MONASH University

RECONSTRUCTING THE FRAME:

Examining the Creative Process Through Wandering, Ritual and Rectification

Isaac Kalman Greener

Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts,
University of Melbourne

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Department of Fine Art
Faculty of Art Design & Architecture
Monash University

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Abstract

My research traces the metaphorical explosion and reconstruction of the Jewish conceptual frame that was built around me to create my Jewish identity. I draw on the concept of the fragment or symbolic shard central to Kabbalistic Lurianic principles, to describe this experience which I explore through encounters with the natural landscape. My art practice, which constitutes the primary research for this candidature, has consisted of two key aspects. Firstly, to uncover these shards, primarily through a generative methodology of wandering, which I distinguish from the tradition of artist walking. And secondly, by engaging with these shards which have manifested in the form of revelatory images, I develop the concept of the art ritual to enact a Kabbalistic rectification process—a method by which chaotic shards are returned to their cosmological source.

Wandering in the forest, which has led to revelatory images, represents the central generative component to the methodology of this research. As this occurs intuitively, and also represents esoteric concepts, a challenge of this research has been to develop a conceptual framework from which to explore my methodology. In doing so, I have examined dualistic themes as they manifest in my own practice, such as the relationship between the body and the soul, as well as the difference between the artist and the thinker. I have explored the concept of external forces that creatively combine and offset both Jewish mystical thought and contemporary philosophy from Baruch Spinoza to Elizabeth Grosz. Additionally, I interrogate themes and revelatory aspects of the creative process developed by Hermann Hesse in his novel *Narcissus and Goldmund.* As an outcome of examining these concepts, I have contributed to the creative field by developing a methodological approach to artmaking that activates the wandering process, primarily through listening to the land and the dissolving of the self. I have also developed a conceptual framework that explores these productive dualistic tensions primarily through the concepts of partaking in art rituals and enacting a rectification process.

Enacting a rectification process through partaking in art rituals further represents the central ethical and creative considerations of my practice and contribution to further knowledge and understanding of the creative process itself. In this context, I explore whether forces contained within a constructed frame should be returned through a rectification process in accordance with Lurianic Kabbalistic principles or left to become autonomous through a

proliferation of sensations following the concept of the plane of composition described by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Concluding that these forces must be returned, produces a very particular creative outcome. One with an emphasis on listening and the dissolving of self, as well as creative process over artistic outcomes. This approach to creative practice provides an answer to what I see as a critical impasse in the thinking of these philosophers and kabbalists, and a new way to understand my own art practice. One which espouses the intuitive relationship between the self, cosmological forces, and the creative process by removing the notion of a transcendental God and the artist from the centre of spiritual and creative practice. It is through recalibrating the role of the artist, as well as making a conscious shift away from *art as performance* towards *art as ritual*, that I suggest prevents the drying up and dwarfing of one's inner senses—to which alone the mystery, one which according to the character of Goldmund consists of a fusion of the greatest contrasts in the world and is only found in a truly sublime work of art, is accessible.[1]

As an outcome of this research, I offer what I describe as a foundational block. This is symbolised by the *table as frame* which draws on Jewish traditions and which has emerged as a central motif of the art rituals of this research. Returning the table to the site of the artistic ritual represents a marker of a creative lineage that prioritises the intuitive and embodied experience, and a point of reference—a demarcation of territory, from which others might experience, what I believe to be, the power of the land. The desert in particular, is referenced as a site that offers silences through which one can listen and a vastness through which one can see.

[1] Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund: A Novel,* 185.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Isaac Kalman Greener
December 2019.

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RECONSTRUCTING THE FRAME:

Examining the Creative Process Through Wandering, Ritual and Rectification

Isaac Kalman Greener

INTRODUCTION

I was already a reluctant participant in the traditional Jewish ritual practice of circumcision, known as *Brit Milah*. This was before discovering that the *Mohel* (a religious Jewish man trained to perform the ritual) had performed *metzitzah b'peh* on my son, against my stern warnings.[2] Enraged by the *Mohel's* actions, and ultimately by the ultra-orthodox doctrines and philosophies of which he had followed, I speak of a metaphorical shattering of a Jewish frame of identity that had been built around me from birth. Contained within this frame had been my understanding of spirituality, culture and the Jewish religion. This understanding was not of the physical body, but rather the body as two diametrically opposed aspects of the oneself. In this paper, I contextualised this idea through Hermann Hesse's novel *Narcissus and Goldmund* (1931). Portrayed are the characters Narcissus, the thinker, who is associated with rational, scholarly pursuits and his opposite, Goldmund, the artist who lives in the maternal realm of the senses, nature, and the flesh. While Hesse presents his characters as two distinct people, I explore these characters, in line with Mark Boulby's analysis of the text, as representing two conflicting aspects of the one self.

As examined in chapter 1, I blame the shattering of the frame on the Chabad movement (an influential Orthodox Jewish movement of which the *Mohel* is a member). I also reject Chabad's authority over religious, cultural and spiritual practice, as well as their belief in an immanent and transcendental God. Yet to my surprise, I found that many of their fundamental concepts and doctrines seemed to conceptualise aspects of my art practice, which up until this point in my research, had been experienced only through an intuitive process. As such, I constructed a conceptual framework from which to investigate this shattering through my art practice.

Central to this is Chabad's core mystical belief in *tikkun olam*, or the 'repair of the world.' As examined in chapter 2, Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534–72) speaks of God creating two universes: this one, and a previous universe which at its spiritual core consisted of *orot* (lights) and *kelim*

[2] *Metzitzah b'peh* is a contentious Orthodox Jewish law that mandates the *Mohel* to orally draw a drop of blood from the wound of the infant's penis.

(vessels).[3] Light is symbolic of God's creative energy, while the vessels symbolise the receptacles that receive and harness this energy. Luria argued that in the first universe the world of *chaos*, or the divine light, was too intense for the vessels resulting in the vessels shattering and the implosion of that universe.[4] Luria contended that the shattering showered sparks of the earlier light into the second universe, where they became embedded. As such, it is the purpose of life in this world to uncover these holy sparks of chaos and release them back to their source. As Luria explains, this is achieved through following Torah and the contemplative performance of *mitzvot* (Gods commandments). In other words, for a Chabad Jew, the purpose of life is to uncover these holy sparks and release them back to their source. This is a rectification process and the philosophical underpinnings which explain why the *Mohel* was at our house to perform *Brit Milah* on my son.

By examining Lurianic principles to contextualise the metaphorical shattering of my Jewish frame, I suggest that what shattered were fragments of the frame from which symbolic shards became embedded within the natural landscape. As such, I have come to conceptualise the purpose of my art practice as consisting of two key aspects. Firstly, to uncover these shards through a key generative methodological practice of wandering, as examined in chapter 3, and secondly, by engaging with these shards which result in revelatory images through partaking in art rituals to enact a rectification process—the return of these shards.

Wandering in the forest occurs intuitively, however, I often walk with knowledge and purpose in the forest. Whilst walking can provide the necessary conditions from which to wander, I argue that it is distinct from a conscious act of walking and, therefore, also to the lineage of art walkers in contemporary art practice. This is because wandering requires an absence of, or an indifference to, either a fixed course or a specific rational intention. As such, navigation remains consciously ambiguous to the self. This ambiguity allows for an internal form of navigation to occur, equally absent of intention, one experienced only through the senses and the flesh. It is this movement, sometimes triggered by a sound, a barrier, or animal, as examined through two of my central artworks, *Tree Wall* (2017) and *Tree Bark* (2018), that enables a dynamic movement to occur, which activates the wandering process. This begins through listening to the land and leads to the dissolving of self through engaging with natural forces and processes—God and nature as one singular substance—which are explored and

[3] Naftali Brawer, *A Brief Guide to Judaism: Theology, History and Practice* (London: Running Press, 2008), 137.
[4] Ibid., 137.

then defined in chapter 2, through a framework that draws on Jewish thought, and philosophical principles from Baruch Spinoza, Gilles Deleuze and Elizabeth Grosz.

In chapter 3, I define listening to the land as being distinct from both the Jewish belief in the importance of listening, and 'cultural listening'; a term I use to describe the practice of listening to the land as examined through indigenous Australian tribes and nations. I argue that this is the case because my experience of listening to the land represents an intuitive process. The notion of the dissolving of the self represents another way in which I have adapted a fundamental Chabad concept to frame my art practice. Chabad speaks of their belief in the annihilation of selfhood, or self-nullification, where in a spiritual state one's consciousness opens to God's infinite light and wisdom through having no self-awareness and ultimately becoming egoless. Contextualised through natural forces I speak of how listening to the land enables a dissolving of the self and of the ego. This results in a mysterious journeying, one which I have not been able to rationally articulate through this exegesis, but that is marked by slipping out of perceptual boundaries that demarcate the self and which leads to an uncovering of the spiritual shards.

The outcome of uncovering these shards is initially contextualised in chapter 2 through the notion of revelation. I explore ideas of revelation as something that can occur in different ways and operate on various levels. This notion is examined as a case study between the Jewish theological understanding of Moses Maimonides, in contrast to Hesse's concepts as they pertain to his characters of Goldmund and Narcissus. It is through this analysis that I uncover Hesse's understanding of 'the basic image' described though the character of Narcissus. The basic image, according to Narcissus, is held within the creative mind of the artist long before it finds its expression as an artwork. In agreement with Narcissus's assertion, I conclude that through wandering, these uncovered shards transform, also through a mysterious process, into basic images that are stored within the creative mind. It is only when these basic images are ready to be revealed, through another process that has remained outside of a conceptual framework, that they present as revelatory images. These images are thus the visual manifestation of these shards and it is these revelatory images that I bring into my art rituals.

As examined in chapters 1 and 5, while drawing on both Jewish rites of passage and the lineage of performance art, the concept of an art ritual is presented as distinct from both. While art as ritual, as with Jewish rites of passage and performance art, can create the framework to access an otherwise unattainable transcendent space, it is the intention of these art rituals that

distinguish them. Activated through the same methodological practice of wandering, yet this time out in the desert, these revelatory images are engaged with. However, this is not to enact a Jewish rite of passage, or to produce an artistic outcome, but rather to partake in a creative practice that can enact a rectification process—a returning of the shards anew.

Essential for this rectification process to occur is the need to construct a frame, and this ultimately uncovers the central ethical and creative considerations of my practice. Whether through the construction of a wall in *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, or building the table as frame in *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, these revelatory images speak of the need to construct and place—a frame—out in the desert. In this context, I explore whether forces contained within a constructed frame should be returned through a rectification process in accordance with Lurianic Kabbalistic principles or left to become autonomous through a proliferation of sensations which can lead to the potential explosion of the frame as conceptualised by Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Elizabeth Grosz. This concept speaks of the need to construct a frame to consciously manipulate natural forces in the pursuit of making art. Concluding that these chaotic shards must be returned to their cosmological source, leads to an examination of my contribution to practices and discourses in the field of art.

Contributing to the creative field in terms of the manifestation of ideas, I develop a methodological approach to uncovering the shards that distinguishes walking, and the lineage of art walkers, from the notion of *wandering*. Activating the wandering process represents a further contribution to the field of creative practice through enacting the concepts of listening to the land and the dissolving of the self that prioritise the intuitive and embodied experience. My sustained consideration of the creative process itself, represents my contribution to discourses in the field of art. Developing the concept of the *art ritual* in contrast to what I later define as a performative act to enact a Kabbalistic rectification process—a method by which these shards are returned—produces a very particular creative outcome. One with an emphasis on listening and the dissolving of self, as well as creative process over artistic outcomes. This approach to creative practice provides an answer to what I see as a critical impasse in the thinking of these philosophers and kabbalists, and a new way to understand my own art practice. One which espouses the intuitive relationship between the self, cosmological forces, and the creative process by removing the notion of a transcendental God and the artist from the centre of spiritual and creative practice. It is through recalibrating the role of the artist, combined with a conscious shift away from *art as performance* towards *art as ritual*, that I

suggest prevents the drying up and dwarfing of one's inner senses to which alone the mystery, one which according to the character of Goldmund, consists of a fusion of the greatest contrasts in the world and is only found in a truly sublime work of art, is accessible.[5]

Research Questions

My research has explored the following questions:

1. How to develop artworks derived from my own generative methodology of wandering and listening to the land?
2. How to develop a conceptual framework of my art practice as it relates to the traditions of art walkers and performance art?
3. How to explore the relationship between thought, revelation and the creative process as it relates to my art practice?
4. How to develop a conceptual framework and creative methodology drawing from Jewish mysticism and Deleuzian thought—in particular, principles from Lurianic Kabbalah that address the rectification of the shattered vessel—and the notions of cosmological forces and the construction of a frame as defined by Gilles Deleuze and Elizabeth Grosz.

[5] Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund: A Novel,* 185.

CHAPTER 1

TRUTH, AS WITH LAW AND JUSTICE, MUST SOMETIMES BE BLIND AND COLD FOR THE GREATER GOOD

This chapter begins with the Jewish ritual circumcision of my son. Discovering that *metzitzah b'peh* had been performed by the *Mohel* against my wishes, disrupts my reluctant acceptance of this traditional Jewish ritual practice. This opens my research into the doctrines and philosophies of the Chabad movement, which act as an authority over Jewish laws, traditions and justice within the orthodox and (to some extent) secular, Jewish community in Melbourne. This then leads to an examination of my artwork, *Truth is Marching* (2014), which is a response to these events and initial understandings. It is during the making of this work, that I learn that Chabad considers Jews to have a body and a soul. This then led to the revealing of Chabad's spiritual practices and philosophies. While I am repelled by Chabad's authority over religious, cultural and spiritual practice, as then examined, I become interested by many of the concepts that define their beliefs, and by the practices they have banned. Of key interest to me is one of Chabad's fundamental concepts, that of the unity between the duality of the body and soul, and the mind and heart. I also became interested in their belief in self-nullification and certain aspects of *Merkabah* mysticism. I examine why this is the case, arguing that these concepts seem to conceptualise many of my own beliefs and experiences within my art practice. To explore this contention further, I then investigate my video work, *Ocean Walk* (2011) as such an example. I conclude this chapter with a comparative analysis between *Truth is Marching* and *Ocean Walk*, as representative of two distinct ways of working. It is through this analysis that I also present a key concept in my art practice, that of partaking in art rituals which is initially defined and then examined. I begin this chapter with the story of Isaac's circumcision.

> *When God appeared before Abraham, who would become the father of nations and of the Jewish people, he commanded Abraham to circumcise himself and his offspring. As God states: 'Every male among you shall be circumcised…it shall be a sign of a covenant between Me and you. Whoever is eight days old shall be circumcised, every male*

throughout your generations."[6] *God then continues by declaring that this covenant of the flesh is to be an everlasting covenant, and that any uncircumcised Jewish male would be cut off from his people, for he had broken with God's covenant.*[7] *Following on from this, God then informs Abraham that in one year's time, he and Sarah will have a son, and that he will be called Isaac.*[8] *Upon hearing this, Abraham, initially responds by laughing for he is approaching one hundred years of age and his wife Sarah, who will become the mother of nations and of the Jewish people, is physically incapable of having children being of the age of ninety. Following this God then reiterates that this covenant will only be established with Isaac as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. The following year his son Isaac, meaning laughter, in Hebrew, is born.*

Isaac's circumcision and near sacrifice represented Abraham and Sarah's faith and devotion in God. Isaac remained a loving son to his mother, faithful and trusting of his father even when things did not make sense to him.[9] Isaac became a man of faith, a vital figure in the establishment of the Jewish people, central to which, was the circumcision of his sons. Unlike Isaac, with the ensuing birth of my first child, I did not want to remain faithful and trusting, for circumcision did not make sense to me. I viewed it as a barbaric and archaic tradition that had no relevance to contemporary life, and I was adamant that if I had a son, he would *not* be circumcised.

The importance of the covenant of the flesh, known as *Brit Milah* in Jewish law, is evident in the fact that it is practiced equally amongst secular and orthodox Jews.[10] As such, to many

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[6] Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, *The Bible: Authorized King James Version* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), (Genesis 17:11), 23.

[7] Ibid., (Genesis 17:14), 23.

[8] Ibid., (Genesis 17:19), 18.

[9] Ibid., (Genesis 22:6–9), 24.

[10] Using Israeli Jews as a sample, according to research conducted through the Pew Research Centre, Jews self-identify with one of four subgroups. They are: Haredi ("ultra-Orthodox"), Dati ("religious"), Masorti ("traditional") and Hiloni ("secular"). Haredim are the most religiously devout group regarding the Torah, both written and oral, as revealed by God on top of Mount Sinai. Orthodox Jews therefore follow a strict observance of Jewish Law, or halakha, which derives from the Torah, as well as subsequent Talmudic and Rabbinic law, and the customs and traditions compiled in the many books. Haredim men, generally living secluded lives from the rest of society, are likely to attend religious educational institutions (*yeshivas*), and dress in a very distinct, conservative fashion. Datiim**,** equally described as modern Orthodox Jews, are nearly as religiously devout as the Haredim, with firm certainty in their belief in God. They also equally follow a strict observance of Jewish Law. However, unlike the Haredim, they are much more integrated in modern Jewish society. Masortim are the most diverse of the four Jewish groups. They encompass a large middle ground between the two Orthodox groups and secular Jews. Religion is somewhat important in their lives, yet many are not strict in their observance of Jewish Law, for example, they would use public transport on the Sabbath. Hilonim, or secular Jews, mostly do not believe in a Jewish traditional understanding of God, or any idea of a God. Mostly proud to be Jewish, many partake in Jewish rituals, which include events that could be seen as cultural rather than religious, such as lighting Hanukkah candles or attending a Passover Seder. For secular Jews, being Jewish is as a matter of ancestry and culture rather than as a matter of religion. For

non-orthodox Jews, the failure to follow the commandment given to Abraham, does not hold the fear of breaking Jewish Law, but relates to the forewarning by God, that "any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people."[11]

So ingrained is the practice of *Brit Milah* amongst secular Jews, that to refuse can cause deep angst and conflict within families and the wider Jewish community, it can lead to being ostracised from one's own family and friends. While I was prepared to endure a conflict, my wife was not. Even though *Brit Milah* did not hold any religious significance to her, and even though she also understood it as barbaric, she saw the performing of *Brit Milah* as something very important to her cultural identity; to lineage, to family. Furthermore, she was not prepared to withhold this lineage from her son. As such, conflict defined this time. Although, with the birth of our son, the wall that had divided the space between the mythology of pregnancy and its reality, where the question of whether to circumcise had been neatly perched, began to dissolve. In this joyous yet equally fragile time, I did not want to upset my wife or our families, all who adamantly insisted that this tradition take place. And with that, I relented.

When my first son was just three days old, our Jewish obstetrician sat us down and recommended a *Mohel* to perform the circumcision.[12] However, the recommendation came with a caveat, that we were to insist that he would not directly suck blood from the wound of the penis—which unbeknown to us, was performed as part of the ritual. Like most secular Jews, we were quite oblivious to what the circumcision rituals entailed, beyond the removing of the foreskin and some Hebrew prayers. We vowed to make sure that something we deemed revolting and a potential health risk did not occur.

When the *Mohel* first came to our home to meet us and inspect the health of our son, it represented an overlap between our secular traditional values, in contrast to his religious traditions and following of Jewish law. My wife had insisted on using a *Mohel*, because this symbolised tradition and lineage. As the *Mohel* explained the ritual and various roles family

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further discussion, refer to: Kelsey Starr and David Masci, "In Israel, Jews are united by homeland but divided into very different groups," Pew Research Centre, accessed December 4 2019, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/08/in-israel-jews-are-united-by-homeland-but-divided-into-very-different-groups.

[11] *The Book of Genesis*, 17, 14, 23.

[12] Traditionally a Mohel is a Jewish man trained in practice of Brit Milah the "covenant of circumcision."

members would be honoured with, he reassured us (when confronted) that he would not be drawing any blood directly from our son's penis.

When the day of the circumcision arrived, I made sure to remind the *Mohel* what he agreed to. Even so, perhaps with an innate sense of distrust, I chose to record the event under the guise that it was for an artwork (ironically it did become the first major artwork for this PhD). During the ceremony, I noticed nothing concerning about the *Mohel's* actions. The following day, however, out of curiosity, I had a look at the video. It was then that I noticed the *Mohel's* head bob up and down in what would have been a microsecond. As I moved through the footage frame by frame, it was clear to me that the *Mohel* had performed this act. When I confronted the *Mohel* and made him watch the video, he first denied and then later claimed it was an unconscious act. In that moment, this man of God became a liar, and the frame which held every doubt and suspicion I had about Jewish culture and religion became unstable.

Figure 1: *Metzitzah b'peh* being performed on my son during his *Brit Milah*, video still, 2014.

Furious, through a series of occurrences, coupled with the threat of going to the media, I ended up at the house of the most senior rabbi of Australia, a Chabad leader.[13] Acknowledging that the *Mohel* should not have performed *metzitzah b'peh* against our wishes, the conversation quickly moved away from questions regarding admonishment.[14] Over a series of meetings, we discussed what I came to understand was a complex issue. I felt listened to by the rabbi, honoured to be engaging with such a prominent figure, in what I believed was a rich philosophical and ethical discussion. It concluded with the rabbi promising to discuss my major concerns with the head rabbi of Israel in an upcoming meeting. That clarity would be provided on whether alternative forms of *metzitzah b'peh* were considered *halachically* acceptable, and my key demand that a detailed consent form would be provided to new parents.[15]

The response from Israel was deeply disappointing. All that was agreed on was that they require all *Mohelim* to refer customers to their website. Here, they would give a brief explanation of the *Brit Milah* and encourage people to have a full and open discussion with their *Mohel* of choice in relation to procedures and method. Expressing my deep disappointment at what I viewed was a token concession, the head rabbi of Australia stated via email, that it was a small but positive step. He concluded this email by reminding me that there are two components to one's spiritual journey in the service of God; the fear and love of God. His final sentence in that email then stated: "Tradition as with law and justice must sometimes be blind and cold … for the greater good."

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[13] Chabad is an Orthodox Jewish Hasidic movement. The movement took its name from Lyubavichi, the Russian town that served as the movement's headquarters for over a century. There are over 200,000 adherents to the movement, which follow and interpret classical Judaic writings and Jewish mysticism, especially the Zohar and the Kabbalah of Rabbi Isaac Luria. Chabad philosophy is rooted in the teachings of Rabbis Yisroel ben Eliezer, (the Baal Shem Tov), founder of Hasidism. Chabad is well known within secular Jewish communities for its outreach activities. Initiated by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994), followers are encouraged to reach out to non-observant Jews to adopt Orthodox Jewish observance. As such, Chabad outreach includes activities promoting the practice of Jewish commandments, as well as other forms of Jewish outreach including the performing of *Brit Milah*. David Eliezrie, *The Secret of Chabad: Inside the World's Most Successful Jewish Movement* (Toby Press LLC, 2015).

[14] The *mitzvah* of *Bris Milah* (ritual circumcision) is one of the most important *Mitzvot* of the Torah. It is comprised of three steps; *Milah* (circumcision), *periah* (uncovering the corona), and *metzitza* (suction of the blood). According to Chabad belief *metzitza* is to be done with the mouth. For further discussion refer to: *Metzitzah b'Peh: Why It Matters*, JLI's Machon Shmuel Research Institute, 1, accessed June 4, 2014, https://www.machonshmuel.com/index.php/papers.

[15] *Halacha* refers to the body of Jewish laws supplementing the scriptural law and forming especially the legal part of the Talmud. Some rabbinical counsels, including the Rabbinical Council of America, advocates methods that do not involve contact between the *Mohel's* mouth and the open wound, they include the use of a sterile syringe, suction tube, and gauze. For further discussion refer to: Eliyahu Fink and Eliyahu Federma, Controversial Circumcisions, *Haaretz News*, 2013, accessed September 15, 2014, https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-for-n-y-hasidim-medical-knowledge-is-power-1.5341728].

With these final words from the head rabbi of Australia, the already unstable frame shattered. Contained within the frame was my understanding of spirituality, culture, Jewish religion and identity. Shattered were fragments of these understandings. The research for this PhD was initiated with the circumcision of my son. It had now evolved into seeking to uncover and make sense of these fragments. This process began with the making of the work, *Truth is Marching*.

The work as presented at C3 gallery consisted of a wooden 'throne' positioned towards the back wall of a long rectangular space.[16] Projected onto the throne was an image of myself slowly lifting my infant son as an offering. On the opposing wall was another projection of a fly being slowly entrapped within the web of a spider, a symbol of how I felt. Throughout the space was a surround sound system which played a loop track of people from various ages and ethnicities repeating the phrase: "Truth as with law and justice must sometimes be blind and cold for the greater good." While the three components of this work express the emotions and thoughts experienced after my son's circumcision, the focus for this research, based upon its direct influence on further works, is the throne.

In Jewish tradition, it is customary to designate a chair, 'throne,' for Elijah the Prophet, the "Angel of the Covenant," who is believed to visit every circumcision ceremony.[17] As told in the book of Kings, the reasons for this throne relates to the biblical period during the reign of King Ahab (740 BCE), when Jewish people were banned from following the *Torah* and performing its *mitzvot*, including the *mitzvah* of circumcision. God then reveals himself to Elijah, who had demanded that Jews repent and be punished by God for not performing the *Brit Milah*, and vows that whenever my children make this sign in their flesh, you will be present.[18] It is for this reason that the sages instituted that there be a seat of honour for Elijah at every circumcision.

It is a custom that the father places the baby on the lap of the *sandek* who will hold the baby during the circumcision while sitting on the throne of Elijah.[19] It was I (Isaac) who placed our baby in the hands of the *sandek*, my father, the son of Isaac, the name bestowed upon me

[16] C3 gallery, Abbotsford Convent, Collingwood, Melbourne. 29 October–15 November 2014.
[17] Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 201.
[18] Daniel Matt, *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition. Volume Two* (Stanford University Press, 2004), 89.
[19] A *sandek* is a person who is given the highest honour at a Brit Milah ceremony. The main role of a *sandek* is to be seated during the ceremony and hold the baby on their knees. For further discussion on the role of the *sandek* refer to: Fred Kogen, "The Bris Milah: Defining Sandek", accessed July 2018, http://www.ebris.com/bris_stuff_sandek.html.

Figure 2: Isaac Greener: *Truth is Marching*, installation view of throne, C3 gallery, 2014, timber, projection, https://vimeo.com/238267193.

Figure 3: Isaac Greener: *Truth is Marching*, installation view of entrapped fly, C3 gallery, 2014, projection, https://vimeo.com/110863691.

Figure 4: Isaac Greener: *Truth is Marching*, soundscape, C3 gallery, 2014. https://vimeo.com/111089841.

to honour my late grandfather. As such, the throne was a personal symbol of tradition and lineage, as well as representing what I viewed as the power of the gaze. The throne of Elijah, as a symbol not only of a higher power, but one that was watching us to ensure that the covenant was done *halachically*, according to Chabad belief.

According to Chabad doctrine, the *mitzvah* of *Brit Milah* is one of the most important *mitzvot* of the Torah and is comprised of three steps; *milah* (circumcision), *periah* (uncovering the corona), and *metzitza* (suction of the blood).[20] While these steps are mentioned in the *Mishna* and the *Talmud*, neither provide comprehensive guidelines for the performance of

[20] Translated from Hebrew, mitzvah means commandment. There are exactly 613 *mitzvot* (plural of mitzvah) given in the Torah at Mt Sinai. The 613 commandments are divided into two categories: 365 negative commandments and 248 positive commandments. In other words, they are Gods commandments which tell the Jewish people what He wants them to do, or not to do in their daily lives. In common usage, a mitzvah also refers to "a good deed," a charitable, beneficial act performed by another person; *Metzitzah b'Peh: Why It Matters*, 1.

milah, *periah* and *metzitza*.[21] However, Chabad argues that the procedure has been preserved through the *Torah she-Baal Peh* (oral tradition), and from one *Mohel* to the next.[22]

This is confirmed by numerous *Rishonim* in numerous *Mishna* texts, that *metzitza* is to be done with the mouth.[23] Chabad also sites Kabbalistic works, to argue that there is a mystical importance and mystical dimension of the *metzitza* being performed specifically with the mouth. Also arguing that *metzitza* saves the child from spiritual harm and danger, they cite Rabbi Yoseph Gikatilla (1248–1305) who explains how *metzitza* serves an essential role in eradicating the *Kelipah* of the foreskin.[24] As such, when Elijah watched the *Mohel* to make sure that the covenant was done *halachically*, he was making sure that the *Mohel* drew blood directly from the wound of the penis with his mouth. To not do so, relates directly to the fear of God that the chief rabbi was referring to.

The fear of God relates to the fear of punishment for doing the wrong thing, the fear of separation from God due to a state of sustained reverence, and the annihilation of selfhood.[25] In other words, while the *Mohel* should not have performed *metzitzah b'peh* against our wishes, a point that will be addressed later, he would have felt compelled to perform *metzitzah b'peh* because if not, he would be considered a *Rasha*, one guilty of a crime, wicked (hostile to God), and guilty of sin (against God).[26] He would have also incurred the penalty of *karet*.[27] What equally surprised me however, was the Chabad doctrine of the annihilation of selfhood, that one can become so overawed by God's majesty, that he has no self-awareness at all, becomes egoless.[28] As such, when the *Mohel* explained his actions as being "unconscious," he

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[21] The Talmud, derived from the Hebrew verb 'to teach', is the comprehensive written version of the Jewish oral law and the subsequent commentaries on it. It originates from the second-century CE. The Talmud is the source from which the code of Jewish *Halakhah* (law) is derived. It is made up of the *Mishnah* and the *Gemara*. The *Mishnah* is the original written version of the oral law and the *Gemara* is the record of the rabbinic discussions following this writing down. For further discussion go to: Geoffrey Dennis, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Myth, Magic and Mysticism: Talmud*.

[22] *Metzitzah b'Peh: Why It Matters*, 2.

[23] Ibid., 3. The term *Rishonim* refers to head rabbis and legal scholars who lived approximately during the eleventh to fifteenth centuries. They were the leaders in the domain of halakhic ruling and interpretation of the Torah.

[24] Ibid. The term *Kelipa*, or *Kelipot*, meaning literally "shell" or "bark" is another term for evil and impurity. For further discussion go to: Geoffrey Dennis, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Myth, Magic and Mysticism:* Kelipot.

[25] Louis Jacobs, *A Concise Companion to the Jewish Religion*. Abridged and revised ed, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 21.

[26] Charles Omole, *Secrets of Biblical Wealth Transfer*. (California: Xulon Press, Incorporated, 2005) 24.
For a further discussion on the term Rasha go to: Shneur Zalman, Lessons in Tanya: The Tanya of R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi, (Likutei Amarim, Ch 12).

[27] The punishment of *karet* (excision) refers to death at the hands of Heaven, but some argue that it means the cutting off of one's seed, whether by death without offspring or through the death of the latter. For further information see: Donald Wold*, The Meaning of the Biblical Penalty of Kareth,* (University of California, Berkeley, 1978).

[28] Louis Jacobs, "Loving and Fearing God: Should Jews feel one emotion over the other—or both equally?", *My Jewish Learning*, accessed November 2017, https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/loving-and-fearing-god/.

was referring to the annihilation of his selfhood. By claiming to have been in a trance like state, he was in fact relieving himself of all personal responsibility, through this higher fear of God.

To perform circumcision is a commandment from God, as revealed to Moses and contained in the Torah.[29] In contrast, the performing of *metzitzah b'peh* comes from laws instituted by rabbis, as found in the *Mishna*, *Talmud* and in Kabbalistic text. Laws are also derived from long standing customs. When the rabbi stated that, "tradition as with law and justice must sometimes be blind and cold for the greater good," the traditions and laws he was referring to relate directly to laws and customs. The Jewish concept of justice as examined by Edward Kessler, is a justice within Jewish teachings based on biblical statements such as, "justice, justice you shall pursue."[30] According to *Midrashic* interpretations, justice is established when humankind acts in accordance with God's laws and imitates God's attribute of justice.[31]

I had come to understand what the rabbi meant when referring to the fear of God and to tradition, law and justice. Yet what still troubled me was the rest of his statement, about being blind and cold for the greater good. Initially experienced as an emotional, visceral response, my research led me to realise that this statement can also be understood as constituting law. In Chabad belief, in every generation there are certain rabbis who, because of their great scholarship, piety and observance, are generally accepted as religious leaders and authorities. They are responsible for the proper observance of law and matters of Jewish thought. These rabbis, as stated in the Torah, have the authority to teach and to make judgments about the law, secure in the promise of divine guidance. As it is written, "consider what you do, for you judge not for man, but for God, and He is with you in your decision."[32] Not only do these rabbis have the authority to make laws, the Torah also states that, "you must observe all that they decide for you."[33] It is this phrase that I argue is key to understanding what the rabbi meant by being, "blind and cold for the greater good."

[29] There are five foundational books of Moses that constitute the Torah. They are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
[30] Edward Kessler, *The Jewish Concept of Justice* (London: The Way Publications, 2000), 69.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, (2 Chronicles 19:6), 541.
[33] Ibid., Deuteronomy 17:10, 239.

To further contextualise this phrase, the rabbi clearly acknowledged that the *Mohel* should not have performed *metzitzah b'peh* against our wishes. When we spoke of admonishment, he even supported my initial wish of reporting him to The Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria. How can this be the case? This is because in *Halacha* there is a dictum that states that, "the law of the land is the law."[34] Going against our wishes was considered breaking civil law, but as soon as it became a broader question of *Halacha* and consent, Orthodox Jews are not obligated to adhere to any civil laws of the land, if they contradict the Torah. So how do they ensure that civil laws do not contradict the Torah? They make sure that the masses remain blind and cold for the greater good.

I have addressed the concept of fear as referred to in the chief rabbi's email. The concept of love, however, is twofold. First, is a love of God in terms of the practical details of religious life, the practice of the precepts and the study of the Torah. Secondly, is the love of God in its mystical sense of intense longing for the nearness of God and for communion with Him.[35] In order for Chabad members to experience this (second) love, they must have, as claimed by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, a "profound love and responsibility for every Jew."[36] It was this edict, that led to the creation of a worldwide Jewish outreach program by Chabad, where they seek to attract non-observant Jews to adopt Orthodox Jewish observance. As such, our *Mohel's* motivation for performing *metzitzah b'peh* was because of a fear and love of God, and a love (obligation) towards his fellow Jew.

[34] Emanuel Quint, *A Restatement of Rabbinic Civil Law: Laws of the paid bailee, laws of the lessee, laws regarding labor, laws regarding borrowing of objects, laws regarding stealing, laws regarding robbery* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing House Ltd, 1990), 301–358.

[35] Louis Jacobs, "Loving and Fearing God: Should Jews feel one emotion over the other—or both equally?*"* accessed November 2017, https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/loving-and-fearing-god/.

[36] Yisroel Shmotkin, "A Boundless Capacity to Love Unconditionally", *Chabad*, accessed March 2015, https://www.chabad.org/therebbe/article_cdo/aid/4228505/jewish/A-Boundless-Capacity-to-Love-Unconditionally.htm.

Figure 5 (left): Franco-Flemish oak throne chair in the gothic style, 19th century, timber.

Figure 6 (right): Daniel Chester French, *Abraham Lincoln*, Lincoln memorial, Washington DC, 1920, Georgia marble.

In building the throne for the work at C3, I wanted it to represent these laws, traditions and customs, as well as the power of the gaze, and the power of rabbinical authority. I also however, wanted the throne to speak more broadly, to the power of any institution, whether that be religious, political or cultural. My research revealed many examples of chairs that embody this power. They include gothic style ornate chairs that are still present in many churches today and the iconic sculpture of Abraham Lincoln posed in a position of power. With these inspirations in mind, I began to formulate ideas and designs for the throne. I wanted it to be handmade and ornate to represent power. I also wanted the throne to have a high timber back with no ornate trimmings, to allude to, but without directly referencing these gothic thrones. As I was building the throne, however, it became apparent that the high back panel could only be read as a gothic representation. So, I began to lower it. As I did this, the reading of the throne shifted from gothic to something that I believed represented the institutional power that I wished to convey.

It was during the making of the throne, as I researched more about the Chabad movement, that I learnt that Chabad considers Judaism to have a body and a soul. The body is considered *Halacha*, the laws that govern the way that people live, including daily life practices. The soul of Judaism by way of contrast, is called *Kabbalah* (the hidden wisdom), amongst other names. The soul of a Jewish person relates to spiritual dimensions; the esoteric, the transcendental and the mysterious. This led me to Ezekiel's vision of God's throne.

The book of Ezekiel describes a grand vision where Ezekiel rides a chariot drawn by four divine creatures, through multiple layered divine realms where Ezekiel sees the likeness of a throne, upon which appears the likeness of the God.[37] The story of Ezekiel led to the practice of *Merkavah* mysticism, named for the *merkavah*, or chariot, upon which Ezekiel rode. *Ma'asei Merkavah*, *working of the Chariot*, is the modern name given by Gershom Scholem (1897–1982) to describe the first distinctly mystical movement in Jewish history and to the associated *Hekhalot* (palaces) text, that he discovered.[38] Appearing following the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E, it was practiced until the beginning of the fourteenth-century when it was banned. Combining mystical and magical elements, this practice (as further examined in chapter 2) was centered on visions and taught both of the possibility of making a sublime, mystical ascent to God and of the ability of man to draw down divine powers to earth by summoning and controlling the use of God's name.[39] The goal of the ascent varies from text to text. According to Rachel Elior, in some cases it was to have a visionary glimpse of God, to "Behold God in His Glory," by being temporarily transformed into a heavenly being.[40]

Such a journey using what was considered white magic, was considered fraught with great danger, and it was only the adept and worthiest of sages (the elite), who were permitted to practice *Merkabah.* As the middle ages approached, however, the practice and discussion of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* slowly became contraband as the rationalist elite argued that it was a practice of impure magic. An early example of this is found in the *Guide for the Perplexed* (1190), where the Medieval Jewish philosopher, Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon (1135–1204), commonly known as Maimonides, states that these doctrines should not be taught even in the

[37] Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, (Ezekiel 1:26), 905.
[38] Geoffrey Dennis, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Myth, Magic and Mysticism: Second Edition*. (Llewellyn Worldwide, Limited, 2016), Ma'asei Merkava, Kobo eBook.
[39] Moshe Idel, *On Talismanic Language in Jewish Mysticism*. (Diogenes 43, no. 2 1995), 35; See also: Rachel Elior, "*The concept of God in hekhalot literature*," in *Binah: studies in Jewish thought*, ed Dan Joseph (New York: Praeger, 1989), 104.
[40] Elior, 104.

presence of one's pupil, "except he be wise and intelligent."[41] The pupil must also have "a mind of his own and understand it by himself," and then only the headings of the chapters are to be given to him.[42] The perils associated with *Ma'aseh Merkabah*, such as blasphemy, idolatry and sickness, ultimately led to the banning of the practice by the Hassidic movements. This led to the founding of *Kabbalah Iyunit*—theoretical Kabbalah.

According to Chabad, and as told by Shneur Zalman, it is the mind that is the gateway to God rather than to ascend and manipulate forces, as was with *Ma'aseh Merkabah*.[43] A such, he elevated the mind above the heart, while still arguing that wisdom and understanding are the "father" and "mother" from which love and fear are born.[44] Zalman placed Kabbalah and *Hasidism* on a rational basis, teaching that as the brain must rule over the heart, emotions must be led by the mind. Thus, Chabad teaches a rational mysticism that enables the soul to affect the world through an internalised psychological experience, by connecting to the esoteric, mystical, and ultimately God, through divinity, daily acts of prayer, study, and performing *mitzvot.*

There is also however, another reason why practical Kabbalah was banned. Chabad also internalised Kabbalah through the psychology of cleaving to the *Tzadik*.[45] In Chabad doctrine, it is the Tzadik's responsibility to channel divine spiritual and physical forces to his followers by altering the Will of God (uncovering a deeper will), not through metaphysical emanations, but through his own *deveikut* and self-nullification.[46] In other words, the authority of Chabad did not just relate to laws, tradition and justice, but also to the controlling of the mystical and esoteric.

As I could not relate to an authority of Chabad over laws, traditions and justice, I could neither relate to a rationalised and institutionalised mysticism. I wished therefore for the throne

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[41] Moses Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed, trans. Michael Friedlander (Cosimo: Incorporated, 2007), 44.
[42] Maimonides, 44.
[43] Shneur Zalman, *Lessons in Tanya: The Tanya of R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi, elucidated. Rabbi Yosef Wineberg,* trans. Sholom Wineberg and Levi Wineberg (Kehot Publication Society, 1998), Likutei Amarim, Ch 13.
[44] Ibid.
[45] *Tzadik*, or righteous one, is a term used by Chabad to describe the Rebbes (masters), the past leaders of the movement. For further discussion on this matter see: Geoffrey Dennis, *The Encyclopaedia of Jewish Myth, Magic and Mysticism* (*Tzadik*).
[46] Haran C. Smith, *Tuning the Soul Music as a Spiritual Process in the Teachings of Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav* (Leiden, Brill 2010), 104. The term *Deveikut* (clinging or cleaving to God) refers to the mystical communion or union with God, usually as an outcome of meditative prayer or spiritual exercises. For further discussion on this matter see: Geoffrey Dennis, *The Encyclopaedia of Jewish Myth, Magic and Mysticism* (*Deveikut*). The term 'Self-nullification' or *Bittul ha-Yesh/Bittul ha-Nefesh* refers to the nullification, or submission of ego/selfhood in order to achieve Deveikut. For further discussion on this matter see: Geoffrey Dennis, *The Encyclopaedia of Jewish Myth, Magic and Mysticism* (*Bittul ha-Yesh*).

to symbolise the power that any institution, like Chabad, can have over all aspects of life. Yet at the same time, the importance Chabad places in the unity between the duality of body and soul, mind and heart as one of their fundamental concepts of Judaism, intrigued me. So too did the idea of self-nullification and certain aspects of *Merkabah* mysticism. It was because I believed that all of these aspects were (unconsciously at this stage) being experienced and conceptualised within my art practice. An example of this can be seen in my video work, *Ocean Walk* (2008), which was made prior to the candidature. It has a pertinent relevance to the processes that have been implemented throughout this candidature and makes for an important discussion that informs the approach I take in my artworks.

It was a cold, windy winters day as I walked with my dogs along the beach. I loved these days because I found comfort in the isolation of the environment, and because nature demanded something from me that pristine, calm days could not. On calm days, I would often walk consumed within a memory or thought, while staying oblivious to my surrounds. But on wintery days, nature demanded of me to be present. The cold would bring me back into my body, and the burning and roaring of the wind through my ears would extricate incessant

Figure 7: Isaac Greener, *Ocean Walk*, Port Phillip Bay, Sandringham, video still, 2008.

thinking. And with that, I would arrive into the moment. On this day, I noticed a gannet dive below the surface of the water. Like noticing a single insect camouflaged within the foliage of a tree, to then realise that they were in fact countless, I awakened to a similar image. There were hundreds of these birds, moving through the sky as wave-like clouds until they plunged towards the surface. Captivated, I ran home to find my camera and recorded it. I did not think about it for many months after that day.

At a time when the use of a recording device was still new to my art practice, I booked a video camera from my art school. I had no plan for it, but had borrowed it that weekend in the hope of finishing an impending assignment. Hopelessly searching my mind for ideas, my anxiety built to a point where I began to feel out of control. Needing a break, I went to the beach to clear my mind. It was another cold and windy day, and in a singular moment (as I had experienced numerous times before, but had always struggled to explain) I could see a visual image come through me. I could see the gannets dive-bombing from the world above

Figure 8: Isaac Greener, *Ocean Walk*, Port Phillip Bay, Sandringham, video still, 2008. https://vimeo.com/88625874.

the waterline into the one below it, and I could see myself walking from my house straight into the bay—to that point in-between worlds.

With the camera encased in a ziplock bag, attached to an improvised harness that pointed the lens towards my face, I walked to the shoreline. As I began to feel the cold water penetrate my clothing and as the water moved up my body like a momentary horizon line, I began to feel a dissolution of the self. As I was about to lose my footing and be consumed by the weightlessness of the water, I reached that point between worlds. Taking a deep breath, I submerged and dissolved, not by journeying into my personal psyche, but by propelling my awareness laterally into the depths of the landscape—slipping out of the perceptual boundaries

that demarcated the self—to make contact with and to learn from natural forces; the more than human field.[47] The explanation of these natural forces is discussed in-depth in chapter 2.

Whilst it is not my intention to offer a qualitative value of these works, *Ocean Walk* and *Truth is Marching* represent two distinct ways of working. A vital concept in my own art practice is the experience of revelatory visual images coming through me. I discuss this notion in greater depth in chapter 4. While in both cases revelatory images came through me, in *Truth is Marching* these visual symbols were explored through a rational, conceptual mind. While instigated by an emotionally driven and visceral response to the performing of *metzitzah b'peh* on my son, *Truth is Marching* did not lead to the dissolving of the self. The dissolving of the self is another central concept in my art practice, examined in chapter 2. Rather, these revelatory images were explored through the thinker, whose function it is to give shape and form, to determine and represent, the nature of these images through concepts and ideas.[48] While the concept of *the thinker* will be further examined in chapter 2, it was this aspect of the self that explored these revelatory images through *Truth is Marching* and equally led to my deep interest in Chabad's doctrines and philosophies. In *Ocean Walk*, the revelatory image of walking into the bay led to, at this stage of my art practice, the (unconscious) partaking in an art ritual.

An art ritual is distinct from a "non- or pre-artistic religious ritual."[49] A religious ritual in the context of Jewish religious traditions involves rituals that are grounded in Jewish law. These rituals consist of a framework of *mitzvot*, rabbinic laws and traditions, as previously discussed, that dictate daily life rituals like keeping the Sabbath.[50] They also however govern significant occasions in a person's life, marking the boundaries of identity, that can be

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[47] David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012), 9–10.
[48] Ibid., 17–45.
[49] Grosz, A, E. *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 98.
[50] The meaning of the Sabbath or Shabbat, observed from Friday evening to Saturday evening as understood through an orthodox Jewish perspective has two broad themes. Firstly, it is a day of rest for God "rested" from the work of Creation on the seventh day. Therefore, Jewish people rest on that day to acknowledge God as the Creator of the universe. Secondly, they rest as a reminder of the Exodus from Egypt, the redemption from slavery. Resting therefore acknowledges God's liberating power in one's life and in the history of the Jewish people. An intrinsic feature of rest (*m'nuchah*) is the prohibition against doing any manner of work (*m' lachah*), a prohibition that the Torah mentions no less than six times. The Torah never defines the concept of "work" in precise terms. That task was accomplished by the Rabbis of the Talmudic tradition. In my family, as with many other cultural and secular Jews that I know, the Sabbath is not marked by a full day of rest or prohibition. Rather the Sabbath is marked by having a Shabbat dinner on the Friday night. While many Shabbat rituals are observed, like saying a prayer over the wine, it is observed to connect with one's Jewish lineage, to family and friends.

understood as a rite of passage, like birth (*Brit Milah*), coming of age (*Bat or Bar-Mitzvah*), and marriage.[51] These rites of passage which are participatory, structured and with multiple stages, are enacted to create and access a transcendent space, otherwise not accessible within the mundane of the everyday. I have partaken in all of these rites of passage, including the *Brit Milot* of my three sons. To me, they have always marked a ritual that is culturally Jewish, rather than a religious act. This perhaps explains why these rituals, while powerful symbols of growth and change, never led to a transcendental experience otherwise unattainable within the mundane of the everyday.

In contrast, the art rituals which enact revelatory images do not consist of any specific Jewish ritual framework. Rather, engaging with these images, most often within the natural landscape, demands an intuitive listening and speaking to the land. It is this process that leads to the dissolving of the self through engaging with natural forces. As such, these visual revelations represent the means from which to participate in these art rituals. In this context, the image of walking into the water was engaged through the artist—the sensing, engaging and questioning type who expresses his observations and thoughts in pictures and images rather than concepts. While the concept of the artist will also be further examined in chapter 2, it was this aspect of the self that explored these revelatory images through *Ocean Walk* which led to a deeper understanding of the self.

This chapter began with the Jewish ritual circumcision of my son. Discovering that *metzitzah b'peh* had been performed by the *Mohel* against my wishes, led to a deep questioning of my Jewish identity and relationship, with both Jewish religious and cultural institutions and practices. This led to an examination of the Chabad's doctrines and philosophies which act as an authority over Jewish laws, traditions and justice within the orthodox and to some extent, secular, Jewish community in Melbourne. As then explored, it was during the making of the throne for the artwork *Truth is Marching* that I learnt that Chabad considers Jews to have a body and a soul. This led to a revealing of Chabad's spiritual practices and philosophies. It was here that I learnt about the practice of *Merkabah* mysticism and its prohibition which led to the founding of *Kabbalah Iyunit*—theoretical Kabbalah as practiced by Chabad.

Repelled by Chabad's authority over religious, cultural and spiritual practice, as examined, I was also intrigued by many of the concepts that define their beliefs, and by the practices they

[51] A bar mitzvah is a Jewish coming of age ritual for boys when they turn 13. A bat mitzvah is a Jewish coming of age ritual for girls when they turn 12.

had banned. Of key interest was one of Chabad's fundamental concepts, that of the unity between the duality of body and soul, and mind and heart. I was also intrigued by their belief in self-nullification and certain aspects of *Merkabah* mysticism. As then examined, they had captured my attention because they seemed to conceptualise many of my own beliefs and experiences within my art practice. I then examined my video work, *Ocean Walk* as such an example. This chapter concluded with a comparative analysis between *Truth is Marching* and *Ocean Walk* as representative of two distinct ways of working. It was during this analysis that a central concept in my art practice, that of partaking in art rituals, was explored.

CHAPTER 2

THOUGHT, REVELATION AND THE CREATIVE PROCESS

This chapter examines the relationship between thought, revelation and the creative process. I contextualise this relationship as a dynamic movement between external forces and forces moving through the self. Internal forces will initially be defined through an analysis of Chabad's doctrine of the body and soul, and Hesse's conception of the duality of the thinker and the artist. The examination of external forces begins with Chabad's belief in an immanent and transcendental God, which is then followed by Maimonides theology, which separates a transcendental God with natural forces. Maimonides theology is also used to examine, what I suggest, is a correlation between revelation and the creative process. Understanding however, that I had been incorrect to have made such a link, I re-examine Maimonides theology through the character of Narcissus. It is through this discussion that I come to the realisation that while I can align myself to Maimonides understanding of 'nature' as a force, I do not believe in a transcendental God. This leads me to Baruch Spinoza and his belief that God and Nature are a singular reality. Following this, my understanding of external forces is realised as being that of nature and natural processes. With this understanding, I then examine the relationship between these natural forces and the artmaking process.

Contextualised through Narcissus's comprehension of the basic image, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the plane of composition, I initially explore how these forces can be transferred into an artwork. I then contend that both Elizabeth Grosz, who references Deleuze and Guattari, and the character of Goldmund, both speak of a movement occurring between natural forces and the forces within the living body. However, while Goldmund speaks of these forces moving through the artist, Grosz contends that the artist is at the centre of the creative process through the manipulation of these natural forces into the frame. Examining their shared belief that an artwork can become autonomous from the artist; I then explore Grosz's assertion that the autonomous frame can explode and shatter. I then question whether these forces should be manipulated and allowed to explode. This line of questioning leads into the key ethical and creative considerations in my practice—the principle of a rectification process, wherein natural forces are returned, rather than the frame itself

containing these forces being allowed to explode. The rectification process is examined through Jewish mysticism.

I became interested in the concept of a duality between opposing aspects of the self in movement with external forces through the characters of Narcissus and Goldmund in Herman Hesse's novel, *Narcissus and Goldmund* (1931). Set in the Middle Ages, the story begins with the protagonists meeting in a monastery as children. Narcissus and Goldmund are similar to each other on the basis of their superior intelligence and other outstanding talents, they are also distinct from one another through their opposing physical and mental constitutions.[52] Narcissus is portrayed as the thinker, representing the mind and body, and becomes the Abbott of the monastery. He is an introvert, lives in the paternal realm of spirit, one associated with rational, scholarly pursuits, and science. It is the thinker's function to give shape and form, to determine and represent, the nature of the world and God through concepts and ideas.[53]

In Herman Hesse's philosophical book, *Ein Stuckchen Theologie* (1932), he describes the person who is a rational type as one who knows the meaning of the world and of his life.[54] The rational type will also either despise art and nature or he will, through superstition, place too high a value on them.[55] By way of contrast, Goldmund is portrayed as the artist, representing the heart and the soul. He leaves the cloister in his youth for a life of wandering and artmaking. Goldmund is an extrovert, the sensing, engaging and questioning type, who lives in the maternal realm of the senses, nature, and the flesh. It is the artist who expresses his observations and thoughts in pictures and images rather than concepts. The artist is described as the pious type in *Ein Stuckchen Theologie*. While valuing reason, the artist does not see reason as an adequate means for gaining knowledge and therefore mistrusts the intellect.[56]

The differences in constitution between Narcissus and Goldmund are represented in the novel in terms of personality types. Verne Rudebusch highlights this, by reflecting on the influence Carl Jung had on Hesse.[57] Through Mark Boulby's analysis of the text in which he

[52] Hermann Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund: A Novel*, trans. Ursule Molinaro (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 20.
[53] Ibid., 17–45.
[54] Hermann Hesse, "Ein Stickchen Theologie," in Mein Glaube (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971), 69–72. Examined through Verne Rudebusch, *A Thematic Analysis of Hermann Hesse's "Narcissus and Goldmund."* (Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati, Microfilms, 1975), 35.
[55] Ibid., Hesse, Ein Stickchen Theologie 69–72 and Rudebusch, 36.
[56] Ibid., Hesse, Ein Stickchen Theologie 69–72 and Rudebusch, 35.
[57] Rudebusch, 41–55.

argues that *Narcissus and Goldmund* represents part of Hesse's confession, a fragment of an encompassing, lifelong autobiography, I understood that these characters in fact represent two conflicting aspects of the one self, in this case, Hesse.[58] While the focus of this research is not directed towards an analysis of personality types, I was intrigued by what I saw as a correlation between Chabad's understanding of 'the self,' composed of the duality of mind and heart, body and soul, and Hesse's conception of the duality of the thinker and the artist. As I was to learn however, I had been incorrect up until this point of my research to impose dualistic interpretations onto Chabad's concept of the unity between body and soul, mind and heart. This is because Chabad teaches the concept of a false dualism.[59]

As Rabbi Menachem Schneerson (1902–1994) teaches, all paradoxes between spirituality and physicality—light and darkness, good and evil, body and soul—represent dual modes of divine manifestation, however are, in fact, false opposites. This is because they do not exist independently of each other, and are not two completely different substances.[60] This is because God is considered the immanent core of all reality, the creator of everything in his image; the one singular substance that fills the finite realm immanently (*memale kol almin*) and infinitely transcends it (*sovev kol almin*) creating this cosmic singularity.[61] In other words, according to Chabad everything is divine, everything has either a mind or soul including the inanimate. The conflict of duality as such, only happens when one starts to believe that the finite world is something other than God as the immanent core of all reality.[62]

By way of contrast, Hesse's conception of the artist and the thinker are clearly presented as diametrically opposed aspects of the self. The question this presents, is whether Chabad's views represent a universal Jewish understanding of God as both immanent and transcendental—the central tenant to the concept of a false duality? This led me back to the writings of Maimonides and his concept that God and nature are distinct.[63] Through Maimonides theology, I also found that I could make another correlation between thought,

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[58] Mark Boulby, *Narziss und Goldmand, Hermann Hesse: His Mind and Art* (New York: Cornell University, 1967), 207–243.
[59] Eli Rubin and Max Abugov, "Do Chabad Teachings Say Anything About the Mind-Body Problem?", *Chabad*, accessed November 10, 2019. https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3432275/jewish/Do-Chabad-Teachings-Say-Anything-About-the-Mind-Body-Problem.htm.
[60] Menachem Schneersohn, "*Inyannah Shel Torat Ha-chassidut*" in *Sefer Ha-erchim Habad vol. 1* (Kehot Publication Society: New York, 1970) section 19, 5771.
[61] Rubin and Abugov, "Do Chabad Teachings Say Anything About the Mind Body Problem?"
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ben Bokser, "Reason and Revelation in the Theology of Maimonides: the Conflict Between Philosophy and the Torah." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 20, (1947): 541–84.

revelation and the creative process. As such, this investigation continues as a dual mode of navigation between Maimonides conception of God, and what I believe are commonalities between Maimonides philosophy and Hesse's description of Goldmund's creative process.

Before proceeding, however, it is important to note that while Chabad and Hesse's views do not align in terms of duality, they both speak to dual modes of manifestation, dual aspects of the self in a dynamic movement with one another. As such, whether referring to the mind and heart or thinker and artist, they both attest to what I argue is a movement occurring within the self. What Chabad doctrine also indicates, is that the dynamic movement occurring within the body is not distinct from external forces as they are all a singular substance. While I will argue against this singular substance being related to either an immanent or transcendental God by defining these forces as nature and natural processes, they are still one singular substance. This represents one of the key aspects to my research: that there is a dynamic movement that occurs between opposing aspects of self and oppositional external forces which move through and in-between the body. It is this dynamic movement, that leads to the dissolving of the self, as defined in this chapter, that can lead to revelation. These revelatory images, as defined in chapter 1, are then taken into an art ritual to be engaged with. This process can lead to an identical dynamic movement, the outcome of which is examined in-depth in chapters 3 and 4.[64]

Influenced by, and arguing against, an Aristotelian perspective of an eternal universe, Maimonides reasoned against what many Jews of the day viewed as the incompatibility between philosophy and the Torah.[65] In *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides sought to remove this conflict between reason and revelation by demonstrating that they were two complementary phenomena.[66] According to Maimonides, revelation occurs in many different ways:

> *At times the truth shines so brilliantly that we perceive it as clear as day. Our nature and habit then draw a veil over our perception and we return to a darkness almost as dense as before... On some the lightning flashes in rapid succession and they seem to be in*

[64] While the notion of a dynamic movement is further articulated in the body of this dissertation, seeking a broader definition of this term is not within the scope of this research. The cultivating and potential unifying of oppositional forces through a dynamic process is, however, extensively examined through this dissertation. For an alternative understanding of how an artist can cultivate this dynamic movement through resistance and tension to achieve a unified experience, refer to: *Art as Experience* (2005) by John Dewey.

[65] Bokser, "Reason and Revelation in the Theology of Maimonides," 543.

[66] Ibid., 544.

continuous light. Some perceive the prophetic flash at long intervals... By others only once during the whole night is a flash of lightning perceived…[67]

Revelation also operates on various levels. In its most familiar form, it is the experience of "the call" which propels people to either perform heroic acts in the service of good deeds, or to become creative in different fields.[68] Maimonides describes "the call" towards creativity suggesting that, "a person feels as if something came upon him, and as if he received a new power that encourages him to speak."[69] He does this while awake and in the full possession of his senses.[70]

This "call" towards creativity, I argue, can be contextualised though Goldmund's experience when beholding a wooden sculpture of a Madonna. After leaving the cloister and following years of *wandering* (a term that will be defined in chapter 3), Goldmund walks into a church and is moved by the sculpture in a way he had never experienced before. Like a fire that shot through him, he viewed the work as being infused with both mother and father worlds.[71] In other words, he believed the work to be infused with a similar understanding and wisdom of mind and heart that echoes the Chabad theory as described in chapter 1. So intense was the character of Goldmund's experience that it made him wish to become a sculptor. As such, witnessing the sculpture had both led to the experience of "the call" and propelled him to become creative.

Yet according to Maimonides, this is not prophecy in its highest manifestation. When it reaches maturity, prophecy is a mystical experience taking place in a vision or a dream. Maimonides argues that through this experience the normal functioning of the body is suspended and what requires laborious reasoning, and indeed what laborious reasoning cannot establish, is grasped intuitively and with an overpowering sense of certainty.[72] In the agitation which comes upon wakening from this experience, one's entire personality is affected, leading to a need to act on this truth.[73]

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[67] Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines (University of Chicago Press, 1963), 4.
[68] Bokser, "Reason and Revelation in the Theology of Maimonides," 551.
[69] Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, 242.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund: A Novel*. 152.
[72] Bokser, "Reason and Revelation in the Theology of Maimonides," 552.
[73] Ibid., 554.

Overcome by Narcissus's claim that Goldmund had completely forgotten his childhood and his mother, he collapses into a dream world. When Goldmund awakes, he realises that he had rediscovered the image of his mother, the lost woman. It was this experience, grasped intuitively with an overpowering sense of certainty, that manifested in Goldmund leaving the cloister, to leave behind the father side of life—the thinker—to wander a path of the artist, towards the universal mother and creativity.

Up until this point, I thought that I was correct to make a correlation between Maimonides and Goldmund. It seemed they were describing similar levels of revelation that can manifest as a call to creativity, or the experience of a vision or dream where one needs to act on this truth. Yet Maimonides's description of an illumination was one that only occurs through a higher intellect and is then expressed through the imagination. The purpose for imagination in this context is the formulation of new concepts, conveying a revelation. Furthermore, when Maimonides was referring to 'creative fields,' he specifically mentions the fields of science, literature, politics or theology, but not art. Guided by my own prejudices, I had assumed that Fine Art was within this category of the creative field. Perhaps if conceptual art is defined as derived exclusively by concepts, then it does equally fit into this field. Whilst it is not my intention for this research to delve into historical definitions of what conceptual art is or is not, what seemed clear was that Goldmund's visions and dreams, provoked and experienced through the senses, did not entirely fit within Maimonides understanding of a prophet or the expression of these illuminations through a creative field.

To Maimonides, someone like Goldmund would have, in fact, been perceived as a mere imposter. This is because when Goldmund left the cloister he became a pretender to revelation.[74] This is on the grounds that, according to Maimonides, to be a true prophet one must abstain and reject bodily pleasures.[75] In fact, sensuality he argues, is how God "exposes false prophets to public shame, in order that those who really seek the truth may find it, and not err or go astray."[76] Rather a true prophet was a teacher of moral and religious doctrine, where illumination could only occur through the higher intellect. This is because, like concepts, imagination according to Maimonides has its physical basis in the quality of just one bodily organ: the brain. While my predisposition had led me to make a correlation between Maimonides and Goldmund, it became clear that Maimonides, when speaking of the

[74] Ibid., 561.
[75] Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, 234.
[76] Ibid., 234.

relationship between philosophy and revelation, was more likely referring to somebody of the description of Narcissus.

According to Menachem Kellner, the Jewish world in which Maimonides lived saw common folk and scholars alike accept astrology, the magical use of divine names, appeals to angels, etc., as common practice.[77] By way of contrast, Maimonides sort to offer a reinterpretation of Jewish esotericism which attempted to replace mystical, mythical, and magical elements and traditions, those that could collectively be understood as the supernatural, with a philosophical, scientific understanding. It was Narcissus who was described as the thinker, one associated with the mind, who gave shape and form to that which he encountered by means of concepts and ideas. It was Narcissus who spoke of himself as a philosopher, a disciple of Aristotle (as was Maimonides), and of the mind. Furthermore, we are made aware that astrology, connected to mystical and magical traditions, was considered a forbidden science that was not pursued in the cloister. It was also Narcissus who believed that the highest of all concepts is the perfection of, and absolute transcendence of, God.[78] In terms of the experience of revelation, it is Goldmund that implies that this occurred to Narcissus when he states that he had "begun the great exercise, that he was fasting… He was still present, but he had crossed over into another world."[79] A revelation through the higher intellect that led him to taking the oath of a consecrated life and becoming a monk.

It seems that Maimonides was referring to somebody like Narcissus when addressing the relationship between philosophy, different forms of revelation, and what it means to be a true prophet. It is also clear that Goldmund, despite his superior intelligence, could only ever be a 'pretender to revelation' because he did not abstain and reject bodily pleasures. But what exactly did Maimonides mean when referring to the rejection of bodily pleasures? Initially I took this statement to only refer to *halacha*. In the *Mishna Torah* (complied between 1170 and 1180), in which Maimonides codified Jewish law, Maimonides speaks of holiness, as one who refrains from forbidden foods and forbidden sex.[80] In other words, the opposite of bodily pleasures are moral qualities—key elements towards holiness. While the scope of these laws is not relevant to this research, I understood that Maimonides would have rejected Goldmund

[77] Menachem Kellner, *Maimonides' Confrontation with Mysticism*. (Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), 17.
[78] Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund: A Novel*, 280.
[79] Ibid., 68.
[80] Kellner, *Maimonides' Confrontation with Mysticism*, 94.

as a prophet because during his life of wandering Goldmund had broken these laws numerous times. But Maimonides, as I was to learn, was also rejecting another bodily desire, that of a spiritual kind, one directly related to the practice of *Merkabah* mysticism. To put this into context it is necessary to briefly outline Maimonides's two foundational philosophical positions through Ezekiel's vision as discussed in chapter 1.

In *The Guide of the Perplexed,* Maimonides presents two foundational philosophical positions in direct opposition to Jewish mystical esoterism.[81] First, Maimonides rejects the idea that species, such as angels, and other universal forces exist outside the mind.[82] Second, he insists on the absolute transcendence of God, a pure monotheism, not monolatry.[83] This meant for Maimonides that there was a God and nature and nothing else. In terms of Maimonides first position, he writes:

> *After what I have stated about providence singling out the human species alone among all the species of animals, I say that it is known that no species exists outside the mind, but that the species and the other universals are, as you know, mental notions and that every existent outside the mind is an individual or group of individuals.*[84]

Interpreted through Ezekiel vision, it means that Ezekiel did not physically ascend to Heaven, was not visited by angels, and did not literally see God sitting on the throne. This was because prophets, as Maimonides contends, do not actually 'see' things that exist outside of their visions, dreams, or trances—nothing outside of their minds.[85] This position went against all traditional texts and what is now contemporary Kabbalah, where angels for example are independent, corporeal beings, sent on missions by God and visible to human beings.[86] Rather, to Maimonides, the descriptions of angels in the Bible are parables and the rabbinic descriptions of the angels are imaginative representations, for they are unable to be grasped by any of our senses.[87] Yet as Kellner states, the Torah seeks to teach the doctrine that God is the ultimate cause of all that occurs and that it does so by describing Him as working through angels.[88] While Maimonides hierarchy of angels as described by Kellner is beyond the scope

[81] Ibid., 15.
[82] Ibid., 11.
[83] Ibid., 14.
[84] Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, 474.
[85] Kellner, *Maimonides' Confrontation with Mysticism,* 284.
[86] Ibid., 273.
[87] Ibid., 274.
[88] Ibid., 278.

of this research, I was intrigued by Maimonides understanding of what an angel represents within this context.

Angels are what Maimonides understood through an Aristotelian perspective, as separate intellects, form without matter, instantiations of emanation, intermediaries between God and the rest of the created world.[89] Rather than being corporeal beings, however, Maimonides argues that the term 'angel' can occasionally stand for the intellect and occasionally for the imagination, but the majority of the time, the term 'angel' means the elements (earth, water, air, fire), human messengers, prophets, even the forces that govern animal physiology.[90] As such, Maimonides reduced 'angels' to every single casual forces in nature, with notions such as otherworldliness, simply meaning 'nature' and natural processes.[91] This understanding of angels deeply resonated with me, but what, I pondered, did this have to do with Maimonides rejection of bodily desires as it relates to spiritual practice? He explains this through his rejection of the practice of *Merkabah* mysticism and the associated *Hekhalot* literature.

Following on from chapter 1, within *Hekhalot* texts, the divine creative force is considered embodied within Hebrew letters, a divine language by which the world was created.[92] Thus the sages of that time, using amulets and charms, would seek to manipulate God's name through a magical and mystical ascent to access the creative powers of the celestial world.[93] As Karl Groezinger writes, each divine name in *Hekhalot* texts became a venerable bearer of power, where the names which appear in the text are understood as magnificent, powerful, living, and venerable beings, who were praised like a personal God.[94] To Maimonides, these sages had abandoned their intellect into the hands of one's desires, becoming like an 'animal.'[95] As such, these texts represented nothing more than invented lies by wicked and ignorant men as found in their 'stupid books.'[96] With this understanding it became clear why Maimonides's rejection of bodily pleasures related to both the physical and spiritual.

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[89] Ibid., 274.
[90] Ibid., 279.
[91] Ibid., 285.
[92] Rachel Elior, "Mysticism, Magic, and Angelology: The Perception of Angels in Hekhalot Literature*," Jewish Studies Quarterly* 1, no.1 (1993): 3.
[93] Kellner, *Maimonides' Confrontation with Mysticism,* 174.
[94] Karl Grözinger, "The Names of God and the Celestial Powers: Their Function and Meaning in the Hekhalot Literature," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* (1987): 58.
[95] Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, 70.
[96] Ibid., 62.

The practice of *Merkabah* mysticism first appealed to me because, although limited in my knowledge, I believed that it spoke to what I had been intuitively doing in my art practice, just as in *Ocean Walk*. However, through this research I realised that this is not the case. As with Maimonides, I too did not believe in a world full of supernatural and personal forces, such as angels, demons and spirits. Rather, to me, the idea of otherworldly forces meant 'nature' and natural processes. Yet to Maimonides, while there was a 'nature', there was also an absolute transcendental God.

Up until this point of my research, I had not thought a lot about God. It was because in my simplified understanding of 'forces', I had interchanged natural forces with the notion of God. For Maimonides, as taught by Aristotle, they were totally distinct. To Aristotle, there were natural forces of this world and there was a God who is the ultimate cause of all that occurs, through which natural forces functioned as intermediaries between God and the rest of the created world.[97] In my own dreams and visions, which led to *Ocean Walk* and *THE WANDERER* series, which I discuss in-depth in chapters 3 and 4, I believed I had engaged with forces, both of and beyond this world. Yet, I did not believe that these forces were supernatural and personal. I also, however, did not believe in a transcendental God, rather, the 'God' that I had been referring to was connected to nature. This line of thinking led me to Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677).

Directly influenced by many of Maimonides concepts, Spinoza was an early thinker of the Enlightenment. Whilst Jewish, he was considered an outright heretic and excommunicated from religious society for his controversial philosophical views. This is because unlike Maimonides, Spinoza did not believe in a transcendental or immanent God. As examined through *Ethics* (1677), published posthumously in the year of his death, Spinoza argues that God and Nature (everything in the Universe) were two names for the same reality, namely a single, fundamental substance.[98] By treating the physical, spiritual, and mental worlds as intertwined, causally related, and deriving from the same substance, God was no longer understood as transcendental, above all, or to be cleaved to.[99] Rather as Christian

[97] Kellner, *Maimonides' Confrontation with Mysticism,* 274.
[98] Don Garrett, *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 64.
[99] "Cleaving and attachment" (Tzavta V'chibur), in Chabad belief refers to being connected with God, that is the effect of doing a mitzvah.

Kerslake writes, "God was immanent to nature, not as 'eminent' to natural attributes, but as 'univocally' sharing the same meaning."[100]

Narcissus, as I have argued, adhered to the same understanding of a transcendental God, nature and natural processes as Maimonides. As such, prophecy to them occurred on a vertical plane through various realms and levels of revelation that can manifest as a 'call' to creativity, or as an experience taking place in a vision or dream. A result of a pious life devoted to the service of the mind through pure thought and reason for a higher spiritual goal. Goldmund by way of contrast, as previously discussed, was a false prophet, a pretender to revelation, because he did not abstain and reject bodily pleasures of a practical kind. Narcissus's belief in a transcendental God, where God is perfection, cannot be questioned. Goldmund's relationship and belief in God by way of contrast was unclear.

While Goldmund speaks of returning to God (the creator of the natural world), he also questions God, wondering if God is evil and hostile.[101] What is clear however, is that even if Goldmund does believe in a transcendental and, or, immanent God, he sees himself as the son of Adam, "driven out of Paradise; the brothers of the animals, of innocence… out of heaven's hand."[102] As such, his relationship to the spiritual was inextricably linked to the sensory and sensual, to nature and natural processes. This can be evidenced through Goldmund's dreams and visions. While he dreams of mother (Eve), Virgin, and mistress, he also dreams of animals and fish, of magic gardens with fabulous trees.[103]

The character of Goldmund, if he were to be defined by Maimonides, would not have been a prophet. Yet Goldmund spent much of his life in dream states, full of visions that guided him to act out his truth akin to what Maimonides describes. Unlike Maimonides however, I do not believe that Goldmund was an impostor to revelation, and neither did the character of Narcissus. It was Narcissus who saw that Goldmund "bore all the marks of a strong human being, richly endowed sensually and spiritually, perhaps an artist."[104] It was Narcissus who helped awaken Goldmund to his true nature, not one leading to the ascetic life of the mind, but one governed by the senses, a life of wandering through a visceral nature, of becoming an

[100] Christian Kerslake, "The Vertigo of Philosophy: Deleuze and the Problem of Immanence", *Radical Philosophy* 113, (May 2002): 10–23.
[101] Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund: A Novel,* 268.
[102] Ibid., 194.
[103] Ibid., 60–61.
[104] Ibid., 36.

artist. Yet if Goldmund had indeed been driven out of heavens hand as he claimed, then what forces had he been engaging with though his visions, dreams and artmaking? I argue that they were forces aligned to Spinoza's conception of God and nature being of one substance. It was now clear that my comprehension of these forces was aligned to Spinoza's concept of the one substance. As such, I sought to examine the relationship between these natural forces and their relationship to the artmaking process.

Having realised that there are many paths to knowledge, Narcissus comprehends that "the basic image of a good work of art is not a real, living figure, although it may inspire it."[105] Rather, the basic image is not flesh and blood; it is mind.[106] It is an image that has its home in the artist, in the creative soul and mind long before it becomes visible and gains reality.[107] As such, Narcissus comprehends that the basic image is exactly what philosophers call an idea, or in contemporary terms, a concept.[108] As such, ideas can come through both the rational mind, one devoted to a higher intellect, and through the creative mind, connected to the soul. They both have the equal capacity to seize the secret of being.[109] As such, one can argue that some of Goldmund's visions and dreams first lead to the basic images being held within the creative mind. If this is the case, then can these images transfer into an artwork? And if they can, then how?

Putting these questions into context, the character of Goldmund tries to understand why so many perfect works of art, made with great mastery, the joy of art lovers, the ornament of churches and town halls, did not please him at all, why they were almost hateful and boring to him, despite a certain undeniable beauty.[110] They were deeply disappointing to him because they aroused the desire for the highest and did not fulfil it.[111] They were not true images of the soul, because they lacked the most essential thing—mystery. That was what according to Goldmund dreams and truly great works of art had in common.[112] To Goldmund, the mystery

[105] Ibid., 271.
[106] Hesse is clearly arguing against Nietzsche's belief that the artmaking process is the exteriorisation of one's own bodily forces and energies, the transformation of flesh and blood into canvas and oil.
[107] Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund: A Novel,* 293.
[108] Ibid., 273.
[109] Ibid., 293.
[110] Ibid., 184–185.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid.

was only found in a truly sublime work of art, that consisted of a fusion of the greatest contrast of the world, those that cannot otherwise be combined.[113]

As such, for an artwork to contain 'the mystery'—what I argue is the collapsing of all oppositional forces—a dynamic movement needs to occur between the stored image and natural forces. A process that the character of Goldmund reveals in stating, "it is not my hands that shape and form her; it is her hands that shape and form me."[114] By "her," Goldmund is referring to the *Mother*, or the 'senses' rather than theoretical concepts, and to the forces contained within nature and the forces contained within the stored image. For this to occur however, the hand according to Goldmund cannot be tainted by will, vanity, ambition to be famous and dissipation, for it is the ego that invariably dries up one's inner senses, to which alone the mystery is accessible.[115] Thus, while the skilled hand of the artist may produce beautiful images and objects, they are not true images of the heart.[116] In other words, it is only through the dissolving self that these forces can work through the hands of the artist.

The concept of the dissolving of the self, as referenced in chapter 1, speaks of Chabad's doctrine of the annihilation of selfhood, where one can become so overawed by God's majesty, that he has no self-awareness at all, becomes egoless.[117] As examined in chapter 2, however, I reject the notion of both a transcendental God and supernatural, personal forces. Understanding God and Nature through Spinoza's conception of one fundamental substance—that God was immanent to nature, sharing the same meaning, I conceptualise forces as specifically related to 'nature' and natural processes.[118] As such, the concept of the dissolving of the self while referring to no self-awareness and of becoming egoless as with the concept of self-annihilation, occurs instead by engaging with natural, chaotic forces, as will be examined, rather than a Jewish religious conception of God. It is in this state of dissolving that I argue that forces can move through and in-between the body.

What Goldmund is describing is a sensory, intuitive experience, a mysterious movement between the creative mind and the egoless self that enables an artwork to be infused with

[113] Ibid., 185.
[114] Ibid., 315.
[115] Ibid., 186.
[116] Ibid., 167.
[117] Louis Jacobs, "Loving and Fearing God: Should Jews feel one emotion over the other—or both equally?", accessed November 2017, https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/loving-and-fearing-god/.
[118] Christian Kerslake, "The Vertigo of Philosophy: Deleuze and the Problem of Immanence",10–23.

oppositional forces. It reminded me of a TED talk that I had watched from Elizabeth Gilbert.[119] Gilbert speaks broadly to an historical understanding of creativity in contrast to contemporary thought. That creativity prior to the rational philosophies of the enlightenment, such as that of Spinoza, was understood as coming from a distant and unknowable source, for distant and unknowable reasons, a disembodied creative spirit that the Romans, for example, referred to as a 'genius.'[120] A spirit that came through the artist, and into an object as Goldmund describes. However, by conceptualising that God and nature (including people), were of the same substance, people started to believe that they were the centre of the universe above all Gods and mysteries. The result of this was that people, according to Gilbert, saw creativity as coming completely from the individual self, where the artist embodied a genius, rather than having one. If this has been the case since the enlightenment, I wondered if by removing the concept of a transcendental and immanent God from my own understanding of these forces, had I then invariably placed myself at the centre of my own creative process? To address this question, I needed to further consider how contemporary thought conceptualised the relationship between the artist and these natural forces. This led me to Elizabeth Grosz's concept of the *plane of composition* via Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

The plane of composition according to Grosz shares the same constitutions and philosophical underpinnings as the plane of immanence. They are both concepts put forth by Deleuze and Guattari in the book *What is Philosophy?* (1994). Key to this discussion is that: first, both planes ground and collapse all-natural universal forces, including dualistic philosophical conceptions like body and soul, God and nature, as well as any notions of the transcendental. These forces collapse onto a plane which otherwise has no ground or foundation.[121] Secondly, contained within these planes are natural universal forces, "the whirling unpredictable movement of forces, vibratory oscillations that constitute the universe."[122] These forces are termed *chaos*, which is not absolute disorder, but rather a plethora of orders, forms, wills; forces that cannot be distinguished or differentiated from each

[119] TED, Technology, Entertainment, Design is an American media organisation committed to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks, which are then posted online.
[120] Elizabeth Gilbert. "Your Elusive Creative Genius," filmed at TEDGlobal 2009, July 2009. TED video, 19:09, accessed May, 2016. https://www.ted.com/talks/elizabeth_gilbert_on_genius. This research does not lend for a more rigorous analysis of the creative process that Goldmund speaks to. To do so, please refer to the writings of Edward Young's Conjectures on Original Composition, Coleridge's Biographica Literaria vs Kantian Ideas of Creativity, Psychoanalytic esp Freudian notions of creativity emanating from the individual.
[121] Fredrika Spindler, "A Philosophy of Immanence" in Jonna Bornemark and Hans Ruin (eds), *Phenomenology and Religion: New Frontiers,* (Huddinge: Södertörns Högskola, University Södertörn Philosophical Studies, 2010), 151.
[122] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art*, 6.

other for they overlap and intensify one another.[123] Thirdly, this non-literal plane, instituted by the philosopher or artist acts like a sieve stretched over chaos, that can retain or rather select a certain number of chaotic determinations, which remain in absolute movement and from which thoughts or sensations, all artworks, all genres, all types of art, must be located and where they emerge.[124]

Key to this conceptualisation of the creative process, is the instituting of the plane of composition by the artist. This provisional ordering of chaos, which grounds and collapses all natural universal forces, occurs via the initial construction or fabrication of a frame, an initial laying down of a grid.[125] As Grosz contends, "the first gesture of art, its metaphysical condition and universal expression, is the construction or fabrication of the frame."[126] The frame is the first construction, the corners, of the plane of composition.[127] The frame's function is to potentially separate, composing both house (shelter) and territory, inside and outside, and interior and landscape.[128] It achieves this by cutting into a milieu or space to create boundaries—a territory, which functions to entrap chaotic shards, chaord states, to arrest or slow them into a space and a time; a structure and a form where they can affect and be affected by bodies.[129] This according to Grosz is how sensations, generated and proliferated only by art, are created, metabolised and released into the world, made to live a life of their own, to infect and transform other sensations.[130] Art therefore captures a fragment of chaos in the frame and creates or extracts from it not an image or representation, but these very sensations.[131]

Grosz speaks to the condition of arts emergence, what makes art possible. In doing so she seeks to develop a non-aesthetic philosophy for art, one which does not seek to provide an assessment of the value, quality, or meaning of art.[132] Rather Grosz's goal is to explore the arts, and the forces that they enact and transform, a movement between natural chaotic forces (including cosmological forces) with the forces of the living body.[133] In this context, both

[123] Ibid., 4.
[124] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 43.
[125] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art,* 13.
[126] Ibid., 5.
[127] Ibid., 6.
[128] Ibid.,13.
[129] Ibid., 14.
[130] Ibid., 18.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid., 2.
[133] Ibid., 2–3.

Grosz and the character of Goldmund speak with a similar intent. However, while Grosz examines these questions through the conceptual thinking mind, Goldmund explores these questions through the senses. Goldmund's is a non-conceptual approach to artmaking. Even so, they ask similar questions and both speak to a non-aesthetic understanding of art. Their interest lies in how an artwork becomes infused with forces.[134] While both speak of the collapsing of all oppositional forces into the frame of an artwork, Grosz and Hesse's character of Goldmund diverge in their thinking in terms of how this occurs.

As stated, both Grosz and Goldmund speak of a dynamic movement occurring between external forces and forces that reside in the body—a movement which can lead to these forces being contained within an artwork. Goldmund, speaks of this process as a mystery, where the artist is not at the centre of this experience. In fact, for these forces to move through the artist, any expression of the self must dissolve. In contrast, Grosz speaks to the artist at the centre of the creative process as one who needs to construct a frame to entrap these chaotic shards. Yet Goldmund and Grosz speak of a similar outcome. That art proper, art which contains these forces, can only occur "when sensation can detach itself and gain an autonomy from its creator and its perceiver."[135] If this is the case, does it matter if these forces contained within the frame are derived through the dissolving self or via the self? In seeking to answer this question, I was drawn back to the practice of *Merkabah* mysticism.

Unlike Grosz, as previously addressed in chapter 1, the ideas behind *Merkabah* mysticism speak of an imminent and transcendental God. I contend however, that they are both speaking about the conscious manipulation and containment of forces. The practice of *Merkabah* mysticism as examined, was considered white magic and fraught with great dangers. It was why only the adept, the worthiest of sages, were permitted to practice it. I could not help but wonder if Grosz's comprehension of the creative process, one in which *any* artist, and not just the adept, could build a frame to manipulate forces, was different or even more dangerous?

In the Talmud, these dangers are expressed through the parable of four sages who enter the mystical orchard (Pardes). While this parable speaks of supernatural, personal forces, ascension and of a transcendental God, a way of understanding and engaging with forces that

[134] I cannot be sure how Goldmund would define these external forces, yet in the context of this research, I argue that any further hypothesising is no longer necessary. Its purpose was for me to clarify the forces I believe I engage with through my art practice and they clearly align to Grosz's definition of natural, chaotic forces.
[135] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art,* 4.

I have rejected, the warning this story provides, speaks clearly to me. The orchard represents the higher spiritual realms. Prior to their ascension, one of the four sages, Rabbi Akiva said to them, "When you come to the place of pure marble stones, do not say, 'Water! Water!' for it is said, 'He who speaks untruths shall not stand before My eyes'."[136] The second sage Ben Azzai died by gazing at the Divine Presence. The third, Ben Zoma gazed, was stricken, losing his sanity. The fourth, Elisha Ben Avuyah gazed and cut down the plantings, and transmogrified into a heretic. Rabbi Akiva however entered and exited in peace. As such, Rabbi Akiva was the only sage, amongst these four great sages, who could enter and exit the mystical orchard without being scarred. Being a man of great spiritual stature, a true and well-balanced master, he realised that the objective is not to identify with the light and not return, physically, as Ben Azzai did, or mentally as Ben Zoma did. Nor, was it to feel personal release or ecstasy, but rather to go there and return here, with the proper wisdom to serve in the here and now. The journey was to come full circle into one's day-to-day life.[137] This story speaks of the key distinction between what Grosz and Goldmund's character describes. While the outcome of an artwork may equally be an autonomous frame, it is only through the creative process that Goldmund describes that there are no inherent dangers associated with the conscious manipulation of forces.

So, what happens to an artwork when it becomes autonomous? Grosz contends that art is not only the movement of joining the body to the chaos of the universe, but it is also the converse movement, where art: "can be seen as the action of leaving the frame, of moving beyond, and pressing against the frame, the frame exploding through the movement it can no longer contain."[138] It means that these manipulated chaotic shards that have been drawn into a frame are simply allowed to scatter and become embedded in the natural world. Is this problematic? To me this question represents the key ethical and creative considerations in my practice.

The conception of the exploding frame may be understood through the context of Jewish mystical thought. While the *Zohar* (the book of splendour) is not relevant to this discussion, although examined in chapters 3 and 4, the Kabbalah of Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534–72), commonly known as *Lurianic Kabbalah*, is. Luria preached that God created two universes; this one, and a previous one. The spiritual core of these universes consisted of *orot* (lights) and

[136] Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, *The Bible*, 695.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art,* 18.

kelim (vessels).[139] Light is symbolic of God's creative energy, while the vessels symbolise the receptacles that receive and harness the energy. In the first universe, which Luria calls *Olam Ha-Tohu*, the world of *chaos*, the divine light was too intense for the vessels. This resulted in *shevirat hakelim*, the shattering of the vessels, and the implosion of that universe.[140] Luria argues that the shattered vessels showered sparks of the earlier light into the second universe, called *olam hatikkun*, where they became embedded. As such, it is the purpose of life in this world to uncover these holy sparks of chaos and release them back to their source. This, Luria explains, is achieved through following Torah and the contemplative performance of *mitzvot*—a process collectively known as tikkun olam (the repair of the world).[141] In other words, for a Chabad Jew, the purpose of life is to uncover these holy sparks and release them back to their source. A rectification process and the philosophical underpinnings which explain why the *Mohel*, as examined in chapter 1, was at our house that day to perform *Brit Milah* on my son.

A key insight in this research results from bringing these Lurianic principles and Deleuzian thought into productive proximity. I believe that the idea of the exploding frame, as conceptualised by Deleuze and Guattari (and examined further by Grosz) share remarkable similarities to Lurianic principles, both in terms of a world of chaos and the notions of shards. And through this, the idea that forces can be too intense for the 'vessels' they are contained in. Where in Lurianic Kabbalistic thought however, the implosion of that universe occurred because of God, Grosz suggests that the potential explosion of the frame is a result of an artwork becoming autonomous from the artist. In Kabbalist, Chabad reasoning, the purpose to 'uncover' these chaotic shards is so they can be released back to their source. By way of contrast, Grosz speaks of chaotic forces being consciously engaged with and manipulated so they can be contained within the frame to generate sensation. There is no reference to a retuning or a rectification, only the idea that the frame can explode, releasing these chaotic forces back into the natural world.

While the notion of a rectification process is further examined in the following chapter on the methodology of my art practice, it is important to reiterate that questions surrounding whether manipulated chaotic shards are simply allowed to scatter and become embedded in the natural world—a result of the frame exploding—in contrast to a rectification process where

[139] Naftali Brawer, *A Brief Guide to Judaism: Theology, History and Practice,* 137.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid.

these chaotic shards are returned, represents the key ethical and creative consideration in my practice. My conclusion, to be further examined throughout this paper, that these chaotic shards must be returned, represents my contribution to methods in artistic practice and the theories surrounding it. This is because enacting a rectification process produces a very particular creative practice that prioritises creative process over artistic outcomes. It is a methodology that emphasises an intuitive and embodied approach to artmaking, where art functions as a tool for spiritual growth through the significance of listening to the land, and through the dissolving of the self. This intuitive and embodied approach represents a new way of understanding my art practice, while also contributing to the field of artistic research by bringing Kabbalistic principles and Deleuzian thought together into a productive relationship.

This chapter explored the relationship between thought, revelation and the creative process which was examined as a dynamic movement between external forces and forces moving through the self. I defined these internal forces through a correlation between Chabad's doctrine of the body and soul, and Hesse's conception of the duality of the thinker and the artist. I learnt however that a direct link could not be made, but that they still respectively spoke of a dynamic movement occurring within the self. I therefore shifted my focus toward examining external forces.

Rejecting Chabad's belief in an immanent and transcendental God, yet still seeking to contextualise external forces through Jewish thought, led me to further explore Maimonides. It was through Maimonides theology, that I found that I could make another correlation between thought, revelation, and the creative process. As such, the investigation continued as a dual mode of navigation between Maimonides's conception of God, and what I believed were commonalities between Maimonides's philosophy and Hesse's description of Goldmund's creative process. However, through this analysis I found that I had been incorrect to make such a link, because Maimonides, as I argued, would have viewed Goldmund as a pretender to revelation because he did not abstain from bodily pleasures of a practical kind. Believing that Maimonides was more likely referring to a pious type such as the character of Narcissus, I explained this through Maimonides's understanding of God.

It was here that I learnt of Maimonides rejection of Chabad's understanding of an imminent God, supernatural and personal forces. Furthermore, Maimonides denounced the practice of *Merkabah* mysticism, as a spiritual anti-intellectual indulgence. Rather, Maimonides favoured what he viewed as a philosophical, rational understanding of God,

where revelation does not exist outside of the mind, God is transcendental, and everything else is nature and natural processes. While I could relate to Maimonides understanding of 'nature' as a force, I could not align myself with the belief of a transcendental God. This led me to Baruch Spinoza. It was through Spinoza's concept of a single, fundamental substance—of God and Nature as one reality—that it became clear that my understanding of external forces was that of nature and natural processes. With this understanding, I examined the relationship between these natural forces and the artmaking process. I then examined how these forces can be transferred into an artwork, contextualised through Narcissus's comprehension of the basic image that lives inside the soul of the artist. Only then, according to Goldmund, can the image come through the artist as a dynamic movement between natural forces and into (what I term the 'dissolving of the self') the frame of an artwork.

I then researched Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the plane of composition through the work of Elizabeth Grosz, for it also spoke of a movement between natural forces, defined as chaos, and the forces within the living body. These forces equally collapse into a constructed frame leading to the proliferation of sensation contained within an artwork. Goldmund's character however, speaks of these forces moving through the artist, were Grosz speaks of the artist at the centre of the creative process through the manipulation of these natural forces into the frame. Both, as I examined in this chapter, suggest that an artwork can become autonomous (it can detach itself from the creator). Grosz then asserts that the autonomous frame can explode and shatter through a movement that it can no longer contain. Questioning whether these forces should be manipulated and wondering whether these contained forces should be allowed to explode, developed into the key ethical and practical considerations in my practice—the principle of a rectification process, where chaotic shards are returned to their source rather than remaining contained. Contextualising the notion of a rectification process through Jewish mysticism, as taught by Chabad, in *Lurianic Kabbalah*, I concluded this chapter by examining why I believe that this rectification process represents my contribution to understanding practices, discourses and theories, as they relate to the field of creative practice, further.

CHAPTER 3

THE WANDERER SERIES

The following methodology chapters will focus on the two major art rituals enacted for this candidature, collectively known as *THE WANDERER* series. Initially examined will be the concept of wandering as both a way to listen and speak to nature, as well as representing a way of life. I will then examine the distinction between *wandering* and *walking*, contextualised through my artwork, *Tree Wall* (2017). Assessing how revelatory images manifest, I then argue that this process is the central generative component to the methodology of my research which is contextualised through an analysis of *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING* (2017). Examining the revelatory image of myself walking around a brick rebound tennis wall from dusk until dawn in the desert, I consider both the meaning and function of the wall, both through a discussion of personal lineage and my understanding of Grosz's concept of the wall. I then speak of how Janet Cardiff used the wall in her work, *40 Part Motet* and my experience viewing the work. This will then lead to a discussion of darkness contextualised through Claire Bishop's and Eugène Minkowski's understandings of this topic.

I will then investigate my experiences of walking around the wall for ten hours which will be contextualised through Minkowski's ideas on darkness and Kabbalistic thought. I will then discuss my final act in this work: setting the wall alight. Here I will put forward four key reasons as to why I believed that allowing the frame to metaphorically explode, led to both physical and emotional sickness upon my return home. I will then discuss what I believe is a key distinction between a performative act and performance art. Contextualised through the ideas of Anne Marsh on performance and shamanism, I then seek to address this distinction through an analysis of how other artists understand their relationship to engaging with forces as an artistic practice.

I will then shift the focus to explore another key aspect of my methodology—that of the concept of an intuitive listening to the land. This will be contextualised through the notion of

listening as understood in Jewish Kabbalistic thought, as well as indigenous cultural understandings. I will then conclude this chapter with a case study of what I believe are the similarities and differences between *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING* and Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo.*

Chapter four then analyses the second major work *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING* (2017). I will begin by initially examining the processes that led to a revelatory image of placing a circular wooden table back out in the desert. I then examine Grosz's concept of the table being a miniaturised form of the frame. The importance of the table will be discussed in terms of its personal meaning, which is followed by an assessment of what returning to the desert meant to me, both in terms of listening to the land and the rectification process in contrast to *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*. This then led to two key questions that I examine. Firstly, how is it possible to return these forces, and secondly, where would these forces go if returned? It is through examining these questions that I come to some key insights and conclude that my understanding of the rectification process was not based on concepts, or on a faith in God, but grounded in a belief in the mysterious and mysterious processes that I argue can be accessed through the dynamic movement between conscious intention and the dissolving of the self.

Finally, I will reflect on a further revelatory image in which I saw myself bike riding through familiar suburban streets of my childhood. I then discuss how bike riding as a child elicited the wandering spirit within me. Coming back to the art ritual, I then speak of my return to the desert and my conceptualisation of how this art ritual would be different to *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*. I then consider the relationship between silence and how silence enabled a dynamic movement to occur between forces moving through the body, and forces contained within the frame of the table.

SECTION 1: THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING

The *Zohar*, or book of Splendour, is composed of many separate and secretive parables and books which together form a commentary on the Torah, a key text within the Kabbalah as followed by those in the Chabad movement. Written in the form of a mystical novel, it centres around a group of wandering mystics headed by the grand master, Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai.[142]

[142] While the first edition of the *Zohar* appeared in Spain in the thirteenth-century, authorship remains contentious. Amongst certain orthodox Jewish groups, as well as contemporary academics including the late Gershom

Wandering through the hills of Galilee, they experience God's transcendence and immanence, which manifests in the discovery and dissemination of the secrets of the Torah. The act of wandering through nature, considered to have both an exoteric and esoteric reality, is suggestive of providing the conditions necessary for the experience of revelation—one associated with various levels of ascension, supernatural, and personal forces. However, unlike in *Merkabah* mysticism, the Zohar does not speak of a physical ascension, rather, through various realms and stages, revelation is attained through knowledge; through the mind and acts of contemplation.[143]

By way of contrast, the character of Goldmund (as discussed in chapter 2) leaves the monastery for a life of wandering through nature that equally leads to revelation. Unlike the wandering mystics, however, Goldmund's wandering is not associated with a higher mind, supernatural and personal forces. Rather the life of the wanderer, in terms of Hesse's thinking, is one associated with the mother—that of the senses and of intuition. Here revelation and truth, manifesting through dreams and images, occur by speaking to and listening to nature: for "God is in it."[144]

To Goldmund, however, wandering represented more than just wandering through the hills to experience revelation like the rabbi's in the Zohar.[145] It was a way of life, a conscious rejection of law and the mind, of a sedentary life.[146] To be a wanderer was to be, "obedient to no man, dependent only on weather and season, without a goal before them or a roof above them, owning nothing, open to every whim of fate."[147] His way of life was the, "opponent, the deadly enemy of the established proprietor, who hates him, despises him, or fears him, because he does not wish to be reminded that all existence is transitory."[148] As such, to wander

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Scholem, authorship of the *Zohar* is attributed to Rabbi Moses de León (1240–1305), who first published the book. Chassidic Jews however believe that the teachings of Kabbalah were transmitted orally from teacher to teacher, in a long and continuous chain, from the Biblical era until its redaction by Shimon bar Yochai considered a great sage of the second-century. De Leon, as they claim, had acquired the original manuscript and published it. They also claim that he ascribed the work to Shimon bar Yochai. Hila Ratzabi, "The Zohar: This influential work of Jewish mysticism continues to inspire spiritual seekers," *My Jewish Learning*, accessed May 21 2018, https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-zohar/.

[143] Barry Albin, *A Spiritual History of the Western Tradition* (North Carolina: Lulu Press, 2008), 68.

[144] Hermann Hesse, *Wandering: Notes and Sketches* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972).

[145] As argued in chapter 2, revelation can be experienced through the rational mind or the sensing body. While in Jewish mystical understanding of ascension is to God. I have defined ascension as a vertical movement that engages with cosmological natural forces, in contrast to a lateral movement outwards to engage with the same forces, but within the earth. This is distinct from Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the plane of composition which collapsed these forces onto a singular plane.

[146] Hermann Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund*, 194.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Ibid., 195.

represented both a means to listen and speak to nature through the senses, as well as a conscious rejection of the rational and institutionalised life of the thinker.

The life of the artist, according to Goldmund, was not the life of the wanderer but the life of mind and will. This was because to be an artist one had to sacrifice freedom, because art requires things like a roof over one's head, materials, effort and patience.[149] He had sacrificed his freedom to wander following the 'call' of revelation, and became an artist. Becoming an artist however, was no goal for him because, as discussed in chapter 2, being an artist lead to the drying up and dwarfing of one's inner senses, to which alone the mystery was accessible.[150] Yet Goldmund throughout his life, kept returning to art to express his wanderings and visions. And this is the great contradiction of art to me. While art has the capacity to engage the mystery, to contain oppositional forces within an object, it is the artist at the centre of the creative experience, who is responsible for preventing this from occurring.

Wandering as such represents a means for learning through revelation, a way to listen and speak to nature. It also represents my own conflict between making art and being the artist as defined by Hesse. So too does it represent a conflict between the rational in contrast to the sensory, and the institution verses the notion of freedom. To wander therefore represents the central generative component to the methodology of this research. Representing both a direct relationship between the physical body in movement within nature, which leads to revelation, and a state of being. Of course, I am not Goldmund, although there was a time where I felt that I lived in and through nature in a comparable way. Daily life is now more sedentary, but the spirit of the wanderer remains fierce within me, and forever seems to be in opposition with the pull of the thinker. They are, as Hesse describes, dynamically competing aspects of oneself, and in constant movement.

To wander then as I do in Sherbrooke Forest, located opposite to my home in the Dandenong Ranges, is a means to not only intuitively listen and speak to nature, but to facilitate reconnection to the wanderer within. I often walk with knowledge and purpose in the forest, and whilst walking can provide the necessary conditions from which to wander, I argue that it is distinct from a conscious act of walking and therefore, to the lineage of art walkers in contemporary art practice. This is because wandering, unlike the history of art walkers, is not

[149] Ibid., 172.
[150] Ibid., 186.

intentional, symbolic or political.[151] Rather wandering requires an absence of, or an indifference to, either a fixed course or a specific rational intention. As such, navigation remains consciously ambiguous to the self. This ambiguity allows for an internal form of navigation to occur, equally absent of intention, one experienced only through the senses and the flesh. It is this movement, sometimes triggered by a sound, a barrier, an animal etc., that enables a dynamic movement to occur between wandering as a physical act of engaging with

Figure 9: Isaac Greener, *Tree Wall*, video still, 2017, https://vimeo.com/235864850.

nature, and wandering as a state of being. This movement can then lead to the dissolving of the self.

[151] An example of an artist walking as an intentional, symbolic or political act can be seen in Francis Alÿs work *The Paradox of Praxis 1* (1997). The artist pushed a block of ice through the streets of Mexico City until it was completely melted—a process that took over nine hours—seeing the audience confronted with images of the sidewalks with puddles of dirty water in various areas of the city. Alÿs examines day to day life in his city to symbolise the frustration that everyday residents of Mexico City endure to improve their living conditions. For a comprehensive analysis of art walkers and their methods, refer to: *Wanderlust: a history of walking* (2000) by Rebecca Solnit and *The Art of Walking: a field guide* (2012), edited by David Evans.

An example of this dynamic movement can be seen in *Tree Wall*, which represented a barrier, a natural act of intervention. As I came upon the fallen tree I was confronted with a choice of turning around, climbing over the tree, or navigating around the tree into the forest. As such, the fallen tree directly impacted on how my body engaged with and navigated the space. At this point, the tree was a marker for a conscious, rational decision around navigation. Yet as I proceeded horizontally around the tree, and then vertically over the tree, in a cyclic form of navigation, I began to *wander*. This experience, a result of intuitively listening and speaking to nature, also seen with *Ocean Walk*, led to a dissolving of the self, as natural forces moved through and in-between the body. This resulted in a mysterious journeying, one I cannot rationally articulate, marked by slipping out of perceptual boundaries that demarcate the self—to make contact with and to learn from other natural forces. Captured on video, this encounter led to an intuitive processing that I contextualise through Maimonides interpretation of revelation.

My experience of revelation is a mystical experience as Maimonides contends. One where during a vision or a dream, revelatory images come through me which propel me to act on these visions by partaking in an art ritual. It is the intensity and clarity of the images however, that dictates how to respond to these revelations. If these images present randomly, remaining unclear of their purpose and intention, I then must wait for further clarity or re-engage with nature through wandering.

It is during this waiting however, that the rational and conceptually driven mind can take over and try to manifest unknown aspects of the art ritual, as well as the meaning behind these images. Even though I can rationally understand this process as being detrimental—often leading to anxiety and the drying up of my inner senses—I still find myself propelled by 'the thinker.' Seeking to give shape and form to determine and represent the nature of these images through concepts and ideas, I use Photoshop to try and visualise aspects of an art ritual that are yet to be known. Sometimes however, these revelatory images come with a clarity of intention manifesting as a clear vision for an art ritual. It should be noted however, that I often arrive to partake in an art ritual, as will be examined later in this chapter, with certain aspects of the art ritual seen and others conceptualised.

According to Hasidic belief, the Abrahamic Adam was the first mystic for he was able to name all created things. He gave them their true name, because he was able to see from one end of the world to the other. Explained by Rabbi Yom Tov Glaser, Adam did not see distance,

but could see through parallel worlds, through the matrix of creation.[152] To Adam, the world was translucent, until he ate the forbidden fruit and the world became opaque and he lost this gift and the ability to see through creation.

While Adam's story speaks of a transcendental God, of supernatural and personal forces, it resonates to me as an example within Jewish mythology of intuitive listening and speaking to forces. This is the case because Adam was a mystic before God gave to Moses the written and oral laws atop Mount Sinai. Intuitive listening and speaking to the land, therefore, is distinct from the practice of *Merkabah* mysticism, and more generally Jewish rites of passage. This is because unlike these examples, where the initiate follows strict and specific cultural or religious frameworks—often at specific points in time to generate specific outcomes, this is not the case in terms of these art rituals. The art rituals are not connected to any specific cultural, religious or philosophical framework, even if they intuitively court and use aspects of these frameworks. They are enacted when I am 'ready,' and are often done without intention, ambition, or (as previously explored) desire for an artistic outcome.

[152] Yom Tov Glaser, "Introduction to Kabbalah," *YouTube*, accessed February, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_QKIwWPV1U.

Following the experience of *Tree Wall*, a 'call' to action manifested as a clear revelatory image. What came to me was to build a rebound tennis wall… out in the Australian desert.

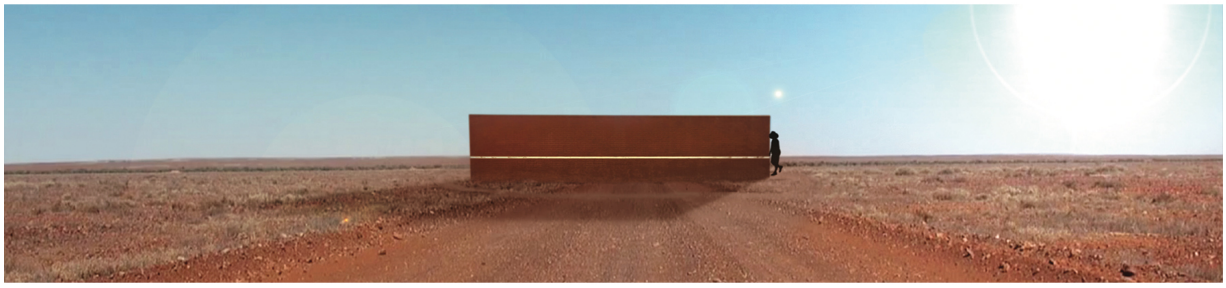

Figure 12 (top): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, Walking around the projected wall–sunset, Photoshop, 2017.

Figure 13 (bottom): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, Walking around the projected wall–sunrise, Photoshop, 2017.

The desert in that vision looked a very specific way: red, flat, rocky, treeless, with a very thin scattering of dry shrubbery. It was a desert I had never actually visited but felt through this revelatory image that I knew it intimately. This is evident in the Photoshop images and the model that I made before finding the location.

I also saw that I would walk around the wall from dusk until dawn. Yet as previously discussed, even with a clear vision for partaking in this art ritual, I still did not know the specific location, what I was going to wear, how I would begin and end the ritual, and how I would show the outcome. These unknown factors as previously discussed, led to the rational, conceptually driven mind and its processes taking over from a more intuitive way of approaching the project. This is evident in the multiple Photoshop visualisations of the art ritual that I made following the initial vison. While clearly illustrating the initial revelatory images (shown in images 10–14), they equally visualise my doubts as well as further ruminations. For example, in images 15 and 16, I ponder the question of whether the wall should be in different locations. In images 17 and 18, I question whether the wall should be enclosed within a white circular or rectangular frame, representing a gallery space. In images

19 and 20, I question the initial vision of walking around the wall, contemplating instead whether I should be playing tennis against this wall, as I did as a child, in different locations. In image 21, I explore whether I should leave an artefact of the art ritual. For example, by placing speakers around the wall, within the circular frame, which have recorded my feet walking around the wall during the art ritual. Finally, in image 22, I explore whether I should leave a steel frame, a vestige of the initial art ritual, within the rectangular frame. However, as always, I came back to the initial vision.

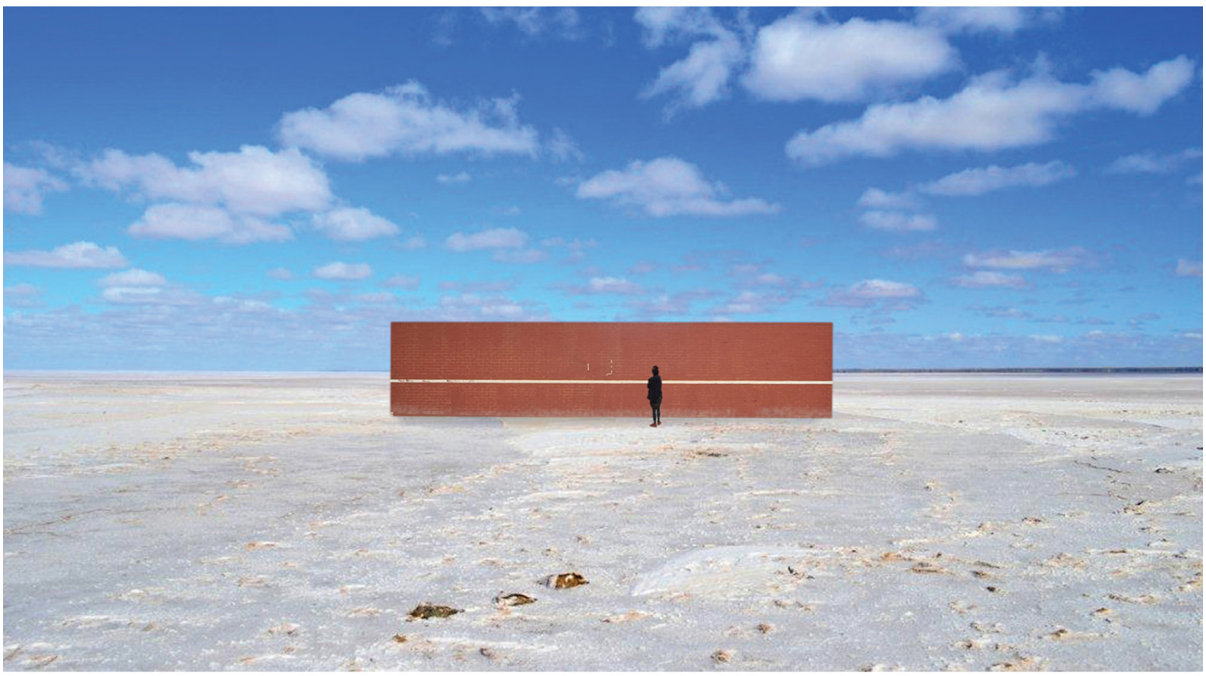

Figure 15 (top): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, whether the wall should be placed out in Kati Thanda–Lake Eyre, South Australia? Photoshop, 2017.

Figure 16 (bottom): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, whether the wall should be placed out in Marree, South Australia? Photoshop, 2017.

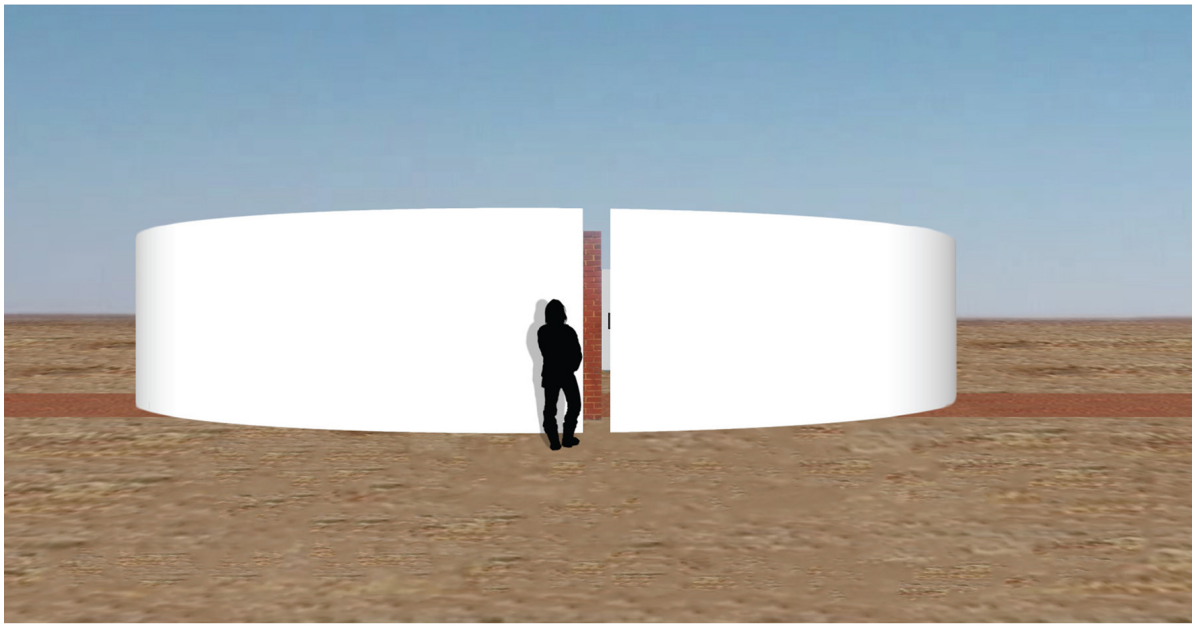

Figure 17 (top): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, whether the wall should be enclosed in a circular frame? Photoshop, 2017.

Figure 18 (bottom): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, whether the wall should be enclosed in a rectangular frame? Photoshop, 2017.

Figure 19 (top): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, whether I should be playing tennis against the wall placed out in Kati Thanda–Lake Eyre, South Australia? Photoshop, 2017.

Figure 20 (bottom): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, whether I should be playing tennis against the wall placed out in the desert, Marree, South Australia? Photoshop, 2017.

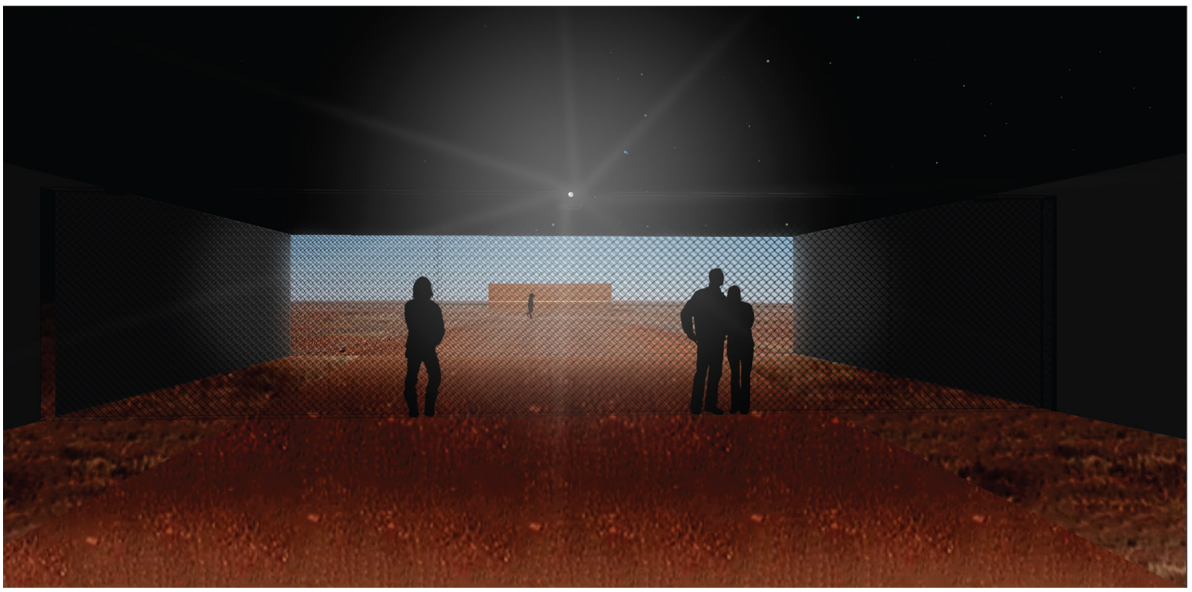

Figure 21 (top): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, whether I should leave speakers around the wall within the circular cube, which have recorded my feet walking around the wall during the art ritual, Photoshop, 2017.

Figure 22 (bottom): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, whether I should leave a steel frame, a vestige of the initial art ritual, within the rectangular frame, Photoshop, 2017.

Figure 23: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, rebound tennis wall, Caulfield park, Melbourne, 2017, red brick.

Why a rebound tennis wall? The brick rebound tennis wall found in Caulfield Park is a place that I spent many hours engaging with as a child, most often on my own, but also with my grandfather, Ludwig. My grandfather loved me, and in many ways this wall represented his love, because it was there that we would often go to practice. The problem was, that while I was a good player, I was not the best. And not being the best triggered something in Ludwig that manifested as deep disappointment that was often accompanied by a rage, which, while never violent, would scare me and make me feel like a profound failure. In fact, much of my relationship with him followed a similar trajectory. Effort was never rewarded and failure to be the best would lead to chastising, or even worse for me, being ignored. Like all children I wanted approval, but withheld, I started to believe the narrative that I was not good enough.

Ludwig broke his back building a wall. It was not long before that, that he had been excepted into the prestigious conservatorium of music in Poland as a concert pianist. Ludwig would never play the piano again, except for a brief attempt at trying to teach his daughter, my mother, who equally represented Ludwig's failure. But he never stopped hearing the music and I will never forget those Friday night Shabbat dinners watching him play, what only he could hear, as his fingers played the silent sound of a concerto on his legs. The wall that Ludwiq built before breaking his back were the ghetto walls of Krakow. Built to isolate Jews from the non-Jewish population, the Jewish peoples, where crammed into a small area where living conditions were unbearable. They functioned as holding grounds while the Nazi leadership in Berlin deliberated on the fate of the Jewish population, now known as the Final Solution.

Here is another understanding of a wall and territory. Echoing the wall discussed by Elizabeth Grosz in chapter 2, the architectural wall that Ludwig built separated: it cut into

space, creating a version of territory, an inside and an outside.[153] This cutting, I contend, can be linked to the constitution of a plane. Neither a plane of immanence or a plane of composition, this plane equally functioned to provisionally order chaos by entrapping chaotic shards, that both affected and were affected by bodies. But unlike a plane of immanence or a plane of composition, the building of the wall did not generate the conditions necessary to produce concepts or art, although both things would have continued to be generated within and outside of the ghetto walls.

Rather the wall, built by thousands of people under forced labour to contain themselves, represented a territory, the result of an extreme societal dogma and belief, a framework of identification. If you did not fit in, you were punished, or in the case of my grandfather's family, murdered. In this context, the inside and the outside while creating two sides, did not divide the inhabitable from the natural (the chaotic), the world on one side and the created world, home and shelter, on the other.[154] It most certainly, as Bernard Cache contends, did not represent the basis of coexistence.[155] Rather, the outside represented the collapsing of dogma, the brutal 'natural' forces contained within the self onto a plane, in movement with chaotic forces of the same substance, but not experienced or expressed through any moral or ethical compass. As such, the reterritorialization of space created another inherent danger associated with the construction of a frame (wall) as spoken about in chapter 2. It was the devastation that came from the manipulating forces for political or personal gain.

In terms of the inside of the wall, it clearly did not represent home or shelter, rather it functioned to bring in, not selectively as Grosz contends, this outside movement between chaos and the body. Living in what I can only imagine was a perpetual state of terror, these chaotic forces would have been in movement with the bodies of the people contained within the walls. As such, I imagine many Jews, both religious and secular, would have sought prayer and answers to make sense of *this* chaos. Within this context, the building of the wall, and being held within it, may have also led to an expatiated attempt at the rectification process as described within Lurianic Kabbalah in chapter 2. One can imagine that the hope for salvation, or for secular Jews, a return to better times, would have been a powerful force from which to seek to uncover and return these chaotic shards.

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[153] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art*, 13.
[154] Ibid., 14.
[155] Bernard Cache, *Earth Moves: The Furnishing of Territories.* Trans. Anne Boyman. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 24.

The red rebound tennis wall was confined to a memory, until my path was impeded by the fallen tree. It was only after taking part in the art ritual that the extent of the symbolic forces contained within the frame was revealed to me. Contained within it, had not only been my immediate personal narrative, but a story of family lineage and survival, and the broader story of human nature. It was his forced building of a wall that had shaped my grandfather's life. Not only due to the trauma of the holocaust, but because while recovering from his broken back in a decrepit 'hospital', the nurse that cared for him, became his wife, my grandmother.

A contemporary example of a frame being constructed within an artistic context is seen in Janet Cardiff's sound installation, *40 Part Motet* (2001). Cardiff utilises a gallery space to re-enact a forty-part choral performance of composer Thomas Tallis's sixteenth-century composition, *Spem in Alium*. Cardiff creates a porous, circular wall of sound where the audience can enter and exit the frame, creating a dynamic movement between the inside and outside. Consisting of forty high-fidelity speakers on tall stands, reaching average ear height and arranged in a circular configuration, one enters through prescribed spaces to a rectangular sofa placed in its centre for the audience to sit on. Part of Cardiff's intent is to deconstruct conventional spectatorship by allowing the listener to "climb inside the music," and therefore climb inside the frame.[156]

I first experienced the work at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in 2004. It began with a first step into a dark and silent space. Overwhelmed with a desire to leave, as I attempted to, a gallery assistant encouraged me to go back in. Feeling obliged, I re-entered the darkness, with arms outstretched seeking protection, perhaps both physical and emotional in nature. Hearing a cough, and some barely audible rumblings, the idea of not being alone in this dark, boundless space, only increased my apprehension and anxiety. As my eyes slowly adjusted, I managed to just stop myself from walking straight into a speaker. The speaker, initially a potential danger, then became a safe space where I could rest. From there I eventually reached the safety of the sofa. As the work moved from its silences to singing, as I became absorbed with watching how other people engaged with the space, the lights suddenly turned on. The assistant then entered the space and apologised, the lights being turned off had been a mistake.

[156] Corina MacDonald, *Scoring the Work: Documenting Practice and Performance in Variable Media Art*. (*Leonardo* 42, no. 1, 2009), 59–63.

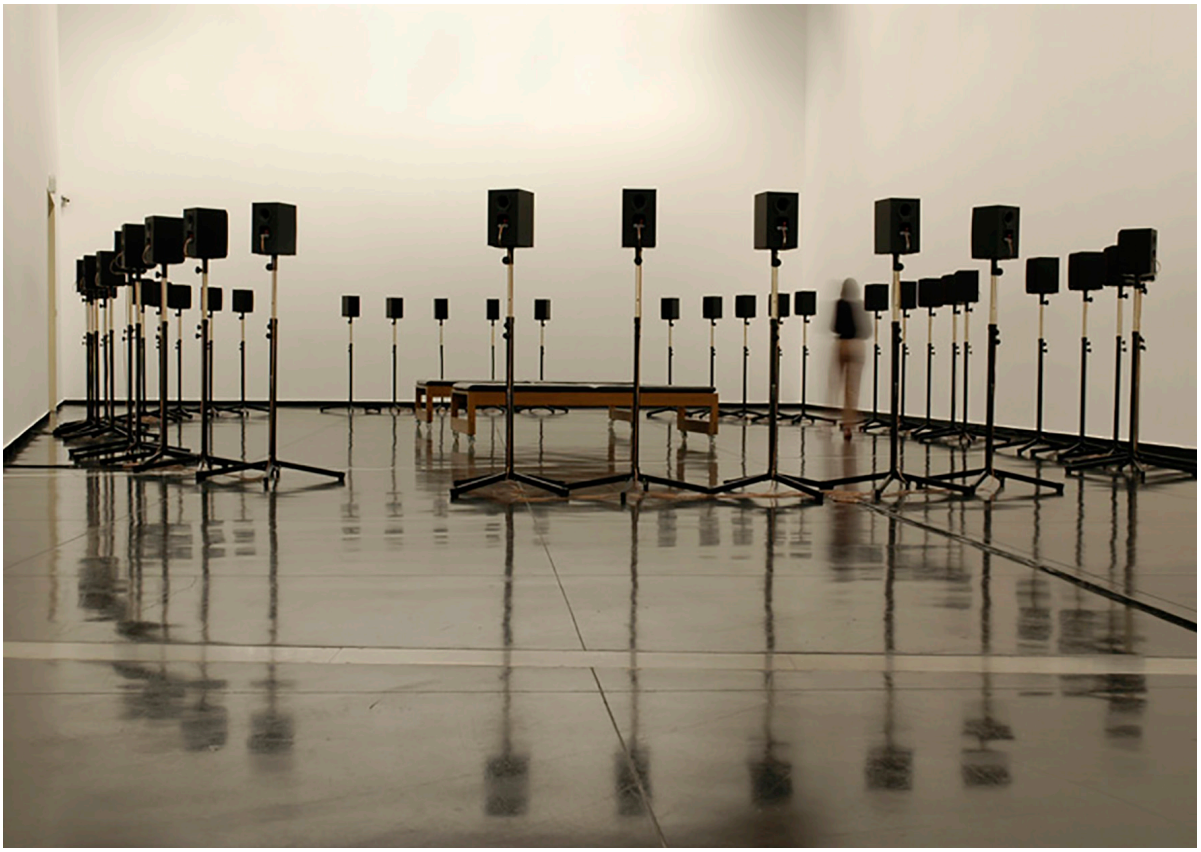

Figure 24: Janet Cardiff: *Forty-Part Motet*, installation view, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2004.

This porous wall of singing, as I contend, created a dynamic, yet somewhat traditional movement between the outside and inside, where it separated and divided, yet equally functioned to select and bring in.[157] As Grosz describes, the frame can be converted into a window, which frames the "landscape" which functions to keep out natural forces, whilst simultaneously controlling their return into the interior.[158] Within the context of Cardiff's work however, with darkness consuming the landscape, there was no divide, no means to control natural forces and how they engaged and moved within the body. There was no physical frame, for the frame had dissolved into the darkness. What there was, was the "perceiving body and its physical boundaries," an invisible frame in movement with the body, which led to a dissolving sense of (my)self, from which natural forces engaged with the body and moved through it.[159]

[157] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art,* 14.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (London: Tate, 2005), 82.

As Claire Bishop contends, "in the age of electrical illumination we rarely experience darkness as a completely engulfing entity."[160] As she continues "stepping into a pitch-black installation may be one of the few times we experience total, consuming darkness."[161] This was my experience of Cardiff's work, a fortuitous accident. The only other time I had experienced a similar, all-consuming darkness was while travelling through the central Australian desert. Particularly occurring during both full and dark moons, the landscape, with all its features and nuances, would dissolve into a different yet equally homogenous darkness, often also leading to an all engulfing experience of a dissolving self.

Bishop's description of darkness as she states, is attributed to French psychiatrist Eugène Minkowski. In his book *Lived Time* (1933), Minkowski speaks to how daylight is characterised by 'distance, extension and fullness,' while the dark night has something more 'personal' about it since it *invades* the body rather than keeping its distance.[162] As Minkowski further contends, while the ego is permeable by darkness becoming one with it, it is not permeable by light.[163] This description of darkness associated with a porous ego reminded me of how kabbalists explain "the night," when one finds oneself in a place of darkness both literally and metaphorically. In their understanding, it is in the darkness, in the realm of the *klipot,* where the chaotic shards, as described in chapter 2, that are needed to be elevated, reside.[164] Therefore, by either consciously placing ourselves within darkness, or finding ourselves in a place of darkness, we can reconnect to ourselves, through this permeable darkness that can dissolve the self.

Located out at Sunnydale Station, 80km from Broken Hill in far west New South Wales, and 800km from Sherbrooke forest, I built a twelve by three-metre white wooden wall.[165] The art ritual consisted of an image of a red brick, rebound tennis wall projected on to the constructed wall, around which I walked barefoot for ten hours from sunset to sunrise during a full moon night. This architectural wall separated, by cutting into the desert space, linking it

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[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Eugène Minkowski, *Lived Time: Phenomenological and Psychopathological Studies.* Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 428.
[163] Ibid.
[164] *Klipot* which translates from Hebrew as "husks" or "shells," are metaphysical barriers between ourselves and the Light (God) that we, ourselves, have created through our own egotistical actions. They keep people from receiving all the blessings that are meant for them, or from feeling happy, certain, or fulfilled.
[165] Driving into Sunnydale Station, for the first time was like driving into my Photoshop image. Having left my home only with the intention to drive north west towards the desert, the moment I saw this land, I knew instantly, that this was the place I had envisaged.

to, as I contend, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the plane of composition, as discussed in chapter 2. And like Grosz, I understood the construction of the wall as enabling the entrapment and slowing down of chaotic shards, through the laying down of a grid.[166] Yet this wall positioned out in the desert landscape did not compose both house and territory, inside and outside, interior and landscape.[167] As such, it did not prevent the natural (chaotic) outside, from inhabiting the relative safety of home and shelter, because this wall did not provide any such notions.[168] Yet the wall still created two sides, as well as enabling and determining a path of navigation.

Similar to *Tree Wall*, the wall created the conditions necessary for my body to engage with and navigate the space. And as with *Tree Wall*, this cyclic navigation enabled, my consciousness and awareness to shift. However, unlike *Tree Wall* the height of the wall prevented any vertical movement over the frame and cut the visible landscape into two distinct, yet equal sides. This dramatically shifted however, as darkness descended onto the landscape,

Figure 25: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING,* the beginning of the ceremony, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2017. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

[166] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art,* 13.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid., 14.

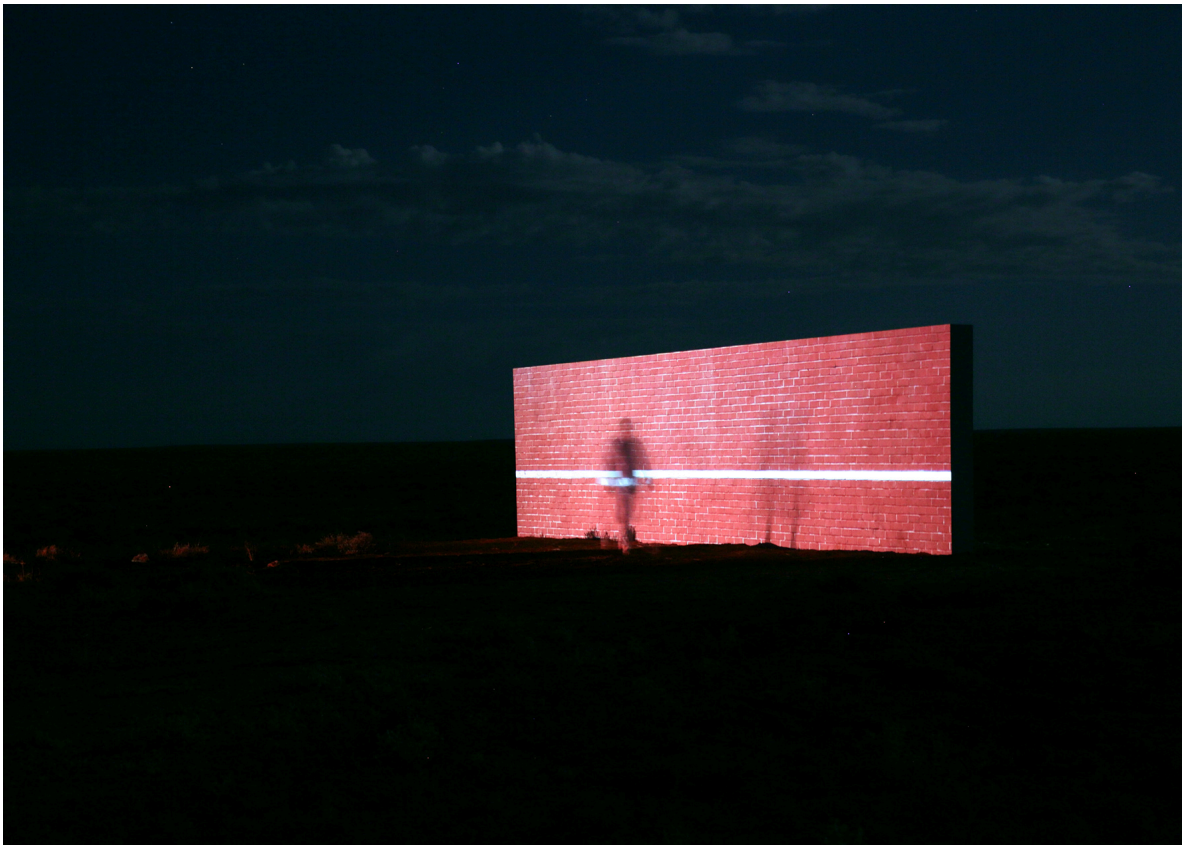

Figure 26: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, the wall transforming during the night, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2017. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

Figure 27: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, the wall transforming during the night, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2017. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

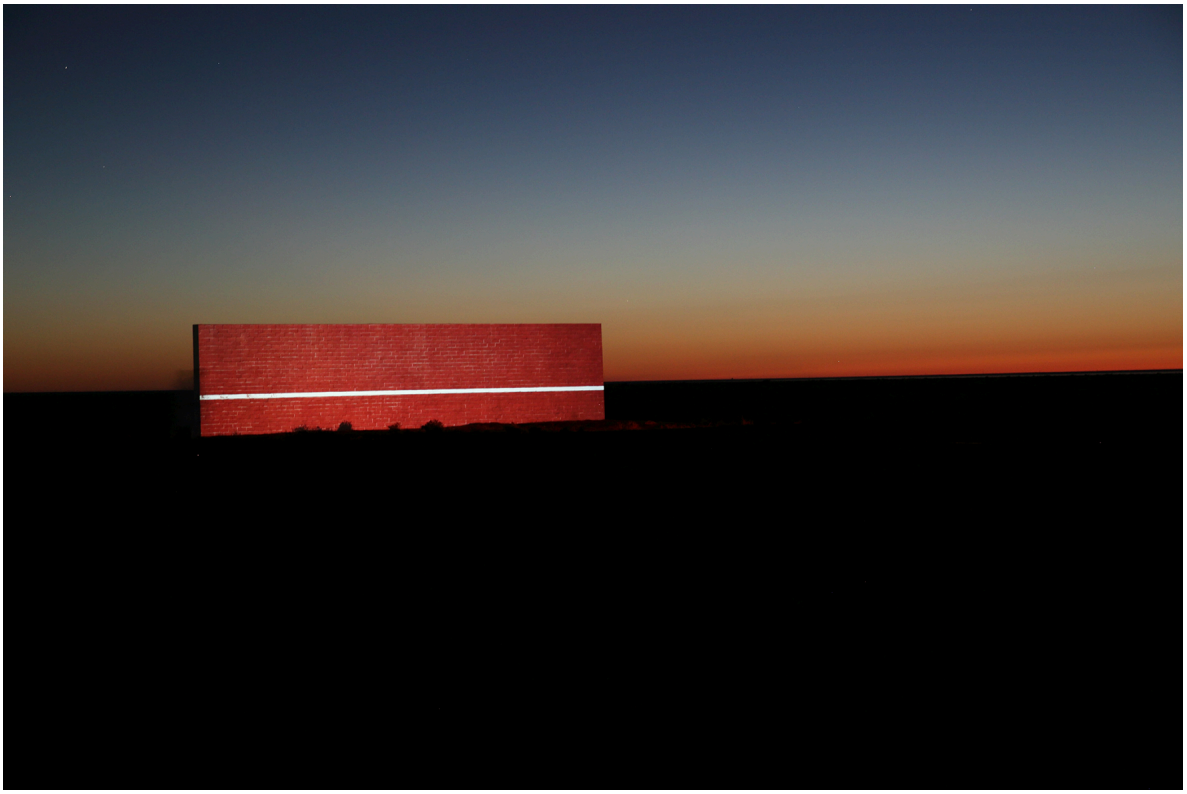

Figure 28: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, the wall transforming during the night, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2017. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

Figure 29: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, ritual ending at sunrise, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2017. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

Figure 30: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, burning the wall, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2017. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

Figure 31: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, burning the wall, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2017. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

Figure 32: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, filming by John Cadd, edited by Benjamin Krycer, https://vimeo.com/243231443.

enabling the projected side of the wall to become illuminated with the image of the rebound tennis wall. While not creating an inside and outside, the projected image created two distinct aspects of the one wall.

Blinded by the light of the projector, the illuminated side of the wall created a barrier between the image and the darkness surrounding it. Characterised by how Minkowski speaks of daylight, it created a distance, an extension from the very landscape I had come to engage with.[169] Preventing the ego, as Minkowski further contends, from becoming permeable, I felt that as I walked into the light I was navigating into the self, into personal memories and self-conscious thoughts associated with the art ritual being captured by the people behind the cameras. In this context it also created a metaphysical, emotional darkness where, according to the Kabbalists, the chaotic shards reside. By way of contrast, as I navigated away from the projected image, away from the cameras, and into the darkness of the landscape, my senses were engaged and provoked as the physical darkness 'invaded' my body. The darkness as such, created the conditions necessary from which to listen and speak to the land, a concept examined later in this chapter. This listening facilitated the dissolving of the self, as examined

[169] Minkowski, *Lived Time,* 428.

in chapter 2. In terms of Kabbalistic thought, it was also within this physical darkness that the same chaotic shards reside.

As such, as I walked around the wall over the ten hours, from the illuminated and visible to the dark and enigmatic, I believe a dynamic tension was created. One between the illuminated ego, which can be characterised through the thinking self, and one created through the dissolving of the self, which can be characterised as an engagement with the natural forces through the senses and intuition. Combined with what I argue were the further collapsing of all oppositional chaotic forces into the frame, this led to a dynamic movement occurring between forces moving in and through the body and external natural forces.

Consciously seeking to engage with forces, whether for spiritual or artistic outcomes, as argued in chapter 2, is to enter the orchard. To consciously seek to manipulate these forces, is to enter the orchard with an objective. It is therefore distinct from the idea of art coming through you, where the body is manipulated by forces, as the character of Goldmund describes. As such, the art ritual could be understood as representing yet another dynamic movement between these two distinct ways of engaging with forces. One where chaotic forces are being manipulated into the frame and another where forces are moving through and in-between the body. This is what occurred that night of the ritual. It is important to note however, that the frame was constructed as an outcome of my revelatory image. It was *not* a response to Grosz's concepts because I had not yet come across her research. It means that while I consciously entered the orchard, I did not enter it with an objective. Yet even without consciously seeking to manipulate forces, I argue through the very act of constructing the frame, that natural forces were manipulated, slowed down and contained within it. As such, I entered the orchard intuitively, yet as I will now demonstrate, to enter the orchard without the rational mind can also be fraught with danger, as I described in chapter 2.

As the sun slowly began to re-emerge over the horizon, as the projected image of the red rebound tennis wall began to dissolve into the coming daylight, I prepared for my final act. I always understood that with the first light, the art ritual itself would be over and I had consciously decided that I wanted to mark this moment of reintegration with a ritualistic dismantling of the frame; a returning to nature. Not at this stage knowing anything about Kabbalistic thoughts regarding a rectification process, as I conceptualised ways to end this art ritual, I was reminded of an experience I had watching Tibetan monks create an intricate Sand Mandala over several weeks. Observing their attention to detail, their concentration and hard

work, I was shocked that upon its completion it was ritualistically dismantled, and the sand returned to nature via a stream of a river. This powerful symbol of return had a lasting impression on me, and as I thought about a symbolic way to mark the end of the art ritual, I came up with the idea of burning the wall. As I watched the wall burn, I was overcome with a sense of euphoria. Walking around the wall barefoot from dusk until dawn on what had been a freezing cold night, had proven to be an act of endurance. Watching the wall burn to the point that it was nothing more than a charred vestige, was an emotional and powerful experience.

However, not long after returning to my forest home, I began to suffer. I suffered in terms of my physical health, having to have my left septic shin operated on after hitting it while producing the artwork, and I suffered in terms of my mental health. Dissecting the art ritual as well as my intentions, I began to understand potential reasons as to why, even though the art ritual itself had been transformative, its outcome had led to this suffering. Firstly, I believed that it could have been because I had allowed the wall to 'explode.' Having now researched Elizabeth Grosz and Lurianic Kabbalah, I understood that rather than 'returning' forces through a process of rectification, I had (in retrospect) released these dynamic shards of chaos

Figure 33: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, the wall as charred vestige, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2017. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

without regard to their impact on the land, the forces that occupy it, or how that could adversely impact my body. While I could not know the impact on the land, I believed that by allowing the wall, and the forces within it, to randomly explode, I had allowed for some of these shards to embed themselves within my body.

The second potential reason was that I had inadvertently captured these forces within the frame of the moving and still image. While the art ritual was over for me with the burning of the wall, I wondered if I had inadvertently captured, or re-embedded some of these shards both during the art ritual, and with the release of these chaotic shards following the burning of the wall. Had they, like my shin, been accidently embedded into the frame of the moving and still image? This question will be specifically addressed in chapter 5.

The third potential reason, was that the art ritual culminating in the burning of the wall, was shared and publicised extensively through various social and print media outlets. This I believe had transformed the performance of an art ritual into a performative act. It resulted, I argue, in the re-emergence of the artist's ego, the self as the central figure within a new frame, marked by the artist as the procurer of forces. Distinct from the notion of the artist as used to describe the qualities of the character of Goldmund, the re-emergence of the artist, refers to the artist, as examined in chapter 2, either placing themselves, or being placed, at the centre of a creative process, where creativity is understood as coming completely from the self of the individual.

According to filmmaker Caveh Zahedi in his essay on art and spirituality, an essay which Elizabeth Gilbert directly references in her well-known TED Talk, if the human becomes the center of the universe above all gods and mysteries, then there is no more room for mystical encounters channeled through the artist.[170] It directly speaks to what Goldmund describes can become of the artist who seeks fame and reputation—the drying up and dwarfing of one's inner senses, to which alone the mystery was accessible.[171] It also speaks to the story of Adam, where the world turned opaque after eating the forbidden fruit against God's will. Had I, by re-emerging as the artist, through the representation and dissemination of the art ritual as my artistic achievement, been disrespectful to the very forces that had opened to me that night?

[170] Caveh Zahedi, *Je est un autre: the Self Other, the self is another* (Io, Un Autro, Italy, 2002), accessed May 2019, https://www.cavehzahedi.com/je-est-un-autre.
[171] Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund: A Novel*, 186.

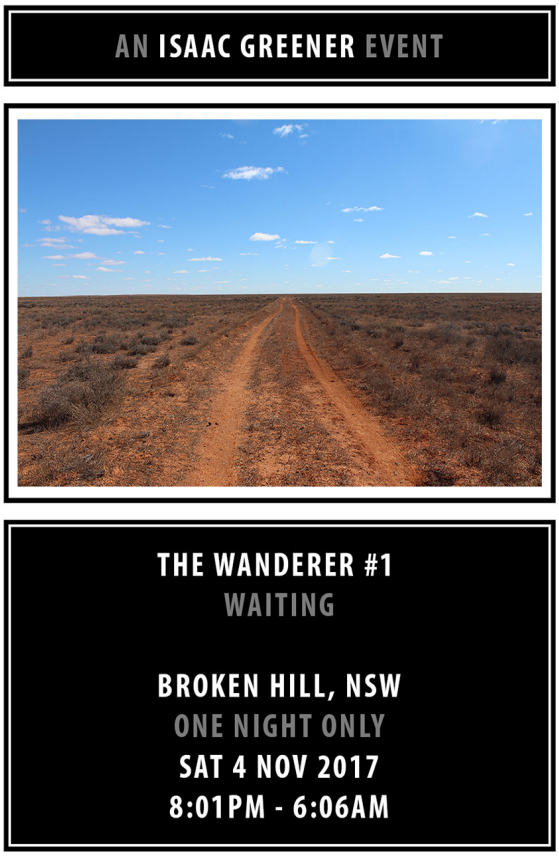

Figure 34: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, invitation, 2017.

And in doing so, had I closed myself to the very mystery I held sacred? I believed that I had, and it had, and this belief was expressed as an emotional, almost spiritual sickness.

On the night of the art ritual there was no audience, because what could have been did not occur. And it is because of this, that the art ritual remained a performance of art, until it was publicly shared as an artwork, where it transformed into a performative act. Prior to the art ritual, I advertised *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, as a one night only event that would occur from dusk until dawn. With the support of Broken Hill Regional Gallery, the engagement of a variety of media outlets, and using social media, my intention was to engage as wide an audience as possible to come and witness this event out in the middle of the desert. Camping was designated, portable toilets provided, and catering and wine organised for 'the opening.' I was acting as I had been taught, following a trajectory of the artist and of a traditional gallery opening, where the artist would perform their performance piece 'live.'

The day of the ritual however, it rained. It had not rained in three months. The farmer informed me that it had not rained like that in more than two years. With the bush tracks

Figure 35: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, desert shrub greening, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2017.

bogged, I reluctantly knew, that it was too unsafe to allow access to the people from Broken Hill and beyond, to the site. Hesitantly, I cancelled the event to the public and began to ruminate. Should I, under these circumstances, and with so much work still to be done, abandon the art ritual all together? Alone and consumed in thoughts and battling the elements, I began to fulminate against the land, against the authenticity of the revelation, as I pondered what the point of it all was.

It was in that moment, that I saw what I had been vacantly staring at. A shrub, seemingly dead, scorched by the desert sun, was sprouting baby green shoots. As with the story of the gannets in chapter 1, in that moment, the shrub was witnessed within a shallow depth of field. But as my field of vision expanded, I saw a desert that was greening before my very eyes. In that moment, the narrative of Isaac, began to dissolve into the desert, as I transitioned from the centre of focus to witness, to a point beyond the self, a state that continued as I navigated around the wall that night. It was due to the rain, I contend, that the art ritual while it could have been, was not a performative act.

A performative act I argue, should be understood as distinct from performance art. To examine this distinction, I will explore the notion of the artist as Shaman as addressed by Anne Marsh. Referencing performance artists including Joseph Beuys, Jill Orr, Theresa Byrnes and Domenico de Clario, Marsh contends that these artists are not shamans in the traditional sense, firstly because their position in the west prevents this.[172] Secondly, Marsh asserts that, "the artist is not entering into a world of spirit or religious ecstasy," rather, they are interested in "shaman-like practices as a healing mechanism."[173] While the artist as shaman is not the focus of this research, her assertion that these artists are, 'only interested in,' rather than entering a world of spirit, is perhaps where a performative act lies. Yet the artists themselves contradict Marsh's claim. Theresa Byrnes talks about communicating with the divine.[174] Jill Orr references her "in-between body" as being a vehicle of energy.[175] And Domenico de Clario speaks of being a witness, as March describes, as if he is listening for the work, looking for guidance to access liminal spaces.[176] It clearly suggests that these artists are not engaging in performative acts but are performing art rituals to intuitively engage forces whether understood as transcendental or natural, without having direct access to, or having learnt from the shamans of Siberia or any other cultural framework.[177] As Marsh contends, this speaks of modernist and postmodernist art historians and theorists, dismissal of an intuitive ability to engage forces on the grounds of it being either romantic, politically incorrect, or simply incomprehensible to the rational mind.[178] It also speaks of art being a fundamentally performative act. If this is the case, then perhaps there is no issue placing the artist at the centre, above all gods and mysteries? If this is not the case however, if the artist is expressing an authentic performative experience, then should the 'art world' be celebrating the artist as genius, and should the artist

[172] "Shamanism" should be understood within a cultural context, one specifically associated with the indigenous people of Siberia in northern Asia, rather than a universal term for people interested in or engaging with esoteric forces, associated with appropriation and colonialism. It is still a term widely used by art critics and artist alike to contextualise and categorise an art practice interested in Shaman-like practices. Anne Marsh, *Performance Ritual Document* (South Yarra, Victoria, Macmillan, 2014), 110.

[173] Ibid., 111.

[174] Carey Monserrate, *A Date with the Divine: The art of Theresa Byrnes* (Cross Current, 54:4, Winter 2005), 138.

[175] Jill Orr taped interview with artist, 24 June 1987.

[176] Domenico de Clario, in *Domenico de Clario: A Second Simplicity*, (Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2005) 23, 50, 64, 66 and 74; Marsh, 108.

[177] It is important to note that while these artists intuitively engage with forces, they do not speak of a creative process that involves partaking in art rituals, or of a creative methodology that speaks of the subsequent returning of forces as part of a rectification process as occurs in my practice. Partaking in art rituals and the rectification process are a conceptual framework and creative methodology representing an original application and my contribution to the creative field.

[178] The institutional dismissal of the mystery and mysterious process equally lead to the artist abandoning these institutions. Why an artist may give up a life of the rational and conceptual for a "wordless" life, a life lived more intuitively, without conscious direction, can be examined further in Ross Posnock's book *Renunciation: Acts of Abandonment by Writers, Philosophers, and Artists* (2016).

allow themselves to receive such accolades when these forces have either moved through the artist, or are contained through the construction of a frame?

The conflict to my mind between a performative act in contrast to performance art, mirrors the conflict that I feel exists between art rituals and their representation as artworks. From the perspective of Lurianic thought, while an art ritual requires the return of these chaotic shards through a rectification process, as an artwork, they potentially contain these chaotic shards within them as well as placing the artist at the centre of the creative process. It is a conflict ever present in my practice as I discuss in detail in chapter 5. It has resulted in me either showing these art rituals and suffering through the drying up of my inner senses, to which alone the mystery is accessible, or choosing not to show these art rituals at all. A position which isolates me from the institutions of art, which while often guided by notions of fame and success and the virtues of the rational mind, also provides the platform from which to share these experiences. What I do know, is that 'my' art, the revelatory images that come through me while wandering and listening to the land, which provide the very structure for further wandering and listening through partaking in an art ritual, needs to be heeded. As such, the fourth potential reason that the art ritual, even though transformative, led to so much suffering, was that the burning of the wall, a conceptually driven, culturally appropriated act, much like the ringing of the Buddhist singing bowl, represented an abandonment of intuitive listening and speaking to the land.

In Jewish belief, *Shema Yisrael*, also known as the Shema, is a twice daily recited prayer considered the most important part of the prayer service in Judaism. The openings of the first and second paragraphs of the *Shema* states: "*Hear* O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one," and "It shall come to pass if you *surely listen* to My commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul."[179] In other words, to hear what God is saying, one must be able to listen, to pay attention, to understand, to internalise, to respond, to obey. This is the essence behind the term Shema and why Judaism is considered a religion of listening. Listening therefore should be understood in Jewish orthodox tradition as an act of faith in a God, one that cannot be seen, or visually represented, but one which can be heard.

[179] Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, *The Bible: Authorized King James Version* (OUP Oxford, 2008), (Deuteronomy 6:4–9), 226. For further insight into the understanding of the *Shema Yisrael* refer to: Grace Aguilar, *Shema' Yiśra'el: The Spirit of Judaism* (Philadelphia, 5624).

I can relate to the sentiment of listening as expressed, but my listening it not compelled or influenced by Jewish religious practice. It cannot be, when such listening is bound to the notion of a transcendental or immanent God, one outside of and prior to nature. Neither however, does my understanding of listening come from a *cultural listening.* Cultural listening to land I contend, is intrinsically connected to indigenous cultural practice in Australia. Passed down from generation to generation, a culture of listening tells the story of connection to land, and the ability to be able to listen to the self. It is not homogenous knowledge however, for each nation or tribe has its own unique understanding of how and what it means to listen. This includes the Wilyakali people, whose land includes that of Broken Hill where the art ritual took place.

The listening that I refer to, is an intuitive listening of the land and of the self. It reflects an engagement with the land, without any specific knowledge of indigenous culture, while at the same time remaining aware not to introduce onto the land, religious or cultural practices that do not speak of the land, or of the natural forces that occupy it. As such, intuitive listening speaks to someone who does not wish to impose on the land, instead seeking to connect with the land and its forces intuitively. It is not a response to the coloniser who seeks to impose traditions, values and customs from another land onto the one that they are now living on, it is the coloniser learning to listen.

Due to circumstances beyond my control, I live on what was/is indigenous land, was born into this land, and through my wanderings have made a deep connection to it. It was also through my wanderings that I came to a personal understanding that natural forces are distinct from cultural practice. Indigenous culture as I have argued, is born from a deep and intimate connection to the land, one that offers its guardians tools from which to listen and live in harmony with the land. But I too believe that I can hear the land, for the forces of the land are not only contained within a cultural frame, rather they exist through and beyond it. It was within this context, that I felt that I needed to present myself to the land truthfully, and that meant to be out in that desert with the only cultural understanding that I did know, that of a Jewish framework, even if I did not wish to impose this culture onto the land.

It has been presented to me during my candidature, that this explanation does not address fundamental moral and ethical issues regarding colonialism, or why I did not seek permission from the Wilyakali elders to be on their land. As I argued, without any intention or capacity to absorb myself within Wilyakali culture, asking for permission would have risked being a

tokenistic exercise directed towards self-mollification, rather than any genuine mark of respect or interest in Wilyakali culture. Rather, my way to show respect to the Wilyakali people and their culture, was to be out there with a genuine intention to listen to the land and to the forces that exist though and beyond it.

Through the ringing of the Buddhist singing bowl and the burning of the wall however, I did introduce traditional and cultural practices that were not of that land, did not come from listening to the land, and which I knew very little about. These premeditated acts were distinct from what took place during the art ritual, which remained ambiguous to external traditions, throughout its duration, therefore enabling an intuitive listening and speaking to the land to occur. The ringing of the Buddhist singing bowl and the burning of the wall, not only marked an act of not listening, but also what listening requires, that of waiting. To listen, one must wait. Waiting needs to occur when enacting an art ritual, as revelatory images do not come fully formed, and therefore the rational, conceptual mind takes over, resulting in these staged acts. Acts which form part of the reasons why I suffered after the art ritual.

CASE STUDY 1: INTUITIVE LISTENING - A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN WERNER HERZOG'S *FITZCARRALDO* (1982) AND *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*

Figure 36: Werner Herzog, *Fitzcarraldo*, Fitzcarraldo overlooking an intact three-story, 320-ton steamer being moved over a muddy 40° hillside, Peru, 1982.

Captured in the full frame of this movie still is the character of Fitzcarraldo, played by Klaus Kinski. You see him dressed in a white suit and hat, overlooking an enormous steamship seemingly suspended on a steep hillside. Here, Fitzcarraldo is overlooking an intact three-story, 320-ton steamer being moved over a muddy 40° hillside. Having 'charmed' the Indians into helping him, Fitzcarraldo's motivation is to access the only rubber trees left unclaimed in the Peruvian jungle to facilitate his dreams of building an opera house in lquitos in the hope of bringing his idol, Enrico Caruso, into the jungle for an operatic performance of Verdi—a vast example of not listening.

While Fitzcarraldo wanted to bring European culture to the jungle, one can argue that Herzog wanted to bring the jungle to the civilised world. Herzog's exercise, the large-scale manipulation of men and object, all in the service of his artistic vision was met with substantial criticism. Seen as representing "German Romanticism run amok, imperial conquest stuck in

the mud and hell-bent on storming its way through to the other side," it represented an act that many have claimed took advantage of, ignored, and negatively impacted the local indigenous population of the area.[180] This was highlighted to many, when Herzog in the early stages of production, after initially being on good terms with the Aguaruna people, had to find an alternative location when they burnt down the camp of the film crew. It was a response to what they perceived as the arrogant attitude of the filmmakers who had simply walked into their villages and attempted to take control without consulting the tribal council.

Herzog came to the land of the Aguaruna people as a romantic; one who identified with nature's unspoiled qualities, its peace and wildness.[181] Confronted however, with the production that was affected by numerous injuries, and deaths, including that of two indigenous extras, Herzog's relationship with nature began to change. As seen through Les Blank's documentary *Burden of Dreams* on the making of *Fitzcarraldo*, late in the film, Herzog, "fulminates against the very nature he went halfway around the world to find."[182]

Figure 37: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, burning of the wall with me wearing the *kittel* in the full frame, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2017. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

[180] Todd Gitlin, "Fitzcarraldo." *Film Quarterly* 37, (1983): 51.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid., 51–52.

Herzog describes a land and its fauna and flora in terms of misery and being cursed. Suggesting that whoever goes too deep into it has a share of this curse; that they are cursed for what they are doing there.[183] Further describing the land as a vile, base obscenity, one where if a God exists, he has created it in anger. He laments the lack of order, the lack of harmony in the universe, where there is (as he describes) just chaos.[184]

Could it be that this is the same chaos that Grosz and Lurianic Kabbalah describes? And that Herzog's fulmination against the land is the result of engaging with unknown lands and forces; lands that perhaps one should never have entered to generate an artistic outcome? Was this the same reason that I had equally fulminated against the land the day it rained, and why I suffered both physically and mentally after *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, as it seemed Herzog did? Dressed in a *kittel*, Isaac walks into the full frame of the still image, the wall burning behind him. Is this heroic image any different to Fitzcaraldo, as he stands there, dressed in a white suit, overlooking the steamship being hauled over the mountain?[185] If the character of Fitzcaraldo, as with Narcissus and Goldmund, is understood as being autobiographical, rather than simply a character, then one can conclude that both Herzog and I engaged in a similar performative act. Does that mean, however, that they are the same?[186]

In the realm of desire, accusations of egocentrism and mastery could be directed at both of us. Engaging with unknown lands and forces under the proviso of poetic licence without acknowledging, or despite the multiple ethical and moral quandaries associated with co-opting or ignoring communities, or creating, or seeking to engage with forces in the name of making art, are legitimate concerns that need to be acknowledged, while not necessarily procuring a

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[183] *Burden of Dreams,* directed by Les Blank (2005, S.l.: Criterion Collection). DVD.
[184] Ibid.
[185] A *kittel*, robe, coat, is a traditional Jewish white robe that is used as part of the Tachrichim, or burial furnishings that deceased Jewish people are dressed in after undergoing a *taharah* (ritual purification). According to Chabad belief, one's soul and its spiritual rectification is far more important following death than any honour he could possibly get from his association with earthly possessions. Thus, the Jewish funeral emphasises the spiritual and sublime over the physical and material and is why Jewish people both secular and religious are often dressed in this shroud instead of traditional clothes. The kittel however, is also worn on the high holidays, a symbolic act linked to its use as a burial shroud, and to the verse "our sins shall be made as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). According to many traditions a bridegroom also wears a kittel on his wedding day, for the white colour is said to symbolise purity. It also is worn to signify unity with the bride (who also wears white) and the beginning of a new life together. Choosing to wear the kittel in *THE WANDERER series*, reflected my understanding that I needed to honour these rituals by wearing a symbol from my Jewish culture that marked this event as different from any other day, whilst marking my intent for these rituals. If I was to engage forces and seek to manipulate them, a symbolic life and death movement would need to occur. If I was to honour this ritual, a metaphorical dissolving of the self would need to occur accompanied at the same time by an honouring of the living, both within self, the human field, but also the other than human field. To do this required deep listening to the land.
[179] For another example of the archetypal wanderer see: Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer above the sea of fog*, 1817.

definitive response.[187] But differences do exist between Herzog and my work which centre around the notion of intention. While both came to respective lands with clear intentions, potentially marked by a similar prophetic experience, Herzog's intention, was to battle and conquer the land, told through the narrative of Fitzcaraldo. If Herzog did come to the land as a romantic, his actions spoke of the self through conquest. As I have argued, to intuitively listen to the land, and be in a reciprocal movement with natural forces, the self needs to dissolve. Herzog's actions, however, never spoke of such an intention. Rather than listening, he came to acquire, and while he could feel and experience the chaos, he never worked with these forces in the making of *Fitzcaraldo*. As such, Herzog did not engage with the land to listen, rather he 'used' the natural environment as a backdrop to a bigger conceptual framework, where at the centre was a warped and distorted ego, which had the power to, "destroy the connection to the source by positing itself as the source."[188] This I argue is best reflected in the way that Herzog experienced the land.

THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING represented numerous conflicts and contradictions which can be understood as both mirroring and being distinct from Herzog's actions. While I did not come to the land as a European romantic, I created a romantic gesture from which nature could be presented in such a light. While not corralling indigenous people into manifesting my own artistic vision, had I equally, even with a clarity of understanding as to why I did not engage the Wilyakali people, disrespected them and their connection to the land? While my intention was to share my experience by inviting people onto the land, was I rather 'using' the audience as perhaps Herzog did, to lay witness to the quintessential artist as shaman, representing a cultural lineage of the individual romantic genius. And finally, while the burning of the wall was conceptualised as 'a returning of forces to nature' had I, like Herzog engaged in a futile and heroic act? A romantic, even narcissistic gesture; a response disguised as a listening to the land, when in fact I was exploring the deepest sources of my isolated self? Or was this an imagined conquering of the self and of forces through exploiting the land, that manifested in the re-emergence of the ego? These where questions that I was left to ponder.

[187] Anthony Downey. "An Ethics of Engagement: Collaborative Art Practices and the Return of the Ethnographer." *Third Text* 23, no. 5 (2009): 594.
[188] Caveh Zahedi, *Je est un autre: the Self Other, the self is another* (Io, Un Autro, Italy, 2002), accessed May 2019, https://www.cavehzahedi.com/je-est-un-autre.

CHAPTER 4

THE WANDERER SERIES

SECTION 2: THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING

Every Friday night, for as long as I could remember, my family gathered around my grandparents dining room table to bring in the Sabbath. While not a religious family, we would still follow certain customs and traditions, including the saying of prayers of gratitude over the Shabbat candles, wine and the Challah (ceremonial sweet bread). We would then join hands and sing a Shabbat song of welcome that my sister had learnt at Kindergarten. We would then raise our wine glasses and toast *L'Chaim*, "to life." That same table was also used for Jewish high holidays: that of Jewish New Year and Passover, where Jews read the *Haggadah* to commemorate and recount their exile from Egypt to the promised land.[189] My memory is that of my grandmother cooking for days before hand, and of those nights being loud and atmospheric, as the seats where slowly occupied by my grandmother's brothers and sisters, my parents and sister, and one set of cousins. I was too young to understand the miracle it was that so many of them where sitting there, having been saved by luck and Oscar Schindler during the Holocaust.[190] I was also too young, and will never truly comprehend, what it meant for them to be sitting together around that table not only as survivors, but as witnesses to the murders of their parent, siblings and children.

As I approached my twentieth birthday, most of my great uncles and aunties had died. When my grandfather, the patriarch of my family, died a year later, the frame of the family, and the roles within it, became disrupted. When my grandmother died less than a year later, as grief prevailed and established roles within the family became blurred and contested (as

[189] The word Haggadah means "telling," as its primary purpose is to facilitate retelling the story of the Exodus from Egypt. It is read during the Sedar. The Seder is a feast that includes reading, drinking wine, telling stories, eating special foods, singing, and other Passover traditions.

[190] Oskar Schindler (1908–1974) was a German businessman who saved the lives of 1,200 Jews during the Holocaust by employing them in his enamelware and ammunitions factories in occupied Poland and the Czech Republic. He is the subject of the 1982 novel *Schindler's Ark* by Thomas Keneally, and its 1993 film adaptation, *Schindler's List* by Steven Spielberg. Schindler is responsible for saving the lives of my grandparents and my grandmother's siblings.

with chaotic shards), the frame that had held my family together shattered and the family dispersed. For a long period, high holidays went unmarked, yet Shabbat dinners persisted, even if for years it consisted of my parents and I eating takeaway at my grandparents' house, which was now my parents' home. Yet with time everything evolves. While that Shabbat table has long gone, and Shabbat dinners no longer happen at my parents' house for they have also become elderly, the tradition lives on. Whether it is my parents visiting our home in Sherbrooke, or my family going to my sister's house, the Shabbat table is now vibrant again with my three nieces and my three boys singing my sister's Shabbat song.

According to Elizabeth Grosz, the table, being a piece of furniture, is a miniaturised form of the frame, architecture on the inside of architecture, a frame within a frame. In this context, furniture can be understood as an interior replication of architecture, where the closet is a box in the box, the mirror a window onto the outside, and the table another floor on the ground.[191] Referencing architect Bernard Cache (himself a furniture maker as I am, or perhaps once was), furniture is that which most intimately touches the body, it is linked to the architectural frame through a direct contiguity with the body and its activities. Furniture brings the outside in, but only to the extent that it itself is extracted and transformed from this outside, stripped down, reworked, refined, in short, an outside now constructed, regulated, inside.[192] Because it takes and transforms the outside, Grosz contends that furniture enables the body to be most directly affected by it, while equally protecting us from the chaos of the outside world.[193]

[191] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Ar*t, 15.
[192] Ibid., 16.
[193] Ibid., 15.

Figure 38: Isaac Greener, *Tree Bark*, video still, Sherbrooke Forest, Victoria, 2018, https://vimeo.com/379495883.

Walking through Sherbrooke forest, I would often notice the bark that had fallen off the almost one-hundred-metre-high Mountain Ash trees, draping itself through the smaller trees and the undergrowth beneath. As I was wandering through the forest early one morning, I saw a child joyfully hauling one of these long pieces of bark over his shoulder as he walked. Like a snake, the tail of the bark left a trail along the walking path. As the family left, what remained on the forest floor was an artefact of his connection. A few weeks later, as I again wandered through the forest, I noticed, engaged with, and captured on video my own interaction with another piece of bark that had draped itself through the forest undergrowth.

In contrast to *Tree Wall*, clear revelatory images for a specific art ritual did not come through me from either observing the child, or through my own encounter with *Tree Bark* (2018). Rather, what did materialise, were random revelatory images that together created a visual apparition, where I understood that I had to re-engage with the forest and with the encounter I had witnessed. What I envisaged was walking from my home, then walking back into the forest. I would then find a long piece of bark and drape it over my shoulder as the child had done, as seen in images 39 and 40. I would then carry it out of the forest to my home, bring it into my house and form a circle with the bark in my dining room (images 41, 42). I

would then burn the bark (images 43, 44), use the ash from the fire as an outline for a table (images 45, 46), and proceed to build a table from the timber of a Mountain Ash tree (images 47, 48). I would then roll the table back into the forest to partake in an unknown art ritual.

Figure 39 (left): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, finding a long piece of bark, Sherbrooke Forest, Victoria, 2017. Image courtesy of Benjamin Krycer.

Figure 40 (right): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, draping the bark over my shoulder, Sherbrooke Forest, Victoria, 2017. Image courtesy of Benjamin Krycer.

Figure 41–42: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, forming a circle with the bark in my dining room, Sherbrooke Forest, Victoria, 2017. Image courtesy of Benjamin Krycer.

Figure 43–44: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, burning the bark, Photoshop, 2017. Image courtesy of Benjamin Krycer.

Figure 45–46: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING,* using the ash from the fire as an outline for a table, Photoshop, 2017. Image courtesy of Benjamin Krycer.

Figure 47–48: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING,* building a table from the timber of a Mountain Ash tree, Photoshop, 2017. Image courtesy of Benjamin Krycer.

After building the table, as with *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, the period that followed was marked by the thinker, the rational, conceptual mind seeking to draw out and manifest an art ritual that I had not clearly seen. This pressure to extract revelatory images, to understand how I was going to engage with this table, once again led me into a metaphorical darkness as previously described through Kabbalah. As with *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, Photoshop demonstrates multiple versions of how I might engage with this table in various locations. This includes rolling the table back into the forest, and then sitting at the table from dusk until dawn drinking ritual wine (see images 49, 50).[194] In another example, I was to place the table out at the old Olinda Golf Course, a place where I also often walked, where dressed in the Kittel and using a hand planer, I would walk around the table from dusk until dawn, shaving the timber until it was returned to a stump. As with the concept associated with the Sand Mandala, this was meant to represent a movement of return. I had taken the bark out of the forest, used the timber of the Mountain Ash tree to build the table and then in a symbolic act would 'release' the shavings back into nature as part of a rectification process (images 51, 52).

Figure 49-50: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, sitting at the table from dusk until dawn drinking ritual wine, Sherbrooke Forest, Victoria, Photoshop, 2017. Image courtesy of Benjamin Krycer.

[194] Wine has a unique position in Jewish life and tradition. According to Jewish law, when you make a blessing over wine, you are exempt of making any blessing over any other beverage, for they are all subservient to the wine. Wine is also understood to escort us throughout our lifecycles being used during the Brit Milah as well as during wedding ceremonies, Shabbat and high holidays.

Figure 51-52: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, wearing the Kittel and using a hand planer around the table from dusk, the old Olinda golf course, Victoria, Photoshop, 2017. Image courtesy of Benjamin Krycer.

It was whilst wandering once again in the forest, this time filming the death of a beetle, that I saw a revelatory image which disclosed to me to take the table back out to Sunnydale station, and to sit at the table from dusk until dawn.[195] The moment I could *see* the table back out in the desert, I knew that that was where the art ritual needed to occur. Returning was a means to take the lessons I had learnt, as well as the questions still unanswered from *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*. It felt like another opportunity to authentically listen to and speak to the land. In doing so, I would engage forces through an uncontrived rectification process, where upon completion of the art ritual, the forces, would be returned rather than allowed to explode. The question of how to return these forces, and where, if possible, these forces will be returned to, will now be addressed.

According to Deleuze, as will be further examined in chapter 5, not only do all oppositional chaotic forces collapse into the frame, it is also the being of sensation—the flesh of the artist transformed into a compound of sensations.[196] It is why Deleuze, as with Grosz, when speaking of the construction of the frame argues that it is a metaphysical condition.[197] While it is not within the scope of this research to define the broad and intricate discipline of metaphysics, I argue that while the natural forces they refer to are quantifiable, the action of

[195] While the dying beetle (most likely a scarab beetle) represented a literal transition from life to death, according to Herman Hesse, a rite of passage is marked by a similar metaphorical experience. I believe that by witnessing this encounter in the forest, it activated a sense of wandering, which can be understood through such a metaphor and it was that which led to the vision for the art ritual.

[196] Gilles Deleuze, *What Is Philosophy?,* ed. Félix Guattari. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 183.

[197] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art*, 2, 10.

these forces, as with the (metaphysical) body, collapsing into the frame is not. Therefore, as I will argue in chapter 5, the frame represents both object and concept. In other words, the concept that natural forces can be manipulated into a frame and that the frame can slow down and contain these forces, which can then equally explode, is exactly this: a metaphysical idea, one that cannot be rationally contextualised.

When Kabbalists speak of returning chaotic sparks to an immanent and transcendental God, unlike Deleuze and Grosz, they are not speaking of metaphysical aspects of the rectification process. Rather, their belief is grounded in faith and through the teachings of Isaac Luria, where the *Tzadik*, as examined in chapter 1, has the responsibility to channel divine spiritual and physical forces to his followers. Yet what Deleuze, Grosz and the Kabbalists share in common is a belief that these shards are not tangible, existing either through concepts or faith.

When I speak of engaging with these forces, I do not speak of Deleuze and Grosz's concepts, although my understanding of, and engagement with these forces has been unquestionably grounded through their ideas. Yet, there is a mystery that remains as to how these revelatory images come through me. Equally, the dynamic movement that I argue occurs between forces—the body and the frame—during the art rituals, does not align with their ideas. Conversely, while my understanding of a rectification process has been unquestionably contextualised through Kabbalistic beliefs, I do not believe in an immanent and/or transcendental God, and, as such, I cannot align my understanding of these chaotic shards (or how and where they return) with such beliefs. Yet, as much as I believe that chaotic forces can be engaged with, I equally believe that the forces should be returned. How and where these intangible forces are returned, as with Kabbalistic thought, is an act of faith and intention. Not a faith in God, but in the mystery and the mysterious processes, that, as the character of Goldmund, Gilbert and Zahedi suggest, can be channelled through the dissolving of the self. It is this same dynamic movement, between the conscious and dissolving self, that can facilitate the return of these chaotic forces back to their cosmological source.

While I knew that I would return to the desert, to the same spot where *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING* had taken place, like before, I knew that there where elements to this art ritual that were not fully realised. But this time, I did not force upon myself an expectation to conceptualise and extract these visual images. Rather, I had gone from waiting, to learning how to wait, from questioning to trusting my artistic process. What came, was a revelatory

image to bike ride though my childhood neighbourhood, starting and returning from the house in which I had spent my formative years.

I grew up in a multicultural street in an outer suburban neighbourhood. My next-door neighbour and best friend was Mohammed. It was a strange friendship, largely due to the way culture and religion impacted on our dynamic. Mohammed had been born into a conservative, religious Muslim family who had emigrated from Lebanon following their civil war.[198] I had grown up in a secular Jewish home, with my mother having emigrated from Poland after the war and my father having emigrated from Israel. In another time, on different lands, Mohammed's father and my father had been on opposing sides in the Arab/Israeli war of 1967 (also known as the Six Day War). In another time, on different lands, our fathers had fought each other, and may have been responsible for the killing of each other's friends. Yet in our unremarkable suburban street, Mohammed and I had formed a remarkable friendship. Not just for what had been, but because old land attitudes framed by culture and religion were ever present, and would sometimes come to the surface. It was Mohammed's father that had first made me aware of my Jewishness, when as young kids Mohammed and I were play fighting in the backyard of his parents' home. Coming outside, his father declared this a fight between Israel and Lebanon and he demanded of his son to win.

Differences of upbringing and lineage however, dissipated when we left our respective houses and got on our BMX bikes. For hours at a time Mohammed and I would wander free through the suburban streets, through the enormous forested parks that the streets backed onto. Before mobile phones, time was only dictated by the setting of the sun, which marked the immanent need to make our way home. And through these wanderings we stayed connected to each other, to our environment, to the land. Planted were the seeds to becoming a wanderer, and of learning to listen to the land.

Riding my bike retracing my memories almost thirty years later, I realised something that altered my understanding of these revelatory images that came through me, and the associated narrative I had attached to them. As I rode through memory, through the suburbs and forested parks, I realised that I was not bike riding exclusively through the narrative of Mohammed and Isaac. Rather, I was bike riding through multiple narratives, some remembered and some

[198] The Lebanese Civil War was a multifaceted civil war in Lebanon, lasting from 1975 to 1990. For a further understanding of the civil war refer to Jamie Chamie's Journal article: "The Lebanese Civil War: An Investigation into the Causes." *World Affairs* 139, no.3 (1976): 171–188.

forgotten, some associated with bike riding and others not, but all memories that had shaped my childhood and influenced my adult life. Understanding that these images were multi-layered and contained both known and unknown meanings, was transformative. Understanding that I could therefore never fully conceptualise and rationalise these symbols, began a process that I term the dissolving of the narrative. It was an understanding that I took out into the desert.

When I returned to the desert for *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, there was no invitation to an event, no local media and no social media like the time before. Beyond the farmers, and the same documenters as last time, no one knew that I had returned to the desert to partake in another art ritual. This return was marked to occur on the Jewish Sabbath and dark moon which contrasted with the 'darkness' of the full moon during *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*. In the days before the art ritual was to take place, it rained. It had not rained since *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, which had occurred almost a year previously. To the famers, I was the rain man, the bringer of good fortune, and I was happy to think that by being there, I was playing some part in lifting their spirits, of what had otherwise been a difficult, dry year. In terms of the ritual, the rain and the unusually cold weather, almost instantly reconnected me to the land. In *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, I was waiting to understand my intention, to understand these revelatory images, but this time I was only there to listen and speak to the land, not to engage the image, but to disconnect the self from any narrative associated with it.

As examined, according to Grosz, furniture brings the outside in, because it takes and transforms the outside, enabling the body to be most directly affected by it, while equally protecting it from the chaos of the outside.[199] While the process of building the table was one of stripping down, reworking, and refining nature, the table placed out in the desert, as with *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, did not create an inside and outside, nor house and territory, or a protection of the body from the natural chaotic outside.[200] Unlike *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, the table as frame was not built to facilitate a physical form of navigation and did not create two sides. Rather it was the body functioning as a frame, that created a division between what I was seeing, and the video being projected onto my back. It meant that unlike in *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, I was not going to be blinded by the light of the projector,

[199] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art,* 15.
[200] Ibid.

and that there would be no barrier between myself and the physical darkness. As such, rather than constantly navigating into the self, into personal memories and self-conscious thoughts, as was the case during *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, this time, this symbol of memory would be both *figuratively* and literally behind me, marking the instability of personal narrative. As such, the non-projected side of the self, dressed in the white kittel and looking out towards the horizon, would be able to engage and listen to the land through my unimpeded senses. Enabling, I believed, for the physical darkness, as previously described in this chapter, to invade my body and through that, the self would become permeable and dissolve.

The ritual began with the setting of the sun. There was no Buddhist singing bowl, no introduced marker. As the sun began to set over the horizon, I decided to walk along the red earth goat track until I reached the table. It was a point of connection, and of paying respect to the land and to the art ritual that had taken place at that precise location a year earlier. Sitting down on a Mountain Ash tree stump that I had taken with me—to my mind, representing the duality of nature from forest to desert (as further examined in my conclusion), and the importance these contrasting lands have played in my life—the night descended onto the landscape.

As I sat at the table, nothing that I had rationally conceptualised occurred. Rather than there being no barrier between myself and the physical darkness, the light from the data projector kept hitting my glasses, shining the light from the projector back into my eyes. Creating a halo effect, where the horizon in front of me became saturated with light, combined with the generator consuming the sounds of the desert, I had created an almost identical situation as in *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*. Except this time there was no other side of

Figure 53 (top): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, the table in location, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2018. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

Figure 54 (bottom): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, the artist at sunset, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2018. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

Figure 55 (top): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, projection on the artist at night, *Bike riding through memory*, 2018, Broken Hill, NSW, 2018. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

Figure 56 (bottom): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, projection on the artist at night, *Bike riding through memory*, 2018, Broken Hill, NSW, 2018. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

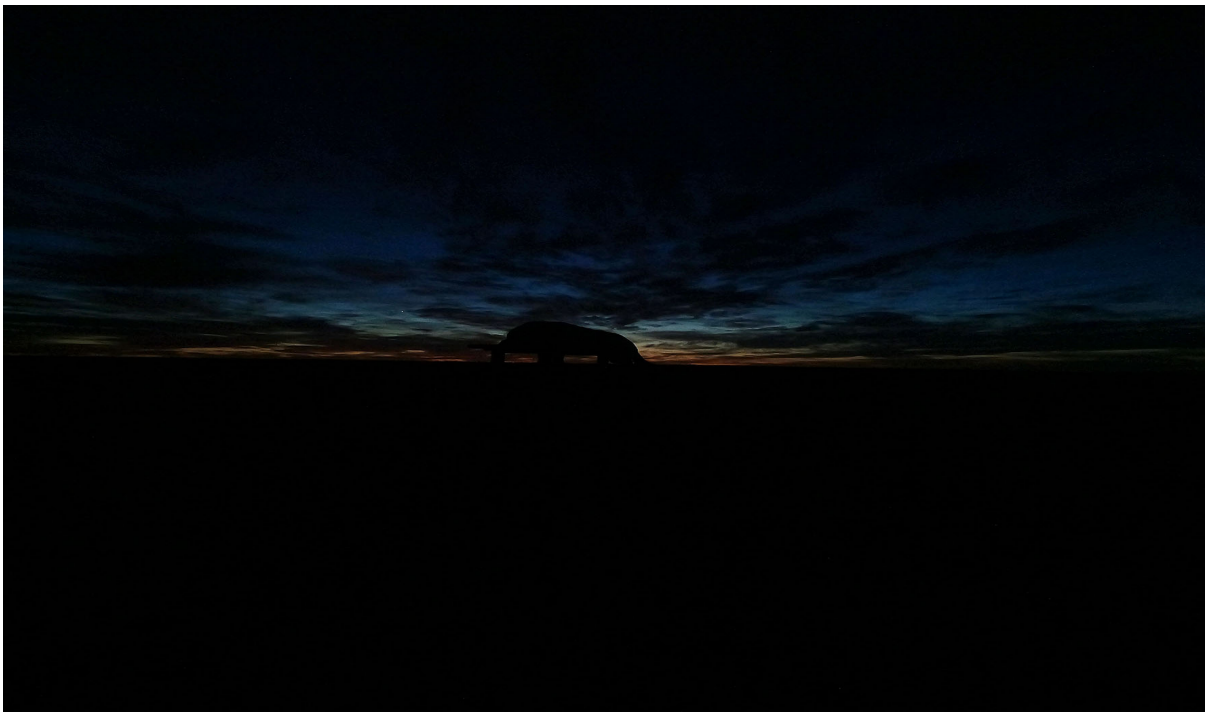

Figure 57 (top): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, the projector and generator being turned off, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2018. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

Figure 58 (bottom): Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, first light, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2018. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

Figure 59: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, dawn, the artist emerging, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2018. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

Figure 60: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, marking the end of the rite of passage, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2018. Image courtesy of Kay Abude.

the wall that connected me back to the landscape, back to listening. As such the projected image, functioned as a barrier, triggering an internal 'listening' occupied by noise.

It was as a twenty-year-old, traveling on the Oodnadatta Track, 50km north of Maree in the South Australia desert, that I turned off my motorbike and was confronted with something I had never experienced before. It was a deafening internal noise, a space between thoughts and emotions, that presented as a self-isolating barrier, an emotional wall, that had almost instantaneously enveloped me and my senses, provoked by the vastness and silence of the desert. But as I spent more time travelling through the desert, followed by time living out in the desert, the noise began to quieten to the point where I could start listening to the silence. And it was in that silence, or perhaps the space between the silence and the noise, that I began to be able to listen to the land. Similarly, to the experience as described in *Ocean Walk*, the vastness of the desert enabled me to listen and to see, and in doing so, I could propel my awareness out into the landscape and beyond, and to the forces contained within it.

CASE STUDY 2: NINE CATEGORIES OF SILENCE

Curator Toby Kamps as part of a catalogue project for the exhibition, *Silence* (2012), which he curated, proposes nine categories of silence as a means to understand how silence has been used within the arts.[201] As Kamps suggests, there have been many attempts by artists over the last century to invoke the absence of sound or speech: as a symbol, as a phenomenon, as a memorial device, as an oppressive force, and as something to be inhabited and explored through performance.[202] However, relevant to this research is the category of *Cagean Silence. Cagean Silence* refers directly to artist John Cage and his work *4'33"* (1952/1953).

[201] The Menil Collection, Houston, Texas from July 27–October 21, 2012 and University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive from January 30 to April 21, 2013. *Silence* was conceived and initiated for the Menil by Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art Toby Kamps. Joined by Steve Seid, Video Curator at the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, this exhibition and catalogue project looked at nearly a century of modern and contemporary art investigating silence as both material and theme. The exhibition brought together a selection of works by four generations of international artists to explore questions around silence, such as: what is silence? And why does it have such a grip on our imagination? Participating artists included: Joseph Beuys, John Cage, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Marcel Duchamp, Yves Klein, Bruce Nauman and Amalia Pica among others.

[202] Toby Kamps, *The Menil Collection*, Houston, Texas from July 27–October 21, 2012 and University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive from January 30–April 21, 2013, 64.

Inspired by Robert Rauschenberg's *White Painting (Two Panel)* (1951), and four other similar works from the 1951 *White Painting* series, Cage's *4'33"* became the most famous deployment of avant-garde silences, having made its debut at the Mavericks Concert Hall in Woodstock, New York, on August 29, 1952. It was there that twenty-six-year-old virtuoso pianist David Tudor stepped onto the stage and performed Cage's composition by closing the

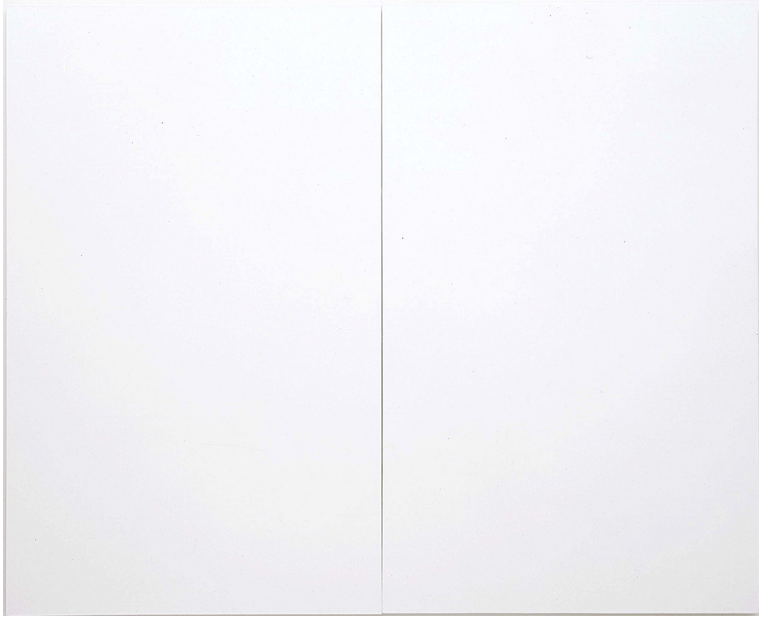

Figure 61: Robert Rauschenberg's *White Painting (Two Panel)*, 1951.

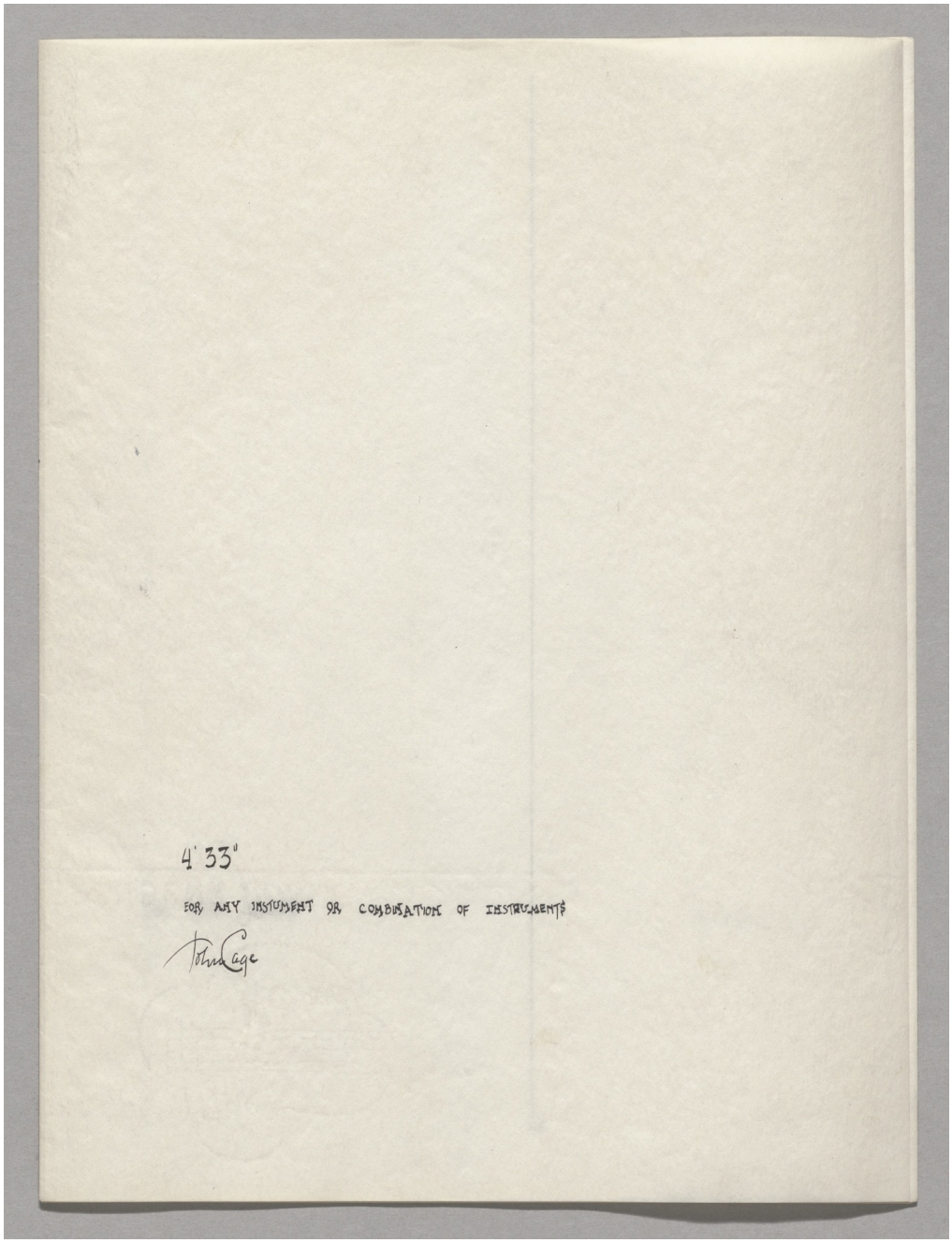

Figure 62: John Cage, "*4'33"* (In Proportional Notation)", 1952/1953, The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

keyboard cover at the beginning of the piece and then opening and reclosing it between its three movements, of 30", 2'23", and 1'40." While keeping track of time by consulting a stopwatch and reading a now lost, blank staff-notion score in 4/4 time, Tudor did not play a single note. Instead, he sat in concentration, letting the listeners react to this musical non-event.

This work stood as the culmination of Cage's years of research into alternate models of music and consciousness. It stressed the limit of reason, awareness of the present moment and, perhaps, the idea that emptiness can represent a form of transcendence.[203] It was a provocative foray into the heterogeneity of the sonic environment, pushing the notion that "the experience of silence… almost anywhere in the world today, is traffic."[204] Cage wanted sound to be nothing more than itself, he said "I love sounds, just as they are, and I have no need for them to be anything more."[205] Yet by calling attention to the sonically liminal, he also reconceived the act of listening, and through the "musicalisation of all sound," he established a means by which silence could be heard.[206] This musicalisation of acoustic silence was made possible by the intentional act of recording, which functions as a framing device for acoustic silence through the giving of duration to something that is without duration, just as *4'33"* gives form to the silence of the place of listening.[207] As such, to experience *Cagean Silence* (ambient noise) is to give attention to what is already there to be heard: all sound. This sound is most often ignored because we usually give our attention to what is supposed to be heard (music and speech).[208]

The audience however, although sympathetic to this experience, were unprepared for what unfolded. By preventing the audience from being able to check and label their feelings against previous experiences, for such a work had never been performed before, I argue that the silence on stage inverted the audience's gaze onto themselves and fellow audience members. Consequently, the audience could not "hear" the silence or the sound. As Cage contends: "They missed the point… What they thought was silence, because they didn't know how to

[203] Kyle Gann, *No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's 4'33."* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 105.
[204] Dugal McKinnon, "Dead Silence: Ecological Silencing and Environmentally Engaged Sound Art." *Leonardo Music Journal* 23 (2013): 71–74. Taken from John Cage in interview, in *Listen*, directed by Miroslav Sebestik (2003, France: ARTE France Développement). DVD.
[205] Ibid., 71.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid., 73.
[208] Douglas Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*, edited by Inc NetLibrary (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 161–199.

listen, was full of accidental sounds. You could hear the wind stirring outside during the first movement. During the second, raindrops began pattering on the roof, and during the third the people themselves made all kinds of interesting sounds as they talked or walked out."[209] The question is: why?

Perceived silence I contend, generated an internal noise within the audience. This internal noise of discomfort and self-chatter, triggered by the perception of silence, generated an internal noise that drowned out the external, peripheral sounds that Cage was trying to get the audience to listen to. John Cage sought to control an experience that was not about silence, but about creating the right environment that would propel the audience's awareness to move laterally, outward to the sounds permeating the space, rather than the sounds, or lack of sound, coming from the stage. Seeking to control this outcome, led the audience to an experience that left Cage disappointed. But his response, represents that of the ego, when one seeks to control what cannot be controlled, as I sought to control the art ritual. Because of this, Cage could not understand, could not listen to the noise that had been generated. While people had not been able to listen to the sound of the rain or chairs folding, they had heard another sound, at a much higher volume. That being the sound of the self, the same sound that Cage may have also been listening to when he lamented the audience's response.

To describe the desert as silent is incorrect, for it is full of different sounds. It demands however, a different kind of listening than what John Cage sought to draw out from his audience. But to hear the ambient noise, whether it be the sound of the wind or the animals, requires a silencing of an internal noise. Without it, the desert cannot be listened to or spoken with, and it is this that makes the desert such a powerful force. For it demands a listening, for if not, it will provoke an internal noise, the noise of self, that can be not only deafening, but brutal to the person experiencing it. To hear all of one's thoughts, whether positive or negative, in surround sound can be a harrowing experience. When the rains came, as when the projected image bounced off my glasses, an internal noise was created that was deafening, resulting in an inability to see or engage with forces beyond the self.

As I became more and more irritable during *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, as the noise of personal narrative drowned out the desert (unlike in *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, where aspects of the art ritual remained fixed), it was in a split moment of decision that I asked

[209] John Cage, interview by John Kobler, "Everything We Do Is Music" (*The Saturday Evening Post*, October 19, 1968), cited in Richard Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1988), 65.

the camera man to turn it all off. As the projector light was switched off, as the generator became silent, the internal noise of self, began to dissipate. And as the camera man informed me that he could no longer capture anything, I felt an incredible freedom. I was no longer being 'watched', or at risk of a performative act. I no longer felt shackled to self-imposed intentions or artistic outcomes placed on myself, or by the institution, or by this research. The 'self' had begun to dissolve and with it any need for proof of purpose, or artistic outcome.

With the projector turned off, the wanderer rose from the stump and onto the table, creating a dynamic movement between forces moving through the body and forces contained within the frame. As describes by Minkowski previously, it was while on the table, that the dark night could *invade* the body rather than keep its distance.[210] It was at that point of merging that the ego became permeable, as I entered the realm of the *klipot,* where the sparks of chaos reside. As I began to listen and speak to the land, my awareness moved laterally outward into the depths of the landscape and vertically to the cosmos. I had contacted and was learning from these natural forces. As the sun arose, I emerged out of the cocoon of my doona. There was no bombastic moment, no exploding frame. Giving thanks, I lifted the table onto its side marking the conclusion of the art ritual, and an enactment of the rectification process.

Figure 63: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, video still, Sunnydale Station, Broken Hill, NSW, 2018, filmed by John Cadd, edited by Benjamin Krycer. https://vimeo.com/379506684.

[210] Minkowski, *Lived Time*, 428.

These methodology chapters focussed on the two major art rituals enacted for this PhD, collectively known as *THE WANDERER* series. It was through this research that I learnt the difference between walking and wandering and most importantly that 'wandering' had become the central generative component of the methodology of my research. For the first time I was able to conceptualise through my research into Maimonides and Hesse's conception of the basic image, how revelatory images manifest 'through me' initiated through the act of wandering. I also learnt that wandering is what forms the foundation for art rituals. Examining the function of the wall I could critically consider my understanding of darkness in the desert through my experiences, while viewing Janet Cardiff's use of the wall in her work, *40 Part Motet*.

In discussing *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, I was able to contextualise my experience of walking around the wall from dusk until dawn. The emotional and physical intensity of walking into the illuminated, projected side of the wall, and then walking around the other side into the darkness of the landscape. Contextualised through Minkowski's ideas and Kabbalistic thought, I then examined one of the central themes of my research, that during the art ritual a dynamic movement occurred between forces moving in and through the body, and chaotic forces that collapsed into the frame.

This was followed by a discussion of my final act: how I set the wall on fire. Believing that this was a ritualistic dismantling of the frame, a returning to nature, I discussed how allowing the frame to explode led to what I believed was an emotional, spiritual, and physical sickness that consumed me on my return home. Speaking to the power of witnessing a desert shrub greening before my eyes, I spoke of how the rain kept the audience away which led to the partaking in an art ritual in contrast to a performative act. Contextualised through the writings of Anne Marsh, I addressed the authentic, that of partaking in an art ritual not for an artistic outcome, but to learn from the land and through this experience grow as an individual. If forces were indeed coming through, which means that I was not at the centre of the creative process, I asked myself—what is the artist within this context?

I also conceptualised my engagement with the land, a key aspect of my methodology, which up until this research had remained intuitive and ambiguous. This 'listening' was considered through a framework of Jewish Kabbalistic thought, as well as indigenous cultural understandings, and only then could I clearly understand my reasons for engaging in the land the way I did. I concluded chapter 3 with a case study of what I believed were the similarities

and differences between *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING* and Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo*. While the movie had left a lasting impression on me, through this research I realised that Herzog may have *used* the land, the people, and any forces contained within it to simply achieve his own artistic ambitions. It was difficult to accept that even with honest intentions to listen, I may have done the same.

Chapter 4 examined my second art ritual, *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*. Discussing the processes that led me to the revelatory image of building a table and placing it back in the desert, I could speak authentically to my experiences of the table in my childhood. As with *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING* these revelatory images opened dormant memories of personal interactions, but also what it meant to grow up through the paradigm of the holocaust and its consequences.

I then, once again, discussed what I consider to be the key ethical and practical consideration in my practice, that of the rectification process. Contextualised through the exploding frame in *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, I spoke of how rectification requires more than intuition and standalone concepts. By dissecting this process through Deleuze, Guattari and Grosz's concept of natural forces, paired with a Kabbalistic understanding of rectifications, I could articulate my practice of rectification as one between conscious intentions and mysterious processes.

Coming back to the art ritual of *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, I then spoke of my return to the desert and my understanding of how this art ritual would be different to *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*. Yet sitting at the table and once again being blinded by the projector, I spoke to what I believe is one of the deserts greatest secrets: that if you do not listen, its silence can be deafening. As discussed through John Cage's work, I concluded this chapter with the decision to switch off the projector, which enabled a deeper listening to the land, and allowed for forces to move through the body and be contained within the frame of the table during the art ritual.

CHAPTER 5

CAPTURING THE IMAGE

This chapter examines the question of whether natural forces, engaged with during art rituals, are transferable into the still and moving image, thereby disrupting the rectification process. This question is initially contextualised through Grosz's understanding of how the frame functions in contrast to my own experiences while partaking in art rituals. I conclude that—whether the creative process is understood through concepts, through the senses, or as a movement between the two—Grosz and I share in the belief that an object can not only contain these forces, but the forces contained within an object can become autonomous from its creator. Reiterating the importance of the rectification process to me, I argue that the forces contained within the frame should not be allowed to become autonomous. I then flag the possibility that by having the art rituals recorded through the still and moving image, I may be inadvertently preventing the rectification process from occurring.

This hypothesis is initially examined through Minor White's concept of Stieglitz's 'equivalents,' where he argues that through a metaphysical connection between the photographer and subject, forces, or what he terms 'the spirit,' can be captured within the frame. Occurring when the artist is positioned behind the camera taking the photograph, I then wonder if such a transfer can equally occur if the artist is in front of the camera? As is the case when I partake in the art rituals. I then examine this question in light of the famous anecdote about Hans Namuth being accused of Jackson Pollock's death because he stole the artist's spirit while filming Pollock during his 'ritualistic' act of painting. I conclude that whether the artist is behind or in front of the camera, a mysterious form of transfer might occur. Examining the potential implications of this understanding to the rectification process, I then re-examine and re-evaluate the footage.

In doing so, I discover that unconsciously I did prevent the potential transfer of these forces into the still and moving image frame. It is also through this re-evaluation, that I come to another important understanding: I had been so preoccupied with what the still and moving image *should not* capture, that I neglected to see the ineffable—what I believe the still and moving image *could not* capture. Examining the concept of the ineffable, in terms of the

tradition of the *Via Negativa*, or the negative way through Maimonides theology, I then examine why I believe that it is not appropriate to show these images within a gallery space. I conclude this chapter with an exploration of why, in presenting the creative outcomes of this PhD, I intend to once again place the frame of the table at the site of the art rituals as an opening to the darkness and silences of the desert.

Referring to the work of Indigenous artist Clifford Possum, Elizabeth Grosz suggests that contemporary artworks require an "artistic pop," "the eruption of sensation at the level of the artwork itself to work as contemporary artworks."[211] The eruption of sensations relates to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *affect.* While a broad analysis of the concept of *affect* is not within the scope of this research, it is necessary to contextualise its understanding as it relates to the proliferation of sensation. As such, *affect* can be understood as an unconscious experience of intensity and sensations, independent from a subject, distinct from feeling and emotions, that cannot be fully realised in language—because *affect* always emerges prior to and outside of consciousness.[212] *Affect*, is therefore transmittable in ways that feelings and emotions are not—between a body and an artwork infused with this intensity. Sensations are composed of *affects*, which are created and released into the world through the act of framing and entrapping fragments of chaotic shards as discussed in chapters 2, 3 and 4.[213] In doing so, art extracts from chaotic shards, not to create an image or representation, but a compound of sensations generated and proliferated only by art.[214] In other words, art is the way in which chaotic shards return as sensations.[215]

As Grosz writes, sensations can be created and proliferated in a way that these forces can detach themselves and gain an autonomy from their creator and perceiver.[216] As such, sensations can find a self-sufficient mode of existence where *affect* is preserved within it, even if the material (the art work), lasts for only a few seconds, as long as it passes through and becomes a being of sensation.[217] For an artwork to 'pass through' and become autonomous however, the creator must first consciously seek to borrow and extract something from these inhuman forces, through the construction of the frame which slows down chaos as discussed

[211] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art*, 98.
[212] Brian Massumi, "Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgements." In Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 30.
[213] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art*, 18.
[214] Ibid.
[215] Ibid., 98.
[216] Ibid., 7.
[217] Deleuze, *What Is Philosophy*, 166–167.

throughout the paper.[218] Following the construction of the frame, the artist themselves can become an *affect*, becoming inhuman, through merging into the very material they are transforming.[219] *Affect* therefore is both produced through the act of framing and then entrapping fragments of chaotic shards, and a state of life where all form is dissolved. As Deleuze and Guattari contend, "the being of sensation is not the flesh but the compound of nonhuman forces of the cosmos, of man's nonhuman becomings."[220] As such, "flesh is only the developer which disappears in what it develops: the compound of sensations."[221] The artist therefore can enter a pre-individual state, where they are not distinguished from the animal or the vegetable, where all beings are subjective, and in doing so, joins the world, mixes himself with nature, and enters a zone of indiscernibility with the universe, as these forces which cannot live within us, act through and on us.[222]

Deleuze, Guattari and Grosz's description of the creative process speaks directly to my experiences while partaking in art rituals. Using different terminology, we both speak of chaotic shards being able to be arrested and contained within a frame. We also consider the potential for these forces to be able to detach themselves and gain an autonomy from their creator. Yet there are also significant differences, most importantly being how the frame functions, why the frame is constructed, and what I believe should be the outcome of constructing the frame.

For Deleuze, Guattari and Grosz, the creative process leading to a creative outcome is premised on the artist constructing a frame that can separate and protect the body from nature. The premise is grounded in the idea that the body is both physically protected from the outside—a chaotic nature, through the construction of an architectural frame, and that the metaphysical body as a compound of nonhuman forces (such as organs, cells and molecules), can merge *into* a dematerialised frame during the making of art. As I argued in chapters 3 and 4, the two frames placed out in the desert (the wall and the table), did not physically protect the body from natural forces. But why did my body not metaphysically disappear into the frame and become a compound of sensation as they describe? It did not disappear because the

[218] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art,* 3.
[219] Deleuze, *What Is Philosophy?,* 181.
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid., 183.
[222] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art,* 16, 181, 182. Excess of sensations refers to excesses of the body and the natural order alike. In nature this includes forms of sexual selection, sexual attraction, and sensations that go beyond the need for mere survival. Art extracts these sensations, which are intensified through their integration into form and their impact on bodies.

frame was constructed as both object and concept, a point that I will address later in the chapter. It was my conscious intention for the body to not be drawn into the frame, because for the self to dissolve, the body needed to remain outside of the frame. I argue that this is necessary because only the sensing body, in contrast to the mind, can speak to and listen to the land. As such, while my body did become a compound of sensations, this was not a consequence of the body being separated from nature through the frame, rather, the body dissolved because it remained intimately connected to nature through deep listening.

In the art rituals, as my body remained unprotected from the chaotic world, it could have been seduced by the ego into becoming its own frame. Unlike the constructed frame, I could not seek to manipulate forces, because to do so would run the risk of these forces becoming contained within the body, thus the body would become its own frame as Grosz describes. One where contained forces (through a movement the body as frame can no longer contain) could metaphorically explode, leading to what I believe would be extreme sickness, both physically, mentally and spiritually. This perhaps explains why the practice of *Merkabah* mysticism was considered fraught with danger. It would be a vastly different and compounded sickness to that described after *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*. In that example, I believe the forces contained within the frame did explode, from which some of these chaotic shards attached themselves to my body. What I am describing here is an internal explosion, where the body—not as organs, cells and molecules, but as soul—implodes and then metaphorically shatters. It is not the dissolving of the self, but the destruction of the self. For this to not occur, as I have previously argued, these forces must remain, as they do on the plane of composition, as infinite movement, able to be channelled through the artist.

This listening however, that resulted in the dissolving of the self during the art rituals was distinct from the listening that takes place in Sherbrooke forest, which occurs without any intention, without the need to construct a frame. Rather, the listening that takes place out in the desert occurs because of engaging the revelatory images, that reveal themselves to me. These images speak of the need to construct and engage these frames out in the desert. As such the listening that occurred in the art rituals, in contrast to wandering in the forest, is the result of a dynamic movement between forces being contained within the constructed frame, and forces moving unimpeded through the body.

While the need to build a frame comes through revelation, the constructed frame represents both object and concept. It is created out of material, but its foundations, not just

how the body may collapse into it, are metaphysical, having been conceptualised through a lineage of rational thinkers. It is the thinking mind that created a distinction between thought and revelation, a transcendental God, and supernatural forces, as did Maimonides. It is the thinking mind of Spinoza, influenced by Maimonides, that placed God and Nature as a single substance. It is Deleuze, influenced by Spinoza, who conceptualised a plane of composition, where all notions of oppositional forces collapse into an infinite movement, from which concepts are extracted. And it is Deleuze and Guattari (further rationalised by Grosz) who conceptualised the idea of a plane of composition, where the same collapsed forces produce art.

The construction of the frame, therefore, is the physical manifestation of the mind's engagement with forces, it is a symbol therefore of the thinking mind. By way of contrast, the body engaging with forces through listening and speaking to the land is intuitive, it comes from and through the senses, it is a relinquishing of the mind, the way of the artist as conceived by Hesse. As such the movement between the frame and the body represents not only a dynamic engagement with natural forces, but a movement between the artist and thinker as two aspects of the oneself. This speaks of another reason why the body should not collapse within the frame. Not only would this prevent a listening to the land, but the artist as a compound of sensations, would become contained within a thinking paradigm. This is because while the frame may collapse all oppositional forces of nature within it, its structure is still that of concepts. As such, the artist, as an opposing aspect of the self, would dissolve into the thinking frame. This would manifest as the chronic thinker as discussed in chapter 1, resulting in art only as concept, and at least for me, the drying up and dwarfing of my inner senses—to which alone the mystery is accessible.[223]

I have established clear reasons as to why the body is not separated from the earth, and while in a dynamic movement with the forces contained in the frame, must not dissolve into it. As previously discussed however, Grosz contends that the very first gesture of art, is that it requires a body's prior separation from the earth, from nature, from its world to generate an

[223] Jung speaks of the idea that everyone possesses mechanisms that are both introverted and extroverted. In *Narcissus and Goldmund*, Narcissus, the thinker, is the introvert and Goldmund, the artist, the extrovert. According to Jung, while one will naturally predominate, if this condition becomes in any way chronic a type will be produced, resulting in a habitual attitude in which one mechanism predominates almost permanently. As Jung states, "the other can never be completely suppressed since it is an integral part of the psychic economy.'' Carl Jung, "Psychological Types." In *Collected works of C.J Jung*, revision by R.F.C. Hull of the translation by H.G. Baynes, Vol 6. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 4, 6.

affect and for the self to become an *affect*.[224] It asks therefore the question of whether the body, positioned outside of the frame while still dissolving, hinders an artistic outcome? If understood through Deleuze, Guattari and Grosz's conceptions of how art is generated, then the simple answer is: yes, the art ritual does not meet the requirements of art. Yet in considering this position, we must remember what Grosz's intentions were when writing her paper. They were, "to explore what makes art possible, what *concepts* art entails, assumes, and elaborates," to "develop new ways of addressing and thinking about the arts and the forces they enact and transform," and to indirectly conceptualise new ways in which "art and politics can be linked together and rethought."[225] So why is this important? Because firstly, Grosz is seeking to understand what makes art possible so as to extract concepts, and secondly, it means that art can only meet their requirements if we understand art exclusively through the paradigm of concepts.

In other words, art can only generate an *affect* if procured through concepts and the ideas that the work may provoke. However, if we use the articulation of the creative process as described by the character of Goldmund (the artist) the frame does not have to be constructed to manipulate forces, and the body as the flesh does not have to merge into the frame for *affect* to be produced. Rather, through a mysterious process, forces move through the hand of the artist and are then contained within a frame. The forces within the frame (the artwork) are then able to become autonomous, as seen with the example of the wooden Madonna examined in chapter 1. In this example, the character of Goldmund depicts the creative process as one that comes exclusively through a paradigm of the senses.

What I am describing however, is the creative process as a *dynamic movement* between both the thinker and the artist, between concepts and the senses, between forces being manipulated into the frame and forces moving through the body unimpeded. Yet, whether the creative process is understood through concepts or through the senses, or as a movement between the two, all share in the belief that an object can not only contain these forces, but the forces contained within an object can become autonomous from their creator. While the outcome may be the same, the question that emerges is whether or not it makes a difference as to how these forces are procured? Through the character of Goldmund, Hesse speaks of a creative process, as a mystery, one in which forces come through the artist by occasionally

[224] Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art,* 10.
[225] Ibid., 2.

manipulating the hand, despite the artist's ego. In other words, for these forces to become contained within the frame of a sculpture, they do not require an egoless person, but moments of spaciousness within the ego, from which these forces can navigate their way through. We can therefore understand these forces as seeking a path of navigation to be contained within the frame, to become autonomous, and to become a compound of sensations where *affect* is preserved in it. The artist is, thus, only a vessel to these forces and not at the centre of the creative process.

In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari (further referenced by Grosz), place the artist at the centre of the creative process as the manipulator of forces. The artist constructs the frame from which chaotic forces can be contained. The artist then merges into the frame, into the material form, from which these forces can be transformed into an artwork. Then the artist re-emerges as flesh and according to Deleuze, becomes "a seer."[226] As such, the artist is understood as being "the presenters of affects, the inventor and creator of affects."[227] And while the forces contained within an artwork become autonomous, also understood as distinct from the artist's 'hand,' it is the artist that has knowingly manipulated these forces, enabling the conditions for this to occur. To therefore answer my question, I believe that how forces are procured makes a profound difference. Forces seeking a frame from which to be contained, which become autonomous, is the opposite of consciously manipulating forces with the intention of them becoming autonomous. One places the artist at the centre of the creative process, the other understands the artist as a vessel to a mystery. While this distinction may be clear, as I have argued, these art rituals represent a dynamic movement between these two opposing understandings. It also represents a personal conflict that is ever present in my practice. At the heart of this conflict are my intentions for partaking in these art rituals.

In contrast to Goldmund's understanding of the mystery, should these forces now contained by the frame and autonomous be presented as my artistic outcomes, my *affects*? Or should the forces be returned as part of a rectification process? Jewish Kabbalistic thought provides unique insights into this dilemma. Examining this conflict, Michael Berg argues that one does not engage in the practice of Kabbalah to become capable of miraculous and otherworldly abilities which are then presented to the world as coming from the self. Rather, it is to understand the physical, as well as spiritual, rules that govern this world and our lives.

[226] Deleuze, *What Is Philosophy?*, 171.
[227] Ibid.,175–176.

For when one understands them and begin to act accordingly, they can begin to make the self into a better, more expanded individual, to know oneself.[228] As Rabbi DovBer Pearson further articulates, key to overcoming any illusionary perceptions of self, what he refers to as the 'false self/ego,' one must understand on a personal level that all that exists is the *Ein Sof*, God understood as infinite light.[229] This is why, according to Lurianic Kabbalah, the ultimate purpose of life is that of a rectification process, a returning of the shattered light to its infinite source.

My understanding of the rectification process, as previously discussed, draws on Kabbalistic thought, whilst at the same time differentiating from the notion that the purpose of this practice is to return these shards to a transcendental and/or immanent God. The idea however, of engaging in a spiritual practice to know oneself, speaks of an authenticity directly relating to my reasons for partaking in these art rituals. As such, the rectification process is an important action of intention. I now understand that this *was* my intention when I burnt the frame in *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*. In *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, forces that remained contained within the frame of the table were returned metaphysically, through a conscious intention and by the spontaneous act of placing the table onto its side. Yet in both art rituals the cameras were there to capture the performance of the art ritual. Why did I choose to film and photograph the art rituals? And did this effect the rectification process?

As Anne Marsh contends, the reasoning behind such decisions goes to "the heart of what artists believe performance art is and does in this world."[230] Marsh seeks to address questions about capturing the image by examining the scholarship and philosophies surrounding the ontology of performance. Centred around philosophies of presence, and the ideologies that accrue to them, Marsh explores a lineage of thought and debate which primarily divides this question as one between capturing the live event of a performance to confirm it having happened, in contrast to whether performance art should not be captured because it is ephemeral and made to be lost in time.[231]

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[228] Michael Berg, *The Way: Using the Wisdom of Kabbalah for Spiritual Transformation and Fulfilment* (New York: Wiley, 2002).
[229] DovBer Pinson, "What is Kabbalah? A basic introduction to the Kabbalah," *Chabad*, accessed February 10, 2019, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/170308/jewish/What-is-Kabbalah.htm.
[230] Anne Marsh, *Performance Ritual Document* (Melbourne: Victoria Macmillan, 2014), 11.
[231] Ibid.

In *THE WANDERER* series, I paid for the services of a professional videographer and photographer. This was even after my experience in *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, where presenting the art ritual as an artistic outcome, contributed to so much inner conflict as discussed in chapter 3. So why did I once again employ the use of a videographer and photographer in *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING* when this time I had no intention to exhibit or share the work? The answer in part relates to Peggy Phelan's insistence, discussed by Marsh, that performance art needs to be experienced live by the viewer for it to guarantee an authentic experience.[232] The answer, in part, also relates to the subsequent critiquing of this position by Amelia Jones, who says that: "the body art event needs the photograph to confirm it having happened."[233]

With no audience at either art ritual, both out of choice and due to weather conditions, documenting the event, even if unconsciously, was my way to guarantee an authentic experience and confirm that it happened. The camera not only functioned to record the event, but the operators of the cameras, acted as my witness. Confirming it having happened also served an important practical function as a requirement needed to successfully complete this PhD candidature. With no images of the art ritual, how could I prove that these visual images did not merely exist as Photoshop images?[234] These positions, however, can be successfully contrasted by the argument that performance art should not be captured, because it is ephemeral and made to be lost in time.

Choosing to not document a performance art piece is not historically underpinned by concerns regarding autonomous or dissolving forces. Rather as Marsh also examines, the reasons behind the argument that performance art pieces should not be captured because they are ephemeral, is largely political. Relating to the resistance movement that began in the 1970s,

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[232] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1993),146–166 and Marsh, 32.

[233] Amelia Jones, "Presence in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," *Art Journal* 56, no. 4 (1997): 98.

[234] The 'real' experience in contrast to the virtual experience, is not within the scope of this research. It is important to note however, that the Photoshop image can be used by some artist to suggest an authentic, 'lived' experience. Fabian Knecht narrates a story regarding the work *Split* (Spaltung) (2018) of his adventures out to the Devils Marbles (Karlu Karlu) to make an artwork. Telling the audience of his time spent out on the land, of meeting the local Warmungu People, and then employing their labour to manually cut one of these marbles into two, Knecht wanted the audience to believe that this event did occur. It was only at the end of the talk that he was prompted to 'confess' his half-truth—that he had met local indigenous people from Tennent Creek, brought them out to site and then got them to simulate this cutting, so he could then 'create' this work through Photoshop and present it as a 'real' experience. Knecht's narrative made me realise the importance of the authentic experience in my practice. That I was not partaking in these art rituals to simply produce an artistic outcome, which after all, could be achieved through Photoshop. Rather, I was partaking in these art rituals to have a genuine experience from which to learn and grow as an individual. This lecture performance was presented as part of Nite Art, Melbourne University, 2017.

not capturing the image was a statement against the commodification of art.[235] While questions regarding the commodification of art are not relevant to this research, the notion of the ephemeral, as they relate to these art rituals, is. If the ephemeral is contextualised through the notion of a rectification process, where forces are transitorily contained within a frame, then how does using the camera as witness (and to confirm it having happened) effect this process? It only effects this process if the chaotic forces engaged with during the art ritual are transferable to another 'frame,' that of the still and moving image. If this is the case, then a rectification process is not occurring.

Photographer Minor White (1908–1976), through his concept of Stieglitz's 'equivalents,' argued that a photograph can stand for another state of being. White believed that the photograph could make a connection between the subject and photographer, via the camera, forming a holistic circle. When in a state of meditation, White argued that a metaphysical connection between the photographer and subject was opened, and it was then that he would expose the negative in the camera hopeful of a "revelation" of the spirit in the subsequent photograph.[236] While rare, White believed that in this state of flux between time and space, the sublime mystery could reveal itself, if only for a fraction of a second.

White's concept speaks of the need for the dissolving of the self through a meditative state for the sublime mystery to reveal itself. However, in this context, the photographer is behind the camera taking the photograph. White's concept highlights what I have argued throughout this paper, that the creative process is a dynamic movement between the conscious self, the artist at the centre of the creative process, and the dissolving of the ego, where forces move through the artist. Yet here White is speaking specifically of the artist being behind the camera. In this context, an equivalence to White's theory can only be made in context of my wanderings in the forest. As such, the argument can be made that natural forces (chaotic shards) may have been contained in the videos that I filmed that captured my wanderings in the forest.

Yet unlike the process that White describes, during these experiences of wandering, there was no conscious intention to court these forces. Rather, the camera functioned as a tool from

[235] Marsh, *Performance Ritual Document*, 11–12.

[236] Marcus Bunyan. *Art Blart. Review: Minor White; Manifestations of the spirit,* curated by Paul Martineau, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2014, accessed March 11, 2018. https://artblart.com/2014/10/17/review-minor-white-manifestations-of-the-spirit-at-the-j-paul-getty-museum-los-angeles/.

which to further engage with, and listen to the land, while capturing what I believe to be documented vestiges of dynamic experiences that led to revelatory images, but were not in themselves containing chaotic forces. This highlights the importance of intention. What White's concept makes clear is that under the right circumstances, the artist behind the camera can capture shards of natural forces, or what White refers to as the spirit. As I was not behind the camera during the art rituals, I wondered whether chaotic forces (contained within the frame or moving through the artist) could still be captured if the artist remained in front of the camera.

As the famous anecdote about Jackson Pollock (1912 –1956) goes, Pollock was tense and frustrated from the experience of having himself captured in action by photographer Hans Namuth. As Pollock came in from painting outside, he poured himself a tumbler of bourbon, having been sober for two years, and demanded Namuth hand over the reels. Ending up in a heated and public argument, after that night Pollock never stopped drinking and returned to a more figurative style of painting. Six years later, bloated, depressed and drunk, he drove his car into a tree, killing himself and a friend.[237]

As Marsh explores, Pollock strongly identified with the artist as shaman and saw his paintings as "akin to the methods of the Indian sand painters of the West."[238] Seeking to give further voice to the artist's own sentiments, Marsh refers to the writings of Alan Kaprow. Writing about Pollock two years after his death, Kaprow suggests that Pollock's paintings where "bordering on ritual itself, which happens to use paint as one of its materials."[239] A point where art became more actively involved in ritual, magic and life.

It is this reason why some accuse Namuth of Pollock's death, arguing that through the act of filming the artist partaking in an 'art ritual,' he stole the artist's spirit.[240] This implies what White contends, that the camera can capture an essence, forces moving through and within the body and contained within a frame. Unlike White however, this story also implies that the capturing of these forces can occur whether the artist is behind or in front of the camera, perhaps through some mysterious form of transfer. If this is the case, what might the

[237] Sarah Boxer, "Critic's Notebook; The Photos That Changed Pollock's Life," *The New York Times* (New York, 1998), accessed April 27, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/15/arts/critic-s-notebook-the-photos-that-changed-pollock-s-life.html?pagewanted=print.
[238] Jackson Pollock. *My Painting*, *Pollock Painting,* edited by Barbara Rose (New York: Agrinde Publications, 1980), 65.
[239] Alan Kaprow, *The Legacy of Jackson Pollock*, in Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, edited by Jeff Kelley, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 4. First published in *Art News* 57, no.6 (October 1958).
[240] Boxer, "Critic's Notebook," 1998.

implications be in terms of these art rituals, and what exactly is being captured? The implications of this understanding relate directly to the rectification process. If forces moving through the body, or contained within the frame, can be transferred whether the artist is behind or in front of the camera, it means that a rectification process is not occurring. The question remains as to whether this transfer occurred during my art rituals?

Beyond White's assertion that such an occurrence is rare, I realised upon viewing the documentation of the art rituals that I had engaged the use of the still and moving image to *prevent* the potential of capturing these forces. In *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*, I asked that video cameras be positioned only on the side of the wall with the projected image. I equally asked the photographer to do the same, to never photograph me on the non-projected side. I asked without a clear understanding as to why. As examined in chapter 3, the illuminated/projected side of the wall created a barrier between the image and the darkness surrounding it. In doing so, it created a distance, an extension from the very landscape I had come to engage with.[241] Viewing the footage, I realised that the cameras positions had created a similar barrier by 'blinding' it from the surrounding darkness. What it could capture was a static and pixelated image of the tennis rebound wall, a distorted image of my body against the wall and what I argue was a false darkness. It also captured the sound of the generator consuming the deserts 'silence', a silence that only I could experience on the other side of the wall which acted as a sound barrier.

It was not an illuminated, porous darkness that I was experiencing as described by Claire Bishop and Eugène Minkowski, discussed in chapter 3. Nor was it the full moon darkness I was experiencing, but a darkness that represented the limitations of the camera. As such, by positioning the camera as I did, I contend that I disrupted the potential for these forces to be transferred into the frames of the cameras. I argue that the same may have occurred in *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, this time however it was due to switching off the projector and the generator that was powering it. It was for this reason that, unlike in the first art ritual, the video cameras could capture an interpreted silence akin to what I was hearing within the landscape, but not within the self.

In both works, while forces may not have been transferred into the frame of the still and moving image, the artist is still captured partaking in an art ritual. In *THE WANDERER # 1:*

[241] Minkowski, *Lived Time*, 428.

WAITING, I am captured at the start of the art ritual ringing the Buddhist singing bowl, during the art ritual when walking into and around the projected image, and at the end of the ritual, where I am captured in the centre of the frame as the wall burns behind me. In *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, I am captured walking to the table, sitting at the table as the image is projected onto my back, and then emerging from the table as the sun rises. The artist therefore *is* captured in the frame, even if these forces have been returned through a rectification process as I argue did occur in *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*. As such, if these images were to be displayed as an artistic outcome, as was the case with the first art ritual, the artist invariably becomes the centre of the creative outcome, in this case the illusionary inventor, creator and presenter of affects."[242]

Yet once again re-examining the footage, I realised that my perception of what had been captured, had been framed by Grosz's paradigm of what makes a contemporary artwork. I had been so preoccupied with what the still and moving should not capture, that I neglected to see the ineffable, what I believe the still and moving image *could not* capture. Again Jewish theology provides a pathway to understanding these issues, even if tangentially, in particular my reading of Maimonides who discusses the ineffable, or apophatic also known as *Via Negativa*, or the negative way.[243] The concept of the ineffable is based on the fundamental belief that God is beyond human understanding and description, beyond the capacity of man to apprehend clearly.[244] Maimonides argues that when every attribute predicated of God is intended to convey some idea of the Divine Being itself—and not of His actions—the negation of the opposite needs to occur.[245] In other words, God can only be described for what He is *not*. Relating these sentiments to the images of the art rituals, I understood that the cameras *had* captured what cannot be captured: the chaotic outside world of forces and mysterious processes that were engaged with during the art ritual.

This represents another reason why I do not want to place these images and videos inside a gallery. This is because the gallery to me represents another example of the constructed frame—the frame as both object and concept. As such, these videos and images of the

[242] Deleuze, *What Is Philosophy?*, 174.
[243] Michael Fagenblat, *Negative Theology as Jewish Modernity* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017), 4.
[244] Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah: Hilchot Yesodei Hatorah: The Laws [Which Are] the Foundations of the Torah*, trans. Eliyahu Touger, (Moznaim Publishing Corporation, 1989), (2:10, et passim; Moreh Nevuchim I, ch. 68).
[245] Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, edited by Shlomo Pines and Leo Strauss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 58.

inexpressible, would invariably be interpreted through multiple conceptual paradigms as previously discussed. In doing so, ideas would be attributed to aspects of the art ritual which I believe to be mysterious, and the concept of *affect* would be placed onto the works, even if, as I contend, they are not contained within the frame of the still and moving image. Furthermore, as previously argued, even though I am not creator and inventor of *affects*, I would still be placed at the centre of the creative process as some form of seer or perhaps imposter? As such, placing the images within a gallery would be disingenuous to the finality of the rectification process, and to the experiences that were had out in the desert during the art rituals.

Walking away from the burning wall and out of the frame of the camera, I stood next to the photographer and watched the wall burn. I could see, as she would later articulate, that being out in the desert witnessing the art ritual and the burning of the wall had had a profound impact. In *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, the photographer spoke of a very different experience due to the projector and generator being switched off. No longer able to capture the art ritual, she described an experience that I articulate as a metaphorical de-framing. Feeling now distanced from the art ritual and no longer with purpose, she described her own consuming experience of the darkness and silences of the desert, which had nothing to do with the chaotic forces I was engaging with while partaking in the art ritual.

As described by Claire Bishop, "in the age of electrical illumination we rarely experience darkness as a completely engulfing entity."[246] As I argued in chapter 3, being out in the desert for many of us represents one of the few times we "experience total, consuming darkness."[247] A darkness that can make our egos permeable, that combined with the silences of the desert, as I have examined, has the potential to open us to natural forces and mysterious processes, while simultaneously having the power to separate us from them. Remembering the photographers experience, I realised that while I still do not know how to show the images of the ineffable, what I could and wanted to offer and share as the creative outcomes of this PhD is the frame of the table placed out in the desert.

I plan on returning the table and tree stump to Sunnydale station, to the exact location of the previous art rituals, to offer the examiners of this project, the darkness and silences of the desert. In this context, the table will cut into this space creating a boundary—a territory. How this frame may affect and be affected by one's body, and how and if, forces will collapse into

[246] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art*, 82.
[247] Ibid.

the frame and move through and in-between their bodies, I cannot answer. But this is not my intention for bringing the accessors to this location. It is not to induce them to partake in their own art ritual. This would be an arrogant and presumptuous assertion that would not only disrespect the examiners, but I also argue, the very land and forces that opened itself to me. Rather, while the table will invariably speak of my own experiences, its function in this context, I now see, is that of an anchor from which the darkness and silences of the desert can be experienced. Something that I have come to believe is a far more powerful experience than any artwork I could make that seeks to frame this mystery.

CONCLUSION

Jewish children, like all children, are not born within a frame, whether that be religious, cultural or societal. Rather a Jewish conceptual frame, an understanding derived from partaking in art rituals, is built around the child, a process that occurs over many years, to instil a Jewish identity. The foundational block of this frame, I contend, is laid from the moment a Jewish child is born. Contained within this foundational block is that of a lineage to Jewish life, in its myriad of forms and complexities. As such, with the birth of a baby, a block is taken from one's own frame and then used to form the foundation from which a new Jewish identity is built. As examined in chapter 1, the ritual circumcision of my son represented the placing of the second block. However, because the way in which one practices and identifies with Judaism is distinct for every individual and family, the four foundational sides of a frame are unique to every person.

The four foundational sides of my frame were formed by my grandparents' experiences and survival of the holocaust; through attending a Jewish school; through the keeping of cultural traditions like the Sabbath; through partaking in Jewish rites of passage like my own circumcision; and, finally, through my parents' understanding of their Jewish identity. But the final partition, a roof, which transforms an open cube into a house—as Elizabeth Grosz contends—was built by my own 'hands,' through my experiences and conceptual understandings of what it meant to be Jewish. It was not built through an acceptance or appreciation of Judaism; it was constructed from a profound anger and frustration that the walls of this frame (and the expectations that came with it) had been imposed upon me.

Continuing with this analogy, the reason why the foundational block is taken from one's own frame is to make sure that one does not become entrapped. Using Grosz's understanding of the frame, by removing just one block this small section of the frame becomes a window and in so doing, transforms the enclosed frame into a house. Through this window and from inside this house, an individual can selectively bring in and exclude aspects of Jewish laws, traditions and customs that do not align with their understanding and experience of their Jewish identity.

As discussed in chapter 1, I did not want to circumcise my son. While I may have relented, I was so consumed by my own conflict with this practice that I was not prepared or able to

give one of my blocks to form the foundation, fearing that in time it would enframe my son. As such, when *metzitzah b'peh* was performed against my wishes, it functioned as the final block which enclosed the frame around me. As an enclosed frame, I argue, its constitution functioned in a similar fashion to the frame constructed to proliferate sensations through the making of art, as discussed in chapter 2. As Grosz details, it is through the construction of a frame that chaotic forces are slowed down and, under the right conditions, these forces can press against the frame leading to the frame exploding from a movement it can no longer contain. Examined through my experience, an aspect of my metaphysical self (the artist, as contextualised in chapter 2 through the character of Goldmund), demanded its freedom and began to distend, and push up against the frame of my Jewish identity. Contained within this chaos, rather than forces being able to move through the body unimpeded, the body became its own frame—a frame now within a frame.

As examined in chapter 5, I spoke to the dangers and reasons why the body must not either merge into the frame or become a frame itself. Both things had occurred when the head rabbi of Australia stated in response to my concerns that, "tradition as with law and justice must sometimes be blind and cold … for the greater good." Unable to freely express my anger and frustration, the frames (under a pressure they could no longer sustain) metaphysically exploded. What was released as I understand it through my reading of Kabbalistic Lurianic principles, were fragments, symbolic shards which became embedded within the land. As examined through my methodology chapters, my art practice during this candidature has thus consisted of two key aspects. Firstly, to uncover these shards, primarily through wandering in the forest, and secondly, by engaging with the shards, which take the form of revelatory images and art rituals to enact a rectification process. Where these forces are returned to, as I have argued, remains mysterious to me. As I conclude this research, however, I now believe that part of this rectification process has been to allow a new Jewish frame of identity to be created, a point that I address at the end of this conclusion.

In chapter 1, I attributed the explosion of the frame solely to the performing of *metzitzah b'peh* and to the rabbi's subsequent statement. As I approach the end of this PhD however, it has become clear to me that while these actions may have been the final act, it was through my actions of not passing on the foundation block of Jewish identity (that initially enclosed the conceptual frame) that led to an eventual explosion. It was, however, by attributing sole

responsibility for this explosion onto the Chabad movement that provided the initial impetus and framework from which to conceptually investigate my art practice.

Through examining the Chabad movements doctrines and philosophies as they relate to Jewish laws and spiritual practice, I learnt (amongst many things) about their belief in the concept of self-nullification, a spiritual state whereby one's consciousness opens to God's infinite light and wisdom through a dissolving of the ego. My curiosity was further aroused because I believed a form of self-nullification was intuitively occurring through my art practice, which I would later define as the dissolving of the self. Initially examining this belief through an older artwork, *Ocean Walk*, I came to understand that the dissolving of the self, precipitated by listening to the land, is what enables me to contact and to learn from—what I came to define through this research as—natural chaotic forces. Forces which as I argued, move through and around me and which enable me to both uncover these shards through wanderings and engage them as visual symbols when partaking in an art ritual.

It was through examining *Ocean Walk* in contrast to my first work for this candidature, *Truth is Marching*, that I also learnt about other key aspects of my art practice. Firstly, that the production of art can occur through a rational and intellectual approach, as well as through an intuitive process. However, it is only through the intuitive (what I believe to be the highest formulation of my art practice) that listening to the land, the dissolving of the self, and the rectification process can occur. Secondly, that wandering in the forest leads to an uncovering of these shards that manifest through me as revelatory images. And thirdly, that these revelatory images (the visualisation of these shards) engaged with during art rituals not only require the construction of a frame, but also are the very frame itself.

Wandering in Sherbrooke Forest initiates an intuitive listening and speaking to the land, as explored in chapter 3. It is through this process that the dissolving of the self occurs, where natural forces move through and in-between the body which can then lead to revelation—revelatory images—that come through me and that are then engaged with during an art ritual. Together they represent my contribution to the creative field in terms of the manifestation of ideas. Through a methodological approach that distinguishes walking, and the lineage of art walkers, to the notion of wandering, I activated the wandering process by enacting the concepts of listening to the land and the dissolving of the self. An approach that prioritises the intuitive and embodied experience.

I have also examined the notion of the basic image as explained by the character of Narcissus. Basic images, I contend represent the outcome of wandering, leading to the dissolving of the self. As examined in chapter 2, the basic image according to Narcissus is held within the creative mind of the artist long before it finds its expression as an artwork. In agreement with Narcissus's assertion, I have now come to understand that the uncovering of the shards leads to them being stored within my creative mind as basic images. It is only when these basic images are ready to be revealed as revelatory images, in contrast to seeking to conceptualise them through Photoshop (as examined in chapters 3 and 4), that these revelatory images can be taken into an art ritual. Before addressing what occurs during an art ritual, I would like to address why I believe the uncovering of these shards occurs while wandering in the forest in contrast to the desert, where these shards as revelatory images are engaged with. I argue that this is a response to a dynamic movement between how these opposing lands demand to be listened to, and how and when I listen to these respective sites.

Not unlike Hesse's characters of Narcissus and Goldmund, the desert and the forest to me represent two opposing aspects of one natural world. The forest embodies the extroverted traits of Goldmund, while the desert embodies the introverted traits of Narcissus. To listen however to either the forest or the desert one must first quieten any internal noise through a conscious act of intention as discussed in chapter 5. In the extroverted, sensual forest, however, which I have predominantly wandered through during the day, there is a demand to listen primarily through the senses to enable my awareness to be propelled laterally, out into the depths of the landscape in which and through which, the embedded shards can be uncovered. In contrast, the introverted, reflective desert, which I have predominantly wandered through during the night, demands a listening that is through the mind—the mind of the artist where the basic image is stored. This enables my awareness to be propelled internally so I can engage intuitively with the revelatory images. As I have argued, however, the forest and the desert, rather than representing two distinct places, are two opposing aspects of the one natural world. As such, through my body, through the branch that ignited the wall, through the table and the stump, the forest found its way into the desert. And in opposition, the desert through my body found its way into the forest. As with so many other dualistic aspects examined through this research and explored in my art practice, this pull of oppositional forces represents a central generative condition of my art practice including the conditions necessary to enact a rectification process. Another central aspect of my art practice has been the construction of such frames.

In examining the relationship between the artist and the natural forces of the surrounding world, I have relied heavily upon Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the plane of composition, primarily examined through the work of Elizabeth Grosz. Central to their concept was the importance of constructing a frame as the primary generative component of an art practice. I have argued however against many of their assertions, in particular, my belief that the artist must not merge into the frame—that the frame must not become autonomous—and that the artist should not be placed at the centre of the creative process. I draw many of these conclusions from my understanding of Lurianic thought in productive contrast to Deleuze, Guattari, and Grosz's concepts, leading to what I believe is an original application of these ideas in regard to the creative process itself; a substantive contribution to the arts that will be further addressed shortly.

As I approach the end of this PhD, I have equally realised the importance that constructing a frame plays within my creative process. As I have examined throughout this paper and contextualised through this conclusion, the uncovered shards are what manifest through me as revelatory images. Whether through the construction of a wall in *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING* or the table as frame in *THE WANDERER # 2: DISSOLVING*, these images speak of the need to construct and place a frame out in the desert. Understanding that these frames are the physical manifestation of these shards, speaks clearly to me of their purpose. They 'ask' to be placed out in the desert, to be engaged with through the darkness of the night. Because, as previously described, the listening that the desert demands enables these shards to be actively engaged with through a dynamic movement between forces collapsing into the frame and forces moving through the body. As such, the frame functions to engage forces by manipulating them into the frame, to engage with these shards as revelatory images, and by the body being in dynamic movement with the frame and the forces contained within it, consequently resulting in the dissolving of the self. These are essential elements that enable a rectification process to take place as an outcome of partaking in these art rituals.

Developing the concept of the art ritual in contrast to engaging in a performative act to enact a Kabbalistic rectification process—a method by which these shards are returned, produces a very particular creative outcome. One with an emphasis on listening, dissolving of the self, and the creative process over artistic outcomes. This approach to creative practice provides an answer to what I see as a critical impasse in the thinking of cited philosophers and Kabbalists, and a new way to understand my own art practice. One which espouses the

intuitive relationship between the self, cosmological forces, and the creative process by removing the notion of a transcendental God and artist from the centre of spiritual and creative practice. It is through recalibrating the role of the artist, combined with a conscious shift away from art as performance to art as ritual, that I suggest prevents the drying up and dwarfing of one's inner senses, to which alone the mystery is accessible.[248]

In examining my contribution to the field of art both in terms of practices and discourses, I have a developed a methodology that interweaves an intuitive approach to artmaking with a sustained conceptual consideration of the creative process itself. Often examined through an exploration of the self and my own art practice, one might rightfully ask "why should we care"? After all, one may argue that a deeper understanding of the self—with an outcome of partaking in art rituals, especially when these creative outcomes are not shared—only benefit the self. Yet while these preventative actions may inhibit the artist either placing themselves, or being placed, at the centre of the creative process, the outcome of partaking in art rituals simply replaces one frame, that of the artist, with a spiritual frame—one that still places the self at the centre of all experiences and outcomes. Yet, as Michael Berg argued in reference to the Kabbalistic practices examined in chapter 5, there is a clear distinction between presenting an artistic outcome as coming from the self, compared with seeking through the self to understand the physical, as well as spiritual rules that govern this world and our lives. This is because through seeking to make the self into a better and more expanded individual—to know oneself, our capacity to help and support others grows.[249] Of course art can serve a similar function, however, as I argued in chapter 2, as long as we live in a time where the artist is placed at the center of the universe above all gods and mysteries, then there is no more room for mystical encounters channeled through the artist.[250]

As previously discussed, the dissolving of self through listening to the land and enacting a rectification process—the returning of chaotic shards—represents an adaptation of the fundamental Kabblaistic concepts from which I have framed my art practice. Placing an emphasis on listening and speaking to the land to demarcate the self, represents a new way to

[248] Ibid., 186.
[249] Michael Berg, *The Way: Using the Wisdom of Kabbalah for Spiritual Transformation and Fulfilment* (New York: Wiley, 2002).
[250] Caveh Zahedi, *Je est un autre: the Self Other, the self is another* (Io, Un Autro, Italy, 2002), accessed May 2019, https://www.cavehzahedi.com/je-est-un-autre.

learn from the land, rather than simply seeking to extract from it for personal outcomes.[251] This intuitive and embodied approach aligns with a new way to understand my practice, as well as representing its contribution to further understanding practices, discourses and theories as they relate to the field of creative practice. In which creative practice is prioritised over creative processes and outcomes. Where art becomes a tool to a more holistic and symbiotic approach to our relationship with nature and natural forces, where the emphasis is not on extracting but engaging with these forces to learn and invariably share this wisdom. This approach also represents a further contribution to the field by providing an answer to what I see as a critical impasse in the thinking of the philosophers and Kabbalists referenced throughout this exegesis. One, which, while influenced by their key understandings, is not framed by concepts, or a faith in a transcendental God, but grounded in a belief in the mysterious and mysterious processes that enables a wandering to occur. This spiritual practice speaks of an authenticity between the self and the land and directly relates to my reasons for partaking in these art rituals. Hence, while I believe that chaotic shards can be engaged with through the construction of a frame, I equally believe that these forces should be returned.

The frame, as I have examined throughout this paper, also has an important practical function. Through demarcating territory, as Grosz contends, the frame not only functions to collapse oppositional forces, but also enables the self to be 'contained' and supported throughout an art ritual. Not by merging into the frame, which as I have argued can lead to both emotional, physical and spiritual sickness, but by the frame contextualising—framing the experience. Acting as a marker, a reference point as examined in chapter 5, this enables an internalised navigation that the desert demands to be listened to.

As I have further argued in chapter 5, this process and where these forces are returned to remains, comfortably, a mystery. With that said, I began this conclusion speaking of another frame, the Jewish frame that was built around me. I also spoke to my belief that, by not passing on this foundation block, it was through my actions that led to the frame exploding. While this explosion led to my creative output during this PhD, as I explain in chapter 5, it has also meant that I do not want, out of respect to this rectification process and to the forces that opened to me, to exhibit the outcomes of these art rituals as my creative outcome.

[251] David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012), 9–10.

In terms of the personal rectification process, I do not believe that I angered some form of God and have therefore been required to enact a rectification process for not passing on the foundation block. I do, however, understand now the importance of the lineage of the frame and the futile battle I have fought against the Jewish frame through most of my life. As Grosz contends, a frame can become a house that can protect us and, as I have finally come to see, guide us through and from the chaotic outside world. We do not have to like the frame, we can take many blocks out of it, yet we should not allow a frame to collapse or explode as I have argued throughout this paper. As such, part of my rectification process has not only been to return these shards, but to create a new Jewish frame around me. And it has been through this process, that I have begun to place blocks around my three boys, all of which were born during my candidature.

In terms of placing the table as a frame back out in the desert, with the shards having been returned, I now see the table as another foundational block. My way to pass on one of my blocks, which contain what I have learnt through this research, as a marker of a creative lineage and to offer a point of reference from which another can experience, navigate, and potentially listen to, the desert.

APPENDIX

Dear assessors,

This appendix is by no means intended to be read as a further supporting document to my research scholarship. Rather, I hope, as Thomas Merton also sort, that my words regarding my final art assessment, remain spontaneous, free and informal so an authenticity can be offered, not just as it relates to the intended work, but equally to the immediacy of this moment.[252] A moment that has magnified our relationship to the movement between order and disorder, chaos and its relationship to framing.

As you may be aware, it was the day before leaving for Broken Hill that my final assessment was officially cancelled. In response, I was offered to postpone my assessment, or to be assessed based on the exegesis, the documented artwork made throughout my candidature, and a written description of the artwork I had intended to present to you out at Sunnydale Station. Close to 50,000 words later, I was adamant that the darkness and silences of the desert can only be experienced and not described. That my final assessment inviting you out to the location where the art rituals had been enacted, was an offering far more poignant than any description, or reiteration of the artwork into a different landscape or 'frame'. I wanted to offer you the desert, and so I waited. And with that, perhaps for the first time, I felt like I had become a real artist. I was choosing the integrity of the artwork above any other concerns or personal ambitions.

When lockdown 2.0 re-emerged here in Greater Melbourne, and when it became apparent that waiting was the only clarity on offer from Monash University, the option of documenting my final assessment was once again flagged. As my exegesis attests to, my art practice and spiritual life are intimately woven, and life through the lens of a pandemic was clearly not the same as when I first envisioned you coming to the desert. Correspondingly, the artwork that

[252] Thomas Merton. "The Wisdom of the Desert: Sayings from the Desert Fathers of the Fourth Century." (New York: New Directions, 1960), ix.

had been revealed to me, was transforming and distending, as if it was slowly slipping away, perhaps seeking to find another vessel from which its intention could be manifested. Yet even with taking this into account, I chose to wait again. I wanted to offer you what I believed was most important – the art, the desert, its silence and darkness.

Completely unaware of the conversation I had had that day with my supervisor, and the corresponding decisions I had made to wait, that night my mother called me with a panicked voice. She pleaded with me to have the PhD accessed. My mother had asked me the previous time to do this, but this time I was listening—I could hear her. It was not so much the words she was speaking, but their resonance which came from a very deep place within her. Words of the flesh, of the soul, which through their truth and pure intention had the power to somehow navigate and bypass my mind, and in this case, straight into my, for want of a better word, heart. And what I heard was my mother asking me to finalise this PhD before it was too late, before the dementia took from her what was left. As Pico Iyer says, "everything I trust, everything that moves me comes at a much deeper level than the mind."[253] Love to me is one of those things that function on that deeper level. Not a clichéd love, but a love as Dario Robleto describes as a strange and complicated love, a love that exists only when it is at risk, when something is on the line.[254] And in that moment of being able to listen and hear her love, I understood what to do. And, that the capacity to listen, to contemplate, did not require a location, an identity, but rather the capacity to rest in the here and now—in the immediacy of the moment.

I wanted to offer you the desert—its silences and darkness, but I could not. And although I have offered you the reason as to why, that does not mean that I am content to simply explain the artwork I wanted to present to you. The opposite of inviting one to experience the silence and darkness of the desert should not be an object of the intellect. As such, I do not want to

[253] Pico Iyer. "The Urgency of Slowing Down," On Being with Krista Tippett, podcast audio, November 29, 2018, accessed May, 2020. https://onbeing.org/programs/pico-iyer-the-urgency-of-slowing-down-nov2018/#audio.
[254] Dario Robleto. "Sculptor of Time and Loss," On Being with Krista Tippett, podcast audio, July 24, 2014, accessed August 2020. https://onbeing.org/programs/dario-robleto-sculptor-of-time-and-loss/#audio.

offer you an explanation of this work through arguments, concepts and technical lingo. Had my work been a painting, I would not seek to describe the colours or paint brushes I had intended to use, somehow believing that they could function as a successful descriptor in replacement of the painting itself. Rather, while it is a requirement to present to you the 'facts' of the work, I hope I can do so from a space of contemplation and rest, where meaning exists beyond the intellect, beyond the rational, analytical mind, which promotes dualistic thinking framed through the self.

It is from this space of contemplation where language as with art, can transcend the self into a mythological trajectory away from chronological time to deep time, that I speak to you. A space where in being forced to face my shadows and moments of crisis, I hope I can hand over control and accept my powerlessness within the mystery that continues to speak to me as forcefully as it did when I began this PhD. A space, I only now understand is encountered when one realises that listening does not require a geological location.

Upon arriving at Broken Hill, you would have made your way to the Royal Exchange Hotel. The hotel exterior fuses "old world" mining boom era architecture with art deco design. Room 5, the room I had organised for each of you to stay in, was equally "old world era", with heavy floral curtains, oak furniture and trims. With all modern conveniences, the room was spacious, comfortable and with large windows overlooking the main street of Broken Hill. I had also prearranged to replace the five, antiquated framed images that adorned the walls with my own artwork from key wanderings through Sherbrooke Forest. The role of the still photographs in the hotel room 'installation' were three-fold. Firstly, as a broad yet subtle marker and reminder of the dynamic processes that occur between wandering in the forest leading to partaking in art rituals in the desert. Secondly, to create the conditions necessary for your own potential wandering. Through creating a sense of conceptual ambiguity in terms of whether these photographs operate as documentation, original artwork or performance, the intention was to initiate your own internal form of navigation, absent of intention, one experienced only through the senses and the flesh. And thirdly, as discussed in chapter 5, while these documented vestiges of dynamic experiences did not in themselves frame chaotic forces, they still may have captured the ineffable—what I believe the still and moving image *could not* capture. It was within this context that these images may have had an *affect* on the viewer, once again creating the potential conditions for one's own wandering to occur.

Printed, sized, and framed to mirror the original finishes and to equally blend into the hotel décor, I could not be sure if you would have noticed these images, (I for one have never paid much attention to hotel art). As such, I attempted to guide you to their viewing. Firstly, by printing one of these images on the last page of a leather-bound book I had made, and planned to leave for you, and secondly, through one of these images being *Tree Wall* (2017). A central artwork examined extensively within the exegesis.

I chose the Royal Exchange Hotel and the room 5, because I wanted to create, as examined through Elizabeth Grosz in the exegesis, both house and territory, interior and landscape, the two sides of the space of the earth. The hotels design, the comfort of the room, the framed images of the lush forest, were all in contrast to the rugged and harsh terrain that surrounds Broken Hill, and to the town itself that has been transformed and shaped from 150 years of mining. I wanted to offer to you - but also lure you into a state of perfunctory rest, created by the interior safety and shelter of the habitable from the natural, chaotic outside that you were soon to be left in as part of this artwork.

The leather-bound book that would be left on your bed prior to your arrival, beyond the image on the last page, presented the title of this work, instructions for how you were to make your way to the site, what you were to find at the site, what you were to bring and not to bring, and further instructions for how to use a satellite phone so you could contact your driver to be picked up, or in case of an emergency.

THE WANDERER # 3: darkness, was to commence at sunset and conclude at sunrise. Your driver, Aimee Volkovsky, a local journalist who works for ABC Broken Hill, is a person I became acquainted with during the period of *THE WANDERER # 1: WAITING*. She had interviewed me numerous times and was responsible for an article published about the work. Aimee understood my intentions for the work and so I trusted her to follow my instructions.

You would have made your way to the foyer of the hotel at 5.30pm, Aimee would have been waiting for you, holding a sign with your name. Escorting you to the car, Aimee was instructed to not communicate with you on the fifty-minute drive out to the location of the performance. I had oscillated with this decision for quite some time prior to the performance. On one hand, I liked the idea that the rumblings of the car combined with the distraction of communication, would mean that the silence of the landscape would remain “hidden”, and would only reveal itself as the car left the site of the performance. I also liked the idea that

communication framed within the 'walls' of the car, could equally create a sense of comfort and ease, a barrier from the chaotic outside, as with the hotel. Yet my reasoning for not wanting communication was the result of my correspondence with a local artist and outback tour guide, who was equally interested in being your driver. Suggesting that he may be able to reference the history and spirit of the landscape, maybe even spend time with the two of you showing you around, while generous, made me feel uneasy. I did not want anyone's potential conception of "the spirit" or history of the landscape to influence you, and I did not feel that I could, or even should, mediate 'permitted' conversation - an area of research not examined. Rather, I wanted to facilitate your own experience of this tiny part of the Australian desert that was authentic, spontaneous, free and informal. The result of this decision, however, was the potential that the rumblings of the car alone, could provoke an experience of "Cagean silence", which, as examined in the exegesis, can arouse a strong internal noise, which might then be further amplified by the silence of the desert. It was not my intention to manipulate your will, however, understanding that the desert alone could elicit such a response, contextualised and grounded this decision regarding communication.

THE WANDERER # 3: darkness, was to commence at sunset and conclude at sunrise. You were invited and encouraged to stay for the duration of the performance. You would have been dropped off at the point where the wide, red-earth dirt track merged with a goat's track near the boundary fence of the station. To your right you would have seen the galvanised toolbox with your emergency provisions. Opening the box, you would have seen the items as stated in the book, separated into various size containers and labelled. Directly behind the toolbox you would have seen a basically constructed, hessian enclosed, drop toilet. Behind you, was an infinite horizon line preparing to slowly merge and embrace the setting sun. Straight ahead, you would have seen the goat track merge with the 'other half' of the endless horizon as it slowly transformed into a euphony of sunset colours. 300 meters directly ahead of you, was furniture, a frame not separate to, or protecting you from, but placed in the chaos of the outside. As you walked along the dirt track, the same path that I had navigated as I commenced the art rituals, you would have arrived at the round dining table and tree stump from Sherbrooke Forest, positioned at the exact location where the two art rituals, documented in the exegesis, had taken place.

I cannot know if you would have stayed on site for five minutes or until dawn, but this artwork, as previously stated, was an offering, rather than any attempt to manipulate your will.

As such, the table and chair positioned on the dirt track—a frame no longer within a frame, was there to function as an anchor, a light house of sorts, from which, if you had wished, to engage with the land, the spirits, the darkness and silences for the period you wanted.

I also cannot tell you how, or if, I would have interacted with you, or the table and tree stump, during the performance. Like my past art rituals, I wanted to keep that aspect of the performance open and spontaneous, so my actions could respond through listening. While I did have many postulations of how it may have looked, I do not see a specific benefit in sharing these thoughts with you. For rather than giving you guidance to what the performance may have looked like, they simply create potential narratives that infer a vision or knowledge that I did not have or wish to conceptualise. What I do know is that I would have been there under the same night sky, in proximity to your location. And that whether you had chosen to stay for some or all the performance, I was going to spend those two nights out in the desert for the duration—from dusk to dawn. And this excited me, because the irony of this performance was that by offering you the silence and darkness of the desert, I knew that I would not need to perform. Unlike the previous art rituals, there was no specific objectives, or anticipated artistic outcomes. By sharing this experience with you, I did not have to capture, hide from, turn off, or be blinded by the art. That perhaps for the first time, I would not have to battle between my relationship with art with my desire to listen to the land.

As I contemplate all that has transpired, I think once again of Merton and his description of the desert fathers of the 4th Century, who as hermits abandoned the cities to live in solitude. In doing so, they equally abandoned the intellect, individualism, in the quest for salvation- to see their own true self- beyond the superficial, transient, constructed self. They chose to live out in the desert because the arid horizons, the solitude and silences that accompany it, called them to come. And as the visual revelations discussed in the exegesis attest, the desert has equally called me numerous times. And I ponder that perhaps it was not my place to invite you. That the desert must call you, that while my intentions were good, that had you come, I may have been placing you in the unenviable position of tourist, one who simply passes through the desert so they can come home to write and speak about what they had seen rather than experienced.

Nestled in the immediacy of this moment and what it has been teaching me, I contemplate that to be able to listen and rest in that place, does not always require great journeys out into nature. That to listen takes a lot of courage, requires us to slow down, and yet it is always

accessible, even without the silences and darkness of the desert. While I know from experience that the 'natural world' facilitates, perhaps expedites, the potential for deep listening, this time of forced isolation is a reminder that the freedom to listen and engage with the mysterious can always and equally be found within the frame, not just outside of it.

And so, thank you. Thank you for allowing me to dream big, for accepting my invitation to join me out in the desert and for the trust afforded to me. And with that, I will save this document, take a deep breath and walk back into my crazy world of caring for three young boys in lockdown. Each who continue to remind me of the mysterious, and who gift me the experience of expanding outside of the constructed self.

Figure 64: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 3: darkness*, Royal Exchange Hotel replacement image 1. Tree Wall (2017). Wandering through Sherbrooke Forest, Victoria, 2017.

Figure 65: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 3: darkness*, Royal Exchange Hotel replacement image 2. Wandering through Sherbrooke Forest, Victoria, 2018.

Figure 66: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 3: darkness*, Royal Exchange Hotel replacement image 3. Wandering through Sherbrooke Forest, Victoria, 2018.

Figure 67: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 3: darkness*, Royal Exchange Hotel replacement image as they would have been positioned above the bedhead.

Figure 68: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 3: darkness*, Royal Exchange Hotel replacement image 4. Wandering through Sherbrooke Forest, Victoria, 2018.

Figure 69: Isaac Greener, *THE WANDERER # 3: darkness*, Royal Exchange Hotel replacement image 6. Wandering through Sherbrooke Forest, Victoria, 2018.

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