as 'neither conscious nor

entities and objects and finally witnesses a 'newborn sun, rising up out of the depths of the water'. (Johnson, 1986: 139) In dreams events occur in the unconscious, but in active imagination they take place in the imagination. (Johnson, 1986: 139)

⁵⁹ 'By your active participation you convert what would have been an unconscious, passive fantasy into a highly conscious, powerful act of imagination'. (Johnson, 1986: 141)

⁶⁰ 'Passive' imaginary states include hallucinations induced by drugs or certain mental illnesses. 'Such envisioning must not be confused with hallucinating, though certain hallucinatory states may prepare for or even induce imaginative visions. In full-blown hallucination, a demonstrably false claim is made concerning what is *perceived* - say, that I am now seeing a certain quasi-perceptual object, a 'knife', when I am not in fact seeing any such object. In hallucinating, a would-be perception is substituted for an actual perception(....). But the analogy ceases here, for in visionary imagining I do not regard what I imagine as purely possible. Nor do I treat it as psychically real in the dramatic and dramatized form which is found in active imagination proper.' (Casey, 1991: 18)

unconscious but a(...) common ground' that 'gives rise to the transcendent function, the self(...) the synthesis of the two.' (Johnson, 1986: 139, 140) He suggests

emptying the ego-mind and dialoguing with the unconscious contents that spontaneously appear; extending dreams by Active Imagination; dialoguing with dream figures in imagination; converting fantasy into imagination; personifying moods, feelings, and belief systems; and living through mythical journeys. (Johnson, 1986: 203)

Johnson recommends we ask questions like: 'Where is the obsession? Who is obsessed? Where does this feeling come from(...). What is its image?' (Johnson, 1986: 143) He also advises that responses should be honest, 'direct, raw and unrefined' (Johnson, 1986: 142), that they be taken seriously because, on some level, everything produced by the imagination is an authentic representation of the collective unconscious. (Johnson, 1986: 150) The entire process provides a way of reaching a unified state of wholeness because it resolves the conflicts that exist between the ego and the unconscious psyche. (Johnson, 1986: 142)

Jung recorded the images he encountered and the conversations he had with unconscious figures during his own imaginal journeys using this method in the recently published *Red Book*.⁶¹ In a series of lectures at the C.G. Jung Institute the editor of the book, Sonu Shamdasani, explained how Jung subjected himself to a 'process of self-experimentation' that provoked 'an extended series of waking fantasies'. (2009: n.p.) These encounters formed the basis of active imagination during Jung's lifetime. I suggest the dialogues and images recorded in text and as works of art published in Jung's *Red Book* posthumously are evidence of an imaginal (art) practice. Similarly, during an engagement with the Romantic sublime through art practice, this method supports the exploration of both material (body) and non-material (psychic) ways of

⁶¹ When it was released in 2009 it was described as: 'The most influential unpublished work in the history of psychology(...) Carl Jung embarked on an extended self-exploration he called his "confrontation with the unconscious,"(...). Here he developed his principle theories - of the archetypes, the collective unconscious, and the process of individuation - that transformed psychotherapy from a practice concerned with treatment of the sick into a means for higher development of the personality. It is an astonishing example of calligraphy and art on a par with *The Book of Kells* and the illuminated manuscripts of William Blake.' (Sheavly: 2013: n.p.)

being because it is a dialectical process - a conversation between the artist and the unconscious figures that shape the physical world.

Before I begin any imaginal engagement I allow the image to make its presence known to me spontaneously in a dream or meditation and then explore it further using art materials. I record and work with all types of images using Jung's method, starting with writing and drawing because of their expressive immediacy. However, the final image may be executed in anything from paint to pixels or a combination of several media. Throughout the process I take a passive approach and continue to give the image a lot of space. I allow it to roam freely in my imagination whilst paying close attention to what it is doing. Although my interaction with it is silent and visual it is still a dialogue of sorts because there is an exchange of visual information and an ever-evolving emotional response. I do not direct the action, I am an observer in this psychic drama, as though some other part of me is watching another part. The most accurate phrase I have found to describe the attitude I adopt comes from poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge: 'a "willing suspension of disbelief", that is, a bracketing of belief in the empirical reality of what is taking place(....).' (Casey, 1991: 5) I assume in this liminal state I am witnessing an exchange between the conscious and unconscious aspects of my psyche by making use of the imagination's ability to act as a bridge between the two.⁶²

Active imagination works because it positions the psyche between consciousness and the unconscious - these realms function quite differently and the psyche must find ways to balance the tension. (Jaffe, 1984: 77) As it tries to redress the imbalance it looks for creative solutions that require it to embrace possibility, allowing *all* images to enter consciousness including those beyond known frames of reference. Anton Ehrenzweig⁶³ explained that 'any creative search involves holding before the inner eye

⁶² Johnson says that: 'Most of the approaches to Active Imagination are keyed to coming to terms with the unconscious by bringing images up to the surface, reducing the negative effects of their autonomous power, making them conscious, and making peace with them'. (Johnson, 1986: 203)

⁶³ Anton Ehrenzweig was an author and scholar who studied the relationship between psychology, art and creativity.

a multitude of possible choices that totally defeat conscious comprehension'. (Ehrenzweig, 1967: 35) This includes the conflicted, dark and disturbing images the conscious mind usually tries to reject, block or repress. These images are particularly dynamic because they push the conscious mind deeper into imaginal territory, placing it in a creatively precarious position where it loses its grip - something I have also encountered during art-making.⁶⁴

I agree with Ehrenzweig that: 'Creative research proceeds in steps and stages; each of them represents an interim result that cannot yet be connected with the final solution'. (Ehrenzweig, 1967: 48) Imaginal thinking means accepting phenomena for which I have no known frame of reference because I am being guided by a vague numinous presence. To engage imaginally means entertaining not only the plausible and possible but the *implausible* and *impossible* no matter where it takes me - psychologically, morally, or spiritually. Making value judgements or restricting meaning to literal interpretations prevents the psyche from wandering freely and capitalising on the unique relationship the individual has with the archetypal unconscious. The best way to safeguard against censorship is to let the image present itself first - unconscious images are not censored, which is why dreams are often bizarre and even embarrassing at times. I also take Hillman's (1980) advice to 'stick to the image'.⁶⁵ Allowing the conscious mind to let go can be difficult - imagination naturally gravitates towards unfamiliar territory and this undermines conscious control.

One of the reasons for encouraging an exchange between conscious observer and the unconscious is that it is the means by which these two realms can eventually be

⁶⁴ When the imaginary speaks to us it creates pathways between outer and inner realities - when realized, an image 'becomes a "psychopompous", a guide with a soul having its own inherent limitation and necessity'. (Hillman, 1981: 56) '(...) when consciousness is in an altered state, the brain seems to function in a mode in which information that does not fit the commonsense conception of the world is not repressed(...) ordinary waking consciousness is a strict censor'. (Laszlo, 2007: 99) When images circumvent the censor it is possible to explore realms of consciousness free of the limitations usually imposed by the physical body, consensual reality or established systems of knowledge.

⁶⁵ Hillman in Avens, 1980: 47. I refer to this as 'follow the image'.

reconciled. The goal of this synthesis is not analysis or interpretation, or the privileging of one over the other. Archetypal theorists are keen to stress that the imaginal is an experiential field - what is most important in archetypal practice is not whether the image is true or fanciful but how we respond to it. (Hillman, 1991: 20) Working imaginally is about experience rather than interpretation because when something becomes an image, it is immediately 'animated, emotionalised, and placed in the realm of value'. (Hillman, 1983: 59)

As I indicated, experiencing an image involves emotion which is an essential part of imaginal practice - archetypes are 'as much feelings as thoughts'. (Jung, 1966: 66) Engaging imaginally therefore means paying close attention to affect because this indicates the depth of engagement and drives the entire process. As Jung points out, 'it is not storms, not thunder and lightning, not rain and cloud that remain as images in the psyche, but the fantasies caused by the affects they arouse'. (Jung, CW 8, 154) Similarly, when the Romantic engages the sublime in nature, emotion inspires them to create images that express the incomprehensible. Emotion is a response to the mysterious unknown and the numinous manifestations of existence and this is why fantasy is essential in both imaginal and Romantic art practice. Emotion is also responsible for activating the imagination, particularly when it is in conflict with rational thinking.

Rational thought and analysis play a part in imaginal practice and it should be evident from this discussion that I engage in both. However applying them sensitively means respecting the subjective and personal by not restricting meaning to one already established. Once I have worked creatively with an image I use an alternative form of analysis.⁶⁶ It is something I do at various times during the process but only after the original image has presented itself, and even then I am careful not to confine it within a pre-existing framework like classical mythology. I agree with Hillman that the image

⁶⁶ 'Studio production as research is predicated on an alternative logic of practice often resulting in the generation of new ways of modelling meaning, knowledge and social relations(...)' (Barrett, 2007: 4)

suffers neglect if we locate it outside of itself and attach meaning derived from classical myth or moral instruction. (Hillman, 1981: 51) Although traditional terms of reference may well turn out to be valid, it is important to have a personal relationship with these myths and symbols first because as Angela Voss points out,

imaginal research does not seek to 'reduce' symbolic experience to rational/scientific norms and terms, nor to 'explain' it through an objectivist discourse which is alien to its own terms of reference.⁶⁷ (Voss, 2009: 45)

Protecting the integrity of the image gives it room to move and reveal what a superficial reading may not. I often find that numinous images elicit responses that are in conflict with everyday reality, however as I go through the process of unravelling these contradictions, I discover new and valuable layers of meaning.

Hillman's way of working is similar to those used by artists who are also motivated by an imperative to safeguard and preserve the integrity of images. (Hillman, 1991: 16) However, he stresses that imaginal practice is not an 'artistic endeavour', nor is its intended outcome 'a creative production of paintings and poems'. (Hillman, 1991: 57) Although there may be, and often is, an aesthetic outcome, imaginal engagement is something to be undertaken 'for the sake of the figures(...) not for the sake of art'. (Hillman, 1991: 57) Even though I am trained in my profession, my art practice is also in the service of psychic evolution. I value the image as a spiritual function of the psyche as well as an aesthetic object. This does not create conflict for me as an artist because, as I pointed out earlier, archetypal images have an aesthetic of their own based on certain givens or truths which, if respected, can imbue the work with a certain numinosity.

During active imagining the psyche has access to a realm of archetypal images described as a 'margin', a 'field', a 'ground' or a 'state(...)' an integral part of

⁶⁷ Because the value of this method derives from its subjective approach it is critical that each individual engage with the image personally. However, it is also true that regardless of how the image manifests for a particular individual, it still carries a reference to an archetype that can be located somewhere in the various mythological frameworks of human culture and classical mythology.

imaginative experience', placing it on the edge of an 'entirely empty abyss', while at the same time a 'sense of *something*, not of sheer nothing'.⁶⁸ (Casey, 1991: 39) I am familiar with this abyss, as well as Casey's description of an image that becomes 'progressively less distinct in identifiable content'. (Casey, 1991: 39) The terms field and ground are fitting too in the sense that when I enter this state of consciousness, I am aware of a hovering groundlessness as my being opens out into an infinite space.⁶⁹ On some level this state of awareness can be compared to Richard Stein's⁷⁰ 'witness consciousness' which differs from the ordinary thinking mind in both content and function. (Stein, 2010: 70)

Active imagining is related to visionary experience or what mediaeval mystics referred to as an eruption of a unitive vision in one's psyche, which means imaginal research is essentially a spiritual practice. (Johnson 1986: 216) Robert Johnson describes the process:

An image or set of events seizes one through the imaginative faculty with such power that one really knows and experiences the unifying truth of the self. One sees, for a brief time, a glimpse of true unity, beauty, and meaning of life. (Johnson 1986: 216)

An imaginal (art) practice that uses imagination as a research tool to engage the sublime in nature is visionary in both an artistic and a religious sense because an encounter with the numen is a sacred experience. (Corbett, 1996: 15) When linked to

⁶⁸ 'The marginal area remains projected in front of him or her, on the lateral edges of the plane of presentation. Thus the imaginal margin contributes to the irrevocably frontal, depthless character of the imaginative representation, which hovers before the imaginer at a certain indefinite and untrespassable remove'. (Casey, 1991: 39)

⁶⁹ Tantric Buddhists and other Eastern philosophies have very detailed knowledge of the various levels or grounds of consciousness mentioned by Casey and others. They can be found in the *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (Rinpoche, 1994) which was written specifically for the Western psyche. It contains clear directions for recognising these states that may only be reached through certain practices. As I will explain in 'Into the Blue', I experienced one field of consciousness I considered 'imaginal' because it bore similarities to the 'blue' ground of consciousness described in Tibetan philosophy.

⁷⁰ Richard H. Stein is a Jungian analyst who writes about Eastern philosophy and its links to archetypal theory.

the sublime in nature, art-making has the potential to offer a glimpse of what a unitive vision of existence might look like.

Because archetypes provide a matrix for both the physical landscape and the human psyche, plumbing the depths of our experiences in nature gives us the opportunity to discover 'the universal lessons deep within all particulars'. (Voss, 2009: 44) Image-making and imagination are powerful activities in their own right but when undertaken in a natural open air cathedral like The Gap they are even more so. The Gap was already resonant with its own archetypal forms. It played no small part in my psychic drama so before I continue I will introduce this unique and dynamic landscape.

The Gap

I can feel my breath slowing to match the deep sine-waves of the rolling sea. Driving out to The Gap. BRINK - synchronistically scrawled on the back of my hand, on the steering wheel, to remind me about a community youth project. Earlier, chatting with a friend in cyberspace about her recent fall - and painting. Falling and painting, we decide, go together.

Not today, not here - don't fall today.

(Frantom, Journal entry, 2009)

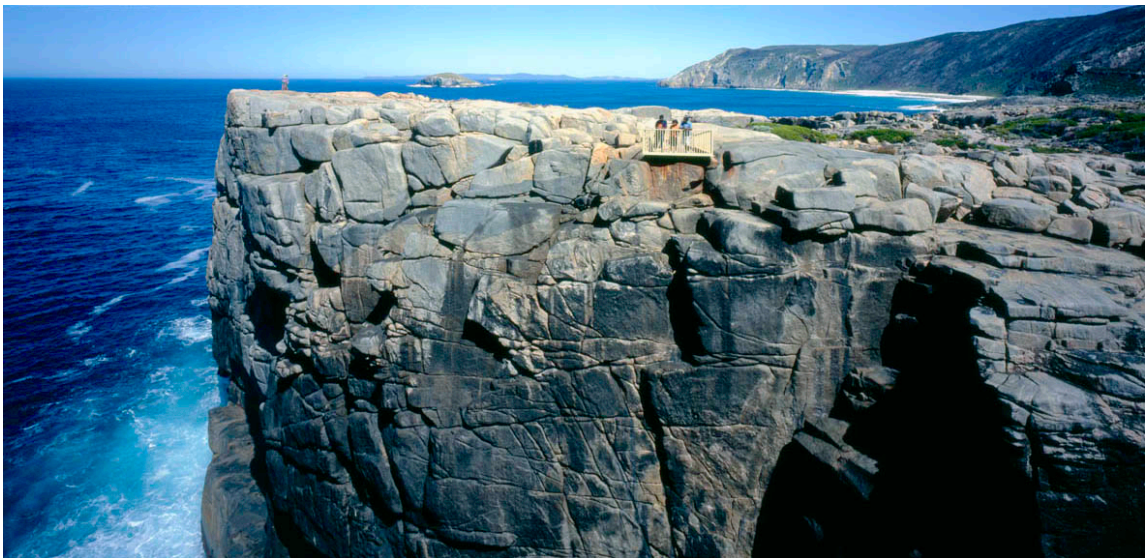


Fig 1. Mike Lyons, *Gap Panorama #1*, 2009 (photo of cage from Eastern side), film scanned to digital file

The Gap is located on the south coast of Western Australia, eighteen kilometres from Albany. It could be described as an awe-fully sublime landscape because it engenders an 'agreeable kind of horror'. (Addison in Morley, 2010: n.p.) Even the tourist signage recognises it as a symbolic threshold on the brink of the void, in this case the deep cold expanse of the *Southern Ocean*. Printed alongside dire warnings about the treachery of freak waves is the greeting: *welcome to the edge...of Antarctica*, adding that the rock on which you stand is one of the known limits of the southern world as most people will ever see it. Beyond this edge humanity has minimal presence, little impact and even less control.

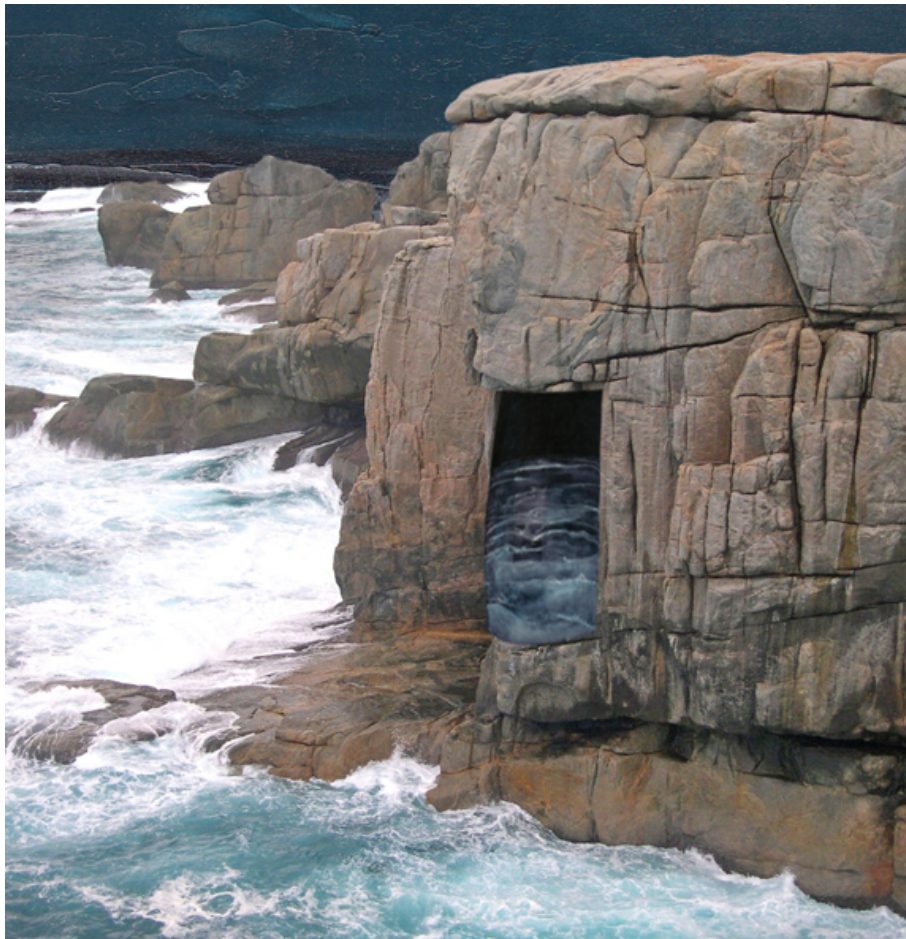


Fig 2. Michelle Frantom, *Welcome to the Edge*, 2012, digital collage from original artwork

As you step onto the edge of this physical landscape you might also feel as though you are stepping onto a psychological edge. Even without the warnings or prior knowledge of events that have occurred there it takes little imagination to see it as a place of

death. It is a dangerous if awe-inspiringly beautiful landscape associated with both foolish and courageous acts, one recorded on a plaque commemorates the rescue of Stephen Mathews on the night of March 14, 1978.⁷¹ As you advance along the western path the same plaque quotes James Barrie: 'All goes if courage goes'. The Gap has a formidable reputation - accidental drownings and suicides have been absorbed into local folklore and most have never reached the tabloids. Discussion about suicides that have taken place there seems taboo, the only reason I know about several is because I am a 'local', having spent eight years as a child and twenty years as an adult on this coast. Word of mouth still operates in a community where until recently many people knew their neighbours. The art community is even smaller so when I heard about the death of Melusina⁷² I spoke to a friend who, as a volunteer in the local rescue group, had been called out on that day. Another artist friend lived next door to a retired rescue worker who had been on the two-way radio - he agreed to talk to me off the record.

Romantic and somewhat anthropomorphic descriptions of the *Devil's Gap*, as it was originally known, appeared in the tabloids as early as 1914:

The awesome Devil's Gap, the dark frowning walls of which rise up in forbidding majesty to the height of 150 ft above water level, make an impressive scene....This is no place for the timid traveller for in its present unprotected state few will dare to risk looking over the brink of the chasm. The view can be taken in only by extending oneself flat upon the earth and drawing up cautiously to the edge. The ocean's swell dashing and swilling into the sides of the Gap, churning itself into fantastic tongues of water and sending clouds of vapour-like spray into the faces of those above, form a picture the fascination of which holds the lover of Nature for hours in silent admiration. Here Nature is seen in her sternest mood; bold massive piles of granite which have defied the seas for centuries are her materials, grand and impressive have been the

⁷¹ 'On the night of March 14 1978 Stephen Mathews was saved from almost certain death in the waters off this spot. This plaque commemorates the outstanding courage of Paddy Hart, skipper; Keith Richardson, mate; and the crew of the whale-chaser *Cheyne II* and John Bell aircraft pilot in making the rescue'. (Government of Western Australia and Shire of Albany)

⁷² 'Melusina' is a pseudonym for an artist I knew who 'apparently' suicided at The Gap. I have not sought permission to use her real name, preferring instead to protect her identity. In one version of a German myth Melusina is a creature, half fish and half human. <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/melusina.html>

manner of their employment(....). There is probably no more inspiring sea scenery i(n) any part of the world.⁷³

Another more prosaic account was given in the local newspaper in 1935.

a great cleft in the cliffs fronting the Southern Ocean. The walls are sheer, almost as though deliberately plumbed, and are about one hundred feet in height. The entrance(....) is possibly thirty yards wide, but the cleft narrows considerably to its inner end, and forms a kind of blind funnel, into which great waves roll endlessly. The Gap is always floored with a smother of turbulent white water, churned to froth by the conflict between the forces of nature.⁷⁴



Fig 3. Michelle Frantom, *Study 40*, 2009, mixed media on paper, 20.7 cm x 14.3 cm

Eighty years of violent natural weathering have probably had minimal impact on its geological structure but there have been some changes. One of the most obvious is the observation platform with metal railing securely bolted and cemented to the existing

⁷³ *The West Australian*, 15 Jan, 1914 p. 8.

⁷⁴ This description was originally published in the Albany Advertiser on November 11, 1935 but is referenced here from 'The Gap', Barbara Temperton's 'stories in verse' from *Southern Edge*.

granite on what has always been the best vantage point from which to peer into the yawning chasm. Supporting the comment made in the 1914 newspaper article about 'drawing up cautiously to the edge', my mother told me that once when she peered over the side she was buffeted by gusts of wind so strong that her friend had to grab hold of her to stop her over-balancing. When she took me there as a child in the 1960s there was still no protective barricade. Today the steel structure is a prominent though small interruption to the grandeur of the site. The tiny metal cage does not diminish awareness of the fragility of the human body as it hangs over this natural void. Neither does it not stop the suicides because it is only about two and a half metres in length and one and a half metres deep. Those wanting to jump choose one of many other convenient rock ledges. Although official reports indicate there have only been a few suicides, they loom large in local folklore and anecdotal evidence suggests there have been quite a few more.⁷⁵

During seven years of study, and previously, I have spent a lot of time at The Gap, worked in different parts of the landscape, explored and scrambled over rocks. I have always found it quite overwhelming - dense granite of sheer, impenetrable proportions and a powerfully dynamic, deep and turbulent ocean. If there is any sensory relief at all it is an uneasy calming of the violence when the wind and sea subside but there is never a complete absence of activity - the deep ocean suck and 'thwack' just dulls to a subsonic thud. I have been there on days when the hot granite dries hard salt wells in the baking sun; days also when the sea slams into the 'gap' making the rock shudder shiny with spray. The entire site is impressive but the chasm itself is the most memorable and awe-inspiring. Each time I go there I am drawn to this cauldron where rock and sea have been locked in battle for millennia.

⁷⁵ I have been informed by someone who works at the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) that there have actually been very few suicides. However, anecdotal evidence suggests this figure has been downplayed. The DEC are currently (2013) conducting a risk assessment survey.

The Gap is a local curiosity, a natural shrine and a tourist drawcard. On clear days there is a steady flow of visitors, a quick stop on the way to lunch at *Whaleworld*.⁷⁶ The majority do not stay for long, preferring to scramble over expansive rock faces, pose for photographs and leave. There is a quick exodus at dusk when the light begins to fade, an oppressive air descends and primal instincts encourage one to retreat to the reassurance of car lights and a warm engine.

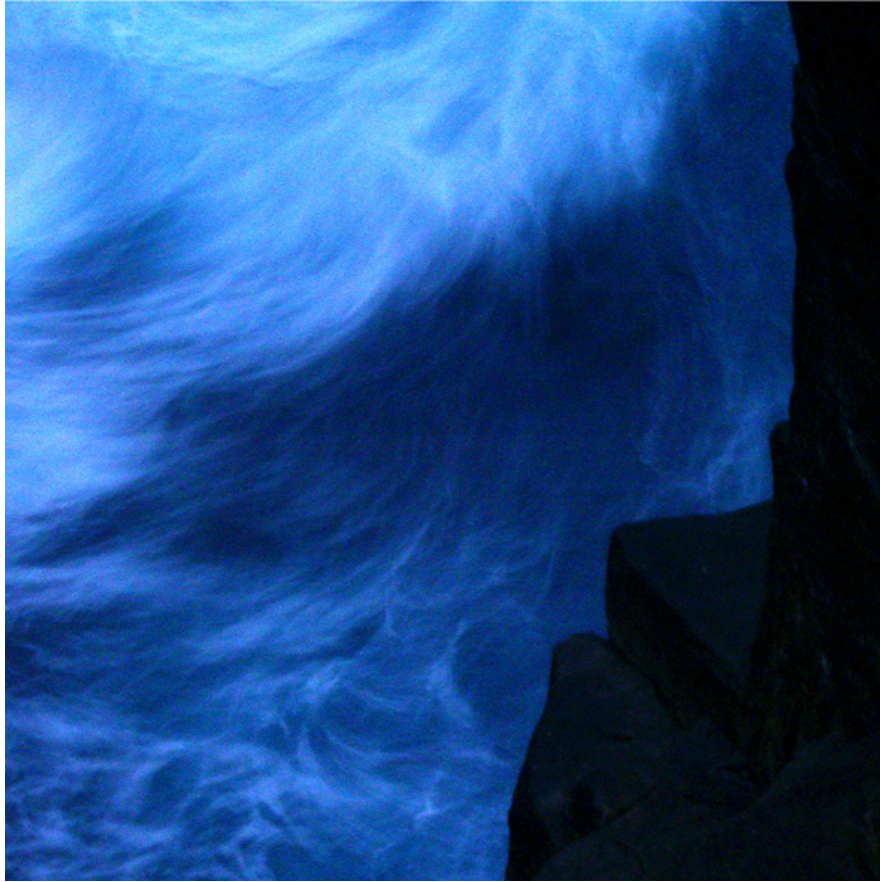


Fig 4. Michelle Frantom, 2010, *Void*, digital photograph.

I have not been able to stay in this environment for any length of time during daylight hours but it was particularly difficult on one occasion at dusk when I stood alone behind the mouth of the chasm to take photographs. Even though I was in no real physical danger, I had to speak severely and rationally to myself to find the courage to stay. As I stood on the ledge holding the camera carefully during a long exposure I felt

⁷⁶ *Whaleworld* is a popular tourist attraction built on the site of the old whaling station that used to operate in Albany.

very vulnerable but was able to capture the magical image I call *Void* (Fig. 4, p. 51) - the only alteration I made was to digitally change the exposure later.

Sightseers seem casual about the danger as they exuberantly scale granite formations and stare from flattened tops, over the sheer sides and into the sea. They tend to sober up when they look into the chasm. Their verbal exchanges predominantly focus on one theme as they imaginally step into the chaos. Like them, my own reactions to the site have been based on abstract future concerns like - what 'might' happen 'if' - rather than on events that were happening in real time. My responses were personal and subjective yet it was uncanny how they were repeatedly echoed by others.⁷⁷ Often I overheard comments like: 'Look how deep the swine is. It wants to pull you in', 'I don't think too many people come back out of the water here'⁷⁸ and the most common response of all: 'imagine - being in there'.

The tendency to project oneself into an event or situation, to imagine and visualise potential scenarios, seems to prevail in the face of overwhelming sensory stimulus and threat. The practice of fantasising is common in imaginal thinking where 'questioning loosens experience by asking how experience looks against a different background under an expanded horizon'. (Charles Winqvist, 1981: 32)⁷⁹ Fantasy is an interface between the image as concept and as visual phenomenon; according to Winqvist it has the potential to alter consciousness because it creates conflict between what is happening now and what could have happened, resulting in 'non-temporal' images that convey new meaning. (Winqvist, 1981: 32)

⁷⁷ 'All comprehension and all that is comprehended is in itself psychic(...). Nevertheless we have good reason to suppose that behind this veil there exists the uncomprehended absolute object which affects and influences us(...). The justification here is a psychodynamic one, of the sort usually termed subjective and regarded as a purely personal matter. But that is to commit the mistake of failing to distinguish whether the statement really proceeds only from an isolated subject(...) or whether it occurs generally and springs from a collectively present dynamic pattern. In that case it should not be classed as subjective, but as psychologically objective, since an indefinite number of individuals find themselves prompted by an inner impulse to make an identical statement, or feel a certain view to be a vital necessity'. (Jung, 1989: 352)

⁷⁸ Journal entry, 19 November 2006.

⁷⁹ Professor Charles Winqvist is a theologian and philosopher.

It does not require too much imagination to see the abyss at The Gap and the surrounding topography as a physical embodiment of the Void, so why do we project ourselves into such an alien environment? Edward Casey's view is that 'The places of landscape - "placescapes" - provide a(...) setting, for archetypes as well as for structures of presentation'. (Casey, 1991: xx)⁸⁰ In a primal place like the Gap thoughts turn easily to an omniscient and divine 'other'. When people speak into the abyss they might be talking to themselves, the souls of those who have disappeared into it, or maybe God. Because it presents a danger to both body and psyche it encourages a 'contemplative embrace of death' which, according to Arthur Schopenhauer, is the 'proper goal of life'. (Levine, 1985: 392)

In *Seascapes of the Sublime: Vernet, Monet and the Oceanic Feeling*, Steven Levine explains:

For Schopenhauer, art alone releases the spectator from the vicious circle of worldly desire, denial, and frustration that inevitably accompanies a life subservient to the workings of will. In opposition to Kant, the sublime is now purely defined as the response to phenomena that stand in a hostile relation to the human will to survive; gone are the metaphysics of human superiority to nature which Kant optimistically postulates as a reflection of the superiority of God. Aesthetic contemplation of the sublime may, for the brief instant of its enactment, elevate the individual above the trivial and tragic world of will into the disinterested and hence invulnerable realm of pure ideas; acceding to the sublime, however, constitutes a courageous rejection of the lurid blandishments of life. (Levine, 1985: 392)

Framed in this way, the Romantic's quest to experience the tragic sublime and confront death can be seen in a positive light. Schopenhauer suggests 'the seemingly paradoxical phenomenon of delight in the terrible(...) produces an ecstatic state' we understand as the sublime in nature. (Julian Young, 2005: 116)⁸¹ This is because the antidote to the fear of death is to reach 'a point of view from which the extinction of the individual is a matter of complete triviality'. (Young, 2005: 170) In other words, in contemplation of

⁸⁰ 'Place is paramount in human experience; it is the very basis of landscape taken in the generic sense of all that underlies geographic orientation and representation'. (Casey, 1991: 229)

⁸¹ In 2011 Julian Young was Kenan Professor of Humanities at Wake Forest University in the U.S.A.

the sublime, accepting mortality can be a platform from which the individual can see beyond themselves and appreciate that they are part of something immeasurably large and eternal - 'we feel ourselves pass away and vanish into nothing like drops in the ocean'. (Schopenhauer in Levine, 1985: 394) Standing on the viewing platform at The Gap this is not too difficult to imagine.

Confrontation with the imaginal constructs of life and death in the metaphorical Void lead to a deep appreciation of the body, mortality and life in general. Simon Morley argues this occurs because the sublime encourages a transcendent world view that is not based on 'secular, scientific and rationalist' approaches to reality. (Morley, 2010: n.p.) Mark Welman⁸² explains that even though the collapse of personal boundaries are experienced as an imaginal 'death', this image also represents an awakening to life and a deeper sense of identity in relation to the world. (Welman in Brooke, 2000: 137) Stanislav Grof⁸³ cites the example of seventeenth century Augustinian monk Abraham a Sancta Clara who clearly understood the benefits for those prepared to face death in an experiential way: 'The man who dies before he dies does not die when he dies.' (Grof, 1994: n.p.) This practice not only frees the individual from the fear of death by altering their perception of it, but transforms the way in which they live their life. (Grof, 1994) As a transcendent reality, death is 'a metaphor for a pivotal shift in one's mode of experiencing things' in life. (Welman in Brooke, 2000: 131)

The need to confront and reconcile with death through art is not uncommon in Romantic art. Referencing Monet's *Belle Isle* sojourn, Steven Levine explains:

Here we can begin to glimpse a metaphysical explanation for the self-destructive

⁸² Dr. Mark Welman is a scholar and author who writes about archetypal dream imagery and death.

⁸³ Depth psychologist, Stanislav Grof has written extensively about the West's limited and generally fear-driven attitude towards death based on its misunderstanding that it is a finite reality. 'In Western societies, the dominant paradigm presents a cosmology in which humans, as biological matter, live and die in a universe governed by the laws of physics. In this worldview, there is no room for the possibility of life after death, and different states of consciousness have significance only as pathological deviations from that worldview. In sharp contrast, the cosmologies of other cultures, ancient and contemporary pre-industrial, have taken for granted the existence of an afterlife. For them, dying is a meaningful part of life, and death is a journey for which the individual can and should prepare'. (Grof, S. 1994)

courting of peril that characterises the anecdotes about Vernet and Monet and the stormy sea. Whatever portion of their motivation might be attributed to the empirical pursuit of a natural effect, there is by Kant's account a determination much deeper, a drive that is anterior even to the claims of the life of the individual. This drive for the sublime finds its expression in the self-contemplative consciousness that alone in the universe can acknowledge the necessity and destiny of its own death, a cosmic death transformed by art into conscious spectacle. (Levine, 1985: 389)

The Gap presents the individual with the spectre of death because it is extremely difficult to occupy in both a physical and a psychological sense. Staring into the chasm and imagining 'what if' triggers a memory not consciously realised yet still intuitively familiar to the human psyche - the Void. Those who recognise it as such on a visceral level are also grappling with an irrational desire to become one with it that opposes another powerful instinct - for survival.⁸⁴ If these conflicting desires are permitted to coexist without favouring one over the other, the resulting tension can force the psyche into unfamiliar territory and non-ordinary states of consciousness. I discovered this during a drawing session at The Gap during which I forced myself to disobey an instinct to flee because I knew it was irrational. I experienced an unfounded but very real primal fear brought on by a 'vision' of the ocean rising up to engulf me. At the time I was sitting on a rock platform in an elevated position, at least thirty metres above the sea, so this was highly unlikely. When I controlled an instinct to run, the effort required to stand my ground changed my perception - my thinking became more 'distanced' and I had a profound insight. As I analysed the structural pattern and movement of the huge rolling swells through my drawing, I wrote in my journal:

We perceive a mountain like we see a wave....But the wave is fluid, a cone like the mountain except we see the mountain as solid - it's a time thing. Neither are really solid, but the mountain moves too slowly for us. If we had different vision we would see the mountain move.

Time is the 4th dimension.

(Frantom, Journal entry, 2009)

⁸⁴ 'Archetypal statements are based upon instinctive preconditions and have nothing to do with reason; they are neither rationally grounded nor can they be banished by rational arguments' (Jung, 1989: 353)

My understanding was more than just intellectual - it was experiential as well. The images that came to me during that imaginal encounter made me realise that in my model of reality, the physical and non-physical realms of existence were divided. Making an image of what I saw, both in my imagination and in the physical world, enabled me to understand that these seemingly irreconcilable realities were actually the same thing manifesting in different ways. In this case the conflict in consciousness created by opposing ideas and realities was a necessary part of the process of discovery and further supports the link between imaginal practice and the tragic sublime in art.

Edmund Burke noted that one of the main characteristics of the sublime was 'the heightened and perversely exalted feeling we often get from being threatened by something beyond our control or understanding'. (Morley, 2010: n.p.) The fact that the desire to enter this chaotic violence opposes the instinct for survival supports Schopenhauer's view that the sublime requires a 'division of the personality into two - a threatened self and an unthreatened one'. (Young, 2005: 131) It also highlights a fundamental yet paradoxical truth: wanting to enter this chaotic void indicates a primal need to be free of the physical, to transcend and enter another Void that is eternally still. Forgetting ourselves for an instant opens a space for the instinctual recognition that even though individual consciousness is small, it is held within a much larger one. That insight is a welcome respite from the relentless striving of and for material existence - the kind of rest we might experience in sleep, except in this case it happens while we are wide awake, completely conscious. The desire to enter *the* Void might explain why some people imagine 'being in there' as they look into the void-like chasm of The Gap. Its ability to evoke that response makes The Gap both awful and sublime.

During my research the contradictions between the material and non-material elements in the landscape shifted my consciousness from the physical to the

metaphysical⁸⁵ and from the concrete to the abstract. James Cowan⁸⁶ notes that in a similar way, indigenous Australians know Uluru⁸⁷ as both a 'metaphysical presence(...) as well as a geological one'. (Cowan, 1992: 32) For the Pitjandjara people, who are its caretakers,

Rock is both an epic poem for all, a cautionary tale for some, a source of sacred law and ethics for others, and a repository of esoteric knowledge for those few who aspire to the title of mekigar (lit. 'man of magic') or tribal hierophant. (Cowan, 1992: 32)

It is conceivable the rock formations of The Gap have their own story of battle, death and resurrection; the geological descriptions on the tourist signage certainly imply this. Cowan maintains the epic tales buried deeply in significant landscape features are an 'expression of various archetypal passions at a supra-mundane level'. (Cowan, 1992: 34) Here Cowan is referring to the ways in which humankind can engage myth in order to make sense of events that happen during daily life and connect to the physical world. The drive to re-invent mythical tales reflected in the landscape is instinctual and common to all cultures and as these stories are retold, they also remind us of the creative forces that brought it all into being. Geology symbolically mirrors the human psyche - changes in consciousness are represented 'as entering a cleft in the earth' and the start of a spiritual journey is often 'symbolised by a tunnel, funnel, whirlpool or gaping mouth of a gigantic monster'. (Grof, 1980: 70) The reference to being swallowed and absorbed into a larger entity is significant because it mirrors the experience of drowning - of being overwhelmed by the sea and by the unconscious. Even though Grof cautions that these images are representative and not to be taken literally, many

⁸⁵ Here I am referring to metaphysical as that which is beyond the purely physical dimension, additional to. I have not used 'non-physical' because in archetypal psychology, there is no division between the material and non-material. In Jungian theory, 'Metaphysics signifies Being, existence and reality, that which is(...) we do not need to bifurcate the empirical from the phenomenological, for speculative propositions about psychic reality are simultaneously metaphysical phenomena'. (Mills, 2012: 22)

⁸⁶ James Cowan is an Australian poet, novelist and Aboriginal cosmologist.

⁸⁷ *Uluru* - also known as *Ayer's Rock* - is one of the largest rock features on the Australian continent. It is considered by some to be the 'geographical' centre of Australia. For Aboriginal people it is the spiritual centre and home of the *Rainbow Serpent*.

cultures continue to associate human-like qualities with particular geographic locations. (Grof, 1980: 70)

In much the same way certain motifs and metaphors for human experience can be linked to the Gap because although it is undoubtedly a physically dangerous place, it is also a landscape that psychologically threatens. The Gap is a microcosm of death - it challenges both body and psyche. However it is also a place where, sitting on the edge 'painting against death', I gained some profound insights into the nature of consciousness.

Welcome to the Edge

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

(Hebrews 10:31)

The coastal landscape of The Gap assaults the senses. It is physically threatening and visually overwhelming - emotionally thrilling and exhausting at the same time. During the research I painted my small ink studies under steel-grey skies, equally steely winds and in a blinding sun-shower of light - all to the relentless chorus of ocean crashing against impenetrable rock. As I dodged sea-spray I occasionally suffered vertiginous fantasies in which I plummeted off ledges into the sea. On one occasion an instinctual response to reach for some paint brushes bouncing innocently into the abyss was just as quickly withdrawn.

This landscape evoked emotions in me similar to the persistent drowning dreams - annihilation, suffocation, being overwhelmed, drawn down into the depths - the sensation of falling into a dark and infinite abyss. The prospect of overbalancing, either physically or psychologically, was not an option so I had to find a way to work on this 'edge'. I relied on two strategies: one involved staying connected to the body (to ground myself in a physical reality) and the other was to make sure I maintained some

level of equilibrium between personal imagination (which is highly subjective) and an imaginal one (which has the capacity to be more objective). I took photographs and made small images from materials on-site both to ground me physically and infuse the work with something tactile beyond the pictorial or informative. Making images in this environment gave me the opportunity to explore the relationship between creation and destruction which, as archetypal processes, are present in nature and an integral part of creative research as well.

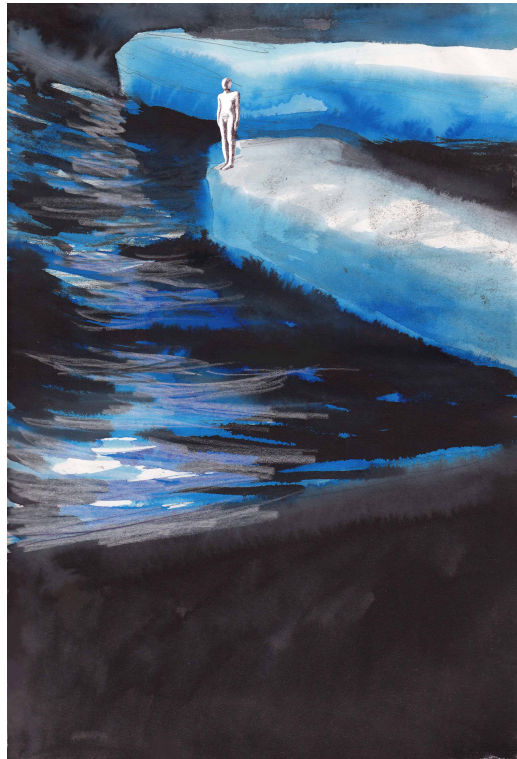


Fig 5. Michelle Frantom, *Study 48*, 2012, collage of mixed media drawings (digital file)

Because The Gap is a physical manifestation of 'a' void it also symbolises 'the' primordial Void where every-thing was created out of no-thing. In such a dynamic crucible the tension between conflicting impulses stimulated an already overactive and fertile imagination. Although I completed the final works in the studio I continued to feed on the emotions I felt when on site which, because they were also a physical memory, helped maintain the link between body and psyche.

I have not always appreciated the importance of the corporeal body. However, as a result of this study I am now convinced it is critical to not only preserve but deepen the connection between physical and psychic bodies. I also understand why Jungian theorist Cedrus Monte made this comment in her paper *Numen of the Flesh*:

the flesh, the materia of the body, contains its own capacity for generating the *numen*, and therefore the experience of healing. The *numen* arises out of the flesh as a direct result of the very nature of matter itself(...) there is no split between spirit and matter. (Monte, 2005: 1)

Given the 'negative, pathological effects generated by the relative split of body and mind', Monte feels it is 'imperative to offer skilful ways and means of affirming the irrevocable and harmonizing relationship between the instinctual, animal body and the archetypal, spiritual impulses of mind'. (Monte, 2005: 2) Making images of a sublime landscape using an imaginal method is one way to harmonise the relationship between instinctual body and spirit (*numen*) because it involves both ways of being human. Monte's work is important because as she says, the body has been 'marginalised in psychoanalytic practice'. (Monte, 2005: n.p.)⁸⁸

As I rendered the landscape of The Gap, translating the felt experience of the sublime into art, I also began to see the relationship between *its* geological 'body' and the archetypes that made it so. In his paper *Rock Forms and Art*, Othmar Tobisch⁸⁹ highlights the parallels between the earth sciences and art:

both artist and scientist are aware of similar forms, which in art are called 'abstract' forms, and that perhaps their perception transmits a non-verbal kind of communication from the individual's unconscious to his(sic) conscious mind. Alternatively, the forms might be interpreted as symbols from the collective unconscious of the human psyche to the conscious mind of the viewer. (Tobish, 1971: 141)

⁸⁸ Cedrus Monte aims to address this issue in her role as a Jungian analyst, integrating body-work and movement with a methodology based in imaginal psychology. Her underpinning premise is this: 'Imaginal thinking(...) encourages us to see the two worlds of spirit and matter, psyche and body, as one fabric, one realm inextricably interwoven with the other, as the Eastern spiritual traditions have been describing and teaching for centuries'. (Monte, 2005: n.p.)

⁸⁹ At time of writing, Othmar Tobisch was Professor Emeritus of Physical and Biological Sciences at the University of California.

The equivalences that operate between models across different fields of study further evidence the presence of a framework that underpins all reality. Archetypes define the molecular structures of landscape and become visible via artistic expression. When human beings acknowledge these archetypal patterns by continually re-imaging them as cultural myths and art objects, they become more closely connected to the places in which they live. The following individual accounts show that these images are part of the collective psyche of humanity. The first is by Jung who recorded it in the 1960s. The second is taken from my own journal written decades later at The Gap – I had no knowledge of Jung's experience at the time.

I once experienced a violent earthquake, and my first, immediate feeling was that I no longer stood on the solid and familiar earth, but on the skin of a gigantic animal that was heaving under my feet.....It was this image that impressed itself on me, not the physical fact(...) man's(sic) (...) terror of the unchained elements - these effects anthropomorphise the passion of nature, and the purely physical element becomes an angry god.

(Jung, 1978, CW 8: 155)

The mass of rock beneath me moved. It swayed, I swayed. I was near the *Natural Bridge* and thought it might collapse, taking me down with it. I wanted to run, but my brushes and ink were strewn around me, I didn't want to abandon them and that was enough to ground me. But that rocking sensation - it's been there before, that feeling that I am riding on the back of a giant heaving serpent - a dragon. I stayed, against my instinct(...) but I still waited for the tidal wave.⁹⁰

(Frantom, Journal entry, 2009)

Further evidence that archetypal images are innate in human consciousness can be found in the cultural practices of the Eastern Australian Yaralde⁹¹ tribe. According to anthropologist Professor Adolphus Elkin, adepts who underwent traditional initiation were required to confront terrible and 'prescribed' visions which included, among other catastrophic events, 'flood waters rising(...) and the earth rocking'. (Elkin, 1994:

⁹⁰ Jung says that in symbolic terms 'dragons make their lairs by watercourses, preferably near a(...) dangerous crossing(...) sea serpents live in the depth of the ocean' because 'the psychological conditions of the environment(...) leave similar mythical traces behind them'. (Jung, CW 8: 155) As a consequence these traces repeatedly activate the 'affect-laden fantasies' that manifest as particular '*archetypes*' or 'myth-motifs' in the human psyche.

⁹¹ Lower Murray, Eastern Australia. (Elkin, 1994: 61)

60) Elkin observed how initiates involved in magical rituals deliberately slept in burial grounds or wild natural sites to evoke feelings of terror. It was thought that 'occult forces of conscious beings' inhabited the landscape, especially those associated with terrible legends or where tragic events had occurred.⁹² (Elkin, 1994: 61)

The rationale for these practices is not vastly different to that of contemporary depth (archetypal) psychologists who contend that to become fully conscious the unconscious contents of the psyche must be integrated, which means facing the 'dark side'. Before certain knowledge is revealed it is necessary to confront psychic terror because although this darkness is experienced as a personal 'reality', it ultimately resolves at a point beyond the individual psyche. Resolution cannot be achieved however, until the person has undergone what is referred to in both mythology and psychology as the 'dark night of the soul' or 'descent to the underworld' - a psycho-mythical initiation found in many cultures in various forms. Transpersonal psychologist William Bonto notes that the intensity of this psychic journey varies and can take the form of an encounter with the Void within which 'fear and ecstasy co-exist' (Bonto, 2012: 2). He also suggests this idea is reminiscent of Martin Buber's "divine Void," where the spirit of the human being meets the spirit of the divine' and imaginal Demons and Angels fight for control of the soul. (Bonto, 2012: 2) Jung maintains the struggle between opposing forces is eventually resolved and a new self is formed in which the apparent binaries of negative and positive, though still present, have been brought into a unified whole within the psyche. (Bonto, 2012: 2)

The way the Void is interpreted is critically influenced by cultural background - in the West for example it is generally perceived as being negative because it is associated with death. However, in their exploration of death as an initiatory event, Stanislav and Christina Grof argue that although the contemplation of death is seen by Western scientists as a 'symptom of social pathology(....) deep confrontation with the most

⁹² The reference to 'tragic events' is relevant in light of the accidental deaths and suicides at The Gap.

frightening and repulsive aspects of human existence can result in a spiritual opening.' (Grof, 1980: 20) An imaginal death prepares the individual for a physical one by 'establishing a deep, almost cellular awareness that periods of destruction are those of transition rather than termination'. (Grof, 1980: 23) In this context negative states of mind and confrontations with darkness are seen as creative initiatory processes rather than destructive episodes or evidence of mental illness.

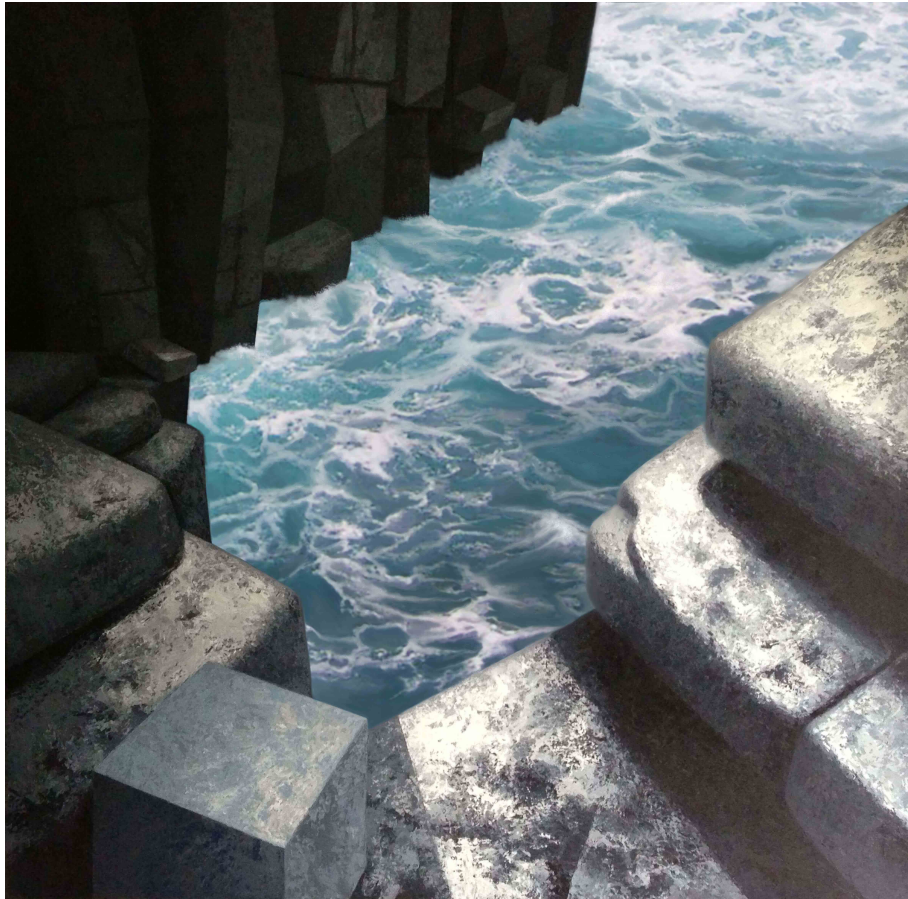


Fig 6. Michelle Frantom, *Chasm 3*, 2013, digital collage from original artwork

Because of its design, the chasm at The Gap is both a physical and a symbolic Void. It was therefore a very effective imaginal portal through which I could enter the sea of the unconscious and confront death on a psychic level. Although this was an imagined scenario it resonated through the emotional body as grief, sorrow and abandonment. I was fortunate to be able to channel these emotions through art-making - when faced with the creative yet equally destructive sublime in nature, the artist is forced to create

nature anew, to balance these conflicting forces within the psyche. (Ernst Kris, 1971: 52)⁹³ In so doing they are able to tap into the potential benefits of an experience that might otherwise be destructive - in effect the artist is 'painting against death'.

In this chapter I introduced the idea that because the forms and forces in the landscape have archetypal underpinnings, they are unconsciously recognisable to the human psyche and can therefore be translated into images. I also highlighted the importance of psychic imbalance as a creative edge in imaginal practice and its links to The Gap as a real-time symbolic equivalent. In the following chapter I discuss the work of artists Lawrence Daws and Rick Amor who respond to the uncanny and sublime in the Australian landscape by taking an imaginal journey into the unconscious through art making.

⁹³ Ernst Kris was a twentieth century psychoanalyst and art historian.

PAINTING AGAINST DEATH

The light is muted, not much tonal variation. It is stormy, brooding, sulky. Fierce heat then sharp sun, blinding glints of white shatter across the sultry purple blue. That intense aqua, the colour of hope that pulls you in, and the white foam - lazily slobbering up the sides(...) the sun has gone, it has cooled and the wind is stronger at my back. The mood is changing, darker - the fear that descends with twilight, when you know it's time to go.

(Frantom, Journal entry, 2008)

Both East and West recognise the Void as a significant and enduring theme in human consciousness. Human beings are drawn back to this motif because it is archetypal, evidenced by the fact that artists repeatedly reinvent new ways to make images about it. In order to know the Void, intellectual understanding is not enough – it requires real and direct knowledge through *gnostic* experience. As Kevin Townley⁹⁴ notes, one of the Hermetic principles is that although everything in existence is mental in nature before it manifests in the physical realm, ideas only come into being when we fully engage with a specific image. He suggests we follow image with action - a process he describes as 'thought, word, and deed'. (Townley, 1993: 4) Engaging the idea-image of the Void presents some ideological as well as practical challenges for the artist.⁹⁵

Although the Void tends to be associated with nihilism in traditional Western culture, this is only one of its manifestations. As indicated in my discussion on Schopenhauer and Levine, I am more interested in how it has been interpreted positively as a transcendent phenomenon rather than one predominantly associated with physical death. Levy traces the first recorded constructive view of the void to Plotinus [201-270 C.E.]. (Levy, 2006: 66) Plotinus's position is anomalous because Western attitudes have been largely determined by the dominant spiritual traditions of the time - both Judaism and Christianity saw the divine as a 'single transcendent God the Father' and 'creative principle' rather than God as 'Void', which they interpreted as being nihilistic. (Levy,

⁹⁴ Kevin Townley is an author and scholar of Western mysticism and the hermetic sciences including the Qabalah and Alchemy.

⁹⁵ Mark Levy points out that: 'The Void as a field with divine or spiritual associations is largely relegated to the Western mystics and to very select members of the avant-garde in Western art beginning with Romanticism in the early nineteenth-century'. (Levy, 2006: 2) In 2011 Dr. Mark Levy was senior professor of Art History at California State University.

2006: 67) For them the Void opposed the idea of a God who created the known world – so they could not see how the Void might instead represent God. (Levy, 2006: 65) The tendency to associate the Void with death and nihilism is justified because an encounter with it does involve a ‘death’ as far as ego-consciousness is concerned. However, although it continues to dominate Western perceptions this view is only one dimensional.

In an Australian context the idea that the Void contains 'no-thing' has greatly influenced the ways in which non-indigenous Australians relate to their homeland, particularly in the early part of our colonial history. Yet in just five words of her poem 'My Country' poet Dorothy Mackellar (1911) astutely observes that the Void-God in the landscape is something more than just empty space. The phrase 'her beauty and her terror' clearly identifies the way in which many non-indigenous Australians, including its artists, see the landscape. As a country of extremes its inhabitants are regularly faced with the challenge of self-preservation and the limits of their own mortality. Though less poetic, Mackellar could just as easily have chosen the words 'life' and 'death' instead of 'beauty' and 'terror'.

In an interview with Julie Copeland, Australian artist Rick Amor said: ‘the greatest art is about death(....). Death’s the ultimate fact we work backwards from and(....) painting should have that awareness in it of the passing of time(....) and then we disappear(....) art is the consolation for that’. (Copeland, 13 April 2008) His comment struck a resonant chord because at the time I was making art about death *in* a place of death.⁹⁶ During one of my drawing sessions at the Gap it occurred to me that I was engaged in the futile pursuit of trying to paint the Void. I was reminded of the crumpled animal corpse I had seen there previously, suspended on a precipitous ledge in the chasm directly opposite the viewing platform. I wrote:

[There is] the carcass of some once furry animal on the ledge opposite the lookout. My heart drops like a stone into the chasm as I imagine the poor

⁹⁶ I am not suggesting my art is 'great'.

stranded beast, shivering between the sheer impossibility of granite above and the long fall into the abysmal sea.

(Frantom, Journal entry, 2009)

This scenario was highly improbable in real terms and later an obvious explanation came to light. At the time though, I was overwhelmed by the incongruity of the image: the creature's soft fur and fragile warm skin against the cold hard granite, exposed to the more than usually harsh elements. In my imagination it was an ineffectual offering to the sea-gods. As I empathically projected myself onto the ledge I saw myself suspended over that chaotic void - between creation and destruction - impotently *painting against death*.

Death is possibly the most tragic theme known so Amor's comments not only confirm his place in the Romantic tradition of painting but with the tragic sublime. (Lindsay, 2005: 5) Linking creativity to death as Amor does invokes a particular kind of terror that Simon Morley (2010: n.p.) says:

first came into vogue as a way of discussing new kinds of experiences sought by Romantic artists(...) generated by evocations of extreme aspects of nature - mountains, oceans, deserts - which produced emotions(...) of a decidedly irrational and excessive kind, emotions seemingly aimed at evicting the human mind from its secure residence inside the House of Reason and throwing it into a boundless situation that was often frightening.

Simon Gregg identifies two traditional categories of the sublime as polar opposites: the 'catastrophic and the terrible', and the 'quiet and transcendent'. (Gregg, 2011: 22) The most obvious for this discussion is the former, however they should not be considered in isolation because in imaginal theory, one invokes the other. Gregg further divides these categories into eight qualities: the 'grotesque', the 'glacial', the 'domestic', the 'pastoral', the 'void', 'light', 'disquiet and darkness' and 'decline'. (Gregg, 2011: 3) Although it is convenient to isolate them for discussion, several of Gregg's categories overlap. Even though I partly agree with Gregg's description of the Void as 'materiality(...) consumed by vacuousness(...) an engagement with the infinite' my

experience of it is that it is a paradoxical space. (Gregg, 2011: 3) My understanding of the Void aligns with Eastern philosophy where it is defined as being both 'empty' and 'full' – because although it is often described as being empty, empty does not equate to 'mere nothingness'. (Fritjof Capra, 1975: n.p.)⁹⁷ Emptiness in this instance is a potential space - 'the essence of all forms and the source of all life'. (Capra, 1975: n.p.) Capra explains that because the Void is a reality that underpins all phenomena, it 'defies all description and specification' and is therefore often regarded as being 'formless, empty or void'. (Capra, 1975: n.p.) An interpretation of the Void as both *empty and full* rather than *just empty* makes sense of Mackellar's paradoxical description.

In Australia it is not just the land that is void-like - in its infiniteness, fullness and emptiness the ocean too evokes feelings of the sublime. In his recent book, Simon Gregg (2011: 161) focuses on the space *above* the sea as a source of contemplation for the sublime, however Jungian theorists are adamant that descending into the dark realm of the unconscious is a similarly powerful and necessary transcendent stage in the evolution of consciousness, or what they call 'individuation'.⁹⁸ Archetypal psychologists argue that transcendence is not even possible until we confront the hidden recesses of the psyche and its contents. Descending into the depths is a symbolic drowning in the Void of the sea (or its equivalent) - a plunge into the unconscious undertaken by the ego-self and experienced as a psychological death. As we have seen, the value of facing one's own death is recognised in both Eastern and Western cultures⁹⁹ and, as the example of the Yaralde people showed, carried out in

⁹⁷ Dr Fritjof Capra is a physicist and systems theorist.

⁹⁸ In her paper, "'Suffer a Sea-Change': Turner, Painting, Drowning", Sarah Monks says that "'sublime" (etymologically perhaps *sub limen*, up to a high threshold) always carries with it – even if only as trace memory – that over which it climbs or floats: "the gloomy deep". 'By engaging with the implications of 'beneath', of the sub in the sublime' Monks 'sets out to challenge any sense of the sublime as necessarily already ascendant, as always and easily cut free from its murky remnant.' In particular she focuses on 'the ways in which J.M.W. Turner set about suggesting, to an extent which is unprecedented in the visual representation of water, what it might be to be beneath – beneath the horizon, beneath the water and beneath paint'. (Monks, 2010: n.p.)

⁹⁹ Archetypal psychologists like Jung, Hillman and Avens recognise the profound similarities between Eastern and Western spiritual systems. However they caution that although 'the unconscious is identical with the imaginal ground from which all purely spiritual doctrines and disciplines' derive from, in order to

different ways during shamanic rituals all over the world.¹⁰⁰ Many contemporary depth (archetypal) psychologists like Stanton Marlan, James Hillman and Christina and Stanislav Grof continue to uphold that tradition.

The sea occupies a significant place in the Australian cultural imagination as a symbol of death. In her PhD thesis Kathryn Burns notes, the sea is 'a traditional symbol of change and the passing of time, and, through its sheer enormity and power, also carries the very real danger of death'. (Burns, 2007: 25) Burns argues that the Australian habit of perching on the edge of the continent between two different elements - land and sea - has a 'powerful and symbolic impact for coming-of-age narratives', on a national scale. (Burns, 2007: 25) The proliferation of images of 'islands, thresholds and frontiers...in Western Australian writing' also indicates there is a strong imaginal relationship between Australians and the sea. (Burns, 2007: 17) The ocean evokes real terror and it is *this particular form* of the Void, with its links to death and the unconscious, through which many Australian artists continue to engage the tragic sublime in nature.

Whether on land or in the sea, the motif of the Void in the Australian landscape confronts its inhabitants with their mortality. One of the most effective ways to meet that death is through symbol and metaphor - in the form of art, dance, writing and painting - giving visible expression to the archetypal figures in the landscape. Painting against death is an attempt to reconcile with this Void. Confrontations with the powerful and numinous forces in nature are a reminder of all that is temporary and permanent, creative and destructive at the same time. Extremes of terror and awe

be relevant to the West, 'Eastern values must be discovered from within', which means dealing with the unconscious. (Avens, 1980: 5)

¹⁰⁰ The different stages of 'transcending' or dying are well documented by Tibetan Buddhists who have studied these images in detail in the context of their own culture. They fully acknowledge that Westerners will see different images particular to their cultural heritage but that these nevertheless equate symbolically with the different stages of consciousness experienced during the process of dying. (See Sogyal Rinpoche's, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, 1994, U.S.A.: Harper Collins) Spiritual psychologists like Jung and those who followed are convinced this process can be studied during life by seeking out and working with images that arise from the unconscious and present to the conscious mind. This is what motivates their imaginal engagement with the unconscious. The practice of seeking out of death in life is common in many indigenous cultures during initiatory and shamanic rituals.

challenge the individual to transcend the everyday. Whether these dualities are reconciled through literature, expressive painting techniques, abstraction or symbolism, artists continue to paint and write against the death the Void implies. As a microcosm of that Void, The Gap is an ideal place to explore the relationship between the sea, the Romantic sublime, death and transcendence.

In Australia, the links between the Void and the landscape have been examined repeatedly since European occupation. (Gregg, 2011: 161) Yet while the Australian desert is a familiar symbol for the Void, it is less appreciated that it is also powerfully represented by the sea that surrounds the continent. In imaginal psychology an encounter with the Void is often experienced as a 'descent to the underworld' or a 'night sea journey'. Certain paintings by Rick Amor and Lawrence Daws suggest they have taken such a journey, at least in part. It is evident from his comments that Daws appreciates the significance of this undertaking; he is familiar with Jung's theories and shares his view that suffering has a purpose because it has the potential to evolve consciousness. According to Candice Bruce,¹⁰¹ Daws accepts it is necessary to confront and reconcile one's self with anxiety and danger to attain a sense of peace and eventually forge a 'whole personality'. (Bruce, 2000: 83)

There are two bodies of Lawrence Daws's work that convey two different experiences of the Void: one that expresses it from a personal perspective and another that is more abstract and archetypal.¹⁰² The first series produced in the 1990s is entitled *Night Sea Journey* (Fig. 7, Lawrence Daws, *Night Sea Journey 1*, 1993, oil on canvas, 158.0 cm x 137.0 cm). Daws's encounter with the unconscious takes place on board a ship in the middle of the ocean. In *Night Sea Journey 1* (1993) a woman dressed in translucent sleepwear leans against the railings. The sea is framed by the clean mechanical lines of the ship's architecture which dilutes the threat of a direct confrontation with the black

¹⁰¹ Dr Candice Bruce is an art historian, curator and author.

¹⁰² Based on my experience of both, I consider this is the natural progression - from the personal to the objective. I discuss my reasons for making this assertion later in this chapter.

emptiness of the ocean. There is an element of self protection in this work. The geometric structures hold the figure safely so the viewer, and perhaps Daws himself, are prevented from falling into the (unconscious) sea. This image reminds me of being inside the safety barrier-cage at The Gap where organic body-shapes are also contrasted with metal railings. In esoteric philosophy the image of the cube symbolically fixes the eternal aspect of the self in the presence of an overwhelming archetypal force.¹⁰³ I suggest in a similar way, the cube-like framework of the ship provides psychic as well as compositional stability in Daws's painting.

It is informative to compare the impact of the *Night Sea Journey* paintings with one entitled *The Dark Sea* (Fig. 8, Lawrence Daws, *The Dark Sea*, 1993, oil on canvas, 61.0 cm x 76.0 cm) completed in the same year which does not directly reference the human figure. In the first, the figure is placed between the viewer and the abyss. As psyche she mediates the powerful forces of the unconscious because the figure and the safety rail shelter the viewer from the full impact of the night sea. In *The Dark Sea* we are at greater risk of falling into the darkness yet prevented once again by the ship's railings. On both occasions Daws has positioned himself and viewer behind a barrier, a psychological device that protects the ego-self from a full confrontation with the Void.

The sea has been and continues to be a dominant theme in Australian art. Some visual artists have approached the oceanic Void through the work of late twentieth and early twentieth-first century Australian novelists who have written extensively about West Australian beaches and coastlines.¹⁰⁴ (Bennett in Cranston, 2007: 31)¹⁰⁵ Art curator Trudy Johnston, notes that many of Andrew Mc Ilroy's partly autobiographical paintings (Fig. 9, Andrew Mc Ilroy, *From the Pier*, 2009, oil on linen, 153.0 cm x 146.0

¹⁰³ I base this on esoteric philosophy's idea that the image of the cube symbolically fixes the eternal aspect of the self in the presence of an overwhelming archetypal force. The psychological function and esoteric symbolism of the cube is discussed further in the 'The Imaginal Void' (p. 98)

¹⁰⁴ Among them are: 'Robert Drewe, Jack Davis, Randolph Stowe, Peter Cowan, Dorothy Hewett, and Tim Winton'. (Bennett in Cranston, 2007: 31)

¹⁰⁵ Dr. C. A. Cranston is a university lecturer and co-editor of 'The Littoral Zone: Australian Contexts and Their Writers' (2007)

cm) have been inspired by Tim Winton's book *Breath* in which he writes about surfing on the south coast of Western Australia and the issue of drowning. (Trudy Johnston, 2010: n.p.) Mc Ilroy acknowledges that although his works represent real places, they are more about recollections of experiences - like not being able to reach the surface before he ran out of breath:

'I mostly remember beautiful stillness, the darkness, the muffled sounds from above. I try to paint the movement, the tumult and the desperation I felt in reaching for the surface'. (Mc Ilroy in Johnston, T., 2010: n.p.)

Johnston suggests Mc Ilroy's symbolism is similar to Winton's in that his paintings convey the unease associated with deep water. The idea of sinking into the depths of the abyss as a metaphor for the anxieties Mc Ilroy suffered as a child also parallels Rick Amor's comments (p. 74) about how he expressed his own childhood fears by painting the sea. (Johnston, T., 2010: n.p.)

Through her character Esther in *The Toucher* Dorothy Hewett 'reflects on the capacity of the ocean to both create and destroy':

There was something elemental about it - the black salt-streaked granite, the foaming sea(...) something brutal and absolute, like death or murder(...). The force of the wind could tear you over the edge(...). She dissolved into it: sea, rocks and sky; the dark curve of a land splashed with light; a giddy sense of clinging to the edge of things. (Cranston, 2007: 37)

Bruce Bennett¹⁰⁶ notes how novelist Robert Drewe captured the 'simultaneous lure and threat of oceans and beaches for many Australians' and that for Drewe,

threat and danger in the sea to which he is drawn by fascination and need(...) is principally represented in the image of sharks which grew in the young man's imagination. (Bennett in Cranston, 2007: 32)

Yet although it is often represented as a place of foreboding, confrontation with the oceanic Void is also an opportunity for transcendence. Tim Winton acknowledges that

¹⁰⁶ Bruce Bennett is Emeritus Professor in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of New South Wales.

immersion in the sea can be redemptive, he writes about a 'sense of at-oneness' and recognises its 'numinous possibilities'. (Bennett in Cranston, 2007: 39)

Rock and ocean carry Rick Amor's projected personal anxieties. His painting *The Visitor* (Fig. 10, Rick Amor, *The Visitor*, 1999, oil on linen, 130.0 cm x 162.0 cm) revisits a traditional theme in Romantic art - a lone figure standing small against the elements – in this case a titanic enigmatic rock as 'reminder of the vastness of creation and our relative insignificance within it.' (Bond, 2000: 40) Tony Bond¹⁰⁷ argues that the role of the vertical figure in this painting is to act as 'a lightning conductor connecting the material and immaterial.' (Bond, 2000: 40) However, I interpret it as a confrontation between individual consciousness and the unconscious and suggest the figure 'stands' for the psyche, just as Daws's female figure does in the *Night Sea Journey* series. In *The Visitor* the human figure is not necessary to convey scale because the monolithic rock extends beyond the frame and dominates the composition - this is enough to elicit feelings of awe and anxiety as Amor intended.

Arts writer Gavin Fry suggests Amor regularly alludes to the disembodied shadows of De Chirico's paintings that influenced him at a young age. (Fry, 2008: 30) Like these shadows the figure of the rock in *The Visitor* acts as a 'witness-judge' to remind us of the 'need for humility in the face of power or nature, or by extension, God'. (Robert Lindsay, 2005: 5)¹⁰⁸ In *The Runner* (Fig 11. Rick Amor, 1998, oil on canvas, 76.0 cm x 110.3 cm), as in many of his early sea paintings, Amor's figure flees some unseen terror. In a moving field of paint it struggles to hold its ground. Amor shares what prompted him to paint an earlier work called *Nightmare* (Fig 12. Rick Amor, *Nightmare*, 1982, oil on canvas, 33.0 cm x 40.0 cm):

I had a dream that I was on the Frankston Pier, it's night-time, the sea is dark and crashing and the pier's breaking up. I'm on the bit of the pier that's out the end, it's sort of isolated out in the water, at the mercy of the elements. That figure on the pier came out of my head immediately. I was painting a picture, it

¹⁰⁷ Tony Bond is an art curator and author.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Lindsay curated Rick Amor's exhibition, 'Standing in the Shadows', in 2005.

was very quickly painted and it just appeared like that(...). (Copeland, 2008: n.p.)

Amor acknowledges his sea-scapes have their genesis in a psychic realm that repeatedly throws up the anxieties of his childhood. Although based on an actual pier, *Nightmare* is more of a psychological self-portrait than a representation of a real place, conveying a time of personal crisis when distressing memories had resurfaced. (Copeland, 2008: n.p.) He also accepts his fears are not unique because they belong to a collective age of anxiety that pervades the contemporary psyche. (Copeland, 2008: n.p.) For more than three decades Amor has painted the sea 'as a metaphor for man's (sic) insignificance in the face of nature'.¹⁰⁹ (Lara Nicholls, 2012: n.p.)¹¹⁰ However, he is also painting against the death of his ego-self in the face of the imaginal Void.

Amor's relationship with the sea is similar to mine because these 'portentous dreams of the sea(...) won't go away. "It's an anxiety," he says. "There is a perceived threat. The sea has always frightened me. And I love that aspect of it."' (Johnston, 2002: n.p.)

Hillman identifies the underlying source of these fears:

The image-soul's delight is the ego-soul's dread. In dreams, it fears drowning in torrents, whirlpools, tidal waves which(...) translate to mean the dreamer is in danger of being overwhelmed by the unconscious(...), flooded with fantasies - no ground, no standpoint. Heraclitus, however, like alchemical psychology, sees death in water as the way of dissolving one kind of earth while another comes into being. (Hillman, 1979: 153)

Amor explores his relationship with the sea through the materiality of paint¹¹¹ and in so doing, conveys something immaterial, numinous, tragic and sublime in the landscapes

¹⁰⁹ 'My whole childhood was spent in the sea(...) I dream about this natal littoral constantly and regard my artistic breakthrough in the eighties as having been inspired by the memories and fear of the sea(...) I dream about my childhood in the dark tonality of my painting. The sky is always lowering into the sea, the beach is deserted and something awful has happened or is about to happen.' (Amor in Nicholls, 2012: 130)

¹¹⁰ Lara Nicholls is assistant curator of Australian Art at the National Gallery of Australia.

¹¹¹ 'Due to unconscious interpretive conventions, it was asserted, the viewer considers works of art to be brimming with expression if they appear rough and visibly "laboured" - any visible traces of the hand are treated as seismograph data taken unfiltered from the creative psyche. Viewers respond to marks in

he physically occupies and dreams about. Amor still dreams about the sea¹¹² and these images remain a part of his 'psychic life'. (Copeland, 2008: n.p.) He says he is unsure if the images feed the dreams or the dreams feed the paintings but concludes it probably works both ways. (Copeland, 2008: n.p.) By making us aware of this threat, Amor successfully captures the 'Romantic terror of our times'. (Lindsay, 2005: 5) As humanity faces the inevitability of rising sea levels and the possibility of existential annihilation he is not alone - collectively we have entered into a new but very old relationship with the sea on both a physical and a symbolic level.

Motivated by a similar imperative to express numinosity in the landscape, Lawrence Daws often uses symbols. His intimate understanding of the dark underworld of the psyche has been enriched by his knowledge of Jung, Schopenhauer, sacred geometry and alchemy. (Macaulay, 2010: 11, 12) Bettina and Desmond Macaulay¹¹³ suggest that by dividing the background equally into earth and sky in *The Cage II* (Fig. 13, 1971, oil on hardboard, 91.0 cm x 106.7 cm) Daws highlights the psychological tension that exists between dreams and the world of everyday consciousness. (Macaulay, 2010: 13) In *The Labyrinth*, (Fig. 14, 1969-70, oil on linen, 122.0 cm x 122.0 cm) a painting from the *Mining Disaster* series, Daws uses symbolic metaphor to explore the disconnect between above (conscious) and below (unconscious) – rational thought (geometric structures) and irrational fear (organic shapes) – and conveys the panic of miners trapped underground. (Macaulay, 2010: 14) The reference to being overwhelmed in both of these paintings reminds me of my drowning dreams where I am held 'under' something. The common psychological theme being acted out is a confrontation with the unconscious which, in each case, also indicates an encounter with the Void that is

paintings as signs for the artists feelings, as 'expressing', which is why a long smudged stroke will be called "moody", while a cluster of short rapid dashes are said to be "agitated"....' (Smith, 2001: 579)

¹¹² 'Rick Amor dreams of the sea(....). He has a(n) intense relationship with it(....). It deeply informs his art. It inspires him. It attracts and repulses him equally. And it seeps into his sleep. "I dream about the sea all the time(...)"'. (Johnston, C. 2002)

¹¹³ Bettina and Desmond Macaulay curated and wrote the catalogue essay for Lawrence Daws's exhibition, 'The Promised Land'.

projected imaginably onto some aspect of the landscape and made into a piece of visual art.

Daws chooses different aspects of the landscape to reflect his encounters with the Void. As we saw in the more personal *Night Sea Journey* series, he positions himself close to the sea. However, to paint the non-anthropomorphic existential Void he takes a more remote view above a waste-land horizon. In both the *Night Sea Journey* and *The Cage* (Fig. 15, 2005, 11/40, digital mixed media print, 102.0 cm x 136.0 cm) he juxtaposes organic and geometric forms. These reappear over several decades - initially in the 1970s and as late as 2005.

At different times in their artistic careers, both Lawrence Daws and Rick Amor have used the figure as a motif to illustrate the unequal relationship between sublime forces in nature and the ordinary human being. However, Lindsay notes that in works like *The Visitor*, although Amor's use of the figure is a powerful perspectival device, it creates a visual dilemma for the viewer. The figure is resonant with meaning and therefore fragments the image by pulling the eye up short as it makes its way towards the horizon. (Lindsay 2005: 6) Daws uses the figure more effectively - the mass of tiny figures in his apocalyptic painting *The Cage* (2005) speaks to me directly because its implied anonymity stresses the insignificance of human life. Using both scale and viewpoint Daws successfully hints at an 'other' omnipresence that eclipses the individual psyche. Daws's transition from the representational figure in *Night Sea Journey* series to its symbolic representation in his later work parallels a shift in consciousness from the transient to the eternal self in the symbol of the cube.¹¹⁴

Archetypal determinants like this imbue both his and J.M.W. Turner's later works with a certain numinosity. Paradoxically, by moving into abstraction and symbolism they engage the viewer more directly. (Fig 17. Lawrence Daws, *Asylum in Eden*, 1982, oil on

¹¹⁴ See full explanation 'The Imaginal Void', p. 98.

hardboard, 137.0 cm x 160.0 cm) Before he too dispensed with the figure,¹¹⁵ Turner included it in works like *The Passage of Mount Saint Gothard* (Fig. 16, 1804, watercolour on paper, 98.9 cm x 68.6 cm), presumably to indicate scale which, as in Amor's work, limits interpretation. The paintings of Turner, Amor and Daws I find most powerful are those that do not reference the figure directly, which seems counter intuitive to Amor's statement that: 'the figure will always have an emotional content to it, there's always an association with a figure(...)'. (Copeland, 2008: n.p.) Paradoxically, it seems that by denying the viewer something recognisably 'human' to attach themselves to, there is a more direct exposure to the archetypes that underpin these primordial landscapes.

Daws weaves symbols and paint into a 'web with which he spins' the archetypal image-myths of the human condition - "suffering, redemption(...) freedom". (Rosemary Crumlin, n. d.: 128)¹¹⁶ Amor manipulates paint to exorcise his personal anxieties and, in so doing, engages the viewer emotionally. Both artists use the motifs of sea, sky and desert waste-land to represent the Void and paint against an existential death. Turner seems to have had a slightly different relationship with this archetype than either of them which could be attributed to the time in which he painted. Daws and Amor place the figure 'in' the landscape to protect their psyches from its potentially destructive impact, whereas Turner's perspective is infused with an eighteenth century Romantic vision of the *numen* as it manifests in nature. The former are influenced by a twentieth century ego-centric anxiety where God is either absent or ready to annihilate the unsuspecting individual at any moment. Turner's paintings deliver a powerful experience because he invites the viewer to step into a transcendent field of ethereal painted glazes in which scale and form are impossible to determine. Yet although each renders it quite differently, all of these artists indicate they have experienced nature as a detached and disinterested entity on some level. Their God is not the redemptive

¹¹⁵ 'The first major English landscape painter to omit the figures was Turner, clearly because his subject is so often the interplay or conflict of natural forces - wind and water...' (Seddon, 1987: n.p.)

¹¹⁶ Rosemary Crumlin is an author and art historian.

imago dei reflected in the loving face of a Jesus Christ or serene Buddha, but an ancient and pure form of the *numen* that pre-exists all images - the primordial Void itself. Regardless of whether it is possible to achieve or not, Daws, Amor and Turner have sought to bridge the divide between 'us' and the 'other' in the landscape and reconcile themselves with it through their art practices.

Another way to reconcile with the landscape is to give it human form and characteristics, which is what traditional Romantic painters did when they began to respond more imaginatively to it in the 19th century. (Robert Rosenblum, 1975: 36) Amor says of his own relationship with landscape: 'I use buildings and landscape and the environment as a poetic metaphor for the human content'. (Copeland, 2008: n.p.) In some of Lawrence Daws's paintings like *Big Terrace*, (Fig 18. 1986, acrylic & oil crayon on paper, 152.0 cm x 122.0 cm) rocks are transformed into 'figures' in the landscape. This move away from the literal figure within the ground of the painting is also a psychological shift. The anthropomorphication of nature evidences a desire to merge psyche and body-consciousness with the landscape and find common ground.

Throughout his long career as an artist, Lawrence Daws has repeatedly tapped into an imaginal field of archetypal dreams and fantasies to *re-present* the symbols and motifs of human cultural expression. (Bruce, 2000: 2) Though he paints real landscapes it is also evident that wherever he locates his art geographically, the inner landscape of the imaginal psyche is also depicted. (Bruce, 2000: 84) Daws himself admits his images have always been in the service of psychic enquiry - landscape for him is 'just a way of unloading a whole lot of private imagery'. (Bruce, 2000: 84) Many people respond to his work on a deeply personal level, which suggests he is able to detect and represent those archetypal constants in the landscape that resonate with the collective psyche. Daws renders these motifs in various ways, using abstract geometry in the mandalas of the 1960s and 1970s, symbolic landscapes, representational figurative works and geometric symbolism in *The Cage* series in the 2000s. When an abstract non-

anthropomorphic version of the Void appears in 2005 in *The Cage* series, it signals a deeper descent into the unconscious. Based on my own experience, these encounters resurface at different times and levels of intensity during one's lifetime.

Forays into the unconscious can be dangerous to the psyche's equilibrium and the experience cannot be fully expressed or conveyed to others in the final images. I can only speculate how Daws encountered the Void but it is my view the physical act of painting helped him reconcile with it. What seems clear in the various depictions of the Void is the need to protect the psyche, whether through symbols (Daws), painting as a spiritual act (Turner),¹¹⁷ or the facture of the paint itself (Amor). Imaginal experience has a physical component - conversely ritualistic acts like making images engage the body, painting with art materials has an impact on the psyche. This reflexive process between the material and the immaterial is an important part of imaginal (art) practice.

As well as examples provided in the work of Daws and Amor, I found several written accounts to indicate my experience of the night sea journey was not isolated. It is recorded in cultural myths as well as in spiritual psychology - Jung himself undertook the journey. He also related an image given to him by one of his clients - a theologian who dreams he is standing on the shore of a dark lake in a deep valley:

As he approached the shore, everything grew dark and uncanny, and a gust of wind suddenly rushed over the face of the water. He was seized by a panic fear, and awoke. (Jung, 1969: 17)

Jung suggests the theologian's descent into the valley of water was symbolic of a descent 'into his own depths'. This accords with a similar dream of my own.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ According to Jason M Kelly (1998), Turner's painting was driven by the need to find 'perfect harmony' between the material and spiritual dimensions of reality. (Kelly, 211) Turner had significant knowledge of the hermetic science of alchemy and considered painting to be a transcendent activity that furthered the evolution of consciousness. 'Turner formed his ideas about alchemy from several sources, one of whom was a patron of his, Richard Payne Knight. Knight is a prominent English writer (Gage 1987: 207) whose works include *The Worship of Priapus* and *An Inquiry into the Symbolical Language of Ancient Art and Mythology*'. (Kelly, 214: n.p.)

¹¹⁸ According to Hillman 'the underworld differentiates at least five rivers: the frigid Styx; the burning

I am standing on a wild black cold ocean under an inky black sky, in a palpable leaden darkness, buffeted by a screaming primeval wind - the kind that hails from an existential void. I am calling for someone and someone is calling out for me but the wind is obscuring our voices. I wake in mortal dread.

(Frantom, Journal entry, 2011)

Although they are disturbing, dreams like this have a positive function - Hillman explains that when working imaginally the most distressing images are the 'best for they(...) restore a figure to its pristine power as a *numinous* person at work in the soul'. (Hillman, 1992: 25) As well as providing entry to this imaginal territory, my recurring drowning dream operated on another level - the idea-image of drowning corresponds to a psychological state in which the individual psyche is overwhelmed by the collective unconscious. This image lives in the mythic imagination of humankind and is present in many cultures where it takes on the narrative of a descent into an 'underworld'. On a symbolic level 'drowning in the unconscious' is an encounter with the Void.

Some archetypal images make no reference to 'being' in human form, they are abstract and resist direct analysis and expression. They have a powerful effect on the psyche because they loosen the grip of the censoring, controlling intellect and self serving demands of the ego-self, which is why the descent is also known as the 'transcendent function'.¹¹⁹ (Jung in Rossi, 2002: 134)¹²⁰ Deconstruction of the ego is an essential part

Pyriphlegethon; the mournful, wailing Cocytus; the depressive, black Acheron; and Lethe(...)'. He also says that 'we must pay attention to the *kind* of water in a dream(...)' (Hillman, 1979: 152) From his description I identified the water in my dream as the Cocytus or 'river of wailing' which Stanton Marlan (2005) describes as 'the frozen lake of Dante's ninth circle'. It was also reassuring to find the blog of Ron Dowd (2010), a contemporary Sydney-based psychotherapist who references the work of James Hillman. '(...) at a deeper level I experienced icy chill, an existential heart, a cold stranger that seemed completely unconcerned for my sleep and for my well-being in general. I learned something of this stranger: as James Hillman says, sickness can be a vital way for the soul to learn'.

¹¹⁹ Jung says that because consciousness 'appears to be essentially an affair of the cerebrum', the mind sees the unconscious as separate from itself, which causes it to experience this descent as a terrifying and alien encounter characterised by a 'suffocating atmosphere of egocentric subjectivity'. (Jung, 1990: 20) 'This confrontation is the first test of courage on the inner way, a test sufficient to frighten off most people', often resolved by avoidance or projected negatively onto others and the external environment. (Jung, 1990: 20) If the individual proceeds on this path they face 'unprecedented uncertainty, with apparently no inside and no outside, no above and no below, no here and no there'. (Jung, 1990: 21) In the turbulent chaos that follows we collapse, we 'sink into a final depth(...) a kind of "voluntary death". (Jung, 1990: 32) This 'symbolic process is an experience (*in images and of images*)' and may be 'compressed into a single dream(...) or extend over months and years'. (Jung, 1990: 39) Jung stresses the

of the individuation process¹²¹ (Jung in Bruce, 2000: 76) as the psyche moves towards integration with what Stein refers to as a 'super-consciousness'.¹²² (Stein, 2010: 70) Stanislav Grof notes that 'along with our experiences of extraordinary perception there often comes a deep metaphysical fear(...) rooted in the fact that such experiences challenge and undermine fundamental beliefs about the nature of reality'. (Grof, 1994: 135) He adds that more often than not, when we are given the choice between a new way of seeing and returning safely to something we are familiar with, we choose fear because it is easier. (Grof, 1994: 135) It takes courage to step away from a reality we are comfortable with into a 'death' where we face the ultimate unknown.

Artists have traditionally used landscape painting to enter the sub-liminal space between their personal psyches and the numinous realm of the imaginal unknown. Some, like Daws, have done so through the image of the night sea journey. This type of encounter with the unconscious is well known to Jungian theorists. It is a critical stage of individuation. Jung described individuation as 'dramatic' (Jung, 2005: 4) and a 'true labour', even if it is 'ultimately a worthy pursuit'. (Jung in Rossi, 2002: 134) Although the perilous journey into the unconscious in some form is vital, he advised against it because unless we are driven to undertake it, it is 'neither useful or necessary'. (Jung in Breaux 1989: xi) Inevitably, at some stage though, each person will encounter it because the outcome of this journey is to find a point of balance between the

importance of working through this experience imaginally by saying that if they are not made conscious, the individual can succumb to the fascinating power of archetypal images. (Jung, 1990: 39)

¹²⁰ Doctor Ernest Rossi is a Jungian psychotherapist and author.

¹²¹ The process of becoming an 'individuated' human being cannot be fully accomplished without first integrating both aspects of the *unconscious psyche*: the *personal* and the *collective*. (Jung, 1990: 276) The ego-personality paradoxically seeks individuation however this is problematic because, although it is the primary vehicle for individuation, the subjective ego-self ultimately loses it-self when it reaches its goal in the objective Self (or God-image). As the psyche becomes more aware it also becomes more cognisant that it is only a small part, not the whole, of consciousness. As Jung notes '(...) the experience of the self (Self) is always a defeat for the ego.' (Jung, 1963 CW 14, 778)

¹²² The process of individuation is based on a fundamental paradox. On one hand it requires that we respect and encourage the drive to develop individuality, on the other it requires the ability to leave that behind. I understand this phenomenon as the development of a 'dual-awareness', the ability to balance seemingly conflicting agendas; a both/and approach to knowledge rather than a singular either/or. The ability to embrace paradox is a critical part of the evolution of consciousness.

conscious and unconscious realms of the psyche. (Jung in Rossi, 2002: 134) Whenever an individual undertakes the night sea journey it also signifies the development of an ego towards independence and the ability to use 'free will'. (Neumann, 1955: 203)

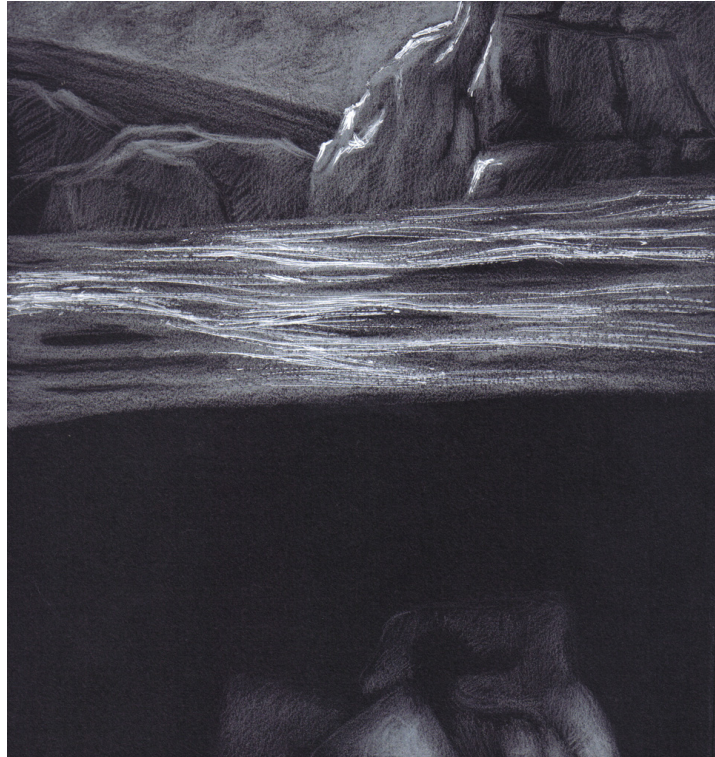


Fig 19. Michelle Frantom, *Study 42*, 2010, pencil on paper, 18.0 cm x 17.0 cm

Because the night sea journey is a confrontation with the unconscious it can be extremely challenging. I can confirm that 'when the ego(...) takes the vanishing personally, it makes depression(...)'. (Hillman, 1972: 285) However, Hillman also counsels that 'emptiness' is not to be 'overcome, fulfilled or completed' because emptiness itself is the goal. (Hillman, 1972: 283) This is because it eventually leads the individual to realise the one true reality - the ground of being in Taoist philosophy, the primordial Void of the West or Divine consciousness in Hinduism. As a first step in the evolution of consciousness the reward for undergoing annihilation is the opportunity to gain some valuable and critical insights into what it means to be human. Instinctively I knew I would have to follow the image all the way down, take the journey to its end,

before I would be able to swim to the surface, which is eventually what happened. On a very deep level the experience has irrevocably changed me.

In the next section, 'Into the Blue', I show how imaginal practice works as a 'practice' for consciousness and how it unfolds in the context of visual research over a period of time. I describe a series of events, both psychic and physical, in the order they happened as I moved out of the dark, into the blue and towards the light. These events allowed me to reconcile the displaced contents of my psyche with an external environment and gave me insight into the Void and its role in human consciousness. The following could be considered a map that tracks my movement through a particular imaginal landscape in response to a physical one. It is a discrete episode in a complex ongoing narrative and should be read as a dialogue between the real and the imagined, between myself and the numinous figures that inhabit an archetypal land. The discussion moves into The Gap as studio where I carried out the practical research and, as I painted against death, set out to refine imaginal practice as a working methodology.

Into the Blue

I dreamed some people were trying to revive a drowned boy in an underwater cave(...) he was an opaque ultramarine blue colour, like Krishna. Maybe it was Nathan Drew. His eyes fluttered and I realised he had been alive all along. The last few nights I dreamed I am surfing, being held underwater and surrendering to drown in chaotic seas.

(Frantom, Journal entry, 2008)

Psychologist Peter Butcher identifies one of the triggers for the psychological night sea journey. A client of his related an experience in which

The ordinary world(...) was suddenly transformed: he became aware of a radiating, complex pattern in existence, in which he and all else played an integral part(...) he particularly recalls walking across a field, becoming aware that the plants around him appeared quite changed and that they had a vibrant livingness which seemed to expand beyond their form. (Butcher, 1983: 222)



Fig 20. Michelle Frantom, *Study 21*, 2009, mixed media on paper, 20.12 cm x 14.2 cm

I recall being aware of what Butcher describes as an 'expanded' state of consciousness like this at various times in nature, but there is one in particular that occurred in the early phase of my research at The Gap. I tried to paint it (figure 20, p. 84) and although the image does not do justice to the actual experience, making it was an essential part of the process so I have included it here. I also wrote in my journal:

the rain is driving almost horizontally - the wind has swung to the south and it is bitterly cold(.....). The rain eases, the sun comes out and I come out from behind the rock to an epiphany of golden light, blinding yellow white dancing on the sea and a glow behind the headland. It is sublime, overwhelms my senses and I scramble for my journal, white pen, no(....) gouache, black pen(....) I sit on the wet rock, awkward with my little book on my lap, grateful that the page is already primed in aqua ink. The headland has disappeared in a suffusion of gold(....) I cannot drink it all in. If I open my eyes too wide the whole scene will pour into me. (Frantom, Journal entry, 2009)

Butcher goes on to say that after this type of episode individuals often become disoriented and experience an inner chaos or disorientation similar to 'a Death, the Dark Night, a Fall into Formlessness, Being Swallowed by a Monster, Entering Hell or the Void.' (Butcher, 1983: 222) He suggests this occurs because the resulting inner turmoil forces the individual to 'question some well-entrenched self-perceptions'. (Butcher, 1983: 222) As a consequence, the usual frame of reference is brought into doubt which, in the case of his client, resulted in

an encounter with a dark 'Void' or a 'Fall into Formlessness', a world where there were no distinctions, no means of orientation, where all opposites, even good and evil, were not opposites at all but were part of one and the same thing. (Butcher, 1983: 222)

Butcher's comments were a revelation because they gave me some insight into the possible reason for my own descent. They also confirmed that the Void was indeed a realm of seemingly irreconcilable opposites as I had discovered, both empty and full, yet one and the same.

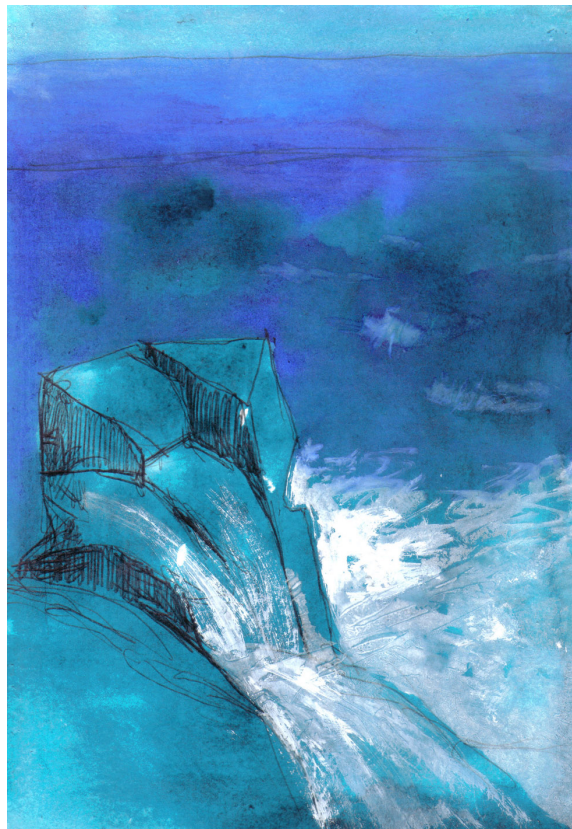


Fig 21. Michelle Frantom, *Study 15*, 2009, mixed media on paper, 20.4 cm x 14.2 cm

The disorientating nature of the night sea journey requires the psyche to anchor itself. This can be done through the work of art which transforms a potentially destructive experience into a creative one. As Kevin Fauteux¹²³ observes:

The task of elaborating religious experience seems simple: what began as a loss of self and a subsequent submersion into unity is reversed and leads back to reality when the individual begins to express what she(sic) experienced. (Kevin Fauteux in Spezzano, 2003: 32)¹²⁴

Elaborating on my own experience I made images to try and express the emotion and chaos I felt at The Gap. I am sure the physical act of making art grounded me. Initially my responses to the powerful numinosity of the landscape were recorded in text and as small black and white studies. As the 'night sea' phase of the journey progressed, dread transformed into a milder anxiety - my perception altered and the artwork changed along with it. The black became translucent and suffused into a particular aqua colour. Light symbolically and actually penetrated the dense water as it opened out into the sky. This movement was paralleled in the chromatic progression from black to blue and white (see Fig. 21, p. 85; Fig. 23, p. 88)

I channelled this transition through the physical body and the act of painting with art materials in the studio - rough, thick, luminous blacks and opaque whites in the large painting I call *Drowning*, (Fig. 22, p. 87) scale and texture in *Chasm 3*, (Fig 6, p. 63). These works attempted to show how overwhelming this landscape was – working on the original paintings (which were 2400 cm square) was physically intense because I used large palette knives, pushed around big quantities of paint and constantly moved my entire body up and down a stepladder. Because the point of view in *Drowning* is below the horizon line I was forced to stand 'under' the water, so the emotional impact of the 'drowning' motif was further intensified.

¹²³ Doctor Kevin Fauteux is a psychologist and author.

¹²⁴ Chapter 2: 'Self Preparation in Religious Experience and Creativity', pp. 11-42.

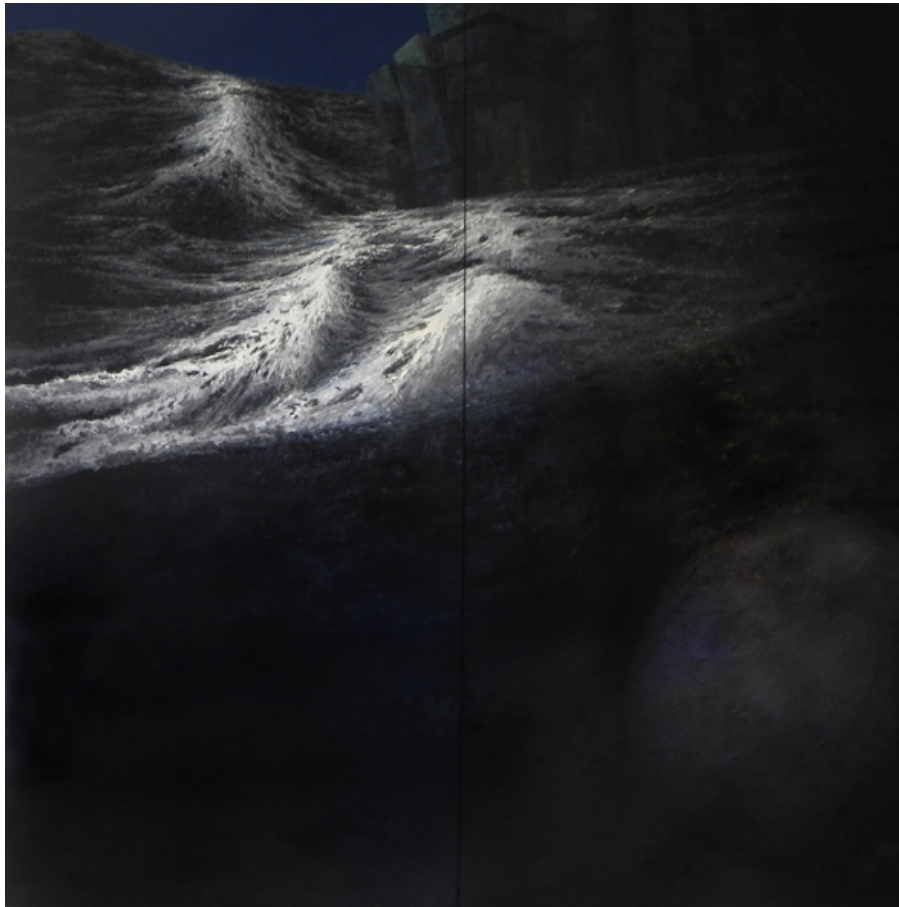


Fig 22. Michelle Frantom, 2013, *Drowning*, oil and mixed media on board, 2400 cm x 2400 cm

As I continued to mirror-trace the movement of the water in its fluid media equivalents of ink and gouache on my small journal pages at The Gap, I began to focus more specifically on the aqua blue. The more time I spent there the more I became obsessed with it. At the same time I noticed I was projecting myself imaginatively into the physical drama at the base of the vertical rock face, in effect imagining 'being in there'. I wanted to be immersed and absorbed into this precious jewel-like substance. I followed the affect and, just as Robert Johnson advises, I asked questions: Why was I so obsessed? What was the attraction. What did this blue represent or symbolise?

The obsession with the water at the base of the cliffs arose partly because I recognised it – it was the blue I had seen in a recurring dream of many years in which benign yet

imageless entities from somewhere in the sky encouraged me to drink a blue sickly sweet effervescent liquid.

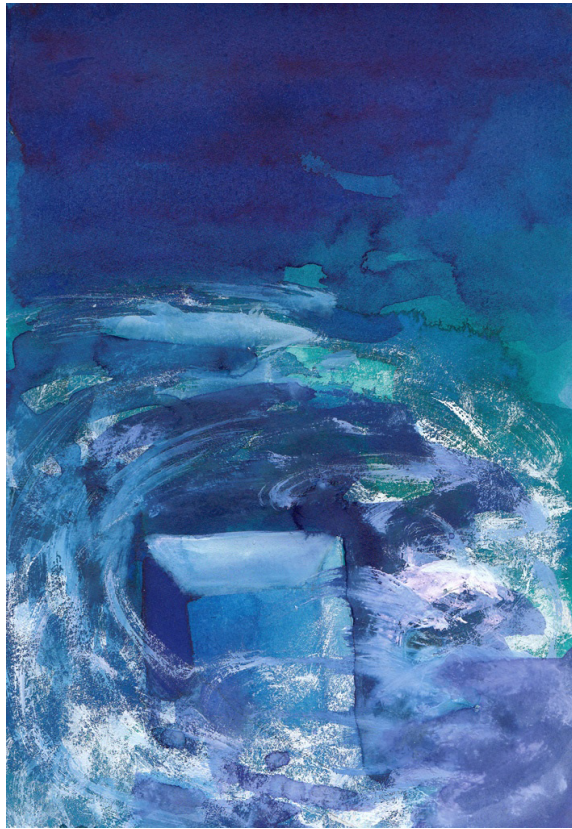


Fig 23. Michelle Frantom, *Study 17*, 2009, mixed media on paper, 20.4 cm x 14.2 cm

Although it made me want to vomit I felt compelled to drink it. The response to that dream and the blue water at The Gap was similar - a compulsion to 'drink it in', be 'immersed' in it. It occurred to me that 'drinking in' also describes the way in which we engage visually with something that is pleasing to the eye. My sensory memory of the dream was so strong that, as I created my small studies, I became aware of a seductive quality in both the dream and the blue water. I was attracted and repulsed at the same time. The form of the two images - the dream of drinking the blue liquid and the waking image of being in the blue sea - was different. However the content, affect and irreconcilable psychic conflict was similar - this schism was both emotionally and logically disturbing.



Fig 24. Michelle Frantom, *Study 28*, 2007, gouache on paper, 16.7 cm x 18.0 cm

The degree of internal conflict I felt alerted me to the presence of the archetype and shows how imaginal practice operates as a conduit between the imagination and material reality. I was compelled to engage but was unable to do so without taking some 'risk', albeit a psychological one. I resolved the issue by leaping metaphorically and visually into the new blue chasm that presented itself, which meant following the image without knowing why or trying to discover its meaning. This is a critical dynamic in imaginal practice. Not being able to reason, effectively intellectualise or match it to pre-existent symbols keeps the reading of the image open and maximises its potential to take the individual beyond the immediate experience. As it tries to maintain order the conscious mind usually censors things for which it has no frame of reference. Working imaginally means allowing both of these disparate voices to be heard, straddling the divide between conscious control and unconscious chaos.¹²⁵ There is always a risk the purpose or intent of the image will never be revealed, however it is

¹²⁵ Similar to the way I forced myself to stay seated on the rock at The Gap and chose not to follow an instinctual urge to flee.

precisely this willingness to surrender control of the outcome that allows meaning to unfold more deeply and on several levels.

Later, applying theory retrospectively as imaginal practice dictates, I discovered 'blue' has a specific archetypal significance. In his essay *Alchemical Blue and the 'Unio Mentalis'* (2010: n.p.), James Hillman correlates the symbolic values of several colours with stages of psychological evolution. He equates the chromatic movement, from black to blue and then to white, with a specific phase in the development of consciousness - from introspection through the faculty of thought and imagination to an imaginal realm. In archetypal philosophy this is known as the *unio mentalis* –

the interpenetration of thought and image, of perceived world and imaginal world, a state of mind no longer concerned with distinctions between things and thought, appearance and reality(....). (Hillman, 1981: 8)

Hillman (2006) explains that the *unio mentalis* is the 'confluence of understanding and imagination', a state of consciousness where thought integrates with imagination. In an imaginal sense, the addition of air, or imaginative thought, to matter activates both a physical and a psychic process that facilitates entry to a numinous realm - blue leads us into an experience of the spiritual. (Jung, CW 8, 1978: 211 f.n.)

Hillman's and Jung's comments suggest reasons for my move from black to blue inks as I made perceptual and metaphysical shifts from the element of water to air. Hillman claims the archetypal realm of images is coloured blue and that this 'blue foundation is the imaginal ground which allows the eye to see imaginatively(....)'. (Hillman, 1981: 8) He even argues that the psyche itself is based in the blue firmament, and that this mythical place supports 'metaphysical thinking(....) the presentation of metaphysics in image form'. (Hillman, 1991: 34) In traditional Buddhism the 'blue light' symbolises certain realms of consciousness, one of which human beings may be reborn into.¹²⁶ I

¹²⁶ '(....) a dull blue light representing the human realm will come toward you.... Do not delight in the dim blue light of the human realm. This is the seductive path of habitual tendencies(....). This (dull blue light) is an obstacle blocking the path to liberation(....)'. (Rinpoche, 1994: 287) In addition *The Bardo of Thodral*

contend this field of images or psychic projections shares similarities with Hillman's imaginal *unio mentalis* where thought and imagination come together. When framing a model of consciousness in art practice a conversation based around colour is useful - if consciousness operates on a continuum from darkness to en-lightenment, then its evolution can be matched symbolically to the range of visible colours in the spectrum from black to white during the process of making art. (Hillman, 2010: n.p.)

Matching transitions in consciousness with the symbolic values of colour resolved one of my research objectives because it was one way in which imaginal psychology could be combined with art-making as practice for consciousness. As I followed the affective content of the image, in this case my emotional response to a particular chromatic variation of blue, I was able to note the symbolic value, the feeling, the idea of blue and my evolving relationship with it. Making observations in a detached way without trying to solve the puzzle, allowing imaginal dialogues to play out without judging them brings Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'willing suspension of disbelief' into focus.¹²⁷ Feeling and playing with images is not the same as analysing and making intellectual evaluations of them. The latter is a function of the conscious mind as it attempts to establish and maintain boundaries because, in the extreme, not doing so leads to 'madness'.¹²⁸

In addition to the tension that already existed between the controlling aspect of my psyche and its imaginative function there was another split - between psyche and body. Although I was powerfully and irrationally drawn to the beautiful blue water I was also holding a sensory body-memory of its treachery. From my surfing experience I knew that being immersed in this colour in the ocean, in that place to which I was drawn and imagined myself to be, was also the place I would most probably drown. I

or *Tibetan Book of the Dead* makes a distinction between a 'dull' and a 'clear' blue, about which it says represents 'limitless wisdom(...) skanda or aggregate of consciousness'. (Bakula, 2013: n.p.)

¹²⁷ See explanation p. 41.

¹²⁸ The blurring of boundaries between creativity, altered states of consciousness, spirituality and what society often perceives to be madness have long been recognised. This lack of clarity means artists often find themselves on the metaphorical and metaphysical edge.

was caught between emotion and reason: the desire in wanting to drown (merge, become one with, 'die') and survive (remain separate, 'live'). My thoughts continued to unfold in the following imaginary scenario and show how this creative imbalance led to some quite illogical but valuable insights.

If I jumped into the blue it was unlikely I would survive the fall and the swell breaking hard against the rock face. Even if I did, the sea at the base of the cliffs is aerated by constant agitation. From watching waves break on beaches, reefs, diving, sailing and surfing I knew this agitation makes the colour of the sea lighter, giving it the beautiful aqua tinge I was so entranced with. However, the addition of air to water also renders it less capable of physically supporting a human body. I have experienced this when trying to claw my way to the surface after falling off a 'green'¹²⁹ wave. Even when the maelstrom of white has subsided, the pretty blue-green does not support my weight. It is only after the air has been released and the bubbles dissolve that the water reclaims its cohesive density and offer enough resistance for a human body to push against. This prior knowledge might have contributed to my 'physical' bodily fear.

The numinosity of the blue water was intensified because of the conflict between an instinctive (body) memory and a projected (psychic) imaginary reality. The emotional depth of my response and ensuing internal dialogue had probably already altered my perception of the actual colour of the sea. When I tried to capture the feeling in my visual diary, and later in the studio at home, I was completely seduced by the aqua ink and rich translucent phthalocyanine blue oil paint in my kit - it was rich enough to 'eat'. This mesmeric attraction prompted me to over-use it obsessively at first, probably to the detriment of the work. It was as though I could not get enough blue or one that was sufficiently vibrant and translucent. In the latter stages of research I came across Hillman's warning of the inherent risks in literalising the image, or 'as the alchemists say, "Beware of the physical in the material". Physical, of course, means also

¹²⁹ Surfers look for 'green waves' because they are unbroken. They support and propel the board forward through the water.

metaphysical(....). Any blue that becomes pure blue is not true blue'. (Hillman, 2010: 108) Hillman maintains this is what happened to Yves Klein who was so obsessed with a particular type of blue he not only created it, but patented it.

Hillman warns that when air and imaginal blue come together it can be difficult for the psyche to remain in balance and it can become possessed by the archetype. (Hillman, 2010: 107) He suggests the complexity of blue 'often forces on its devotees a monochromatic reduction that idealises one specific component, most famously, the Blue Revolution of Yves Klein'. (Hillman, 2010: 123 f.n.)

Unless the mind can dissolve the literal into fantasy it can become possessed by a single feature of archetypal blue's imagination i.e. Yves Klein's manifesto and demonstrative acts(.....). Blue literalisations must be dissolved lest the archetypal power coagulate into a monocular metaphysical vision. (Hillman, 2010: 123)

It is also possible individuals become obsessed with this colour because it promises insight and revelation, which Hillman's comment supports:

Blue is preparatory to and incorporated in the white, indicating that the white becomes earth, that is, fixed and real, when the eye becomes blue, that is, able to see through thoughts as imaginative forms and images as the ground of reality. (Hillman, 1981: 8)

Because of its close links to imaginal consciousness, blue is particularly relevant for a methodology based within art practice. It became evident that the blues of my own landscape palette had introduced me to a realm that had previously seduced others, the fascination it has held for several Western artists is well documented.¹³⁰ Some have studied its metaphysical properties and role in the evolution of the psyche in depth - their research, as well as my own, uncovered links to Western alchemical systems in

¹³⁰ There is insufficient scope in this document to undertake a comparative study into the varieties of blue used by these artists. I have based my discussion on a simple observation that there are artists who have had a 'blue period' or a protracted relationship with it. I have focused on blue's symbolic significance for the psyche and drawn parallels between the spectral colour and the 'blue' of the imaginal realm analysed in detail by James Hillman. 'My' blue was a clear aqua and therefore not the same as Klein's.

which the symbolic value of blue has been examined.¹³¹ A few artists have had intimate and lengthy relationships with it and produced a body of blue work - probably the best known is Picasso for his 'blue period'. Cezanne too went deeply into blue, transcending its usual referential associations to align it with a 'deeper level of existence'. (Hillman 1981: 8) Klein's relationship with blue seems to have been somewhat literal, which may have been a result of an unrealistic quest for immateriality through the material that obscured an alternate reading of its value as a symbol. In contrast, Cezanne was able to maintain the 'complexity' of the colour blue by constantly engaging with its chromatic variations, thus ensuring it did not 'fixate into a singleness of mind or mood'. (Hillman, 2010: 123) However, it is also possible Cezanne did not venture quite as deeply into the blue of the imaginal realm as Klein did.

There are similarities between my encounter and Yves Klein's obsession with blue based on its links to the imaginal. Inspired by the philosophies of Rosicrucianism in which emptiness equates to spirit as a 'living dematerialised substance', Klein chose a particular monochrome blue to symbolise the immateriality and purity of the Void. (Levy, 2006: 123, 124) Klein's blue was intended to evoke feelings of ecstasy and infinite expansion rather than the melancholy usually associated with it in the work of Symbolist artists. (Levy, 2006: 124, 126) On some level, I too have explored blue as an infinite expansion of ecstatic experience and its links to the Void so I appreciate why Klein (1959) would say: 'I want to go beyond art, beyond sensibility, beyond life, I want to go into the void'. (Levy, 2006: 130) In 1960 he claimed he was in a particular spiritual state that grew daily and which he was focused on keeping 'pure and authentic',

¹³¹ Modern Western alchemy has been derived from Mediaeval European alchemy. Jung's understanding of both Eastern and Western alchemy informed his study of psychological processes. There have been many different interpretations of alchemy, from literal attempts to turn lead into gold to the symbolic. Jungian theory links alchemy to psychic transformation and the process of individuation. Many artists, including those from the Symbolist movement, and others like J.M.W. Turner, Marcel Duchamp and Yves Klein linked the alchemical process of transformation and subsequent evolution of consciousness to the activities of engaging and working with images. I refer the interested reader to Polly Young Eisendrath's and Terence Dawson's, *The Cambridge Companion to Jung* (2008); John F. Moffitt's, *Alchemist of the Avant-Garde: The Case of Marcel Duchamp* (2003) as well as other texts referred to and referenced in this thesis.

untainted by the 'psychological domain'. (Levy, 2006: 124) Although he had previously represented the Void as a blue square or rectangle, he eventually relinquished colour and the materiality of paint altogether for an empty white gallery infused with his essence. (Levy, 2006: 127) Klein was aware of the dangers in opening himself to the 'immeasurable energy of the Void' so perhaps his sudden death from heart failure 3 years later was not unexpected. (Levy, 2006: 131)

Finding myself in my own blue period I took the risk, indulged the obsession and 'painted it out'; blue remained dominant in my paintings, right up until the latter stages of my studio research. Unaware of Hillman's warning at the time I pressed on, invoking the recurring dream in which the saccharine sweetness of the blue liquid made me nauseous. I noted the synchronism between my dream, the blue, my insatiability for it and what was happening with the paint in the studio. There was something 'unpalatable', I could not 'swallow', yet I was compelled to drink it, use it, eat it - to satisfy a hunger that had a destructive element embedded in it. I had incorrectly assumed my response to the colour blue was not significant in itself because it was simply representative of the water. However, I came to realise that on some level the psychological states Hillman spoke of were familiar, confirming what I had already intuited: that when air penetrated the black water there was a parallel shift from the density of the corporeal body through the emotional psyche towards a numinous reality.

There is another quality of blue that secures its critical role in the evolution of consciousness. Hillman says the imaginal field represented by blue allows us to see events as images which in turn creates a remoteness between us and 'real things'. (Hillman, 1981: n.p.) The act of moving slightly away from things enables an intellectual distance that encourages contemplation. Here is psyche as *logos*¹³² (as distinct from

¹³² Logos as the so-called 'higher' function of mind is identified with *spirit*, *Logos* equates to the theological 'Spirit'. In one aspect *logos* is an intellectual function of the 'material' cognitive brain whereas on another level it represents a more holistic knowledge or truth. It is tempting to think of the

eros), a psychological state that seems to have something in common with the phenomenon of aesthetic distance and the way in which the creative process itself provides a level of remoteness from what may otherwise be overwhelming. Given my need to return regularly to the site I was grateful that the process of looking as well as working with art materials facilitated an aesthetic and more detached response to my subject. During imaginal activity images are able to express thoughts and by engaging the imagination in this way, the mind is able to widen its horizons. (Hillman, 2010: 110) Imaginal practice gave me a deeper understanding of the landscape, a way to play creatively with the images and the emotional distance to reflect without becoming completely seduced by the blue or drowned in the black ocean of the unconscious. I am convinced that both object and image grounded me enough to negotiate the Void safely. Imaginal practice continues to be my safety barrier - a metal cage perched on the edge of the chasm - securely bolted to the dense granite of matter.

The perceptual shifts I experienced in response to the aqua sea at The Gap opened a window into the blue of imaginal consciousness, a non-ordinary reality where the boundaries between consciousness and the unconscious are blurred. In blue, as in water, I move without gravity - strange thoughts and images float unhindered to the surface. What was happening in the physical landscape, in the sea, between sea and stone, was mirrored in abstract and symbolic ways in my psyche and my artwork. The inter-play between the emotional values of colour, and real observation with fantasy, changed my view and my understanding of The Gap and the Australian landscape in general. In the process I discovered for myself that the imaginal realm was coloured blue. In addition blue turned out to be the interface between black and white, between un-knowing and knowing where I could begin to see the connections between things. In the final stages of my research I had an extraordinarily numinous dream, confirming

former as a process *towards* something and the latter as an 'absolute', which is its intended goal. From this I have assumed that the journey of consciousness begins with the mind's basic capacity for conscious awareness, then in the ability to take in, process and interpret information. Eventually *logos* moves into a realm of consciousness where paradoxically, 'thought' is no longer present or required. Here it could then be defined as *Logos*, Spirit or *numen*.

that not only had my imaginal perception changed from black to blue, it had also moved into white. I wrote in my journal:

I was out on a vast body of water on a surfboard that was capable of neutral buoyancy. 'Someone' else was there, on a slower board. I went underwater, maybe 30 or 40 feet deep and suspended myself above an empty white shallow recessed 'shrine'. I could not quite see inside but was sure it was empty. I knew this structure was creating the waves on which 'we' would be surfing. We could barely see the land but felt in no danger because the sea was completely transparent, clear and full of radiant crystal light. 'We' decided to head further in and catch some waves.

(Frantom, Journal entry, 2012)

The dark oceanic unconscious had finally mirrored its opposite in a sea of brilliant white light in which I was no longer alone or fearful. In that brief moment I understood that both darkness and light are illusory manifestations of the same phenomenon in consciousness.¹³³ The impact of this image on my psyche was immense. It supported what Western spiritual psychologists and mystics, and Eastern traditions like Buddhism maintain - that binaries are just two aspects of the same reality - the imaginal Void. Even though I am unable to re-enter this state at will, a memory of the crystal light periodically enters my waking life and I am reminded of the numinous dimensions of existence as they manifest in that form. Paradoxically, this image also enabled me to reconcile with the dark underworld of the unconscious. Having changed my perception of reality in a very profound way, this knowledge persists and is now the lens through which I occasionally see the world.

¹³³ This is confirmed in the tale of Markendaya: 'The secret of Maya is the identity of opposites. Maya is simultaneous and successive manifestation of energies that are at variance with each other, processes contradicting and annihilating each other: creation and destruction, evolution and dissolution, the dream-idyll of the inward vision of the god and the desolate nought, the terror of the void, the dreadful infinite. This "and," uniting incompatibles, expresses the fundamental character of the Highest Being(....). Opposites are fundamentally of the one essence, two aspects of the one Vishnu.' (Stein, 2010: 67)

The Imaginal Void

'Australia is a mere outline with darkness at its centre: a void'.

(Martin Leer, 1985)

Although confrontation with the unconscious should not be underestimated it is a valuable opportunity for growth. In esoteric philosophy the ability to embrace paradox is critical because in a unified field of consciousness one polarity always attracts its opposite and extreme darkness leads to the light. The Void is a multi-dimensional phenomena and is therefore, not *just* empty or nihilistic – this and/both rather than either/or model is clearly articulated in Eastern philosophy.

The Void I know is full and empty at the same time. For traditional Western philosophy and theology however, the Void is just empty. If the Void is the ultimate image of a supra-ordinate reality as I am suggesting, then it presents a problem for those who only see 'God'¹³⁴ in human form because an absence of that form implies God is not there. (Levy, 2006: 1)¹³⁵ On the other hand if God *is* a 'formless field that permeates everything, the Void is full and has presence'. (Levy, 2006: 1) Even in Western culture, in Genesis, the world was created from the Void. Buddhist philosophy is founded on this paradox - as the essence of reality and the source of all life, although the Void is 'empty', it is an emptiness that cannot simply be equated with 'nothingness'. (Chandogya Upanishad, 2006: n.p.)¹³⁶ Arnolds Grava¹³⁷ explains:

The confusion arises between Nothing and Emptiness. They are not the same thing. When philosophers like Lao Tzu speak of 'primordial Emptiness' they are talking about the void as a state of ultimate potential, the 'Great Void' of the Tao. (Grava, 1963: 238)

¹³⁴ I refer to 'God' here as the Divine or Spirit, rather than the image of God or 'God-image' discussed earlier as a reflection of the Divine in the human psyche.

¹³⁵ 'The idea of the Void or God as a formless field that at once is the source of all creation and is inextricably linked to all forms of creation is hard for most Westerners and even many Easterners to grasp'. (Levy, 2006: 1)

¹³⁶ In the interpretation of *Tao* there has often been an inclination to associate 'non-presence or 'not-yet-being' with 'absolute non-being' and to confuse 'potentiality of a "field" with empty space or absolute void, or(...) nothingness' (Grava, 238: n.p.)

¹³⁷ Arnolds Grava is a doctor of philosophy at the University of Nebraska.

The *Tao* as a creative void bears a significant resemblance to theories in modern physics. (Grava, 1963: 235) The Void of Eastern mysticism, like the physical vacuum in field theory, is not a state of mere nothingness which even science now concedes. (Monte, 1997: n.p.) Instead, it is a vital part of reality because it is

the absolutely necessary interval between the poles(...) the 'in-between' that is essential for the 'wholeness of the atom, the togetherness of the structural-functional units in their reciprocal, mutual relationship'. (Grava, 1963: 244)¹³⁸

If the Void as God is a formless field out of which all creation emerges¹³⁹ (Levy, 2006: 1), then the Divine is present in both 'torrential cataracts and vertiginous abysses', but also in its extreme opposite - in the uncommon stillness and silence of the Void. (Rosenblum, 1975: 20)

The Gap is a real-time representation of the Void - full and empty in equal measure, invoking both presence (stimulation) and absence (for life) on a massive scale. It is full because watery abyss and stone structures together form a living psychic cauldron. It is empty not because it is void *of* life, but because it is void *to* human existence - both a psychological and a physical symbol of death. As a coastal landscape The Gap is also a symbolic recreation of Genesis where rock (earth) and water (sea) come together violently to create the world. For the physical body and the mind it is a paradoxical space that, on a collective psychological level, is the place to which we will return if we cannot maintain order and control: 'that state of barbaric vagueness and disorder out of which civilisation has emerged and into which, unless saved by efforts of gods or men(sic), it is always liable to relapse'. (James Johnson Sweeney, 1960: 376)¹⁴⁰ Yet between the polarities of creation and destruction the imagination thrives and

¹³⁸ '(...) the metaphysical concept of Tao in its essence corresponds to the scientific concept of a tensional field'. (Grava, 240: n.p.) This is based on the principle of 'inward polarity' – and characterises every field of tension – nuclear, protons and neutrons, extra- nuclear, nucleus and atoms and so on. This is also where we find Whitehead's "'realm of eternal objects" both before their ingression (state of potentiality) and after(...) (state of actuality)' (Grava, 240: n.p.)

¹³⁹ The Void is also known as a 'field of clear or luminous light, or a state of utter stillness, or even just a symbol or mental concept'. (Levy, 2006: 2)

¹⁴⁰ James Johnson Sweeney was an art curator and author.

transcendence is always a possibility. The Gap is a microcosm, a relatively small void within a larger one - *the* transcendent Void of existential annihilation in the West and eternal Divine immanence in the East.¹⁴¹

Individual experience of the Void varies, for some it is a numinous field of energy that cannot be reconciled with everyday consciousness. (Levy, 2006: 1) In this it resembles the sublime in nature. One of the most successful painters of this type of Void was Joseph Mallord William Turner.¹⁴² With his extraordinary ability to convey both chaos and stillness, many of Turner's paintings powerfully express the dual nature of the Void. Rather than interpreting nature as a benevolent entity he presented it as an awe-inspiring yet often violent force that overwhelmed the senses. (Levy, 2006: 95) Turner's Void was inspired by Milton's chaotic and turbulent realm of 'warring elements that exist in an intermediary zone between hell and the created world' - between life and death. (Levy, 2006: 98)

Where Caspar David Friedrich painted the empty Void as vast, silent and still, (Fig. 25, *Monk by the Sea*, 1809, oil on canvas, 110 cm x 171.5 cm), J.M.W. Turner gave us the full void of Creation – apparently Turner delighted in returning to the first chaos of the world when all was without form. (Ronald Rees, 1982: 264)¹⁴³ Perhaps this was because he was more intent on discovering the archetypal underpinnings of reality than simply experimenting with new ways of representing it. Sarah Monks argues that Turner's *Snowstorm* (Fig. 26, *Snow Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth*, exhibited 1842, oil on canvas, 91.4 cm x 121.9 cm) conveys the Void less by representing 'elemental forms' than the process of painting itself, that it depicts its own creation.¹⁴⁴ (Monks,

¹⁴¹ Buddhist literature on the Void is vast and specific, especially in regard to the different levels of consciousness encountered in religious practice. I consider there are links between these models – see the E-library publication by Taylor & Francis, *The Buddhist Unconscious* (2004) by W. S. Waldron.

¹⁴² Despite the fact that his interest in painting the Void raised the ire of his critics. (Levy, 2006: 94)

¹⁴³ Ronald Rees is an art historian and author.

¹⁴⁴ '(...) the picture(...) performs the moment before knowledge, when vision, thought and bodily experience are effectively equivalent and have yet to tip over into the re-cognition that will define them as distinct, and differently valued, types of 'knowledge''(...). Significantly, this primordial state of

2010: n.p.) That Turner was able to capture the 'chaotic miasma' or 'the khora(....) this primordial state of suspended possibilities(....) prior to knowledge, words and meaning' supports his claim that this painting was inspired by direct personal experience. (Monks, 2010: n.p.)

According to Sarah Monks (2010: n.p.), Turner makes more than one reference to the experience of drowning which she suggests is echoed in the practical execution of *Snowstorm* where the boat's mast has been almost obliterated by layers of paint. In his choice of the sea as subject, its symbolic relationship to the unconscious and the way in which he renders it, Turner exhibits at least an intuitive knowledge of the Void and its dual nature. He is just one of a disparate group of artists who have the ability to tap into the images of the collective unconscious, regardless of whether they have partial, full or no knowledge of its existence. As well as Lawrence Daws, Rick Amor and Caspar David Friedrich this group includes, Mark Rothko and Yves Klein. The work of these artists has a sublime quality because they *re-present* the symbols and motifs of human cultural expression, the reappearance of which across two centuries not only links modern Romantics to the Northern Romantic painters of the nineteenth century, but with artists from every era. (Rosenblum, 1975: 12)

Robert Rosenblum argues that Rothko's paintings are successors to Friedrich's landscapes and seascapes, which themselves represent some of the earliest attempts to express God as a sublime presence in the landscape. (Levy, 2006: 136) He cites the similarity in formal structure between Mark Rothko's painting *Green on Blue* (Fig. 27, 1956, oil on canvas, 228 cm x 136 cm) and Friedrich's *Monk by the Sea* (Fig. 25) as an example. (Rosenblum, 1975: 1) For Rothko, the emptiness of abstraction offered a way to paint an underlying "Spirit of Myth" requiring 'no objects in a narrative, no story in the sense of a symbolic with its historical reservoir of mythological beings and laws'. (T.

suspended possibilities is no longer implied by the horizon but rather constitutes the entirety of the scene before us'. (Monks, 2010: n.p.) Sarah Monks is a lecturer in European Art History, School of World Art Studies and Museology, at the University of East Anglia.

D. Martin, 2010: n.p.)¹⁴⁵ His abstract and symbolic Void focused primarily on a Dionysian expression of ecstasy where the artist is in harmony with nature, "the phenomenon without a body", the Void' rather than on an Apollonian 'creation of form'. (Levy, 2006: 134) Painting enabled Rothko to share a religious experience with the viewer through the expression of raw human emotions like tragedy and ecstasy. (Levy, 2006: 135) Levy suggests Rothko's ability to express profound fear and sorrow evoked the 'loss of self' also experienced in meditation. (Levy, 2006: 135)

The 'empty' manifestation of the Void has no image, which is psychologically dangerous to the ego and perhaps even the physical self.¹⁴⁶ Pushing the visible beyond its limits will eventually land us right *in* the Void where the body and ordinary consciousness may not prevail – here different eyes and different ways of being are required. To integrate the image of the Void on a conscious level requires not only courage but some form of 'training' or strategy. Klein was highly trained in martial arts yet it is also acknowledged that when trying to recreate the void as an art installation, he exposed himself to its destructive potential: 'while he was shaping the Void(...) he was also opening himself to the immeasurable energy of the Void, and this was not to be taken lightly'. (Levy, 2006: 129) Moving beyond the image into the Void proper is a Herculean task requiring sustained effort and rigour. However, standing on its edge looking in can deliver some profound insights.

Whether abstract, expressionist, symbolic or representational, artists who paint the Void as a sublime phenomenon are concerned with the numinous and transcendent dimensions of existence. The one quality of consciousness that links the sublime, art-making and the Void is transcendence. Artists who make images about or of it share a fundamental need to explore being as an immaterial possibility. Erich Neumann

¹⁴⁵ Dr. Tim D. Martin is a cultural and art historian who is also interested in psychoanalysis.

¹⁴⁶ Form relates to the body which also anchors the psyche. A psyche that has been separated from the corporeal body must move into a different reality.

maintains archetypes are 'intrinsically formless structures which become visible in art' (Neumann, 1959: 82) This comes about because:

The creative impulse springs from the collective; like every instinct it serves the will of the species and not the individual. Thus the creative man(sic) is an instrument of the transpersonal, but as an individual he(sic) comes into conflict with the numinosum that takes hold of him(sic). (Neumann, 1959: 98)

When Turner imaged the Void as a potential space rather than a non-space as he did for most of his career, he demonstrated that he was far more interested in the universal underpinnings of nature than the particulars. (Rees, 1982: 263) I agree with Rosenblum that it was Turner's ability to resonate with these archetypal forms that made his work so powerful. (Rosenblum, 1975: 12)

The terms 'sublime', 'numinous' and 'void' have all been used in association with artists who paint archetypal themes. These qualities are drawn from the same imaginal source. The presence of root metaphors in some artworks makes them compelling because they speak in a universal language. Images referred to as sublime have epic and timeless themes - their purpose is to share a fundamental given that is unconsciously recognisable to others. When an image is archetypal it expresses an essential quality, through exquisite beauty, ethereal light, materiality, perfect or abstract form. It hints at a truth that reaches back into the primordial fabric of humanity's mythic imagination. These motifs persist independently of time and cultural context because they are archetypal in human consciousness, they remain true regardless of whether the artist is even aware of their presence - something 'else' has taken hold of the materials and, just as the spiritual is conveyed through the human body, a truth is carried by the body of the artwork.

There are many examples where the void is a central theme in Australian landscape painting and I have listed only a few here: Lawrence Daws's *The Cage* (2005), (Fig. 15) is a non-anthropomorphic void of post-apocalyptic flatlands. The Void is also evident in its 'full' chaotic guise in Amor's expressive writhing oceans in *Nightmare* (1982), (Fig.

12) and in the desolate non-anthropomorphic voids of silent empty cityscapes like *Seawall* (1996). It appears in John Olsen's 'void series' - landscape as void in *Lake Eyre* (1975), (Fig. 28) and *Life Drawn Towards the Void* (1975), Robert Juniper's, *The River Dies in January* (1977), sun-bleached and sprinkled with scraggy vegetation. Peter Booth's chaotic anthropomorphic voids convey his personal existential catastrophes (*Painting 1977*). Tim Storrier and Andrew Mc Ilroy recognise the symbolic relationship between the void, the unconscious, drowning and the sea to produce works like *Pacific Drift - The Gesture*, (1997), (Fig. 30) and *From the Pier* (2009), (Fig. 9). Whether minimally rendered or packed with visual information, all of these works image a *potential* space - a qualitative state of being, always on the brink of becoming and not-becoming, that shapes the psyches of those who are living on the edge of the Void.

Australia's archetypal links to the primeval past play a central role - the idea that land, sea and sky are imbued with 'spirit' emerged from a primordial sensibility that did not divide 'the holy from the unholy, the divine from the human'. (Neumann, 1971: 282) For Aboriginal people the land of Australia was, and continues to be, sacred because the *kurunba*¹⁴⁷ or *numen* is embodied in all manifestations. (Cowan, 1992: 3) Rather than seeing an empty land as early Europeans did they inhabited a place of worship 'reminiscent of an open-air cathedral'. (Cowan, 1992: 25) *Kurunba* is not an animistic spirit that breathes in the same way that nature does, but a presence that underpins the metaphysical as well as the physical structures of the land. (Cowan, 1992: 26) Aboriginal people recognise landscape features as iconic representations of the Primordial Event¹⁴⁸ made manifest by the *numen* (*kurunba*), leading to the perception that tribal lands are also symbolic landscapes.¹⁴⁹ (Cowan, 1992: 28) Given the similarity

¹⁴⁷ 'Life-essence'. (Cowan, 1992: 26)

¹⁴⁸ When the *numen* bearing 'Sky Heroes' created the world, they left behind 'their personalised "signatures" in the guise of topographic landmarks, contour variations, trees, animals(....) all manifestations of life on earth'.¹⁴⁸ (Cowan, 1992: 27, 25)

¹⁴⁹ For an oral culture in which 'imagistic' points of reference were vital, the land was a mnemonic device enabling its people to recall the Dreaming. (Cowan, 1992: 29) Cowan says that 'at this point landscape became an important co-respondent in the dialogue between man and earth'. The land contributed to this dialogue with 'signs created out of rocks, contours, flora, fauna(....)', enabling its human inhabitants

between the ever-present *kurunba* and the *numen* of spiritual psychology, there seems to be a correlation between the Dreaming of Aboriginal culture¹⁵⁰ and the collective archetypal unconscious which, like the Dreaming for indigenous people, holds the archetypal myths of the Western imagination. Although these archetypes may be imaged in different ways, I suggest they perform the same psychological function in maintaining the links between the archetypes of humankind and those that underpin the physical world.

Imaginal practice provides a way for non-Aboriginal people to develop a deeper relationship with their homeland. Although I initially felt quite alienated from The Gap because it was a very hostile environment, making images of it gave me a different perspective that resonates with Cowan's comment that the task of unravelling 'the web of significance surrounding....events pertaining to a given landscape requires....us to think in images'. (Cowan, 1992: 31) Aboriginal people traditionally engage spirit through both ritualistic and imaginal acts by entering the primordial unconscious of the Dreaming with its store of archetypal images. (Cowan, 1992: 31) Although they have evolved in a different landscape, the ancestral/genetic memories of non-indigenous peoples similarly allows them to connect with the soul of the land via their own mythical traditions, even if they have moved to another place. Imaginal traditions established in European cultures thousands of years ago can be reactivated anywhere and at any time if those deep connections to landscape can be realised and a 'methodology' applied to put that instinctive knowledge into practise.¹⁵¹ I consider this is what happened during my imaginal engagement with the Void at The Gap.

to 'converse with the Sky Heroes of the numinous Dreaming'. (Cowan, 1992: 29) It is not too difficult to see these as the archetypes embedded in the landscape.

¹⁵⁰ 'The Aboriginal belief is that before the Dreaming(...) before the Primordial Event had occurred - this pristine landscape(...) conformed to the idea of "chaos" (lit. formless void).' (Cowan, 1992: 25)

¹⁵¹ Many are still practised - for several years I was a member of O.B.O.D., a British Druid order in which rituals and practices included active imagining and initiates spoke with various 'figures' in the landscape.

Other artists appear to have had similar insights and made significant connections with the landscape through art practice. John Olsen explored the idea and the physical reality of the Void as simultaneously full and empty in his void series of paintings about Lake Eyre in the 1970s (Fig 28. *Lake Eyre*, 1975, oil on canvas, 214.0 cm x 200.0 cm). His appreciation of the natural cycle of life and death with its inherent paradoxes enabled him to see it in a positive light more closely aligned with Eastern religion than Western philosophy.

Olsen's notion of the void did not imply a negative response(...) but related instead to the paradoxical nature of the full and empty lake, the "ocean" and the desert which(...) found a correspondence with Oriental philosophy. (Hart, 1991: 135)¹⁵²

Olsen described his experience at Lake Eyre in Central Australia as a 'first awakening to the mysterious power of the landscape'. (Abigail Fitzgibbons, 1995: n.p.)¹⁵³ In 1975 he wrote:

What is commonly known as the "dead heart" became instantaneously the living heart(...). The lake is paradoxical, conceptual, for it is impossible to view it without thinking of the empty lake, (...) it's superabundance now and it's future emptiness. (Fitzgibbons, 1995: n.p.)

Much can be learned from observing the experiences of artists like John Olsen and Lawrence Daws because it is clear that although the spiritual adept goes in search of the light, it is the journey into the darkness that paradoxically leads them to it. As Mark Levy notes:

Spiritual growth entails an encounter with the Great Void and lesser voids;¹⁵⁴ it is not all sweetness and light as the new agers would like us to believe. (Levy, 2006: 5)

Recalling Jung's comment that the night sea journey is perilous, and in view of my own experience, it would be irresponsible not to caution anyone intending to engage in any

¹⁵² Deborah Hart was been the senior curator of Australian painting and sculpture at the National Gallery of Australia (1991) and is also the author of several books.

¹⁵³ Abigail Fitzgibbons was a curator for the Griffith University Art Collection in 1995.

¹⁵⁴ Levy cites these as the 'boredom, vertigo, depression, melancholy, and fear' found in the 'works and lives' of the artists he discusses. (Levy, 2006: 5)

type of practice aimed at exploring the unconscious. Even on an imaginal level it poses a significant threat to the ego.¹⁵⁵ Not everyone will encounter the Void as I did, but there are real psychological dangers from becoming entangled with it in whatever form it takes. Because there is nothing recognisably human for the ego to attach itself to, the Void is a particularly dangerous archetype. When it is filled with chaotic sound and movement it engages the ego but still has the potential to frighten it to death. An empty Void starves it of stimulus - either way the ego faces deconstruction. As it fights for its existence it loses its grip on what it thinks reality is, which opens the psyche to other possibilities, one of which is the 'self' - but the other is crippling fear and depression. Being in either a challenging physical or psychological situation pushes the ego to its limits. Engaging a landscape like *The Gap* on more than just a superficial level is a confrontation with an imaginal death that can send the psyche plummeting to the underworld. However, imaginal practice works because the numinous dimensions of consciousness are non-ordinary, illogical and contradictory - what appears on the surface to be a negative experience is also a positive transcendent opportunity if the individual can stick to the image as the following example illustrates.

In the latter stages of my studio research, and just as Amor's 'running man' (Copeland, 2008: n.p.) appeared out of nowhere in his *Nightmare* painting, I 'saw' (in my imagination) a stone cube suspended in the chasm¹⁵⁶ at *The Gap*. I felt compelled to add one to an early version of *Chasm* (Fig. 29, p. 108, *The Philosopher's Stone*). At the time I did not understand why - it was a revelation to discover that in esoteric philosophy, the image of the cube symbolically locates the self or the eternal aspect of being in the unconscious (imaginal) realm. (Jaffe, 1984: 84)

¹⁵⁵ Here 'ego' indicates an aspect of consciousness that knows that it exists as a conscious entity but remains primarily linked to the personal aspect of the psyche. The inference is that ego is only partially or not at all aware of a consciousness beyond 'it'-self.

¹⁵⁶ The chasm I refer to is the main attraction at *The Gap*. See earlier reference in 'The Gap', p. 46.



Fig 29. Michelle Frantom, *The Philosopher's Stone*, 2007, digital collage, print 40.0 cm x 40.0 cm

The cube as symbol of the 'self' (psychic image of God) defines and fixes the formless void into a contained space because it offers 'limits for divine expression.' (Richard Leviton, 2004: n.p.)¹⁵⁷ As a 'subtle container of the higher cosmic worlds', the cube 'defines both the process of divine emanation and of spiritual return.'¹⁵⁸ (Leviton, 2004: n.p.) Edward F. Edinger notes that mandalas and quaternity images make themselves known to the psyche in times of turmoil and create a sense of stability by providing a 'glimpse of static eternity'. (Edinger, 1992: 182)¹⁵⁹

A variety of quaternity or 'four-fold' images appear in different cultural traditions as squares and rectangles, or forms that relate to the number four like the cube which is made up of four-sided squares with eight points. (Clogston, 2007: n.p.) Alison P.

¹⁵⁷ Richard Leviton is a published author who writes about 'earth energies' and geomancy.

¹⁵⁸ Leviton quotes Kevin Townley and Leonora Leet.

¹⁵⁹ 'The mandalas of Tibetan Buddhism are used for this purpose. They are instruments of meditation which convey to consciousness a sense of peace and calm as though one were safely grounded in the eternal structural substance and protected from the disrupting dangers of change'. (Edinger, 1992: 182) Dr. Edward F. Edinger is a Jungian analyst and author.

Deadman says that in esoteric philosophy the cube symbolises the soul.¹⁶⁰ (Deadman, 2006: 10)¹⁶¹ The cube motif can be seen in the work of several Australian landscape painters. In Tim Storrier's *Pacific Drift* (1997) (Fig. 30, *Pacific Drift - The Gesture*, 1997, synthetic paint on paper, 103.0 cm x 152.0 cm) it takes the form of a submerged television suspended symbolically in the sea of the unconscious. Of course it is possible I had seen Storrier's painting and been influenced by it. However I have seen hundreds of paintings and could have chosen any number of motifs. I consider I chose this particular motif because the image of the cube is a natural psychological response when faced with a particular kind of alienation found in the void-like spaces of the Australian continent.

Even though I discovered it quite independently, this synchronistic appearance of the cube is further supported by 400 year old esoteric literature. There is a reference to the floating cube in Western alchemy in Michael Maier's *Atalanta Fugiens - Emblemata Nova* published in 1618. Maier's 36th Emblem (Fig 31. 'Emblem 36', *Atalanta Fugiens - Emblemata Nova*, engraving, no details) is accompanied by the quotation: 'The Stone that is Mercury, is cast upon the Earth, exalted on Mountains, resides in the Air, and is nourished in the Waters'.¹⁶² The motif of a cube floating on air is unusual and uncommon yet the cube in my work is uncannily similar to Maier's.

In *Burning Train & Flesh Cube* (Fig. 32. 1973, oil on canvas, 122.0 cm x 244.0 cm), Lawrence Daws similarly responds to a perceived threat in the landscape by invoking the cube. This work shows how Daws was able to reconcile the unconscious with

¹⁶⁰ 'The Cube of Space, like the better-known Qabalistic diagram, the Tree of Life, can be interpreted as a map of the soul's journey toward unity with the Divine'. (Deadman, 2006: 10)

¹⁶¹ Alison P. Deadman, Ph.D., is associate professor of music at East Tennessee State University and artist/clinician for the Yamaha Corporation of America. She is also a long-time esoteric student. For further information see her website: www.etsu.edu/music/faculty/deadman.html. 28/4/2014

¹⁶² John Eberly, *Atalanta Fugiens (Emblem #21)*, 2000. A book entitled 'Michael Maier's Atalanta Fugiens: Sources of an Alchemical Book of Emblems' was also published in 2002. In it H. M. E. de Jong shows how Maier 'borrowed mottos from old alchemical sources' that 'have a number of meanings and express ideas from alchemy, medicine, and the Rosicrucian system'.

consciousness by clothing the symbol of 'spirit' with the image of 'flesh'. Later, in his painting *The Cage* (2005) (Fig. 15), the cube that dominates his dark elemental flatland has reverted to its abstract symbolic form. The juxtaposition of human and non-human elements in *Burning Train & Flesh Cube* re-affirms the position of the psyche in its critical mediatory role during an encounter with the Void - suspended between consciousness and the unconscious. While it references the Australian landscape, Daws's painting has universal relevance because the cube is a symbol for the eternal aspect of the self. A critical function of images in imaginal practice is that they act as a psychological 'safe-guard' to protect ego-consciousness from complete annihilation. The cube's repeated appearance in Daws's work and that of other artists in response to the awe-ful sublime in the landscape, as well as its links to established systems like alchemy and esoteric philosophy, suggest imaginal practice has the ability to reconnect individuals with these archetypes.

Although it is vital for the ego¹⁶³ to hold itself against the destructive forces of the Void and stand its ground, the way that unfolds must be authentic and evolve naturally without interference from the conscious psyche. In his retelling of the story of the fifteenth century Saint Nicholas of Flüe, Jung cautions against what he perceives as inauthentic engagement. When Brother Nicholas sees an 'overwhelmingly terrifying face he involuntarily interprets it as God', (Fig. 33 Nicholas of Flüe, *The Vision of the Terrifying Countenance of God*, no details) and then spends a lifetime trying to adjust the image until it becomes the Trinity (Fig. 34 Nicholas of Flüe, *The Trinity [The Wheel Image of Nicholas Von Flüe]*, no details) so he can convert this awe-ful *imago dei* into something his traumatised psyche can absorb.¹⁶⁴ (Jung, 1990: 12) However, Jung cautions against what he perceives as inauthentic engagement. He argues that Brother

¹⁶³ Hillman says that 'Modernism is caught up in the reductionist notion that the psychological is coextensive with the personal, that the psyche is all ego. A more subtle modernistic formulation....is that Jung's idea of *the self* embraces both ego and the unconscious, or that there is an axis between them, and the point of psychological work is to firm up that axis'. (Hillman, 1991: 9)

¹⁶⁴ Jung also discusses the revelations of Jakob Bohme, a mystic of the early Christian church. (Jung, 1990: 12)

Nicholas twisted the original image to represent Divine Love because he could not deal with the reality of seeing the dark incarnation of God. Jung goes further to suggest the Trinity image had 'nothing to do with the original experience' and that Brother Nicholas distorted it to fit the Christian canon in which he was operating at the time.¹⁶⁵ He concludes Nicholas's involuntary response was a 'phenomenon of belief' rather than true knowledge. (Jung, 1990: 12)

I agree with Jung's comments about authenticity because in my experience imaginal practice only works if the image makes itself known spontaneously and is not prematurely subjected to logical analysis or cultural interpretation. However, symbols can be called upon and visualised to ameliorate the powerful impact of the awe-ful sublime on the psyche. Imagining a symbol like the cube and carrying it through the artwork can psychologically fix one's presence in the numinous realms of existence, thereby reconciling the psyche with the imaginal Void on some level. As they live and paint on the edge of the Void I suggest this is precisely what some Australian artists, myself included, are doing.

¹⁶⁵ Jung concedes that if Brother Nicholas rendered the image as he originally saw it (if that was at all possible), he may have been identified as a heretic - in which case the final image had to be acceptable to the church. This does not conflict with Jung's original interpretation. It simply provides an additional reason Brother Nicholas felt the need to distort the truth of what he really saw.

LIVING ON THE EDGE OF THE VOID

It indeed appear'd to Reason,
as if Desire was cast out,
but the Devil's account is,
that the Messiah fell,
& formed a heaven
Of what he stole from the Abyss.

(William Blake, 1757)

One of the objectives of this study was to make meaning of a set of recurring images that consistently made their way into my consciousness in the form of dreams. Combining Jung's method of active imagination with visual art practice, I set out to find symbolic equivalents of those dream images in a sublime landscape. An account of that research and my findings are now held in a collection of artworks and a written exegesis where they will add to an existing body of knowledge about the tragic sublime in the Australian landscape. Driving that personal objective however, was a desire to learn more about the role of images in Western consciousness in general, and particularly their ability to mediate between the ordinary and sacred dimensions of the psyche. It was always my intention to develop a working methodology that could be shared with others - in the process I have learnt a few key things about the nature of reality. My study into imaginal (art) practice has shown that it not only has the potential to deepen the connection between people and place, but between the individual psyche and a collective consciousness as well.

In 'Welcome to the Edge' I argued that the imaginal relationship between the natural landscape and the human psyche is underpinned by a shared archetypal matrix. I also discussed psychic imbalance as a creative and vital component of imaginal practice, particularly in respect of my studio research at The Gap. As a result of that research during a long and intimate relationship with The Gap, I have come to the conclusion that the void is not only a recurring motif in the Australian landscape, but a significant archetype in human consciousness. Although it is important to Australians, it

reverberates in the consciousness of all human beings, as Martin Leer's comment about David Malouf indicates:

The claustrophobic room and the infinite void are extremes of Malouf's vision(...) it is tempting to see them as somehow reflecting the extremes of Australia: the inland desert and the sea(...) against which the continent is outlined(...) the basic features of the map have almost universal validity for Malouf. It is his map of the *condition humaine*. (Leer, 1985: 4)

This 'map' cannot be negotiated by privileging either the psychological or the physical because, as I indicated in 'The Imaginal Void', the physical void has links to another more complex metaphysical Void where emptiness is not mere nothingness. Ideas about the physical void in the landscape and its relationship to the metaphysical Void in human consciousness were explored in the context of the Romantic sublime in 'Painting Against Death'. Here I examined how Australian artists respond imaginally to the Australian landscape through art materials to create both 'full' and 'empty' representations of the void. The personal 'case study' in 'Into the Blue' demonstrated how an encounter with the imaginal Void in the landscape altered my view of reality in a profound way.

I continue to support the comments I made in 'Painting Against Death' that artists' attempts to make reality visible through paint reveals a fundamental need to filter an experience of the world through the senses, reconcile inner and outer realities and remove the barriers that prevent them from developing a unified state of consciousness. I can also confirm from personal experience that although it is the ego that drives that quest for wholeness, it is the ego that is symbolically 'sacrificed' as the psyche undertakes the night sea journey. Embracing the paradox and living with the contradictions eventually leads to the realisation that individual consciousness operates within a collective one.

It is through my *conatus*(sic) that I mirror, and am mirrored in, the wider systems of Nature. It is through my conatus that I, and other selves, achieve oneness with the ecocosm. Recognition of the fact that my conatus unites me with the ecocosm, which is seen as my greater Self, in itself expands the scope

of my conatus: my will-to-exist now encompasses the wider systems of Nature.
(Freya Mathew in Mc Donald, 1995: 61)

In 'Painting Against Death' I broadened the theoretical framework for Romantic sublime painting in Australia by suggesting the themes of 'Romantic terror' and 'existential anxiety' repeatedly rise up from the unconscious because they are an archetypal necessity for an evolving consciousness. I put forward some reasons for that fear and shared my insights into the role the idea-image of death plays in the process of individuation. I now conclude that, when used in a conscious way, fear can be used as a path to knowledge. Hillman's comments support my findings:

The biblical statement that fear is the beginning of wisdom is a significant psychological statement. Fear is not merely something wrong, to be overcome with courage, or at best, an instinctual protective device, but is rather something right, a form of wise counsel. (Hillman, 1999: 81)

Although the drowning dreams that initiated this project were frightening and I wanted to banish them from my consciousness, I now see them in a totally different light. As I discovered through my studio research and argued in 'The Gap' and 'Welcome to the Edge', the positive outcomes of the practice of dying are not only well known, but an integral part of many traditional cultures, including that of Aboriginal Australians. The 'problem' death presents to the psyche is not meant to be resolved. Enriched by techniques like active imagination the creative imbalance that arises out of a confrontation with one's mortality opens the psyche to an imaginal ground in which shifts of consciousness are possible.

From my personal account in 'Into the Blue', it should be evident that an imaginal practice involving image-making, writing and research has the potential to transform the fear and negative emotions associated with death. Although Jung's studies provided the theoretical backdrop, the combination of 'doing' with 'knowing' that forms the basis of imaginal (art) practice finally brought about that transformation because as Aniela Jaffe explains,

an experience of meaning comes(...) only from a deepening of external reality through recognition of its numinous background(...). By becoming conscious of its transpersonal connections and images, and experiencing their numinosity, we get an inkling of powers which operate autonomously behind our being and doing, creating an order in our lives(...). (Jaffe, 1984: 80)

In 'The Imaginal Void' I compared the ways in which Rothko and Klein imaged the Void to convey what I see as an inherent danger in being too literal and to explain why I used certain motifs. I made no attempt to 'recreate' the Void as an image - nor do I imagine I could. Instead my artworks were intended as an invitation for others to look into an imaginal space which, in the final analysis, is a ground of being impossible to represent because it is the immanent and imminent manifestation of existence itself. Although this ground extends beyond the limits of visual art practice, they share similar qualities in that both function as threshold states of consciousness between the material and the immaterial. It is hoped that my personal insights and images will now inspire others to take some kind of imaginal journey of their own.

One of the significant outcomes of both the studio research and my enquiry into archetype theory is that I now consider images are not an end in themselves, which has implications for my visual art practice in future. Although I will continue to engage with them, I now consider they have no intrinsic value of their own – they are simply a means to an end because they point to something else. This finding also highlights some ideological differences between Jung and Hillman. Comparing Jung's view of the function of the imaginal in human consciousness with Hillman's I agree with Corbett that,

Hillman does not seem to have made a heuristic advance, especially since an emphasis on the imaginal tends to sequester affect as a primary aspect of the soul's experience. The idea of the 'imaginal' replaces only a small part of what is contained within the idea of the unconscious. Both mean realms of the psyche beyond the sphere of the known. But the imaginal and the unconscious cannot be simply equated. (Corbett, 1996: 98)

Jung and Hillman have divergent philosophical approaches to the imaginal based on their understanding of the role of images in consciousness. However, I disagree with Michael V. Adams¹⁶⁶ that Jungian psychology remains a structural theory and is therefore not a 'true psychology of the imagination' because it adheres to archetypes like the 'great mother', 'hero' and 'trickster'. (Adams, 2004: 56) Adams advocates a post-structuralist revolution that privileges imaginal psychology (as being 'superior to that of a conceptual psychology'). However, it is my view that although Hillman's interpretation of the imaginal is poetic and abstract, it is still predominantly conceptual – an intellectual activity. In which case 'knowledge' in imaginal practice is a function of the mind which does not support the giving over of one's-self to the emotions and rapture of gnostic experience. To my knowledge, Hillman makes no reference to a realm beyond images and does not support the existence of a reality it is not possible for the mind to imagine. On the other hand, and although Jung's dreams and visions were important enough for him to painstakingly record them in the *Red Book*, he eventually acknowledges they are a means rather than an end in the evolution of consciousness. This is confirmed in sermon one of *Septum Sermones ad Mortuos* ("Seven Sermons to the Dead").:

Harken: I begin with nothingness. Nothingness is the same as fullness. In infinity full is no better than empty. Nothingness is both empty and full. As well ye might say anything else of nothingness, as for instance, white is it, or black, or again, it is not, or it is. A thing that is infinite and eternal hath no qualities, since it hath all qualities. (Jung, 1989: 379)

The introduction to *Septum Sermones ad Mortuos* reveals that Jung was influenced by his study into both Eastern and Western philosophy.¹⁶⁷ His ability to trace the common threads that link these both convinces me of the authenticity of his insights and supports my experience of the Void. It also shows how, by combining image-making with scholarly enquiry as Jung did in the *Red Book*, certain truths can be discovered.

¹⁶⁶ Dr Michael Vannoy Adams is an associate professor and prominent Jungian analyst.

¹⁶⁷ 'The Seven Sermons to the Dead written by Basilides in Alexandria, the City where the East toucheth the West'. (Jung, 1989: 378) Jung was drawn to the Gnostics because of their 'thinking in paradoxes' and therefore identified himself with the Gnostic writer Basilides. (Jung, 1989: 378)

I continue to respect Hillman's extensive study of the imaginal realm as a psychic reality. I have experienced this realm, it is blue and full of images and, based on Hillman's comments quoted in 'Into the Blue', and my enquiry into the work of Yves Klein in 'The Imaginal Void', I am only one of many who have seen it. I have also learnt that even though it will be transcended at some stage, it should be taken absolutely seriously. I can appreciate the veracity of my claim to real and direct knowledge could be seen as fanciful, except that even in subjective methodologies there are checks and balances. As the account of my experience at The Gap demonstrated in 'Into the Blue', when the psyche engages in imaginal (art) practice, new insights emerge in unique, spontaneous and synchronistic ways through direct engagement with the landscape and art-making. In my case if, they had not, I might have dismissed them as the result of an unconscious subsuming of someone else's experience or ideology. In the spirit of *gnosis*, true knowledge arrives unbidden, irrationally and unexpectedly, and is only confirmed by a *retrospective application of theory* - just as the cube appeared spontaneously in my imagination before it was applied to my artwork. The process of seeking knowledge through the imaginal requires a commitment to integrity - the mantra for imaginal practice is: image (emotion) before theory (intellect). Many artists demonstrate a similar privileging of practice before theory.

Given my experience, and based on my research into the work of both Jung and Cedrus Monte, I now realise the importance of maintaining a close relationship with the corporeal body, even more so when undertaking psychological work. As Monte says: 'The body *wants* the experience of the *numen* because the *numen* is the very thing that is the centre and core of its existence'. (Monte, 2005: n.p.) The physical is important because when the psyche is challenged in a confrontation with the unconscious it must hold its ground. The body assists in carrying out that function. In a study primarily focused on the transcendent possibilities of consciousness I admit this finding was unexpected. However Jung suggests it is not unusual:

The more insistent the spiritual quality of the self becomes, the more our consciousness is expanded through the integration of psychic contents, the

deeper we must strike our roots in reality, in our own earth, the body. (Jung in Jaffe, 1984: 83)

The difficulties endured as body and spirit move towards reconciliation are not only necessary but should be welcomed: when confronted with the raw power of nature, like the awe-ful sublime or *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* at The Gap, the numinous manifests in the body as a very real and tangible fear. In 'Welcome to the Edge', I explained how on more than one occasion I felt a high level of irrational anxiety when I was actually in no real danger. I now conclude that physical fear has a psychological component intended to jolt consciousness out of the everyday, free it from the controlling rational mind and embrace new possibilities.

One of the major challenges I faced as a cross-disciplinary researcher was in trying to present a single coherent idea while juggling some diverse and disparate models for consciousness. Several have been drawn into the discussion - the Romantic sublime in visual art 'Landscape as God', Jungian and imaginal theory in 'Active Imagination', contemporary esoteric (spiritual) psychology in 'The Gap' and not least of all art practice itself in 'Into the Blue' and 'The Imaginal Void'. This was possible because these models are correlatives - different ways of looking at the same thing. In the context of this study the Void is the common symbol for an aesthetic ideology, a particular psychological state, a quality of the Australian landscape and a model for consciousness in esoteric philosophy. In the final analysis it is the psyche's ability to think in images that binds them all together.

Based on their qualitative similarities and how they are imaged in the psyche the sublime, the Divine and the *numen* are ultimately an expression of one phenomena in human consciousness - the true nature of being, or what Buddhists call the 'primordial ground of our absolute nature'; what we in the West might call the 'existential' Void. (Sogyal Rinpoche, 1994: 263). Although it has been presented from different perspectives, all of the work has been driven by a need to discover and image that

Void. In light of my findings, that is an oxymoronic statement because the Void is an image with no-image, or at least one it is not possible to convey by the usual methods. When fully integrated into consciousness it is this knowledge that provides one of the answers to a perennial question: what is the true nature of reality?

At the extreme, the individual consciousness seems to encompass the totality of existence and identify with the Universal Mind. The ultimate experience appears to be that of the mysterious primordial emptiness and nothingness that contains all of existence in a germinal form, the Void. (Grof, 1980: 31)

In the archetypal Void, image and theory lose their ground to make way for pure experience in an 'all encompassing space of truth'. (Rinpoche, 1994: 263) One of the 'light-bulb' moments of this project was the realisation that images are signposts on the way to that space of truth. Images are not the definitive answer, but they can show the way to it.

Further reading suggests the Void I encountered was only a preliminary stage in the realisation of an overarching unified superconsciousness. The idea that images are eventually transcended has been acknowledged by many philosophers including Jung (1989) in *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*, Mark Levy (2006) in *Void/In Art*, Richard Stein (2010) and William S. Waldron (2004). My comments about the psychic function of images in 'Landscape as God' confirm this knowledge is not new. What might be original in my study however, is the way that knowledge was discovered through a subjective and Romantic methodology in response to the landscape. When conducted in a *particular* way, imaginal (art) practice not only articulates consciousness by providing a means for its expression, but *facilitates* its evolution by offering a practical method of knowing through the creative psyche and its capacity to think in images.

Even though it now seems Jung's imaginal collective realm of unconscious archetypes is only one aspect of Divine consciousness it continues to play a central role in the evolution of the human psyche. It maintains equilibrium by making individuals aware that ultimate reality is a co-existence of opposites, a succession of manifestations of

energies 'at variance with each other(...) creation and destruction(...) the dream-idyll of the inward vision of the god and the desolate nought, the terror of the void, the dreadful infinite'. (Stein, 2010: 67) Engaging in imaginal practice, seeking out the sublime in nature and taking journeys into the unconscious offers a glimpse, in varying degrees, of that reality. For the Romantic in search of dialogues with the *numen* or spirits of place, Bruce Cowan's advice rings true: to live in the Australian landscape authentically we must encounter the 'Primordial Event as if it were eternally re-occurring', just as its indigenous inhabitants did and still do. (Cowan, 1992: 41) The event Cowan refers to is the archetypal core of human existence - an ever-present paradox of creation and destruction. The challenge for humanity is to embrace both, the tragic as enthusiastically as the paradisaical. It is not possible to fully know one without knowing the other - just as it is not possible to be human without valuing the material landscapes we occupy and the immaterial archetypes that constantly renew them. To engage wholeheartedly in life we need to embrace death - to know existence in its entirety we must look into both the loving *and* the terrifying face of God. When Australian artists paint their imaginal portraits of an archetypal land they see both faces - the awe-ful and the sublime.

In Australia we live on the land and near the sea, between Her Beauty and Her Terror, precariously balanced on the edge of the Void. Despite the difficulties in reconciling with its contradictory personality it alone offers redemption:

For Beauty's nothing but beginning of Terror we're still just able to bear(...) why we adore it so is because it serenely disdains to destroy us. (Rilke, 1912: n.p.)

This is the Beauty of Terror.

Appendix 1: List of Images

This is a list of images that appear in the exegesis. Dimensions are H x W. No dimensions are given for jpeg images in digital format. Sizes of prints provided.

Fig. 1. Mike Lyons, *Gap Panorama #1 (photo of cage from Eastern side)*, circa 2009, film scanned to digital file. Collection of the artist..... Page 46

Fig 2. Michelle Frantom, *Welcome to the Edge*, 2012, digital collage from original artwork, print 40 cm x 38.65 cm. Collection of the artist..... Page 47

Fig 3. Michelle Frantom, *Study 40*, 2009, mixed media on paper, 20.7 cm x 14.3 cm. Collection of the artist..... Page 49

Fig 4. Michelle Frantom, *Void*, 2010, digital photograph. Collection of the artist. Page 51

Fig 5. Michelle Frantom, *Study 48*, 2012, digital collage of mixed media drawings. Collection of the artist..... Page 59

Fig 6. Michelle Frantom, *Chasm 3*, 2013, digital collage from original work, print 40.0 cm x 40.34 cm. Collection of the artist..... Page 63

Fig. 7. Lawrence Daws, *Night Sea Journey 1*, 1993, oil on canvas, 158.0 cm x 137.0 cm. Private Collection. In Bruce, C. 2000 *Lawrence Daws: Asylum in Eden, Thirty Years in Queensland*, Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, p. 120.

Fig. 8. Lawrence Daws, *The Dark Sea*, 1993, oil on canvas, 61.0 cm x 76.0 cm. Private collection. In Bruce, C. 2000 *Lawrence Daws: Asylum in Eden, Thirty Years in Queensland*, Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, p. 122.

Fig 9. Andrew Mc Ilroy, *From the Pier*, 2009, oil on linen, 153.0 cm x 146.0 cm. No details of current location. Andrew Mc Ilroy website:
http://www.andrewmcilroy.com/recent_paintings.php (accessed 17/9/2013)

Fig 10. Rick Amor, *The Visitor*, 1999, oil on linen, 130.0 cm x 162.0 cm. No details of current location. In Fry, G., 2008 *Rick Amor*, Sydney: The Beagle Press, p. 107.

Fig 11. Rick Amor, *The Runner*, 1998, oil on canvas, 76.0 cm x 110.3 cm. No details of current location. In Fry, G., 2008 *Rick Amor*, Sydney: The Beagle Press, p. 22.

Fig 12. Rick Amor, *Nightmare*, 1982, oil on canvas, 33.0 cm x 40.0 cm. No details of current location. In Fry, G., 2008 *Rick Amor*, Sydney: The Beagle Press, p. 20.

Fig 13. Lawrence Daws, *The Cage II*, 1971, oil on hardboard, 91.0 cm x 106.7 cm. Collection of Ben Albrecht. In Bruce, C. 2000 *Lawrence Daws: Asylum in Eden, Thirty Years in Queensland*, Brisbane: University of Queensland Press p. 24.

Fig 14. Lawrence Daws, *The Labyrinth*, 1969-70, oil on linen, 122.0 cm x 122.0 cm. No details of current location. Charles Nodrum Gallery, Victoria.
<http://www.charlesnodrumgallery.com.au/artwork.asp?id=54251>
(accessed 17/9/2013)

Fig 15. Lawrence Daws, *The Cage*, 2005, 11/40, digital mixed media print, 102.0 cm x 136.0 cm. Collection: Tweed River Art Gallery, Murwillumbah Queensland University of Technology <http://www.artmuseum.qut.edu.au/archive/news-event.jsp?news-event-id=30700> (accessed 17/9/2013)

Fig 16. J.M.W. Turner, *The Passage of Mount St Gothard, Taken from the Centre of the Teufels Broch, (Devil's Bridge) Switzerland*, exhibited 1804, watercolour on paper, 98.9 cm x 68.6 cm. Collection of Abbott Hall Gallery, England. Tate Gallery website: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-the-passage-of-mount-st-gothard-taken-from-the-centre-of-the-teufels-broch-devils-tw0310> (accessed 17/9/2013)

Fig 17. Lawrence Daws, *Asylum in Eden*, 1982, oil on hardboard, 137.0 cm x 160.0 cm. Collection of David Plant. In Bruce, C. 2000 *Lawrence Daws: Asylum in Eden, Thirty Years in Queensland*, Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, p. 75.

Fig. 18. Lawrence Daws, *Big Terrace*, 1986, acrylic & oil crayon on paper, 152.0 cm x 122.0 cm. Collection of the artist. In Bruce, C. 2000 *Lawrence Daws: Asylum in Eden*, Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, p. 105.

Fig 19. Michelle Frantom, *Study 42*, 2010, pencil on paper, 18.0 cm x 17.0 cm. Collection of the artist..... Page 88

Fig 20. Michelle Frantom, *Study 21*, 2009, mixed media on paper, 20.12 cm x 14.2 cm. Collection of the artist..... Page 84

Fig 21. Michelle Frantom, *Study 15*, 2009, mixed media on paper, 20.4 cm x 14.2 cm. Collection of the artist..... Page 85

Fig 22. Michelle Frantom, 2013, *Drowning*, oil and mixed media on board, 2400 cm x 2400 cm. Collection of the artist..... Page 87

Fig 23. Michelle Frantom, *Study 17*, 2009, mixed media on paper, 20.4 cm x 14.2 cm. Collection of the artist..... Page 88

Fig 24. Michelle Frantom, *Study 28*, 2007, gouache on paper, 16.7 cm x 18.0 cm. Collection of the artist..... Page 89

Fig 25. Caspar David Friedrich, *Monk by the Sea*, 1809, oil on canvas, 110 cm x 171.5 cm. Courtesy Staatliche Schloesser und Garten, Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin. (Rosenblum, R. 1975 *Modern Painting and the Romantic Tradition: Friedrich to Rothko*, New York: Harper and Rowe, p. 1)

Fig 26. J.M.W. Turner, *Snow Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth*, exhibited 1842, oil on canvas, 91.4 cm x 121.9 cm. Turner Bequest, 1856. Tate gallery website: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-snow-storm-steam-boat-off-a-harbours-mouth-n00530> (accessed 17/9/2013).

Fig 27. Mark Rothko, *Green on Blue*, 1956, oil on canvas, 228 cm x 136 cm. University of Arizona Museum of Art, The Gallagher Memorial Collection. (Rosenblum, R. 1975 *Modern Painting and the Romantic Tradition: Friedrich to Rothko*, New York: Harper and Rowe, p. 1)

Fig. 28. John Olsen, *Lake Eyre*, 1975, oil on canvas, 214.0 cm x 200.0 cm. Australian Galleries collection. In Hart, D., 1991, *John Olsen*, N.S.W.: Craftsman House, p. 132.

Fig. 29. Michelle Frantom, *The Philosopher's Stone*, 2007, digital collage on painting, 91.5 cm x 91.0 cm (print 40.0 cm x 40.0 cm). Collection of the artist..... Page 108

Fig 30. Tim Storrier, *Pacific Drift - The Gesture*, 1997, synthetic polymer paint on paper, 103.0 cm x 152.0 cm. Private collection, Sydney. Deutscher-Menzies, Fine Art Auctioneers and Valuers, 2010.

http://menziesart.sitesuite.cn/cgi/dmcat.cgi?rm=display_lot&item_id=7736 (accessed 17/9/2013).

Fig 31. Michael Maier, 'Emblem 36', *Atalanta Fugiens - Emblemata Nova*, 1618. Woodcut engraving, no size or details given. In John Eberly, *Atalanta Fugiens (Emblem #21)*, 2000 <http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/Eberly/AtalantaCommentary.html> (accessed 17/9/2013)

Fig 32. Lawrence Daws, *Burning Train & Flesh Cube*, 1973, oil on canvas, 2 x 122.0 cm x 122.0 cm (122.0 cm x 244.0 cm) Collection of Broken Hill City Art Gallery. In Bruce, C. 2000 *Lawrence Daws: Asylum in Eden*, Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, p. 40.

Fig. 33. Nicholas of Flüe, (1417-1487) *The Vision of the Terrifying Countenance of God*, 14 no details. Website of Dr Remo F. Roth, Jungian analyst and pupil of Marie-Louise von Franz. <http://paulijungunusmundus.eu/rfr/radbilde.htm>

Fig. 34. Nicholas of Flüe, *The Trinity (The Wheel Image of Nicholas Von Flüe)*, no details. Website of Dr Remo F. Roth, Jungian analyst and pupil of Marie-Louise von Franz. <http://paulijungunusmundus.eu/rfr/radbilde.htm>

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