Refugium:

An Exploration Through Landscapes of Liminality

By

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Declaration of Originality

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all the sources I have used have been acknowledged by complete bibliographic references. This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for Master of Fine Art at Rhodes University. I declare that it has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at another university.

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Wednesday 11th February 2014

Abstract

Loosely following a narrative form and structure, this thesis begins, in chapter one, by considering people who occupy a peripheral position in – or on the fringe of – society. In so doing, it analyses the dichotomy created between centre and periphery, the line between qualities or features that are set up as different or opposed. The chapter begins by contextualising my own engagement with the themes and narratives dealt with. It then looks at the representation and significance of historical and cultural characters such as the tramp and the wanderer, the medieval wildman and the outcast, the madman and the prophet, and relates this to some extent to my own narrative. The dichotomy between culture and nature is thus examined here.

The paper then moves on, in chapter two, to examine concerns around landscape, and considers how we engage or separate ourselves from it. The theme of walking is examined closely from an experiential, phenomenological standpoint, especially as an activity which allows greater connection to, and engagement with, the landscape. The relationship between landscape, place, and identity is also explored, looking at how identity is interwoven with connection to place, and, broadly, what this might mean for displaced people. These discussions and ideas are then brought to bear again on my personal narrative.

In chapter three I explore again the separation between dichotomous concepts as looked at in chapter one; I examine the separations between, and within, people, as well as between people and their environment. Here, however, the line of separation is explored not as an impermeable barrier, but as a liminal space of potential and possibility. With this in mind I look at sacred or liminal places within the landscape, as well as the idea of the sublime. I also consider the camera from this perspective, and finally present my own exhibition and body of work, reviewing it in the light of the narratives and themes explored through the thesis.

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- Steiner[1]

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- Kafka[2]

1 Steiner 2004 : 171.

2 Kafka 1999: 129.

Introduction

Paths made through the woods are a metaphor for the process of thinking.
- Harkin (2000: 61)

This thesis accompanies an exhibition, and together it is intended that they form a cohesive whole. Both tell a story. They tell it from different angles, and also emphasise and expand on different perspectives. However, it is my aim that they do not merely touch on similar themes, one in words, the other in images, but that they together form the telling of the story in its entirety – the entirety of the telling, that is, not necessarily the entirety of the story.

It is an intimately personal work – far more so than I could have realised at the beginning. What I had intended as an almost ethnographic study became a delving into the recesses of my self. Rather than aim for a scientific objectivity in the recounting and documentation of this body of work, and the processes undergone towards it, I have decided to include aspects of my own situation and trajectory. My sense is that this makes for a richer and more rewarding process, both for myself and for the reader. While this may, from one point of view, appear egocentric, it is, rather, a candid attempt to engage with the material looked at, as well as my own art-making practice, from an honest, self-reflexive and self-reflective position. Nonetheless, it is my hope that this work rises above any possible self-absorbed myopia, and precisely due to an inward gaze, conversely allows for a more general identification with the material and narrative.

A thread that runs through this work, both the practice and the theory of it, is that of walking. It is a thread which began before me – my grandfather was a mountaineer and a walker, and my father too. So too, the landscapes they and I have explored have been walked since time immemorial by others – the ancestors of the walk. Walking has been an abiding activity, as well as metaphor, throughout my life. Aspects of the activity and practice of it are explored in the body of this thesis, but an introduction to the thesis itself might aptly and helpfully be found in exploring a metaphorical walk.

This thesis is about walking, about following the spoor of an Other, and about moving, on this walk, away from the known into unknown territory, unknown places and landscapes. It is not merely, however, the notation of a walk already completed; not a route map of a journey already

finished. Rather, the activity of writing about an exploration has been an integral part of the exploration itself. I set off with perhaps inadequate supplies, not realising how long the walk would be. Nor did I have certain foreknowledge of the destination – I knew the area, but had no coordinates. And crucially, I was not on a path.

Of course, others have traversed the terrain, in all directions, and from many different starting points. I came across their marks, evidence of their having passed by; their cairns, etchings scratched on bark or rock, cold dead fires long extinguished, even, sometimes, still warm coals glowing faintly. Nonetheless, I was bundu bashing, devising my own path through strange and overgrown, or else dry and brittle land. Rocks were sharp and slid underfoot. Where I had expected a tree to offer shade there was none, and where I had thought a river might relieve my thirst it instead offered a perilous obstacle to be crossed. Still, there were times when in my hunger I gave up, only to find a small hamper fortuitously left behind by some other traveller, nourishment for the strength needed to traverse the next hill. Often, where I had thought I was following a contour around a small ridge, I found myself instead faced with an escarpment whose height and sheer rock face I could barely comprehend. Finally, where I had thought to meander down a gentle slope to what must be my endpoint, my destination, I became mired in thick growth, thorns and branches, which caught me up, entangled. They blocked out all vision, and as I tried to escape them I followed numerous false tracks, had to double back, turn in circles, hack at the thick bushes. The sky was obscured, darkly shrouded, and movement was tight. I found the evidence of others having been lost here, scrawled messages, torn shreds of clothing, what might have been bones in the mulch underfoot. My very writing of this might appear to prove that I must have come out eventually, in order to do the telling. But this is not necessarily true, or not entirely.

Paul Klee famously spoke about a line that begins at a point and from there develops freely as 'a line that goes out for a walk' (in Ingold 2007, 72-73). Conversely, the line that moves between set points in the shortest, most direct route possible is 'more like a series of appointments than a walk'. This paper is not a series of appointments. Rather than give a map, a disembodied, objective set of points through which I passed, I would rather lay out the journey as it was. I would like this thesis to be like that line that has gone for a walk, so that something of the movement is retained in it. Consequently, the lines of argument, of narrative, and of reasoning, may not necessarily be completely straight or linear. This is not to say that they are either mindless meanderings or pointless detours. Rather, the movements reflect an active, gestural

engagement with the themes and materials – the topography and the terrain – that form this paper. There are of course many fascinating side paths, leading to rock pools or vaulted caves, which I cannot include in this paper; some are alluded to, others not even that. Despite the tacking to left and right, the doubling back and bundu bashing, the walk inevitably follows its own course.

The course followed, the flow and movement of the walk, is primarily along the lines of a narrative. It is the story of both the encountering and the creating of a character, a man, whose life and experiences I explore and analyse. While telling of his life and times, the story reveals itself to be as much about the teller as the supposed protagonist – indeed, the line between the two begins to blur. In the end, it is precisely this blurred line which becomes the focus of the narrative. The walk is shown to be a walking of that blurring line.

The first chapter introduces the protagonist, as well as my own situation at the time of encountering him. It explores, in various possibilities, what sort of person the protagonist is, and why he is of interest to me. Thematically, it deals with the movement towards a periphery, or to life on the periphery, of a society or accepted culture. Using historical, cultural, literary, and personal examples and stories to illustrate this position or movement, it examines the dialectic relationship between centre and periphery, society and wildness.

The second chapter looks at the environment that the protagonist inhabits – the landscape that he walks through – and attempts to find ways to understand and identify with his lived experience. The chapter examines some of the problems associated with the concept of landscape, and our relationship to it, or distancing from it. Walking is examined as a phenomenological practice, and the work of two artists is looked at in this regard. I also look at the connection between landscape, place, and identity, and some of the problems of place-bound identity, finally introducing the concept of liminality as a way to transcend some of these problems.

The final chapter meanders predominantly around (and through) the idea of liminality. It relooks at the dichotomies examined in the first chapter, and explores the space between them. It looks at the possibility of finding these places of liminality both within the individual as well as between people, and between people and their environment. Places of liminality within the landscape are considered, and the connection between liminality and the sublime. I then look at the camera itself – my primary tool through this degree. I examine the process of image making, from light entering the camera, to printing the images in a darkroom, relating this directly to ideas of

liminality. This ultimately brings the discussion to my own body of work, and I describe and analyse the images and exhibition in terms of the themes and narratives explored throughout this thesis, particularly picking up on the possibility that the body of work, in its entirety, was engendered and generated from the very liminality which it represents.

Chapter I: The Outsider

He wanted to dream a man: he wanted to dream him with minute integrity and insert him into reality...
With relief, with humiliation, with terror, he understood that he too was a mere appearance, dreamt by another.
- Borges (1970: 73-77)

The Tramp and The Wanderer

Sometimes the silence can be like thunder
Sometimes I wanna take to the road and plunder
- Dylan (1997)

In the middle of 2008 I was busy with my fourth year of study in photography. I was exploring and revisiting an isolated village in the Cederberg Mountains where I had spent a few crucial childhood years. The project had begun as an oblique exploration of my own roots. I was interested in how I fitted into the world, generally, how I as a young white man fitted into South Africa, specifically, and how I, as an always slightly out of place, introverted person, fitted together, privately. Having explored places and stories connected to my family, since their arrival in this country, I found little that resonated. I was now exploring and photographing the one place and group of people that did seem to exert a pull and instil a sense of belonging in me: this tiny, inaccessible rural community of coloured[1] people, begun as a mission station for San[2] and freed slaves. I felt most at home, it turned out, amongst a group of people whose religion was not mine, whose language and history were not mine, whose culture and 'race' were not mine, and whose rootedness to a specific place was not mine. And so, whether or not the project was successful in exploring this, my mind was all the while mulling over issues such as belonging, home, and ancestors; wandering about where the prescribed boundaries of these issues might be for individuals and groups, and what happens beyond those boundaries.

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[1] Under the Apartheid system of racial classification, the term 'coloured' denoted South Africans of mixed race; neither 'white' (European settler) nor 'black' (indigenous African), 'coloured' was a hold-all term for people of many and varied ancestral heritage. Through the racial, linguistic, cultural, and geographic separation attempted under Apartheid, the term still has relevance today, since, in great part, many of those divides are a *de facto* reality of contemporary South African society. The village here described, for instance, was almost from the start, and remains, self-identified as a 'coloured' community. It remains a very complicated word, however, and refers here to a very specific community.

[2] The first peoples of southern Africa have historically endured many derogatory labels. They themselves had no collective name for themselves, but rather existed as smaller groupings (!Kun, Nharo, etc). 'San' is not free of negative connotations, but it is the most accepted and perhaps least offensive name for all the different language and regional groupings that can be used.

On a number of occasions during the course of the year I left Grahamstown, where I lived and studied, and drove through Cape Town (my hometown, so called), up the N7 to Clanwilliam, from where I turned off into the mountains, towards the small village where I spent days walking, talking, photographing, living. Back in Grahamstown, I spent much of my time hand printing photographs in the darkroom. I would wander the streets in the early evening to buy an unhealthy supper, to be eaten in the department, as a break before carrying on with work into the night. At some point in my afternoon and evening walks through town I became aware of another man walking the streets, someone who, for reasons I will try to explore, stood out for me, and became the unfocused focal point of a sort of daydream or reverie.

He was of medium height, with unkempt beard and hair. He wore a pair of ragged boots, tattered jeans; a dirty shirt collar stuck up through the stretched neck of an unwinding jersey, upon whose straggling threads examples of the local flora still hung. He carried over his shoulder something like a duffel bag, ancient and encrusted. He was homeless. But in South Africa this is not noteworthy by any means. This man, however, I never saw begging, never saw going through rubbish, or sitting dejected on the pavement or entranceway of some shop. I never saw him, as I did others, sleeping beside the road, or anywhere public at all. I never saw him speaking or interacting with anybody. In fact there was only one thing I ever saw him doing: he walked. His stride was slow and measured. He was stooped only so much as the bag would account for, not so much as an utterly defeated life would bend one, did others. He was no mendicant; and no drunk, his eyes were not clouded or reddened, features weren't puffy as were the features of others. He held himself straight and walked straight. And always walked. Over the perhaps two-month period that I saw him at different places in town, he was never stopped, never resting; he looked straight ahead and walked. I crossed the road one day so that we would pass close to each other, so that I could see whether he would greet me, or acknowledge my presence in any way, and to look at him more closely. He kept his eyes in front of him and seemed not to see me at all. He was self contained and purposeful in a way that stood out; and at the same time, there was a look slightly wild and uncontrolled in his eyes.[3]

[3] The romance of the tramp is explored repeatedly, such as in Thoreau's story of the origin of the word 'saunter', supposedly 'from idle people who roved about the country, in the middle ages, and asked charity, under pretence of going *à la sainte terre*' (1862: 657); through to the open road,/ Healthy, free, the world before me,/ The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.' (2004: 123). Langan analyses such romantic responses to vagrancy and mobility in *Romantic Vagrancy – Wordsworth and the Simulation of Freedom* (1995), and Cresswell looks at the political and social realities of tramps in *The Tramp in America* (2001).much of Whitman, as in *Song of the Open Road*, which begins: 'Afoot and light-hearted I take

Later that year I was on my last trip to photograph in the Cederberg. It is a long drive from Grahamstown, over one thousand kilometres, no matter what route is taken; provinces, landscapes, histories, and languages change along the way. I drove it slowly, both to experience the landscape I drove through, and out of fear and respect for an old bakkie. And as I drove up the N7, somewhere between Piketberg and the Piekenierskloof Pass that leads down to Citrusdal, past rolling yellow wheat fields, with the late afternoon sun coming down on my hands as they gripped the shuddering wheel, I saw my man on the road up ahead. He was walking north, as I was driving, and so his back was to me. But I recognised his bag, his clothes, his hair; I recognised his whole bearing, so singular and set apart. I recognised his boots and his slow lope. I slowed down in wonderment at his reappearance here at the other end of the country, and to better look at him. Characteristically, he did not look up, or seem to note a car slowing down as it passed. He did not put his thumb out for a lift, and I did not offer one. But the image of him walking beside the road through the Swartland stayed in my mind as I drove on.

As the image settled in my mind, questions came up. If he did not ask for lifts, how had he gotten so far? Had he walked the entire way? If so, why? What destination was he moving towards, that he would walk so far with so little? And if it was not a destination, then what compulsion made him walk so hard a journey at all? A week and a half later, as I drove back south on my return journey, I passed him again, he also having turned around, walking a quiet stretch of road just north of Morreesburg. I was utterly fascinated by him, drawn to him, and at the same time scared of him. With questions in my mind of belonging and home, ancestors and kinship, he came to represent an extreme of something that I was groping around; he developed in my mind into a story, whose narrative, purpose, beginning and ending I had to flesh out.

Eldrich, as I now knew him, was like a blank slate. He wandered the roads and landscapes of the country, and so seemed unattached to a specific, culturally and historically imbued place. Rather, he was free to live into any place through which he wandered. I attached to him a romanticised notion of the freedom of the road, of the unfettered tramp or vagrant (see Langan 1995). He lived as a nomad, in the wild and outside the world of people, and so had stepped beyond the boundaries and proscriptions of culture, civilisation, and history, the 'burden of the dead', as Schama puts it (1995: 574). He lived in a world free of the expectations of ancestry, the demands

of society, and the constraints of history. It was an extreme position, and with it came isolation, hunger, and hardships I struggled to imagine. For my part, despite an urge to shrug off old ties of kinship and historically fated identities, and to be free, too, of society and its innumerable discontents, I nonetheless lived a very different life to that.

My wandering of the southern African landscapes happened in a car; I almost invariably travelled towards people, having left others behind; I was, and am, enmeshed in and party to this society, this civilisation, to these histories. No matter what road I drove on, or whether I followed any map, my wandering was sanctioned. Tourism is an imminently acceptable pastime; what Eldrich was doing was not tourism. Bowles (1949: 6) differentiates between a tourist and a traveller: 'Whereas the tourist generally hurries back home at the end of a few weeks, the traveller, belonging no more to one place than to the next, moves slowly, over a period of years, from one part of the earth to another'. The path of the traveller, according to this, is more risky, more filled with danger and the unknown, while tourism is always just a recreational activity.

I was reminded of childhood stories from the chivalric tradition of Knights-errant, who wandered around in search of situations where they could prove themselves. Their travel and mode of living was endorsed by society, yet the adventures would invariably take the traveller beyond themselves and the bounds of the society, beyond the known, and would change them; it was a rite of passage. As was the walkabout for the Aboriginal people of Australia[4]: it was a challenge and a trial in the form of a journey, that would take the walkers beyond their own limits, to emerge as stronger, more mature people. The history I grew up with was filled with similar stories, of European adventurers who travelled beyond the bounds and control of their culture. Like the others, they risked death, and sometimes succumbed to it, though their goal was different, being personal glory and imperial or economic conquest. But in all instances, though the journey took the traveller beyond the known, and risked their lives and selves, the form of it was accepted.

[4] This was a coming of age ritual in which a boy or young man was required to walk vast distances, in the wild and alone, as an entry into manhood, and into a reciprocal relationship with his environment.

Leaving town in late afternoon quiet Backroad shaded by peppertrees growing beside the last few houses Watered gardens and plastic flowers in the windows I weave through the edges of the square shadows of houses beginning to flatten across the street Childrens voices come out long and thin from the playing field Drift to silence round the bend

For others, the very wandering and travelling itself is unsanctioned, and the movement takes them ever further into the unknown. This story is part of our collective historical narrative in South Africa; the Great Trek is now a legendary episode, and the cornerstone of the formation of an identity, however problematic[5]. It was a movement away from control and civilisation, into the unknown. It was not allowed, had no precedence for the people involved, and through its movement the thread back to the starting point was frayed and broken. An entirely new world had to be formed; a new history, language, ritual, place, religion even, was created. Eldrich, in my imaginings, was engaged is something more like this; there was no return for him, no welcoming embrace; there was no glory to be won. This was not a ritual. He was beyond any bounds that I could see. Whatever kind of travel I engaged in, it would not quite be this. I recognised a desire and a need in this man. I had a longing to be able to do what he did, to go so far, and yet I knew that I would not be able to ultimately sever the thread, the connection to the world of people and history.

The Wildman and The Outcast

The passages where no one waits go on
and give no promise of an end.
You will find yourself among people,
faces, clothing, teeth and hair
and words, and many words
When there was life I said that life was wrong.
What do I say now? You understand?
- Bowles (1981: 66)

I longed for the freedom that this man experienced, yet was put off by the absolute nature and severity of it. Fascinated by him, I began to consider what his life might be like, what his circumstances were and how he experienced the world.

In his separation from society, and the world he inhabited and walked through, he could be seen as a modern 'wild man', the medieval European notion of a wild, hairy, uncivilised and untamed man or woman, living close to nature, and hostile to people and culture. He was the 'dialectical antithesis of all man should strive for… "noncivilization"' (Husband 1980: 5). This is the same role as that of Enkidu in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and although I might be no Gilgamesh, it was an

[5] Not least problematic, of course, is the fact that the unsanctioned travel that is the genesis of this identity, was echoed years later in the Apartheid system that outlawed the free movement of black South Africans. It is an often-repeated movement of people from periphery to centre, from where they displace others to the periphery.

important encounter on the foothills of the Cedar Mountains (Mobley 1997: 223). He had freed himself, or at any rate had been divested, of the weight of civilization. There are parallels between the place in western representation of the wild man, and the biblical narrative of the genesis of the Jewish people, where the wild man enters early on: Rebekah and Isaac had twins, one 'normal', and the other hairy (Holy Bible 1978: 35-36). The line is already drawn, and the dichotomy between civilised and uncivilised set up. Esau, the hairy one, was a hunter, lived off the land and in the wild, while his brother Jacob was more sedate, and stayed in the tents. By contrivance and opportunism, Jacob ensured that he, rather than his brother, got his fathers dying blessing, thereby making himself Isaac's heir. The hairy one, the wildman, both chose and was forced out of his birthright, into the wild as opposed to the domesticity of the tents and the begetting of a people. By this act of sabotage, whether destiny obstructed or destiny fulfilled, the stream of western cultural tradition lists towards the man of the tents rather than the man of the wild. Indeed, this sabotage – this act of betrayal – forms the foundation stone of a dominant notion of civilisation and culture[6].

Eldrich, however, is not inherently 'other'; he has no noticeable physical abnormalities, such as the characteristic hairiness, that would force him into the role of wild man. The wild man, then, if he is not hairy, grotesque, and cannibalistic, is the personification of the social outcast (Husband 1980: 1). The biblical story of Esau as the wild man, mentioned above, is preceded by another story of the redirecting of the line of progression. Isaac himself, Esau's father, was patriarch because his father's eldest son had been cast out. Abraham, being old and having fathered no children, followed his wife's suggestion and visited his servant. With this servant he had a son, of whom the angels foretold that he would be named Ishmael, and that he would be 'a wild man' (Holy Bible 1978: 22). However, years later Abraham's wife conceived a child, Isaac. Abraham, with a legitimate heir born, now gave the mother of his firstborn nothing more than bread and water and, with their son in tow 'sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness' (Holy Bible 1978: 28). This image of the biblical outcast, wandering in the

[6] By 'civilisation', here and throughout this thesis, I mean to denote that impulse which sets humans outside of the natural environment, and builds, through systems of taboos, ideologies, laws, religions, etc, a specifically human environment. Although there are, and have been, a multitude of different types of civilisations, one of their defining features is that they are seen to be an advanced state of societal development (Oxford English Dictionary 2000: 192). They are thus always open to comparative analysis with other civilisations, and are also, almost by definition, set apart from the natural environment and those who live within it. Hence, like 'society', they form one side of (and are an example of) the dichotomy, which I explore, between wildness and order, and centre and periphery. The patriarchal European construction of civilisation is by far the most dominant – and perhaps destructive and chauvinistic – in modern history. In many ways it emphasises most this dichotomy, and it is to this notion of 'civilisation' that much of this paper refers.

wilderness, divested of inheritance and social legitimacy, could easily be Eldrich's lot (Nikaido 2001: 224-233). The wanderings of an outcast are, again, inherently different to that of the tourist, or even the traveller. Where the traveller sets off on their journey by choice, the outcast leaves by necessity, is pushed by force and by the will of others. The traveller may journey to another land or country, but the outcast will journey into exile (Shepherd 2001: 349).

The movement from within society to a place completely outside of it intrigued me. There is an inherent discomfort in life within an over-civilised world, and an always-present impulse to throw off its burden (Freud 1961: 22). The wildman was set up as an opposition to the higher ideals of humanity; it was man constrained by his baser nature, living almost as an animal, by instinct and physical strength, within nature, rather than set apart from it.[7] The dichotomy set nature and humans apart as opposing forces. The wild man or woman[8] was the counterpart to the civilised person, the two living in completely separate worlds. The border between these worlds, however, was porous, and movement from the world of culture and societal acceptance to that of the outcast and wildness did occur (Husband 1980: 9-10; Mobley 1997: 219). The negative association of the wild man or woman and social outcast as being the antithesis of all that is good in humanity is also malleable, and over time in Europe they began to take on a positive connotation. They became 'exemplars of the virtuous and natural life' (Schamma 1995: 97). In an increasingly urban, 'civilised' society, the image of the wild man represented the human being in his natural state, unsullied by the ills and corruptions of society; it was an image of man before the fall. Or at any rate, it was a return from the wretchedness of modern life to that pre-fallen state. With an exile from society comes a freedom of individuality and identity; the loss associated with being an outcast can open up a freedom from the burden of history. The space of the tramp or the outcast is always one of marginality (Cresswell 2001: 11). He or she is always on the outskirts; not a part of, yet visible from within the world that has ejected them. The wild man occupies a similar marginal space. While he might appear to be the nature that opposes the culture, the wild that stands against

[7] Where there is gendered language in this section it is not done unconsciously, but is a way of engaging with the time period and the worldview that much of this material comes from. My intention is not to fall into problematic historical patterns, but to maintain an integrity of tone between the subject matter and the language.

[8] The role of women in wildman narratives is usually as the agency by which the wild man is enticed out of his wild world and inducted into society (Husband 1980; Mobley 1997). This is the case with Enkidu and Shamhat, with Samson and Delilah, in a sense with John the Baptist and Salome, and if Adam can be seen as a prototypical wild man, then Eve can be seen to have been caste in that role too. As in Enkidu's case, the role is not necessarily negative, but becomes consistently so in a Judeo-Christian context, where the move out of a wild state is recounted as a fall and original sin.

the civilised, he is always a wild 'man' (Husband 1980: 11-12); he is never completely animal: he occupies the liminal space between these dichotomies.[9]

The Madman and the Prophet

My way is hot sand. All day long, sandy, dusty paths. My patience is sometimes weak, and once I despaired of myself, as you know.
- Jung (2009: 144)

The desire for a 'return' to a pure, wild state is necessarily complicated, and inevitably involves, at least in part, a regression. Life within society can become stifling, corrupting, and unfulfilling, yet the wild man none the less represents a dangerous alternative. Where Enkidu was a prototype for the medieval wild man, born and raised almost as an animal, the story of Nebuchadnezzar was a crucial model for a slightly different kind of wild man: the madman (Husband 1980: 9). The Babylonian King, struck down from his exalted place for the crimes of pride and idolatry, is sent into the wilderness, where he degenerates into madness, living like an animal, devoid of reason. In William Blake's well-known print *Nebuchadnezzar* (1795) the Babylonian king is depicted crawling along the ground on all fours (figure 1). His body has become hairy and grotesquely textured, his hands and feet have become clawed or taloned, and his face is a mask of horror and madness, from which his long beard hangs down to drag in the dirt. He bears a close resemblance to the idea of the wild man, yet he has not gained a return to nature so much as he has lost his humanity. Eventually, he returns to sanity and to society. This becomes a recurring possibility, temporary madness that reduces a figure into the state of a wildman (Husband 1980: 9-10; Mobley 1997: 218-119). As Bernheimer (1952: 18) notes, 'the limits between wildness and knighthood were fluid', and numerous medieval knights, kings, and even saints lost themselves to madness and their more savage natures in a wilderness, either temporarily, or sometimes for good.

[9] It has been observed that the medieval idea of the wild man informed the responses of Europeans to people geographically (and chronologically) distant to themselves, so that contact with culturally and physically different people often became mythologized as encounters with wild men (Mobley 1997: 219-220). In this context it is interesting to note the name attached to San and Khoi people in southern Africa: 'Bushmen', who came to personify, in the European imagination, just such an image of humans in an unsettling proximity to nature. Even here, though, they could be negative or positive, hunted on horseback, or glorified as pure and living in harmony with nature.

Figure 1: William Blake, *Nebuchadnezzar*, 1795. Colour print, ink and watercolour on paper, 54.3cm x 72.5cm.

Madness was in some ways a similar movement between dialectical categories of wildness and civilisation, reason and unreason, control and lack of control. It was impossible to pass Eldrich on the road, wandering in his tattered clothes and wild hair, and not to consider the possibility of madness. The madman here can occupy a similar position to the wild man: it is someone who has relinquished reason and control, the marks of our inherited, Western notion of civilisation, and has given over to a wilder aspect of themselves. It is this image of madness, the darkness that opposes the light of reason and civilisation, which is explored in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1986). Deep in the jungles of the Belgian Congo, the iconic Mr Kurtz loses all touch with the 'civilised' world. He slips into his own darkness, an inner echo of the Victorian image of the 'Dark Continent', the savagery of his soul overriding the light (Tessitore 1980: 34-35). He becomes the mad, bloodthirsty despot of his own pandemonium. However problematic the representation of, and dichotomy of, 'civilised' Europeans compared to 'savage' Africans may be (and it certainly is; see for instance Achebe 1975), there is something archetypal in the image of a man subsumed within his own shadow, the balance of reason wholly capsized. He became a potent symbol of a man beyond the realm of control, reason, and morals, at the outer purlieu of civilization.[10]

The same dichotomy is here set up – where nature stood in opposition to culture, wildness to civilisation, here madness is the result of siding against civilisation; madness is the result of

[10] See footnote to 'civilisation' in the previous section.

giving in to wild urges and instincts, to loosing the 'savage' within. It stands as a social warning, a form of crowd control for the individual discontented with civilisation, to keep within its boundaries (Freud 1961: 28; Tessitore 1980: 37-37). My own attraction to Eldrich and the freedom from constraints and culture that he represented, was certainly tempered by this image of the wild man as mad man; it was in fact the reason that I did not stop and engage with him when I saw him on the road in the Swartland. The possibility that he had been overcome not just by the purity of nature, but by the darkness of the unconscious and a latent savagery held me back. In any dichotomy, the opposing ideas are reliant on each other for their own existence – civilisation is 'civilised' against the wildness that it opposes. The polarities are thus invariably two parts of the same thing, as night and day form an experience of time. Madness is never a distant place from reason – it is intimately entwined in it; just as Conrad tried to show that savagery was never far from 'civilised', but rather that the two always cleave together. Where social and religious structures order life and ideas into dichotomies, a hierarchy is necessarily set up, and characteristics become moral qualities. Order is set as better than chaos, light better than dark. Madness, in these biblical and medieval stories, as well as in Conrad, Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1973), and innumerable other places, takes place in the wilderness. Madness is the dark shadow of reason; nature and madness become often equated: both occupy the same space of opposition to culture. The polarities become, ultimately, qualities of good and evil.

Yet it is from the wilderness, too, that another narrative of human experience comes. If the wilderness became the negative to urban society's positive, at the same time, and exactly because of its uncivilised, unfabricated quality, it gained a positive connotation: it was pure where its counterpart was corrupt. God's creation was perceived as existing there in its pure form, whereas the polluted urban cultures bore the influence of the fall.[11] Where the darkness of nature confronted the light of culture, the darkness brought on wildness and madness. But if nature was the light to culture's darkness, then from that divine purity some were able to emerge as prophets and saints.

Elijah is the quintessential biblical desert prophet, referred to as hairy and living in caves (Mobley 1997: 227). His relationship with his god and the messages he brings come from the desert and…

[11] Often nature seems to become positive and culture negative when the people involved are oppressed or colonized; the oppressors then invariably occupy the urban environment, giving the sense to the occupied that those places are sullied. They seek a pure and unsullied place, often the place of their own historical identity: the natural landscape (Schamma 1995: 81-98). The urban, being the centre of civilization, stands against nature, which exists on the periphery.

The sand is cool and slightly crusted after the rain white and grey crushed sandstone and quartzite Under the bush its pockmarked and stippled from drops Ants stumble across the broken shifted landscape their routes and passages indecipherable Where tall grasses rise out of the sand their tips describe arcs and ellipses in the impressionable air conducting a symphony of wind their bases work away at the sand moulding small inverted cones This shallow sand shelters seeds and pits to stumble in Under the shallow roots of the grass the sand is darker it will bleach in the afternoons sun

…the wilderness, where he lives beyond the containment of society. Indeed, biblical wild men as prophets in the wilderness, or the wilderness inspiring prophecy, occurs repeatedly in biblical narratives (Mobley 1997: 227; Bartra 1994: 52-62). Moses receives his messages from God while out in the wild, at the burning bush, and alone atop a mountain, and at the end of his journey he is restricted from entering the land to which he led the Israelites: he must live out his days in the wilderness. In the New Testament John the Baptist is something of a wild man, preaching from the river rather than the temple, raging against the political powers and general degeneracy, and eating locusts. And for that matter, Jesus too, whom John anticipated, went into the wilderness for an extended period to commune with spirits. The wilderness, and an extrication from society, became a familiar territory in Christian monastic traditions (Bartra 1994: 52-62; De Certeau 1992: 14, 21; Mobley 1997: 227). There are South African examples, also, of wilderness prophets, such as Makhanda (see Wells 2012), who spent years living alone in the bush, where he both shrugged off the missionary lessons he had grown up with, and formulated his own religious views and prophesies. And for the Boers, 'Siener' van Rensberg received prophecies for his people in the veld.

The line between madman and prophet is a thin one, and perhaps depends as much on the milieu, on the audience of the rantings or prophesies, as it does on any inherent ability to maintain a cohesive integrity of self on the part of the madman/prophet. Both involve an acquiescence to another form of reason – a higher power or a lower faculty of consciousness. Whether someone is accessing a higher power, a universal truth, has been overrun by demonic impulses, or is for physiological and neurological reasons simply unable to reason properly, is an argument that has had different outcomes depending on time and worldview. The wild exists beyond the borders of civilisation, both in the collective history of humanity and within the individual psyche. In the cultural narrative, straying beyond those boundaries is a regression to wildness – to pre-human savagery, or to madness. The reasoning mind buckles beneath the weight of darkness, the unconscious washes over and overwhelms.

I could not help reading Eldrich as a desert prophet, wandering in the wilderness, perhaps for forty years rather than forty days; eating locusts and wild honey, and communicating with some divine intelligence; learning the secret language of the rocks and the birds. This image of him as prophet rose above the dichotomies of difference, not simply as a synthesis to the dichotomy of wildness and civilisation – the picture of a wandering prophet does not seem to straddle the line between the two, with a foot neatly in each camp. Rather it somehow floated above, transcendent,

encompassing the beauty and horror of both uncontrolled nature and sophisticated reason as a sublime possibility. This, of course, was the other reason that I did not stop to talk to him on the road.

The Walker

Well when I was a boy, my daddy sat me on his knee, and he told me,
he told me many things. And he said 'Son, there are many things in this world that you're
gonna have no use for. And when you get blue, and you've lost all your dreams,
there's nothing like a campfire and a can of beans.'
- Waits (1993)

In the 1930s and '40s my grandfather worked in, and then ran and owned a small shop in Salt River, Cape Town. It was the means by which he supported his family, but it was a living, not his life. His life was leaving the shop and the city at every opportunity he could, to hike in the mountains with a group of friends, a small group of Jewish men who felt passionately a need to get out into the wild, into the mountains, just them. Their photographs show a deep love for the mountains and the rocks, an intimacy with the wild spaces. They swam naked in the rock pools, and spent long periods sleeping out. There was a dialogue between my grandfather and the mountains that I think was missing for him in the city. It was a relationship free of the appurtenances of a modern extreme sport: they climbed sickeningly high, sheer, unexplored rock faces with hemp rope and veldskoen, a bag with pipe or bulky camera slung over the shoulder. It was a connection with the mountains that was passed on to his children, and so from my father to me. Childhood holidays were as often as not spent on long excursions hiking for days through local mountains. If the weather was good we would pass by the simple mountain hut to sleep in the open, under a rock overhang or on soft grasses. Backpack, boots, and sleeping bag were among the absolute essentials of my boyhood. Walking, and a relationship with wild places, was a family legacy for me (figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2: Donnie Yasvoin. *Untitled (Charles Kaplan, Table Mountain).* 1940. Black and White photograph. 10cm x 15cm.

Figure 3: Donnie Yasvoin. *Untitled (Mountain Hut, Cederberg).* 1942. Black and White Photograph, 10cm x 15cm

So the idea of walking and being in the wild, on my own, felt natural. Whatever Eldrich might or might not be, his reasons for doing what he did were his own, and since I had not stopped to speak to him, I could explore the broad theoretical possibilities, but not understand the experience. The experience, however, was what was of interest to me: I wanted to know what it felt like to walk the verge of a public road for hours, with no clear destination in mind, but simply to walk until darkness overtook me; and what it would feel like to be enveloped in that darkness, with no recourse to electric light, the company of people, or any kind of control at all over the wildness and darkness which surrounded me. I wanted to know what it would feel like to be looked at with a mixture of interest and horror by the people who drove past. I wanted to feel how the landscape would unfold slowly, step by step, rather than kilometre by kilometre, and how the smells and pockets of warm or cool air would change; I wanted to gain an intimacy with the unnoticed cracks and struggling grasses that people in cars drive past, as I imagined Eldrich must. I was looking, ultimately, for an embodied experience of the landscape and the road. Since Eldrich seemed to exist so closely with it, so inside of it, I decided to attempt to find him in the experience of walking, and of spending long periods in those places.

I began to track Eldrich, trying to follow his spoor along the sides of roads, looking for signs of him, signs of the world that he inhabited. I wore a pair of old boots and jeans, and I walked along the side of roads as they left towns and stretched through the landscape. I walked and I tried to picture him, and tried to get closer to an idea of exactly what he felt, what he gained by his vagrancy, what he might have given up. I came, however, no closer to him. He remained an elusive mystery for me; the power of my imagination could not make that final leap into another living person. I came no closer to answering why he did what he did, and had to accept that, knowing nothing about him, the only thing I knew for sure was that I was the one walking the roads in old clothes with meagre food supplies. And if I asked myself why I was walking, the answer was because I was tracking and studying Eldrich. Since I had to admit that Eldrich, as I envisioned him, was a figment of my imagination, I could only be following, documenting, and tracking myself. The line between him and me had begun to blur, and in my embodied experience of road and landscape and walking, I was embodying Eldrich too.

The philosopher Husserl described walking as 'the experience by which we understand our body in relation to the world' (Solnit 2001: 27). The physical movement of walking places us in the world; we become embodied in ourselves through the physical motion and repetition, but we also become embodied in the world around us – we move through space and time and the world…

The road spins Black tar moving Jagged chipped pebbles Leg kicks back swings forward foot falls Pull the earth towards me on the bottom of my boot Next foot drags the road It moves slowly Thick through the viscous stuff of mind the dark slurry of space Drag the world I stand in one place and roll the earth under my feet just to keep it revolving I can hear the world moving past my ears bush scrapes past Koppie angular rolls past me slowly Look down Road crumbles to gravel under my right foot dry grass growing out of that ants escarpment A black beetle makes for the highground black ground ribboning through space I can see the dust moving up in small clouds from my boot scraping gravel Bag creaks and scratches boots loud on gravel quiet on tar Shoulder the straps with my thumbs to shift the weight Keep looking down

…unfolds around us. Dubow (2001: 248) describes walking, in the context of being in a new environment, as 'a digression through space that is also a subjective ingression in place'. De Certeau (1984: 102-104, 107-112), too, places great importance on walking, here in a city, where walking is the means by which a space is properly experienced and lived in; there is an embodied engagement and experience of surroundings, rather the surroundings being merely a view taken in. For de Certeau the city is a language, and walking, unlike driving, is the act of speaking that language.

The language metaphor might not easily be transplanted onto a highway stretching through open landscape, since here the road certainly is designed to be driven rather than walked (unlike de Certeau's city). Nonetheless, as the landscape unfolds slowly, almost imperceptibly, on the horizon, and as subtle details are encountered and passed by on the border of the road and the land beside it, in the air and the texture of tar or dirt and plants, there is a language being spoken, indeed whole passages which have never been heard before; a language that is spoken through walking, which remains unrevealed and silent from within a car. This notion of an environment as a language, and walking as the speaking of it, is echoed by the Australian Aboriginal idea of songlines, where the landscape is navigated, lived into, and created, by walking and the singing of a song that corresponds to it (Chatwin 1986; Ingold 2007: 50, 79-80; O'Rourke 2013: 279); the landscape is a constantly recreated, re-experienced place, with lines of cultural and personal memory winding through it.

I began to see, as I walked the verges of roads more and drove them less, that there was indeed a growing vocabulary of experience afforded by the bodily motion and pace of walking. Indeed, as Benjamin (1978: 50) states, also comparing a road through the landscape to a text) 'only he who walks the road on foot learns the power it commands'. Ingold (1993: 161-171) stresses the importance of a phenomenological, embodied experience of the world, which allows a landscape to become a known and personal place, rather than an abstract space. In terms of this embodied manner of engaging with a landscape, he speaks of 'ambulatory vision', the way in which the world unfolds and is engaged with by all the senses (Ingold cited in Bender 2001: 5). Moving physically through a place attaches significance, memories, and stories to the landscape, which in turn engender a 'sense of self and belonging' in people (Bender 2001: 5).

It is precisely this sense of embodied experience of environment that Doung Anwar Jahangeer, a Mauritian-born artist and architect, is engaged with in his *City Walk* project (Figure 4). Jahangeer

focuses attention on the footpaths that are created, in South African and other cities, by the repetitive traffic of pedestrians. The paths, for him, reveal the 'characteristics of society' (Simbao 2013: 408). They are the living movement made by individuals and collections of people as the navigate their own routes, which often differ from the intended ones set out by urban planners and architects. By walking these routes, and guiding others on them, Jahangeer is creating a space for engagement with the urban environment as a real, lived, embodied place, rather than simply a dead space that we pass by. More than that, however, he is attempting to open up spaces which, due to South Africa's past, were, and for the most part still are, closed off; he is, I would argue, attempting not just to read the language of the road and the city, but to write new stories, open up new channels of communication using what Bailly would call the 'generative grammar of the legs' (Bailly cited in Solnit 2001: 213).

Figure 4: Doung Anwar Jahangeer. *The Other Side (City Walk in Grahamstown)*. 2012. Colour Photograph, dimensions unknown (Photo: Ruth Simbao).

What Jahangeer's work also emphasises is the political aspect of walking. People walk for vastly different reasons, which are often tied up with socio-economic issues; put simply, a poor person predominantly walks out of necessity, while a rich person usually walks for pleasure, having other modes of transport available. While de Certeau's city might have been designed to be walked, the sprawling, still segregated cities of South Africa were for the most part not (beyond the contained commercial districts in some centres). Even more so, the long highways that stretch through the landscape between towns and cities were certainly not made with walking in mind. While there…

I rest in the tattered edges of the land where the twisted bushes snag packets and foil in the pushing wind and small shacks and cracked corrugations bunch together and rise from the smell of sunwarmed dust and wild daisies leaving traces of gnawed bones and tin cans and shards of green tinted glass where the thin grasses push up beside the tar and gravel. Further the road drags past to get clogged in the town by streetlamps and palm trees.

…may be a huge culture, not to mention industry, built up around recreational walking, it is confined to parks, trails, mountains, and reserves – places where the walker can experience a mediated encounter with nature, an escape from the urban. Jahangeer steps beyond these bounds in his work, transgressing the familiar distinctions.

For Eldrich, and thus, in my embodying and enacting of him, for myself, it was the act of walking as much as anything else that placed us on the periphery of society. A person walking out of town down a quiet stretch of road leaves the easy demarcations we can otherwise place on them: not farmworker (we can usually read the uniform, and in this country, colour), not beggar (whose profession would keep them in the town), not propertied farmer or tourist (who would have a vehicle, amongst other obvious reasons). The walker exists just outside the definable, on the periphery both of society and of the known; walking the road became, for me, a treading of the line between the known and the unknown. My walking on a road through the landscape, as opposed to the city, was a movement along the line of that other dichotomy, between civilisation and wildness, between the controlled and the uncontrolled. It was in fact a walking through the liminal space between between these things. Perhaps even a sort of double-liminality: the road is already liminal, moving through the wild terrain, and the terrain is already liminal, being now not centered in its wildness but always at the edge of itself (at the edge of ourselves), an edge formed by the road; so there are two edges that meet, rather than two spaces that meet, and so a kind of deepened or emphasized liminality.

Chapter II: The Landscape

The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock with no water
If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
If there were only water amongst the rock
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit.
- Eliot (1922: 41)

Prospects of the Landscape

The world has no name. The names of [places] exist only on maps. We name them that we do not lose our way. Yet it was because the world was lost to us already that we have made these names. The world cannot be lost. We are the ones. And it is because these names and these coordinates are our own naming that they cannot save us. That they cannot find for us the way again.
- McCarthy (1994: 387)

The walking of the road between towns was not the end of my enactment. I began to extend my expeditions, so that I did not simply return at the end of the day. I followed Eldrich into the dusk, and over the inevitable fenceline lining the road. I packed almost as lightly as I supposed he must have done, lighter than I had done as a boy hiking in the mountains – I carried less food, enough to make it through a few days, but hungrily. In my worn and frayed clothes I walked the road till the light began to fade, and then searched out possible places to sleep - out of sight of the road, out of sight of what houses there might be, protected from the weather as much as possible. I thus left the road and entered the landscape itself.

The idea of landscape, however, and especially an ability to enter it, is complex. For Cresswell (2004: 11), for instance, 'we do not live in landscapes – we look at them'. This comes from a definition of landscape that hinges on its function as a view, and stands in contrast, for Cresswell, to the idea of 'place'. The conception of 'landscape' in this sense arose out of the development of mercantile capitalism in Western Europe; it involved a distancing from the natural world, a more abstract relationship with the environment, so that the experience of landscape became disembodied (Bender 2001: 3; Foster 2008: 6-8, 45-50). Landscape, in this context, is associated with an 'elitist way of seeing, an imposing/imposed "viewpoint"' (Bender 2001: 3). A landscape

here is a view to be taken in, a piece of land that is contained and bounded, and observed from a vantage point – it is tied up with the development of aesthetics, but also with ideas of ownership and imperialism (Bender 2002: 5; Foster 2008: 45-52; Schamma 1995: 490-495, 526-537; Wylie 2007: 120-135). The disconnected nature of a landscape here means that it is a discrete entity, and the viewer stands outside of it, hence Cresswell's statement above. In this definition, people (subjects) are placed outside of landscape – or, looked at differently, the landscape is placed outside of people – the idea of landscape 'presupposes a viewer' (Foster 2008: 45).

The natural environment thus became an ideological tool in the imperial project of supremacy and ownership. The land became a prospect, which 'exemplifies the empowered, modern Western gaze that distances, objectifies, and attempts to control' (Foster 2008: 45). An aspect of this empowered Western gaze is the objectifying not just of the natural world, but also of the people who inhabit it, or indeed any environment considered different or other (Bender 2001: 3). The 'other' within the landscape becomes merely a feature of the terrain, in a similar manner to that in which the idea of the wild man, in the last chapter, was identified with the wilderness – was indeed, in a negative sense, seen as a part of it.

In this understanding of landscape, and the dynamics of power behind it, there was certainly something of this objectifying gaze in how I had read Eldrich. Similarly, his place within the 'landscape', compared to my place outside of it, was part of my interest in him. As I drove along the road and took in the view of the unfolding landscape from my privileged, centralised position behind a windscreen, Eldrich had appeared within and as a part of a view. There are many writers, however, for whom such an understanding of landscape is narrow and perhaps simplistic (Ingold 2011: 47, 129-130; Ingold 1993: 153-154; Tilley 2004: 12; Wylie 2009: 78-80; Wylie 2007: 70-81). The focus on an aesthetic, historical analysis of the concept of landscape reinforces all of the dichotomies between wild and civilised, which were explored in the last chapter. This reading enforces the dualism between nature and people, object and subject (Ingold 1993: 154-156). In this dualism, there is an inherent and unbridgeable separation between the world and the human perceiver, which means that the perceiver must reconstruct the world in their own consciousness before there can be a real engagement with it. Landscape then becomes this reconstructed world, a 'picture in the imagination, surveyed by the minds eye' (Ingold 1993:154). The mind which contains such a constructed landscape is the centralised, subjective person of the 'empowered, modern Western' world mentioned above (Foster 2008: 45). In their subjecthood, the landscape is reduced to a symbolic and cultural construction.

Along the wide skyfilled encrustment of land burning under the sun Skinned stretched Tufts of dry plants stick out grey grasses and dwarfed trees I watch my boots fall slowly consecutively buckling the meager stems when they appear or landing on dark shifting gravel and hardpacked dirt

I walk through a landscape so black the tar of the road can hardly be told apart black rocks crumbling into black sand the broken shale and slag slicing the sunlight throwing it back up broken and chipped into my eyes On the black koppies strange white orbs of stones sit as if bones thrown In what divining This poured finger of pitch and gravel converges at each moment at my boot with its white streaks and dashes

But for Ingold, and others, the landscape is rather the actual world around us; it is the physical features of the land, and ourselves within it, as well as the 'imaginative exchanges that arise between people and the material world' (Foster 2008: 4). The landscape here becomes the place that we inhabit, and which inhabits us. This understanding of 'landscape' places us as active, living entities within an active, living world: it is the continual movement and interaction, between ourselves and our environment, which is in fact the landscape. As Ingold states his definition: 'the landscape is the world as it is known to those who dwell therein, who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them' (Ingold 1993: 156). Landscape here is the material in which we live and through which we move. Where the former definition hinges on the fact that subjects are placed outside of an objectified landscape (as part of the general inheritance of the movement into a modern, enlightened, self-reflexive consciousness), the latter widens the bounds of the definition, to include even our own subjective experience of the world within the landscape, and to acknowledge that the landscape is a living process, both made by people and making them, and that it is always in flux and under construction (Bender 2002: 103; Ingold 1993: 162).[12]

The first definition and interrogation of the notion of 'landscape' is important. It opens up an understanding of how landscapes were, and are, represented, and of the use that these representations afforded those who made and viewed them, especially in the context of colonial representations, and of the dynamics of power and control inherent in these representations (Wylie 2007: 108-136). The example of Pierneef is often cited in a South African context, where the artist actively employed representations of the landscape in the project of a developing national and cultural identity, one contingent upon a particular idea of the surrounding environment. One such contingency, a feature of Pierneef's work, is that the landscape appears empty of people, open and ready for habitation (Peffer 2005: 49, 50). The scenes portrayed, and the manner of their portrayal, are by no means simply an earnest expression of the artist's personal experience of the South African landscape, much less a failed mimetic attempt (figure 5). As important as such a definition clearly is, however, it does not give expression to the embodied experience of inhabiting and moving through an environment.

[12] Yi-Fu Tuan (1974: 133) gives a succinct explanation of the etymology of 'landscape', differentiating between the sense of a 'prospect seen from a specific point of view' or an 'artistic representation', from the original meaning, which was far more connected to 'the real world', designating a place or group of places.

Figure 5: J. H. Pierneef, *Hardkoolbome – Bosveld*, 1944. Oil on canvas, 61cm x 81cm.

My short excursions on foot, brief trips beyond the car, eventually failed to satisfy. I required more time on foot and less behind the wheel. The view from the inside of a car easily divides the world up into panels. It becomes an inevitable triptych, the landscape sliding past the windows on the side, the horizon unfolding beyond the windscreen in front. There is a definite separation between the subject within the car and the world without. At every moment along the journey, the world is presented to the driver from an insistently singular viewpoint – the world spins past out there, but I remain here. The speed, the sound, the metal of the car, all function to maintain a separation, a subject/object relationship with the world. Eldrich appeared to me from this point of view, as did the world through which he walked. Yet what I wanted was not simply to gain a clear picture of him within the landscape, but to experience what he might have, as he inhabited the world. Thus when I took to the road on foot, and when I left the road and entered the surrounding landscape, it was not simply an exercise in performing Eldrich and photographing the objects and scenes that I found. It was a way of entering the world, and gaining an experience of the landscape, in an embodied way: it was a strategy to follow Eldrich, and to literally enter the landscape, as well as having the experience of the landscape entering me.

The Walker, Within the Landscape

In paths untrodden,
Escaped from the life that exhibits itself,
Here by myself away from the clank of the world,
Tallying and talk'd to here by tongues aromatic
- Whitman (2004: 95)

Driving through the landscape emphasises, as mentioned above, that separation between the viewing subject and the environment; the car seals the senses within its shell. The interior of the car does not interact with the landscape: it is a personal space shut off from the world around it. No matter the landscape driven through, the feel of the steering wheel and the texture of the seat remains the same, the temperature and air can be controlled, and the sounds from outside are muted and often drowned out by the engine. The senses are thus almost entirely cut off from the outside world. Where they are not cut off – in the scintilla of smells that sometimes penetrate, or scraps of sounds that enter, these are presented as discrete sensory hints, not cohesive impressions of a landscape. Sight alone seems to enter unhindered. But even here, as I suggested earlier, the view is broken up by the frame of the car. Indeed, sight alone, even were it not so compartmentalised, would be insufficient. As Tilley (2004: 14) notes, 'perception involves the simultaneous use of the senses. In considering landscape and place, we participate in the world in such a manner that we do not distinguish between the visual, audible, olfactory, etc'. Driving, therefore, will always emphasise the experience of landscape as a view, a scene from which the observer is removed.

De Certeau, writing of observing the world from an unrealistic height – a position removed from a tactile, experiential relationship with it – describes the viewer being transfigured into a 'voyeur'; he ends up 'looking down like a god' (de Certeau 1984: 93). A solution to this disembodied seeing is simply to walk, which allows for what Dubow (2001: 249) calls 'a close and motile mode of seeing. [...] It is a mode of seeing that redraws the eye into the specificities of the physical environment as into the physical body of the seer'. For de Certeau too, as dealt with in the last chapter, a more authentic engagement with the environment is to walk within and through it. Here he was speaking specifically about an engagement with the city, yet walking is no less important outside of the city. Indeed, in speaking of the importance of a corporeal engagement with, and motion within, an environment, Ingold (1993: 166) states that 'movement is the very essence of perception'. Comparing moving through a landscape as opposed to viewing it, Olwig (2008: 84-85) too emphasises this: 'The touched, smelled and heard proximate material world is thereby woven into the walker's sensory field, leading him or her to experience the landscape as a

topological realm of contiguous places'; in this way, walking through a landscape fosters a feeling of belonging.

De Certeau (1984: 99) suggests that the walker 'actualizes' the possibilities inherent in what he calls a 'spatial order'; through his walking, 'he makes them exist as well as emerge'. This is related to de Certeau's understanding of the city, or an environment, as a language, in which context, walking is the spoken word. Where looking at a view is compared to a disembodied, objective reading of that language, walking engages in the very creation of new figures of speech, new turns of phrase – it brings that language into actuality (Ingold 1984: 99). Ingold (1993: 56-57), coming from a different position, and using different terminology, comes to a comparable picture. In terms of landscape, he speaks of the idea of embodiment, by which he does not merely mean the 'inscription' of a pre-existing template onto a 'substantive medium' – pattern stamped into form; but rather, he sees it as a 'movement of incorporation', whereby the patterns and the forms themselves are generated (Ingold 1993: 156-157). A landscape, then, can be seen as an embodiment of the actions, and interactions (between people, land, and time), which continually take place within it and in its production; not a standard form predetermined by set patterns. The walker actualises the space around him- or herself, bringing, through the active engagement of walking, the landscape into embodiment. In this way, the potentiality and abstractness of space is actualised into place and landscape. Landscape is not a static medium, but rather a language which may be embodied through our embodied speaking of it. This, again, is Bailly's 'generative grammar of the legs' (Bailly cited in Solnit 2001: 213), and the potent image of the Aboriginal songlines (Chatwin 1986; Ingold 2007: 50, 79-80; O'Rourke 2013: 279). Ingold (1993: 167) makes this connection clear, too: 'The same movement is embodied, on the side of people, in their "muscular consciousness", and on the side of landscape, in its network of paths and tracks'.

British artist Richard Long works extensively with walking, and with these movements through and within landscape (Roelstraete 2010: 2-4)). His original piece, the starting point of his walking as art practice, was *A Line Made by Walking* (1967). Long walked a line repeatedly over time, until the line he walked was embodied on the field in which he had walked it as a physical trace, a path (figure 6). Walking became the body of his practice as an artist; long and short walks, all over the world. At times he walks lines onto the earth, marks paths with stones, carries objects along routes; he documents the walks as maps, photographs, text, or materials re-formed into sculptures. But throughout, the walking itself is central. Long was concerned mostly with rural or wilderness landscapes, not the built environment, as Jahangeers work is. In some ways the

difference is important. The city is, after all, 'the one environment created exclusively for human use' (Tuan 1975: 157). Jahangeer's walks are centrally about interacting with other people, and emphasising their paths and routes through a city, bringing out the traces and experiences of others, and at the very same time sharing these with his own 'viewers'. Long, on the other hand, walks alone, in relative isolation, usually creating his own paths through spaces often apparently devoid of people. Where Jahangeer's work appears to be an active, performative social commentary, Long's work has the quality of a meditation. His engagement seems to be with the land through which he walks – the topography and physical terrain of the environment. Thus Jahangeer looks at people and how they engage with the built environment (as well as attempting to get participants to become more self-aware in their engagement), while Long looks at his own engagement with the landscape.

Figure 6: Richard Long, *A Line Made by Walking*, 1967. Black and white photograph, dimensions unknown.

However, in the light of de Certeau and Ingold's view of the importance of walking, and of the role of a corporeal engagement with ones surroundings, both of these artists' practices are relevant. Through their work, they are both involved centrally with this 'talking' of the language of landscape. Whether in the city with other people, or outside of the city in isolation, through their actions there is an embodiment of landscape, in the sense of real, lived places and the paths and movements between them. They walk, creating and emphasising paths through and between

places, speaking the landscape into being. For Long, there is inevitably an act of creation involved in his walks. He physically alters the landscape in order to tell the story of his walk, or to emphasise an aspect of the landscape itself. In *Karoo Highveld Crossing* (2004), he has etched his movement on the surface of the earth (figure 7). He has delineated something like a crossroads, or a railway junction, into the very fabric of the landscape. It marks out the movement of his walking, and perhaps, too, the intersection of himself and the landscape, of history, topography, and identity (Bender 2002: 103; Ingold 1993: 162-164). The landscape bears the imprint of his activities, but to no greater extent than he himself carries the marks of the land, in the wear on his shoes, the feeling of the hot dusty Karoo rocks carried in his hands, the memory of that path etched into the landscape of his consciousness and, to however small an amount, the developing personal identity to which that landscape is now an aspect.

Figure 7: Richard Long, *Karoo Highveld Crossing*, 2004. Colour photograph, dimensions unknown.

For myself then, leaving the car behind, and setting off on foot, was thus a creative endeavour in its own right. It was not, as I have said, simply a process of collecting photographs, but was a way of entering into the landscape, of being and dwelling in place. It was a speaking, not just a reading or recording, of the landscape, and a creation of place and identity within it.

Between Place and Loss

The world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside of myself.
- Merleau-Ponty (2002: 474)

By an embodied engagement with the world, I was moving into the landscape. I was attempting to loosen those boundaries between subject and object, which flatten out the landscape into a prospect, a view. Or, if not to loosen the boundaries, then perhaps to open out the line of separation, to explore the liminal space between. I was walking the edges of roads, over days, gaining an intimacy with them. I was setting up camp, such as it was, under bushes and beside trees just over the fence. I was living in the landscape, and where I slept and woke, the small sections of the terrain that I experienced at dusk, dark slow night, and dawn, those became real places, rather than merely spaces filling up a view.

From my childhood memory of walks and long hikes, an image now stood out: the cairns, small piles of rocks built by walkers. They mark out direction where the path might be unclear, and they mark the peak of a mountain; they mark places and the paths between them. They are route markers, messages between walkers, but also subtle markers of presence and habitation in a landscape otherwise apparently unsigned by human hands. I began to construct these in the places where I slept; small devices to note the place, to note my own being there: the other traces of where I had slept – spread out sand or flattened grasses, broken bushes, covered middens – all would very quickly fade to nothing (see figures 18 and 21). The cairns were my mark, my emblem of tenancy, the place of my dwelling, however fleeting. They mark out a piece of earth with a similar aesthetic to a gravestone (see figures 19 and 22). The gravestone functions almost as a portrait of a person. It marks out where their remains lie, but where they no longer are, a testament to loss and memory. It is also a claim to a section of earth. In terms of a marker of place, then, it marks a sort of sacred place; it draws attention to that which once was, and which exists now as a memory written onto, and within, the land – a marker of absence as much as one of presence (Wylie 2009: 278-281).

For Tuan (1975: 152-153) 'place' is a sort of node of geographic space that is known, both experientially as an embodied feeling, and abstractly as a geographic position within a context. Arefi (1999: 183) speaks of a 'chronological connection to a broader physical, cultural or emotional context' in relation to a sense of place. Place, then, is not an objective fact, but relies on subjective relationships. I might walk through places constantly, and, having no personal

connection or experience of them, not be aware that they are places to other people. For Ingold, the idea of place is central to an understanding of landscape. The landscape here, as discussed, is a coherent, lived-in world, the surrounding physical terrain, which incorporates the active subject within it. This landscape consists, in terms of our relationship to it, of places, and the paths between them (Ingold 1993: 167). Each place is a part of the whole landscape; it 'embodies the whole at a particular nexus within it, and in this respect is different from every other' (Ingold 1993: 155). Moreover, there is as much importance placed on the paths and routes that connect places, as on the places themselves – an idea that pictures the landscape as a 'meshwork' of lines and tracks between and around places, which are constantly being made and remade (Ingold 2007: 80; Lefebvre 1991: 117-118).

Place, and thus landscape, is central to conceptions of identity. Identity is formed, in great part, and of course in conjunction with numerous other overlapping factors, through a connection to, or rather a creation of, a place, over time. Indeed, identity is both implicit and explicit in the idea of place. We form collective group identities in response to ideas about regional place, for instance, such as a particular national identity (Bender 2001: 7-13; Foster 2008: 16-18, 46-50; Tuan 1975: 157-161), and our personal identity is also entwined with place – the home we grew up in, school and neighbourhood, trees we played in, or particular terrain we traversed repeatedly (Basu 2001: 339-346; Bender 2001: 5-6; Dawson and Johnson 2001: 321-322, 324-325). The landscape as a 'meshwork', as mentioned above, reflects the repeated and continual creation and recreation of identity with and through place. People become rooted to particular places and landscapes, so that ultimately they identify with these places as home, as 'theirs' (it both seems to belongs to them, and them to it).

There is, however, a crucial problem with leaving the relationship between identity and place there. Those 'meshworks' of landscape can become knotted, and the links and strands severed, when people are forced to leave their 'place', their 'home'; they are uprooted. Thus, the existential dilemma of refugees or exiles. The experience of people in exile, rather than being based on a particular place, becomes an experience of 'being between "here and there"' (Shepherd 2001: 319). Rather than being 'in place', exiles are 'out-of-place', they become 'displaced' (Dawson and Johnson 2001: 319-320, 329-330; Shepherd 2001: 349). Not only are such individuals and groups of people displaced, but they exist then perpetually in between, in the impersonal space that exists between places, 'non-place', with a resultant lack of connection and meaning (Arefi 1999: 181-184: Augé 1995: 86). For a large and increasing number of people

throughout the world, there is thus an inevitable crisis of identity to be dealt with.

At the same time, though, there are those who believe that the idea of a fixed, immovable relationship to a specific place, and the resultant place-based identity, is problematic to begin with. Such ideas, forming concepts of nationality, and nationalism, require a certain stability, and stress boundaries, belonging and exclusion (Bender 2001: 7-9; Foster 2008: 14-15). The ability to move, to not be fixed, both in terms of place, and identity, is crucial here. Thus the recounted statement by Isaac Deutscher, a 'non-Jewish Jew', in response to a question regarding his roots: '"Trees have roots", he shot back, scornfully, "Jews have legs"' (Schamma 1995: 29). In this view, the life of the exile and the nomad is to be embraced; it signifies the forging of new identities, the mixing and creolisation of characteristics, so that identity can be freed of the constraints of place, language, or race, et cetera (Bender 2001: 7-13). To contend, however, that 'place' is unimportant would be simplistic and problematic (Escobar 2001: 141). It would deny the real and important differences amongst people (Bender 2001: 8-13). It would deny, too, the genuine importance of place, and the fact that no matter what the movements, and under what conditions, places are always left behind, passed through, and created along the way. Thus identity, whether it is based on sedentary emplacement, or mobility, is formed and reformed in relation to place, and the routes between places (Dawson and Johnson 2001: 329-330). Besides this, the lived reality of exile - those bonds of belonging being severed, the rootless wandering of someone displaced - can be 'very acute and painful' (Escobar 2001: 140), indeed, the experience can be 'virtually unbearable' (Said 2002: 163).

Thus, both the pain of separation and exile, and the fettered quality of being 'place-bound' (Escobar 2001: 153) and history-bound are problematic, and the solution to one is not necessarily to be found in the other. It is the impossibility of remaining in the Garden once the fruit has been tasted, and the pain of inexorable expulsion. Labadie, the 17th Century nomadic mystic whose wanderings have been recounted by de Certeau, had a vision which 'informed him that he was not at home. He was deprived of himself by the place in which he was' (de Certeau 1992: 276). Thus begins Labadie's journey, a movement through different places, religions, beliefs, and mystical experiences – he is 'both wanderer and migrant: a "walker"' (de Certeau 1992: 271). The outer structures of religion and state, as well as the inner imperative of continuous journeying, cannot or will not contain him. There is a sort of continuous exile, and his story is that of 'indefinite space created by the impossibility of place' (de Certeau 1992: 271).

I sit on the gravel beside the road amongst the brown grass brittling up through pebbles and light sand and low weeds under the mottled shade of a thornbush jabbing its nails and scaled skin skywards Catch my breath Wipe the sweat from my eyebrow and lip dry spittle from the corners of my mouth red ants from the bottom of my jeans Untie my laces loosen the boots from my ankles The soles of my feet ache bruised and chaffed beaten by the pitched plank of the road that slow punishment Each step winced out Draw my boots off by the heel peel the rag of sock Cant move my toes feet seem bulbous and bulging red where I run my finger underneath I put them in the sand and sip water

Sitting between road and fence flicking stones to make the wires reverberate and hum A tick crawls slowly along the seam of my jeans

Labadie existed constantly in the space between places, between here and there, in the constant flux of 'betwixt and between' which can characterise the experience of exiles (Dawson and Johnson 2001: 330). It is partly for this reason (amongst others) that he stands, for de Certeau, as a bridge between his milieu and our own, where 'the figure of the exile and the wanderer might appropriately stand as the iconic figure of late modernity' (Shepherd 2001: 349). Labadie is constantly falling out of the places and structures that cannot hold him. And yet, where he expects to fall through emptiness, he finds himself supported (de Certeau 1992: 271). The opposition between being in place, being rooted, contained, and immobile, on the one hand, and on the other hand being placeless, homeless, free of certain constraints, here finds a certain surcease. Dawson and Johnson (2001: 330), writing about migration and exile, suggest looking at that state of 'betwixt and between' not as a temporary state in the movement from one fixed place to another. Rather, they suggest the idea of liminality as the awareness of a constant state of movement, change, and of being between, not just for exiles or other obviously out-of-place people, but also for those who have not physically moved, those still in-place, as well. Liminality, they suggest, need not be seen as a discrete phase between fixed places, but rather a continuous and fluid movement, 'proximal and immanent in all acts of identification, including [...] identifications with particular places' (Dawson and Johnson 2001: 330). Labadie does not fall through emptiness, but finds himself in that liminality, the constant threshold of both/and.

My initial musings about Eldrich had worked around these issues of historically determined identity, identity tied to place, ancestors, and unbreakable roots. I had been interested in him as a sort of embodiment, albeit a metaphorical one, of the nomad, free of history, place, and civilisation. It was the fact that he was unattached, unconstrained, that drew me. Yet, for me, there was also the tacit longing for a reconnection, in a meaningful way, with the landscape through which I moved; a longing for a reinsertion into place.

He was free of the trappings of place and history, yet he seemed to move through the world not as a refugee. He walked through the landscape, creating place as a constant mode of being. Where he walked the edge of the road or slept beside it, he inhabited that liminal world of being both in place and between places. In following him I accepted entering that ambivalent world, too. But the area of liminality was not simply the space between defined places. It was the liminal area between nature and culture, too: the place of the wildman or prophet (de Certeau 1992: 220-230, 241). Crucially, it was also the line between Eldrich and me, which began to open out as I traversed the liminal place within that line. Being in the position of exile or wanderer allows for

the potential of 'experiencing place and self as "other", [and in doing so] experience[ing] the other as self' (Dawson and Johnson 2001: 330).

Refugium

... Enough
in that trapped silence of a freak
dawn to come face to face suddenly
with a body I didn't even know
I lost.
- Achebe (1971: 8)

To what extent could I claim to be in the position of an exile or outcast, however? My world was a world of privilege, after all. It was the parameters of this inherited privilege, this bequeathed identity of advantage – my emplacement - that I was beginning to explore when I first encountered Eldrich. As noted in the first chapter, where Eldrich might, due to his obvious circumstances, be seen as an outcast, in exile, I was not; I was a traveller – the distinction perhaps revolving around the probability or intention of return (Bowles 1949: 6; Said 2002: 162; Shepherd 2001: 349-350). Yet as I navigated the increasingly fluid boundary between Eldrich and myself, his narrative of displacement began to seep into and to expose the cracks and slippages in my own narrative.

When my parents divorced in my early childhood, my father fairly soon (in my memory) moved into the home of the woman he would later marry. My mother moved, and into her new home moved an unintentional (on his part) stepfather. The unity and cohesiveness of both my physical and psychic worlds were torn. My sense of place, before so unconsciously taken for granted, a complete and unquestioned rootedness (Arefi 1999: 183), was now cracked apart. My father's new home did not open up to me easily; there were step-brothers, and prior memories and claims, so that rather than finding a landscape into which I could place myself, I encountered a contested territory. Where there is a pre-existent quality of place, replete with memories and a 'chronological connection to a broader physical, cultural or emotional context' (Arefi 1999: 183), I found, being in-place is not simply a matter of being present there; there must be a hand in its construction as place. There were skirmishes over the territory, but I did not realise what the stakes were, nor really what the skirmishes were about, until it was too late. My claim there, in any case, was intermittent; I was a migrant only, transported in on weekends. I did not have any of the requisite qualities of a colonising force; I was instead a refugee, a stranger in a strange land.

Rather than allowing my entry within it, the place seemed instead to prohibit an immersion, and my sense was of sitting uncomfortably on a stool made for foreigners, set on the periphery. As Ingold (1993: 155-156) notes, 'places have centres - indeed [...] they *are* centres - but not boundaries'. Be this as it may, there are certainly peripheries where there are centres, and the sense, then, was that while other inhabitants were in-place, I, even as I was there, was never in-place. For similar and other varied reasons, my mother's home – which moved now and then – never quite had the sense of being my place either; I found it hard to engage with them in a way that would inculcate a sense of being in place. Besides this, the animosity that existed between these different places, these opposing centres, and the impossibility of my completely inhabiting either one, forced me precisely into that liminal space between them.

The ability to inhabit and hold a liminal place, however, even admitting the inherent liminality and protean nature of life, is an onerous task, and for a child perhaps impossible. Due to these displacements being internal, personal rather than political; because of an introverted inclination, or for whatever other reason, my response was to withdraw from both places. I withdrew, I think, to a different kind of place, a different realm, and my sense of place became, in great part, unattached to a physical landscape. In Kafka's *The Burrow* (1999), the narrator, in the form of a wild creature, has constructed an intricate underground den with numerous tunnels, labyrinths, and small rooms, a central Castle Keep, a disguised and hidden entrance, and a misleading false burrow nearby. All this has been constructed for the security of the narrator, to keep him safe from the threat of invasion, from the unnamed perils that exist on the outside. The endeavour is absurd, neurotic, even obsessive-compulsive, and perhaps ultimately unsuccessful – although because the tale was left unfinished we cannot know the end (Weigand 1972: 164). What is interesting, however, is that the story has been linked to Kafka's own life; it has been described as the closest he came in his fiction to the autobiographical (Boulby 1982: 175; Wegmann 2011: 361; Weigand 1972: 152). The burrow was the subterranean world that he excavated, in which he could hide from the world, the place to which he could retreat and lay claim. It was of course a mental place, an imaginative landscape rather than a physical one, but it was one that he nonetheless created, with toil and care, indeed even with blood (Kafka 1999: 132).

It was a similar type of place, then, to which I found myself retreating as a child. Without the confidence and wherewithal to engage in such conscious defensive manoeuvres, however, the landscape to which I went had little of the comfort that Kafka's burrow did, albeit for him of a cold sort. It was in many ways a wasteland to be banished to, not a stronghold or sanctum to take

refuge in. The distinction is of course often hard to make. Pink Floyd's album *The Wall* (1979), to which I listened rapt, with groping and growing understanding as an adolescent, describes a similar retreat from the world. But where the wall here certainly offers a solid defence, it contains a bleakness within, and functions as a prison as much as a defence – which of course could easily be said of Kafka's burrow. Milton's (2004: 11-38) Lucifer, failing in his challenge on the totalitarian authority of God, is cast out, flung to a wasteland far from the glories of heaven. Wasteland though the new landscape is, filled with horrors and the desolate loss of heaven, the fallen angel nonetheless claims it. It may not have been victory, but it was at least his; it was his autonomous domain, his Pandemonium.

The desert to which I retreated, or to which I was cast out, was jagged and hard. It was a lonely, bare, and desolate landscape. But it was my own. I would not be forced to fend off adversaries, to relinquish it to others. Like the narrator in *The Burrow* I could not let anybody in, could not share it, but by the same token I would not lose it. Whether through banishment or self-imposed retreat, those worlds offer some sort of refuge and containment, perhaps even survival. It was to the deserts that the San retreated from persecution (Ross 1999: 8); the deserts and badlands to which the Apache and the Aboriginal retreated and were banished (Brown 2009: 221-247; McKenna 2002: 33-60). It was to the desert and the wilderness that Esau and Ishmael were sent. The physical and mental landscapes always overlap in their character and formation, and it was the natural features of the South African landscape that I experienced as a child, the arid karoo, the rugged chines of the Cederberg, the flat desolate pans of the Namib, that lent their form and timbre to my personal wilderness (Foster 2008: 82-84, 88-89; Harkin 2000: 66).

When I saw Eldrich I recognised him, although it took me a while to understand why. He is more than a fabricated alter ego set up to explore the freedom of the road, the freedom from societal constraints. He is a figment, a fragment, a splinter of me. He inhabits and wanders my inner world, that childhood wasteland; he is a scrap left behind, a shard from a fragmented childhood, grown up, bearded, wild and destitute. I had gone to that place, that inner landscape, to escape the liminal place I inhabited in the real world. But of course in so doing I created and entered another liminal place, for from then on I always existed within the fluid space, that open threshold, between the real and the imaginary. From this borderland now stepped Eldrich, and I set off on the road through that land to meet him.

Chapter III: Dusk

Day is tied to consciousness. The unconscious is opaque night.
See how paradoxical, the whims of God.
On the one hand, He appeals to consciousness to develop in us the idea, the sentiment, of the divine; on the other hand, by prohibiting the image, He throws us back into the unconscious, where he reigns without us.
Images in the unconscious are like underwater fauna and flora.
The divers quick torch tracks them down
Once out of the water they are but ill-assorted objects, an undeciphered alphabet of dead memory, often the cause of inner lacerations.
- Jabès (1996: 17)

Limitrophe

All visible objects are but pasteboard masks. But in each event, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall.
- Melville (1988: 145)

The formation of a cohesive identity has always required an antithesis. For the emerging European identity in the medieval era, as explored earlier, the antithesis was often to be found in the dark woods and brooding wilds from which the developing society had relatively recently come (Schamma 1995: 53-60). For the Roman civilisation before them, the Other was to be found in the apparently savage barbarians of the north (Schamma 1995: 75-81). Biblical history was a setting up of the same dichotomy between wild and domestic, and, crucially, between the godly and the unbeliever (Mobley 1997: 218-219, 230). In China, a wall stretches for thousands of kilometres as testament to that division, inherent in a collective identity, between 'us' and 'them', insider and outsider. Colonialism was built on the same opposition, as looked at in *Heart of Darkness* (1989), between civilised and savage. The societal mechanism that allowed a cohesive group identity was contingent upon there being a 'them' to oppose the 'us' – an Other. The presence of the Other was a threat to life, security, possessions, and identity, and thus necessitated a move away from them, and towards a centre, with clear demarcations and boundaries. The 'Faith' required heretics as surely as it did a God in order to maintain its own cohesion; it was defined by the line between the order and the heresy (de Certeau 1992: 17).

The road a tract of the dying connecting the hovels of people dividing their motherlands their rangelands I range beneath powerlines counterbalancing the clouds Hunger strained in my gut The ligature between another day walking and the cadavers of the plains The road always inclines towards death Fissile black cursive script over jagged crust lapping folds of land Whip wheal distending on my back The road coerces towards the dying like strong spirits It is deaths thoughtdream laid down in ink I can hear it soughing

South Africa, as I grew up, was one of the last places where this clear demarcation and othering happened explicitly, and so painfully visually (however implicit it remains both here and throughout the rest of the world). There have always been societies with more fluid boundaries, where inclusion and assimilation are a tacit aspect of the identity; cultures for whom a mixing, a creolisation of language, belief, ethnicity, and identity occur. My own ancestral heritage, however, was not this kind. Jewish identity, unlike that of almost every other religion, does not welcome converts - one is born to it, or, but for a long, painful, demanding process, does not come to it at all. The religion and identity are rigid, the boundaries and demarcations are literally, or perhaps literarily, set in stone. It has always been possible to draw a comparison between Jewish identity and Afrikaans identity in this regard, and the often remarked similitude between Israel and the old South African regime goes deeper than simply the functioning of the organs of state (Du Toit 1983: 920; Hughey 1987: 23-26; Selwyn 2001: 231-237). In both instances, the notion of a purity of blood is an absolute, and there is a sense, drawn out from real or perceived persecution, of there being something singular and set apart about the culture.

The inclusiveness of the idea of the 'rainbow nation'[13] is repeatedly undermined by the reality of the continued divisions and inequality within this society. Even where the tensions of these divisions appear to ease, the idea of being 'South African' has at times played itself out in bitter attacks on those from elsewhere on the continent.[14] Where the benefits and pride of being 'South African' seem hard to claim, it seems almost inevitable that such xenophobic outbursts occur – attempts to clearly define the border so that the self is within, and the other is without. In the midst of globalisation and a homogenising of culture, the same cultural reflex seems to be happening in many places – as a growing conservatism in Europe and North America, for instance; a desire to keep others out and maintain the status quo within (Demmers and Mehendale 2010: 53-65; Blee and Creasap 2010: 269-285).

As mentioned earlier, it was partly these bounds and borders that I was beginning to explore when Eldrich had first appeared on the road. He came to represent the antithesis of every constrained, reductive, isolating aspect of social identity that I could see. Yet in setting him up to play that role

[13] The term, coined by Nelson Mandela, is intended to acknowledge the differences within South African society, while fostering a sense of these differences working together, in harmony, for a common goal. It brings to mind the different striations of society working and existing in harmony, each complimenting the other. The reality often, unfortunately, appears to be rather that the colours clash and still receive unequal privilege.

[14] Xenophobic violence flared up across South Africa in 2008, with many people losing their lives. There have continued to be smaller spates of attacks against immigrants and refugees from other African countries since (Hayem 2013: 77-79).

– of perpetual outsider and archetypal wanderer – I allowed a more insidious dichotomy to slip in, for personal identity, as with social or political identity, is also often built upon the separation of self and other. The singular, unitary position of the modern western identity insists on clear boundaries, stark and rigid beginnings and endings, the supreme sovereign individual, alone and apart.

The clear boundaries of the individual, which form identity, are not only based on the distancing and objectifying of the surrounding world and other people, but also on clearly distinguished categories within the self: reason and rationality as opposed to madness, self-control as opposed to chaos. The dichotomy that is set up between civilisation and wildness, between light and dark, finds a corresponding polarity within the individual. Where in the political or societal sphere those differences and dichotomies might evince themselves in racial or religious diatribe or political othering, in the individual psyche the split between 'good' and 'bad' occurs more subtly. The aspects perceived as or construed to be wrong are hidden, denied, and suppressed. The irrational, the wild, and the dark are expelled from the supposed boundary of self-identity. I was able to comfortably explore the philosophical possibilities of Eldrich from within the security of my self; I imagined I was plumbing the depths of the Other, all the while unwittingly skirting the edge of my own border, straying further and further from the clear line of the road in the gathering dusk, the ill-defined space between.

The Crack and The Wound

Look! He goes and interrupts the city,
Absent where his darkness is,
Like a dark crack in a bright cup.
- Rilke (cited in Herbert 2001: 68)

The cohesiveness of an identity, its insistence and focus on the good rather than the bad, is always contingent on its very opposite – the presence of the dark is always intimated by the light. Indeed it is through the dialectical movement between these dichotomies that identity manifests (de Certeau 1992: 17; Kepnes 1990: 411-415). Mr Kurtz, constrained in his rigid Victorian identity, was unable to withstand the Other when he found it to be not in the jungle around him, but in his own being. The Judeo-Christian pantheon was so singular and one-sided, admitting of nothing but the good and the right, that a split was always an ineluctable development. Lucifer was cast out and rejected, as light had been separated out from dark in the creation. The Other threatens always…

Sheets of rock stab upward as ragged blades A bed of crumbling spears a petrified army lying in ambush Small ancient spines lie jagged in these stones Scrimshaw of someone elses ancestors Elsewhere uniformly oval discs of rock litter the hillside like large squashed stone eggs buried lengthways in the ground

Wind slices sideways through thorn and wattle A highpitched whine from the riverbed Screaming from up the kloof panic in a gust then die down

The wind drives into my face cold Sun pushes my shadow long down the road in front of me Four small drops hit my face from the lowslung clouds far down on the horizon My shadow angles across the road as I walk a curve

to overwhelm. It is the sacking of Rome by the Barbarians, the Mongols sweeping through Europe and Asia; it was the Swart Gevaar for the Afrikaaners, or the satanic forces in their legion for the believers. It is the unconscious and the shadow within the psyche which threatens madness or psychosis, a loss of the light of reason, and submersion within the dark of unreason.

The crack in the wall and the wound to the psyche show as weak points; they appear to threaten the integrity of the identity so carefully bounded within the walled citadel, within Kafka's Castle Keep. Yet the crack is not always seen as perilous – it can also represent the possibility of transcendence; in the world of prophets and mystics, the slip, which could admit the madness, is the very crack where the divine inspiration might enter. It is perhaps this fissure in the bulwarks to which Kierkegaard (cited in Soeiro 2012: 1) was referring in speaking of the 'wounds of possibility', or the significance of which Cohen (1992), too, turns around, so that 'there is a crack in everything/that's where the light gets in'. In both phrases, the negativity and danger of the rupture is gently inverted.

The crack, then, threatens danger, but also offers possibility. The crack, as the wound, can function as the threshold between the known and the unknown. What is on the other side may overwhelm and destroy, but it may also liberate and offer the new. It is the space of dying – between life and death, but also of birth – between non-existence and life. The space between, and the movement through, is the space of threshold and possibility. A story that always stood out from my childhood was Wilde's *The Selfish Giant* (1977: 333-338), in which the giant, after sealing off his garden behind a high wall to keep the children from playing in it, wonders why his garden is then plunged into a continuous winter. He finally realises the reason when the children find a hole in the wall and slip through, bringing the spring with them. The gap in the divide can offer relief, and new life, as it were. It is the movement through the dividing line, across the border, which sustains – by which life and identity are able to remain vital and dynamic.

The movement is in fact intrinsic to all and every aspect and process of life; by this movement, as noted in the previous chapter, landscape is not a static thing, but is constantly in flux and under construction, as is any form of identity. Embracing this, through a Zen understanding of the impermanent, transient nature of being, much ancient Japanese art embraced the aesthetic of the crack – of imperfection: the beauty of a vase or teapot was often considered to be enhanced where it was chipped or cracked, where the imperfection of its surface or structure was made visible (Saito 1997: 377-383). Whether the crack occurred in the firing, or was purposefully made

afterwards, it represented the fugitive nature of life: that nothing was complete or perfect. It was a symbol for the relationship and process between the person and the material, between the subject and the object, and between life and death (Saito 1997: 381-383). Not life, nor death, but rather the fissure between the two became the focus.

Threshold in the Landscape

The earth
is the house-
the dirt grave
we dig thus-
for the dreams
we have killed
before they
can kill us.
- Watson (2007: 171)

The line separating people from nature, from the wild, is a similar line to that dividing the human from the divine, or matter from spirit, or perhaps the conscious from the unconscious. It is this gulf of separation, this dividing veil, through which priests, shamans, psychologists and others offer to act as go-betweens. Partly because the wild – and the wild always begins to inhabit the outer borders of the landscape – is always a place beyond the control and often beyond the ken of people, it is often the place where people experience that separating veil growing thinner – landscape and wilderness experiences often offer that sense of transcendence, of straying to the edge of control, reason, and self. Or at the least, for writers such as Thoreau, of straying beyond the confines of society (Bennet 2002: 25-29; see also Thoreau 2004). It was more than mere escape, of course - as Bowles (1985: 125) admits: 'Like any Romantic, I had always been vaguely certain that during my life I should come to a magic place, which in disclosing its secrets, would give me wisdom and ecstasy, perhaps even death'. This idea of a sacred place, where the veil between the material and the supersensible grows thin, is of course neither new nor specific to Romantic ideals.

Throughout the pre-Christian, pre-modern world, specific places were often imbued with special, spiritual significance – with *genius loci* or ancestors - places where a communion with the divine or religious was easier, where the line that separates these things out becomes diaphanous, where cracks appear in the boundary (Colson 1997: 48; Foster 2008: 7-8, 264; Harkin 2000: 50). These threshold places in the world were often centred around geographical features, such as rivers, …

Spirit lies thick like congealed blood in these valleys How will you sow your seed in this black silt this cumbrous tilth Spent flood of your forefathers Their remains lie spoiling and they howl down drought

…mountains, or caves (Colson 1997: 47-49; Harkin 2000: 59).[15] In South Africa the landscape is still rich with sacred places, often pools or rivers, where communication or communion with the ancestors, with powers and forces beyond the material realm occur. These places are still active locations where, through ritual and supplication, people encounter and engage with these metaphysical realities (Colson 1997: 51). In these places the solid boundary thins, sometimes splits, and the easy either/or reality that we normally insist on becomes complicated within these liminal spaces.

Figure 8: Santu Mofokeng. *Inside Motouleng Cave.* 2004. Black and white photograph, 100cm x 150cm.

Images from Mafokeng's photographic series *Chasing Shadows* beautifully evokes this sense of boundary and liminality between physical place and spiritual realm. *Inside Motouleng Cave* (2004), for instance, looks like a triangular arrow of light entering or piercing the dark of the cave (figure 8). The cave itself is a site of spiritual and historical significance, where people gather for religious services. It is a place where God and the ancestors may be contacted through the veil of the material world, and in turn where elements of a supersensible realm might reach through into the material. This sense of movement between and through boundaries is evoked in the darkness of the cave and the light of the outside, both penetrating and encompassing each other.

[15] Burial sites and graveyards often end up functioning in a similar way, where the presence of something which inhabits a different realm, felt often as the absence of something from this world, is encountered and interacted with. In this sense any land can become sacred, and my own imaging of my sleeping places, as discussed previously, was partly engaged with a sacralisation of the landscape.

Mofokeng's sensitivity and appreciation of this relationship between people and landscape, especially landscapes and places that are loaded with historical and religious significance – these geographic nodes where movement between past and present, matter and spirit, are so powerfully achieved – is illustrated again and again. In *Evangels Crossing a Stream* (2006) three women make their way balancing on rocks (figure 9). The white of their clothes contrast utterly with the dark rocks, river and plants around them; they look, in fact, like nothing less than the angels that 'evangels' suggest – messengers from some divinity, or divinities themselves, crossing over the waters, captured in that moment of liminality between banks.

Figure 9: Santu Mofokeng. *Three Evangels Crossing a Stream.* 1996. Black and white photograph, dimensions unknown.

Just as prolific as are these sacred places - pools, forests, caves and others - are the subtle and ancient cave paintings, which occur throughout South Africa. These paintings, made by the San[16] over thousands of years, also are testament to the thin veil between the material and the spiritual worlds experienced in certain places. Though the topic of much discussion and controversy (see Conkey 2001: 282; and Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1998: 19; and Wallis 2002: 738), they are generally accepted to portray, at least for a large part, the movement of healers between these worlds (Huffmann 1983: 52; Lewis-Williams 2001: 336). Yet they can be seen not simply as representations painted upon a convenient surface, but as emphasising the perviousness of the

[16] See footnote to San in Chapter One.

very surface that they cover. They point often to the function of the cave wall as a veil separating the material world from the spiritual world, and also as the means of ingress and egress between these worlds (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1990: 5-6, 11-12). Cracks and fissures, protrusions and textures, can be places where the healer entered and returned from the other side, or where creatures from the other side entered the physical world (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1990: 13 – 14; Solomon 2007: 154). Again, the line here is thin, and the separation never absolute. The crack is a place of movement and communication, and, like Kierkegaard's (cited in Soeiro 2012: 1) wound, of possibility.

Liminality and Sublimity

The moment is rich with glimpses of, and encounters with, eternity,
as the hoisted sail is drunk with space and spindrift.
Insensible eternity!
The sky disappears into sky, and the sea into sea,
without causing the least disturbance or inspiring compassion.
- Jabès (1996: 68)

When my grandfather took to the mountains to pit himself against the rocks, the cliffs, the dark, it was perhaps partly this experience of the world as vital, dangerous, and wild that he was seeking (figure 10). These experiences of the threshold between worlds, these liminal places where the crack appears, have a long history of association with mountains, where the earth physically rises up and strains towards the sky (Baker 2004: 304-305). It was atop a mountain peak, far above the plains and the gathered people below, that Moses spoke with his God. In Europe, mountains and imposing natural features became associated with the sublime – they were beautiful, but also terrible.

Figure 10: Donnie Yasvoin. *Untitled.* 1940. Black and white photograph, 10cm x 15cm.

Figure 11: Caspar David Friedrich. *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog.* 1818. Oil on canvas, 98cm x 74cm.

In their vastness, in their sense (for Europeans of the 17th and 18th centuries) of being unordered and uncontrolled – societies' antithesis found again in nature – they extended beyond the merely beautiful (Schama 1995: 449-450). They inspired terror and awe. The experience of them pushed the viewer beyond their own bounds and threatened to overwhelm; they seemed to allow one to move beyond the finite to an experience of the infinite – they were places where earthly matter met the divine. It is perhaps partly for this reason that great efforts were made to represent these landscapes, and experiences, visually (figure 11). The sublime has often been represented in visual art as the image of 'man' coming up against the raw power of nature and of the wild. This sense of the sublime being most easily located, and represented, in the natural world began to come through most strongly during the Romantic era in Europe (Scaramellini 1996: 49-52). The awe and wonder of the power, both terrifying and beautiful, of wild places was put before the viewer to contemplate. This Romantic sense of the sublime in nature was echoed in responses to the vast and rugged landscapes of North America, which Europeans were beginning to explore and recount (Baker 2004: 308-309; Doak 2002: 14-16). Artists, and later photographers, continued to draw on these ideas, and to create images reflecting what they saw as the sublime character of the natural world (figure 12).

Figure 12: Ansel Adams. *The Tetons and the Snake River*. 1942. Black and white photograph, dimensions unknown.

Owl calls through the early night Low soft hoot echoing everywhere across the moon blurred hillside and sheer rock buttress down the slope under my bush for hours as the halfmoon sinks to black Windmill yelps and skirls like a beaten dog from over the hill Stops in a lull then the wind starts up again and whips its metal to pining Last wood on the fire seethes then dies down Smoke smells like medicine

The wind bounces the branches of the thorntree off each other like stiff goats fighting Marionette rams I wake from an animal snorting beside me blowing air out through its nostrils heavily it leaves silently I bring a warm rock from beside the dead fire under the blankets with me

I stand under the rolling clouds and shifting moon facing the greying east The golden pungent piss of grysbok lies gathered in depressions in the sand like puddles of the unrisen sun I stand feet apart under the dimming stars and add my own to this yellow offering It hits hollow reverberates quietly like tapping the bottom of fresh bread This crusted shell covers less and less If a crack opens here I cannot fill it

That which is so great as to be beyond the easily definable, beyond the measurable, beyond rational comprehension in fact, can be sublime (Shaw 2006: 3). The experience of sublimity slips past the boundaries and opens up the line between dichotomies (Kirwan 2004: 45; Shaw 2006: 3-23). It expresses that which is not quite of heaven, but neither is it merely earthly; it transcends between the two, and in this sense is perhaps homologous with the idea of liminality[17]. Indeed, it is the experience of landscape as liminal – partly one thing and partly another, thus partly grotesque and partly ineffably beautiful – which allows it to be sublime. Rather than being easily defined and classified as either one thing or another, in its sublimity a landscape is both/and.

Crucially, the sublime also threatens the insular borders of the subject identity; in the face of the sublime it is no longer clear where I end and the world begins (Baker 2004: 305, 307; Shaw 2006: 6-23). The 'terror' of the sublime was in great part the inability to hold these dichotomies easily – faced with that which slips through the boundaries, which is both/and, and transcends categorisation, often the only response was to look on with awe or to recoil in terror. Nonetheless, the impression of the sublime was one of wonder and pleasure – the vertiginous pleasure of losing control, of the momentary comprehension of the infinitude of existence and the insubstantiality of the self.

Long before the Romantics began to explore the sublime as an almost secular (or at least aesthetic) spiritual encounter, there was a strong tradition of exploring the liminal space between worlds. In both the East and the West, alchemy was practised as a scientific as well as a spiritual or religious endeavour (Nummedal 2011: 335; Raff 2000: 43-63; Schwartz 1980: 57). The stated goal was the altering of materials into higher states – turning base metal into gold. It was not always simply an exercise in self-enrichment or material gain, however – in any case, the distinctions between scientific, religious, cultural, and artisanal pursuits were not as marked during the practice of alchemy as they are now (Nummedal 2011: 330-331). More than an attempt at material enrichment, it was a practice of rarification, a movement which worked with the physical in an attempt to transform it into the essence, potentised to the point of being divine (Numeddal 2011: 335, 336). It was also a practice of bringing opposite materials or qualities together, by which both would be transformed (Schwartz 1980: 57-58). The central image and goal in this was the philosopher's stone, a substance which was the result of this sublimation of

[17] Both words can be traced to a similar etymological root, *limin* or *limen*, relating to a threshold – the place where one thing or place ends and another begins (as in 'limit'). Both words also express the idea of being within or on, or coming from the threshold, rather than simply one or the other side of it (Cohn and Miles 1977: 289-291).

matter into essence. The stone offered health, wisdom, worldly and spiritual deliverance, and even immortality (Nummedal 2011: 335-336). The importance of the stone lay in its promise of transmutation. As such, the stone existed in a sort of liminal place, between matter and spirit. The attempt to achieve the stone was a scientific (at the time) process of encountering or creating the sublime – of straying beyond the material forms into the swirling, inchoate, formless mists of the liminal and transcendent. In chemistry, 'sublime' still refers to the process of turning a solid substance into a vapour, which will then turn back into a solid; indeed, the word 'sublime' is said to have entered the English language through old alchemical texts (Cohn and Miles 1977: 292). The focus for alchemy was the space where one thing begins to transmute into another, the place of transformation (Raff 2000: xii).

Identity is defined as much by what it is, as it is by what it is not; the line of separation between self and other is always there, sometimes brutally clearly – it is often the very line itself by which we define ourselves. So too, the line between what we accept and attempt to foster in ourselves – the good, the reasonable, the socially acceptable, the light – and what we attempt to suppress or deny – the ugly, the crazed, the grotesque, the dark – this line too is clearly set up and maintained. Yet the line of division is never impregnable. As I followed Eldrich, the line between us had begun to blur. We seeped into a common space between. More than that, the line and division within myself began to blur. The line between dichotomies of self and other, inner and outer, was not so much erased, as it was momentarily transcended - the shadow and the light came together. What was expressed in those moments was neither one nor the other, but both, and something else entirely.

The sublime and the liminal are moments and experiences which break through the boundaries between things. From those places or qualities which have been separated out, experiences and moments exist where the edges begin to soften and bleed into each other. They exist in the threshold between; that which is liminal is not simply partly one thing and partly another, it is both things, but it is also neither, and as such, it is something else all together; it can contain, in fact, the possibilities of everything at once. Rather than hold the world already manifested, the liminal space holds the world as pure potential, infinitude. The sublime is a momentary glance of this potential everything. At school I was told a story of a famously wise rabbi, to whom people would journey to consult. A young man, thinking to trick the rabbi with a question he would not be able to answer, went to him with cupped hands. In my hands I have a small bird, said the man. Is it alive or dead, rabbi? To which the rabbi sagely replied, the answer, my son, is in your hands.

This, of course, is the same story as that of Schrodinger's cat: the cat, until we open the box and set the reality one way or the other, is both alive and dead at the same time – or neither alive nor dead (Jafek 1990: 216-217). More than merely a thought experiment, Schrodinger's scientific hypothesis held that, until measured, particles exist in all of their possible states and positions at the same time. Once measured (by us) they are fixed and definite; they become manifested as absolute realities.

I can see more clearly with hindsight that I was attempting, in my tracking Eldrich and exploring his life, not to emphasise the differences between us – these were from the start many and manifest. Rather, and partly without knowing it, I was attempting to feel out where the line was between us, and to slip into it. I wanted to explore precisely the liminal places where the boundaries became unclear. It was not a desire to be him, but rather a seeking of the places where I was not solely myself. An exploration and an inhabitation of the road became a way to navigate the line, the boundary between things. At the same time, I set on the imagery of the dusk, of failing light and gathering darkness, to look at liminality, and to open up those spaces in between, to slip within the line. It was a visual language related also to the failing consciousness of sleep, the hypnagogic state between consciousness and dream.

The qualities of light and dark are perhaps the most frequently used metaphors for any number of positive and negative dichotomies – reason, God, civilisation, consciousness, life itself are all seen to be of the light, their supposed opposites are of the dark (Kügler 2005: 95). Light is crucial to sight – we do not simply see with light, what we see is light. Vision is our primary means of engaging with and reading our world. A loss of light is a loss of sight, and is akin to a loss of control. Like being in the wild, being in the dark forces us to admit the limits of our own control, a loss of power. We are at the mercy of something other, something unknown, in which lurks any number of threatening, illegible forms. Dusk, when the light is faded to almost nothing, when the clear edges of things blur and meld, when even the twilight on the horizon is dissolving to dark, is almost anathema to photography. It was precisely for these reasons that I began to expose my slow black and white film through the open shutter as I walked the darkening road. Not just the eyes inability to see clearly, but photography's inability to clearly define and fix, was what began to interest me. Where the ability to capture, fix, and represent – the very rationale, and rationality, inherent in photography – where these qualities began to fail and prove inadequate, I hoped to evoke something of the liminal – the space between night and day, self and other, control and chaos, which I had begun to inhabit, even if only fleetingly. The vespertine and the oneiric

became partly the visual language that expressed what I was exploring, but they were also the substance of the exploration itself.

Dark Chamber

It was difficult to realise his work was not out there in the luminous estuary,
but behind him, in the brooding gloom.
- Conrad (1986: 99)

As I walked the dissolving road in the dying light, as the visual landscape deliquesced around me and hard outlines became fluid movements, I tried to use the camera as a means of evoking this movement, rather than the clear delineating of visual facts which is its usual employment. And as I did this, I began to look at the camera itself in terms of these understandings of liminality, of the space between.

The camera functions by admitting light, through a small hole, or aperture, into an otherwise light-tight box. Light travelling in straight lines converges at the aperture. On the other side, it is inverted and projected onto the back of the camera. The inversion means that the image thus projected – the world carried into the camera on reflected light – is turned upside down and the wrong way round. It is of course the same thing that happens in our eyes – light enters the pupil and images are displayed on our retina, inverted; our brain re-imagines the images as the right way around. This is all common knowledge, and hardly worth repeating. But there is nonetheless something remarkable in the process. Somehow the solid, material world, kilometres and kilometres of it, or minute detail, is able to enter, in the form of light, into a hole the size of a pinprick – the world condensed into light and converging on a single tiny aperture, all of space fitting into a point. I began to be fascinated with the moment when the light is actually passing through the aperture, before even it is inverted and re-emerges on the other side. Within that point the lines converge, but in what form? There must be a moment, a space immeasurably thin, where all the lines meet; where the image is both the right way up and upside down simultaneously, and at the same time something else entirely; a space where it exists in some unrecognisable form, in all its possible variations. It must become, for a brief window, utterly incoherent, before once again re-emerging – a moment of incomprehensible chaos before order once again materialises.

That moment of liminality then, the moment of transmutation, of transcendence, the place of sublimity, was contained in the very instrument of my camera. The aperture functioned as the

crack, the wound of possibility, as the space of movement between set places. And it did not seem to necessarily end at the aperture. The space of being both/and continued, in a sense, within the camera's body, within that dark chamber. Like Schrödinger's box, like the tyro's cupped hands, the body of the camera continued to contain all possibilities; in the unopened darkness were all conceivable images, unlooked at, undefined, unfixed.

Of course, in the film camera the light enters and immediately forms an image on the light-sensitive film – either under-, over-, or correctly exposed, timed perfectly or mistimed, well framed or not. But whatever it is, it remains unknown, and thus all possibilities at once, until the film is processed – indeed, it is only in the processing that the image is really formed on the film for us to see. It was partly for this reason, amongst others, that I was working with an old camera and black and white film. In a digital camera that dark chamber – that continued liminality within the film camera, the unknown suspended in time – simply does not exist in the same way. There is a window set into the back of the digital box – within a split second of the cat being placed inside, we can look, measure, and define its status; in place of a suspension of the finite within the infinite, with the digital we have instantaneous information. The reality is fixed and controlled, the camera in great part relinquishing its relationship to the liminal.

My processing of the film, my fixing of the image etched by light onto its surface, was not the end of this movement through the space of threshold; the photograph, still not incarnate, continued somehow to exist within that inchoate misty realm of possibility. The landscape which had entered the aperture of my camera on its beams and waves of light, remained unfixed and existing as idea rather than actuality – in the chaos of the void, before materialising into physicality. For the image to be embodied I was required to enter into the darkroom, a fabricated night, like the hollow chamber of the camera. For many photographers this is an almost magical place, mostly lost now to experience since the revolution of digital imaging. I have spoken to photographers who get a glazed look in their eyes at the mention of a darkroom. The sense is always of being involved in some dark mystery, like a sorcerer at work: an alchemist, in fact. There is an alchemy in the mixing of chemicals, in waiting and watching for an image to appear slowly through the swirling liquid. Until the print is hung on a washing line to dry, the entire process takes place within that liminal realm, the place between form and formlessness, between the known and the unknown. This was the line that I was walking and at times managing to slip inside of, the threshold space of being both/and, and everything at once. It was the time of dusk, between…

Hunch against the darkened forms that split from their sentry posts and cleave to your shadow as the sun bleeds across the road For proof of this substance put your fingers into your wounds Feel where the sinew is taut on the bone Feel where the bone swivels tight against the will The sun has been heeled down below the rocks Your body is bled upon the sand If you strike a match now they will note you in the darkness

…night and day, the fluid line between Eldrich and myself, and the space between the real and the imaginary in which I so often existed.

The negative associations of darkness as opposed to light, its connotations, within a hierarchical system, of evil, death, chaos, madness, and danger, often obscure its other qualities and functions. In my photography, and in my explorations of my own story and the movement within the liminal and vespertine of both the medium and myself, I began to understand darkness as a place of possibility. As with the image in the camera, it is within the dark of the womb that gestation takes place, where new life is able to take shape. It is from the dark clouds that rain falls, within the dark chthonic soil that germination occurs. My experience of retreating to a safe, unthreatening world during childhood taught me that when the spotlights pan to pick up movement, it is to the safety of shadows that one retreats. And as Mofokeng (cited in Law-Viljoen 2004) points out, shadows are not necessarily simply the negation of light – they are not merely the negative space of absence, but are themselves a presence.

Picturing Refugium

The eye and the wound are the same.
- Hillman (1975: 107)

As I tracked my quarry and tried to read the signs of his passing, the spoor of life in the landscape, I carried a camera slung on my shoulder or stashed in my bag. It was an old 35mm camera, into which I inserted role after role of black and white film. I have explored, in the previous section, some of my reasons for choosing to work with this medium – the relationship that the film camera, and the procedure of processing and printing images, has to an experience of liminality.

There were other reasons, however. In my enacting Eldrich I needed to get into character to some extent; as mentioned, I wore old boots, torn and well-used clothes, and an old bag. I carried little food and no indulgences. In this context, the slightly scratched, heavily used old camera fitted in. A digital camera would have felt oddly anachronistic, out of place. Hand processing and printing in black and white, from a film camera, also placed me on the fringes of the modern photographic industry – a position that felt important in being able to identify with my character, and thus in maintaining a conceptual integrity to the body of work. Apart from this, 35mm film cameras have always been the quintessential tool of the street photographer, and although I was working

visually in a different way, I was none the less documenting life on the road. A small, dusty film camera was thus an important part of the syntax of this language.

Working with black and white itself seemed an almost obvious choice. Dealing as I was with polarities between contrasting ideas and qualities, and the grey areas where they mingled, black and white images lent themselves to this language and discourse. The world depicted with this medium became essentialised, pared down to the elemental structures of light and dark, and the tones of grey where they meld and merge.

I began to observe the world as I walked through it, and to document what I saw. *Untitled (Roadside Objects)* was in a sense the first stage in this (figure 13). I photographed objects, plants, marks, insects, and animals. This was a way of inhabiting the space of the road that I was in, forcing a looking down and an engagement with the world immediately around me. It became a practice of collecting - I was following a man who did not exist, through a world that existed in his imagination, and I regarded everything that I came across as a possible piece of evidence, a potential key from that world. I collected photographic evidence of these objects as a monomaniacal detective might do so, yet with no hope at all of deciphering it. And yet they wove a story by their being photographed, and in their juxtaposition; they functioned something like the bones thrown by a sangoma in divination. The series was shot uniformly, from directly above, placing the object centrally in the frame. They were printed to a size reminiscent of a postcard, an object to be collected or pinned up. There are eighty of these images, arranged in a long row, which stretches for a significant part of the gallery space. This echoes the sense of a stretch of road. The images are specifically positioned along the floor of the gallery, which forces the viewer to bend and peer at them, similar again to my original engagement with them. The long stretch of these images also acts to lead the viewer into the space, emphasising their own movement in walking along and past them, creating a path or road. The large number of them is also partly indicative of the impossible attempt to document and objectively describe the world as a set of discrete, empirical facts.

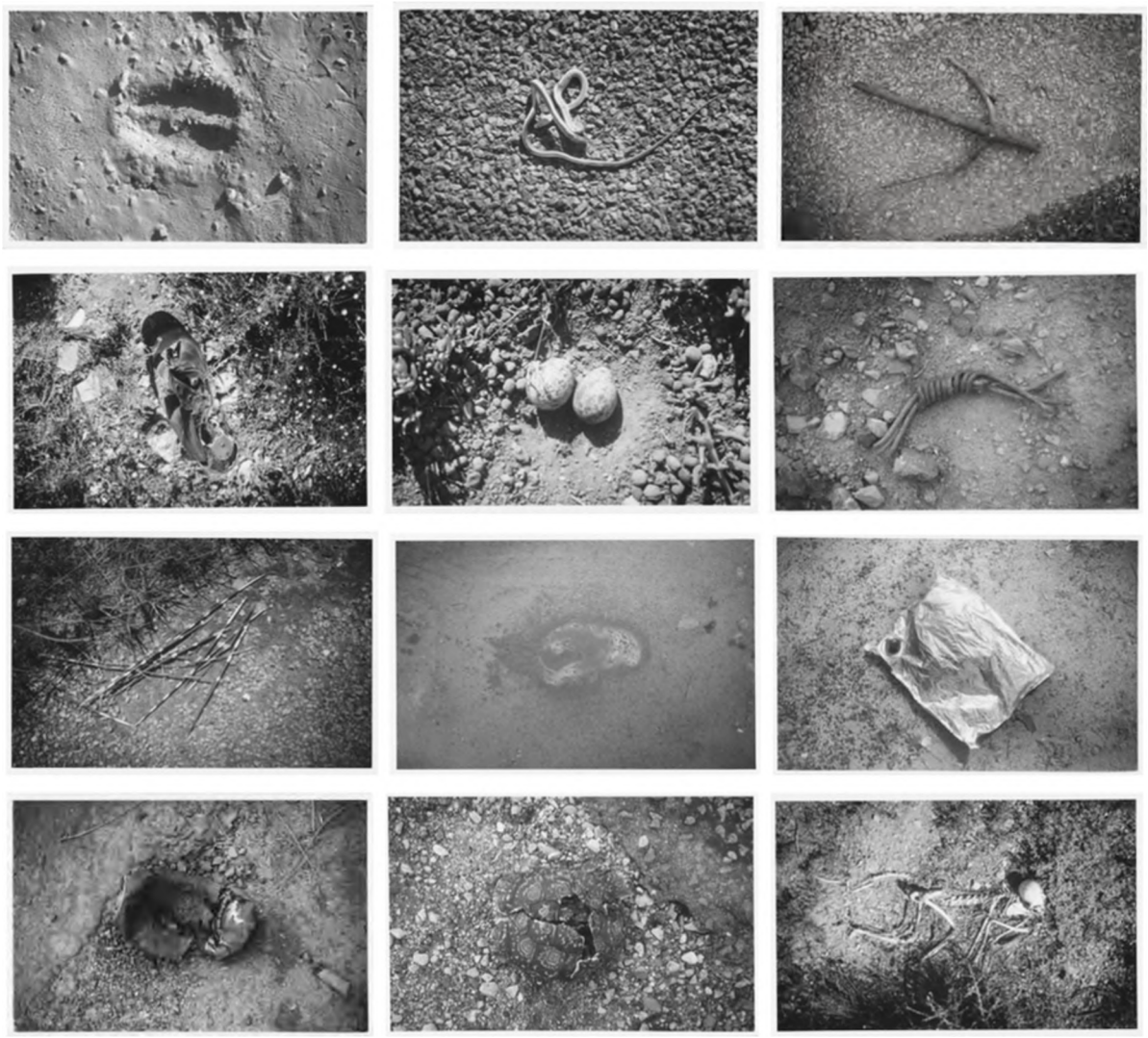

Figure 13: Luke Kaplan. *Untitled (Roadside Objects series).* 2012-2013. Black and white photographs, 17cm x 11cm.

Untitled (Clouds) stands in some ways as a counterpoint to the above series. Instead of looking down, here I turn the camera up, looking vertically into the sky. Instead of facts, here I collect almost impossible moments, instances where the clouds seem to be something else, swirling forms, celestial bodies, solid against the thick blackness of the sky (figure 14). Unlike the other objects, they almost seem to describe what they are not or cannot be, rather than the mundanity of what they are. They are heavily manipulated in the printing process, so that the grey of the sky is blackened completely, while the clouds remain white and set apart. Rather than an exhaustive quantity, here there are a far smaller number of photographs, larger, and in square format, lending them a gravitas which the incorporeal subject matter counterbalances. Where the first series of images are insistently literal, descriptive of the immediate physical world, these photographs necessitate a degree of imaginative engagement from the viewer.

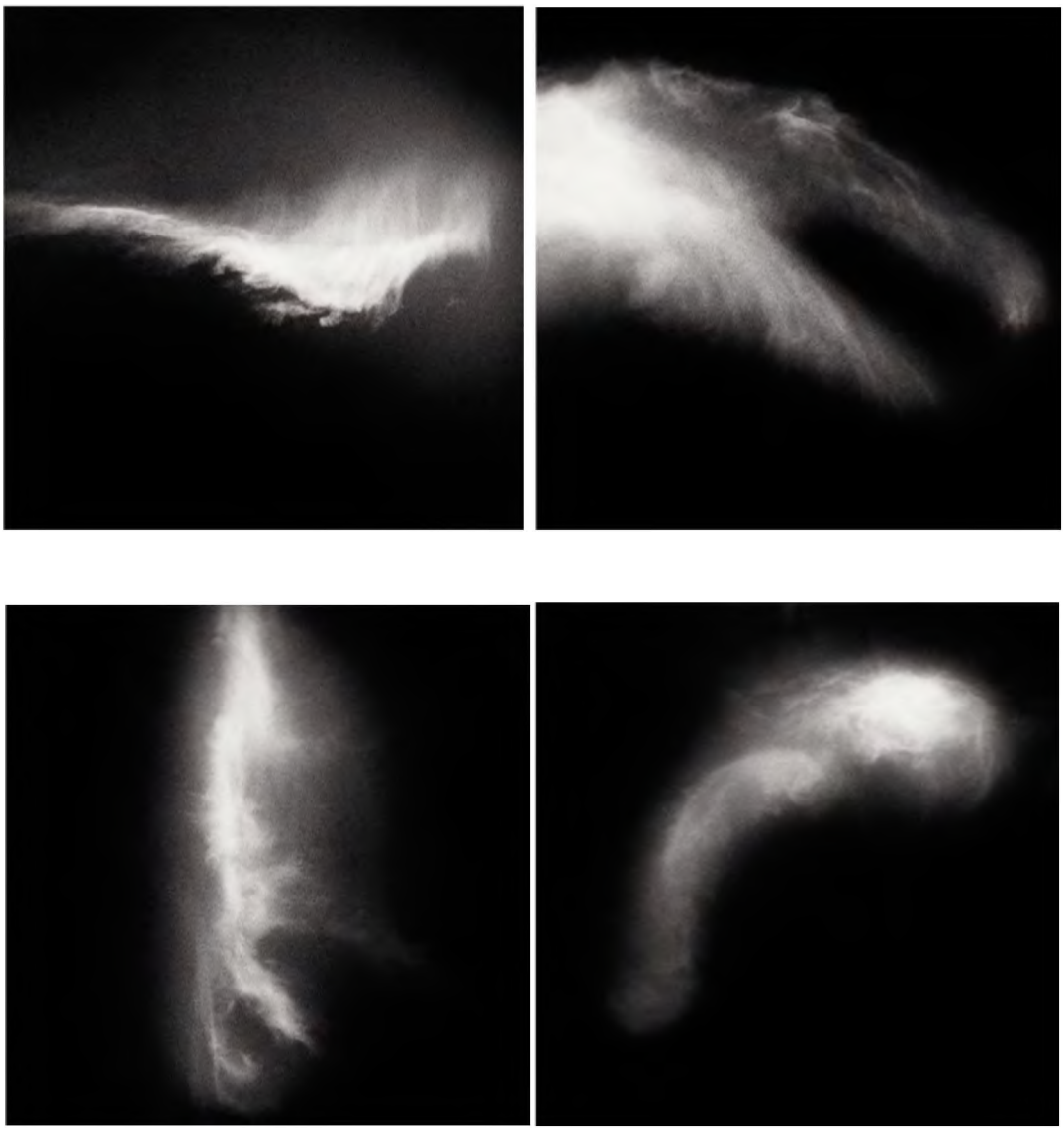

Figure 14: Luke Kaplan. *Utitled (Clouds series).* 2012-2013. Black and white photographs, 33cm x 33cm.

The image in *Untitled (Road Surface)* begin to look at the road itself (figure 15). There seems to be an ever-present urge, when out on the highway under a wide sky, to stand level in the road, with the horizon line central in the viewfinder, and photograph the converging lines. This urge, and the corresponding image, I have tried to subvert. Rather than standing and surveying the perspectival lines, making the landscape into a well-structured view, I lay down on the road, flat on my belly, and held the camera out in front of me. In doing so I entered into a different relationship to the road, feeling the stones jab into my body, the heat of the tar. The focus then became the textures of the road surface itself, a matrix of film grain and blurred tar or pebbles. The wide aperture used here means that, but for a thin line in the middle of the photograph, which is sharp, much of the image is unfocused; the bottom is made up of soft textures of mottled dark

and light patches, almost like dappled light. There is an impression of being partly underground, submerged just beneath the surface, observing the surface of the world from within some chthonic subterranean realm. At the top, where the viewer's eye would ordinarily be led comfortably off along the disappearing road into the horizon – and thus safely out of the image – the photographs are cropped. There is, consequently, no easy exit from the road; there is a sense of being obliged to remain in place, to observe the world from a different position, from within the stony earth almost. This image, at just over a meter across, is printed far larger than the last two series. This emphasises the photographic medium – the film grain and blurred light and dark. The size also allows the viewer greater access into the image itself. The road here becomes a landscape of its own. The wild pushes in along its edges, and in the pebbles and tar on its verges, the road pushes back. It is thus, in a way, a meeting of two edges, rather than places.

Figure 15: Luke Kaplan. *Untitled (Road Surface)*. 2012-2013. Black and white Photographs. 1118cm x 600cm

As discussed, I did not remain on the road, but crossed over that edge, and spent many nights sleeping where I found myself. *Untitled (Sleeping Site)* shows each place documented in a methodical way. Firstly, when I had found where I would be sleeping, I photographed the view from within my new bed. At each site I looked to left and right, down my body, behind my head, and directly above me (figures 16 and 19). There are thus five images per site in this manner. This was in order to give an impression of what it was like to lie in the bushes and bed down in the wild – to be within the landscape, as it were, since there is no commanding view here – the images are clearly from the point of view of the subject (both Eldrich and myself), often obscured or blurred. The process of taking the photographs, however, also helped to place me, since I

would lie and turn in every direction, embedding myself within the grasses and sand as I did, and taking note – and image – of my surroundings. These five points of view were printed very small, and arranged in the formation of a cross. Each image is thus placed in its correct relationship to the others, allowing the viewer to scan up and down and across, as I did from within each place. At the same time, in this formation, the assembled images resemble the body that lay there. The small size forces the viewer to step closer to the images, to examine them more intently – thus physically engaging with them by bringing the body into a proximal relationship to them. Their size and framing also encourage their sense of object-ness, the impression that they could be picked up and turned about in the hands.

Figure 16 (top): Luke Kaplan. *Untitled (Seeping Site 1)*. 2013. Black and white photographs, 32cm x 22cm.

Figure 17 (bottom right): Luke Kaplan. *Untitled (Seeping Site 2)*. 2013. Black and white photographs, 30cm x 20cm.

Figure 18 (bottom left): Luke Kaplan. *Untitled (Seeping Site 3)*. 2013. Black and white photographs, 15cm x 22cm.

The next morning I would document the site of my sleeping, placed within the landscape (figures 17 and 20). Framed more traditionally as a landscape photograph, these images place the empty impression made by my body within the central foreground. Flattened grass and spread out sand give the impression of an animal den. They are evidence of past habitation, the absence of a missed encounter. Printed to 20cm x 30cm, these images offer an easier view than do the five images cross formation, placing the site within a slightly broader physical context. Before leaving, I built a cairn at each site (figures 18 and 21). These functioned as more permanent markers of my having been and passed by, like gravestones or ruins. They also became portraits of the places themselves, the rock, textures, and morning light unique to each site. These I consequently photographed in portrait format, and printed so as to emphasise these characteristics. Each place that I slept was thus documented and represented in three different ways. Within the exhibition these sites are grouped together, so that the viewer might begin to engage spatialy with these places, to look down and across the first small set, and see where the view corresponds to the landscape.

Figure 19 (top): Luke Kaplan. *Untitled (Seeping Site 1)*. 2012. Black and white photographs, 32cm x 22cm.

Figure 20 (bottom right): Luke Kaplan. *Untitled (Seeping Site 2)*. 2012. Black and white photographs, 30cm x 20cm.

Figure 21 (bottom left): Luke Kaplan. *Untitled (Seeping Site 3)*. 2012. Black and white photographs, 15cm x 22cm.

Two series of images show the landscape as dusk gives way to night, and the world becomes less legible. *Untitled (Nightfall – Groot Karoo)* consists of two images taken in near complete darkness (figure 22). The landscape is still partially discernable in both, but only as patches of complete blackness next to areas of dark grey. The horizon stands out against the somewhat lighter sky. *Untitled (Nightfall – Langeberg)* consists of three images, also taken in darkness (figure 23). In the first image the landscape is similarly partially visible – a mountain rising up. But in the next images the landscape becomes less and less legible, ending in the last as a dark form blurring into the white misty sky. All these images were taken with very long exposure

times, during which I held the camera, rather than using a tripod. This allowed the film to register the slight movement of my body within the landscape, as I rocked slightly in the night wind or balanced on a rock. They begin to describe that time of liminality, where forms blur and edges bleed into each other.

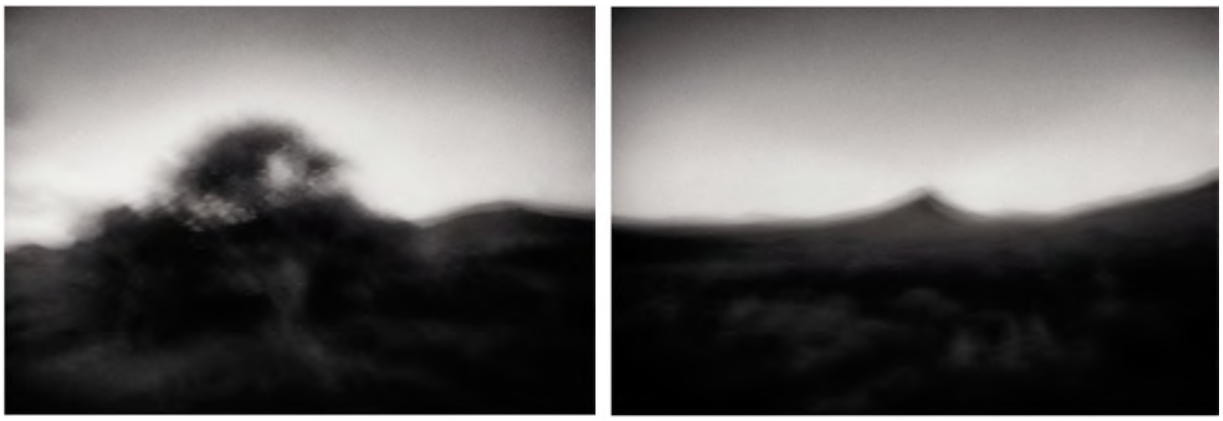

Figure 22: Luke Kaplan. *Untitled (Nightfall – Groot Karoo).* 2013. Black and white photographs, 700cm x 505cm.

Figure 23: Luke Kaplan. *Untitled (Nightfall – Langeberg).* 2012. Black and white photographs, 700cm x 505cm.

Untitled (Daybreak – Langeberg) acts in some way as a counterpoint to these last two series (figure 24). It shows the world already illuminated by the first cold grey light. The features of the landscape are far more clearly discernable, stretching into the distance, where the earth melds with the thickening sky. These images can be far more easily read as a traditional landscape; they are in part a foil for the dark, almost illegible images in *Nightfall*, and at the same time a brief respite from them.

Figure 24: Luke Kaplan. *Untitled (Daybreak – Langeberg).* 2012. Black and white photographs, 700cm x 505cm.

Lastly, and centrally, there are the large prints of *Untitled (Night Road)*. These, like the *Untitled (Nightfall)* landscapes, were taken as the last hints of twilight dissipated on the horizon. The world was dark, with patches of darker shadow here and there describing trees, hills, or perhaps other less stable forms. The images were taken with very long exposure times again, but this time, as the shutter stayed open, I walked slowly down the road. The darkened landscape thus entered slowly into the camera, on the last lugubrious vestiges of light, as I walked through it. These images stand as testament to the failing ability to record, describe, and fix the world – either in our own consciousness or in the tool of the camera (figures 25 and 26). The borders and boundaries of things, the very line of the road itself, normally so clear and distinct, begin to shift, dissolve, and fuse with each other. It is a landscape of softly textured greys and darks, rather than black and white. This is the movement into the inchoate world of the liminal; the clear, stark world dissolves into night, and into its own nascent beginning. There is also the evocation of a darkly unfolding path along which I moving, the movement of which I attempt to offer some experience of for the viewer – the world hovers and passes by, dark and brooding, on either side, while down the centre the dim glow of the road streaks and stretches, the unavoidable direction of movement. This series of three images are printed larger than the others. Again, as in *Untitled (Road Surface),* the medium itself is emphasised here, the film grain blown up and filling the paper with a textured and stippled matrix. The size allows the viewer to stand within this blurring world, for the greys and soft edges to encompass. This, too, denies the easy landscape, the framed view that is taken in from without. Rather, there is a possibility here for the landscape to take the viewer in, and to break down the barrier between.

Figure 25: Luke Kaplan. *Untitled (Night Road 1)*. 2012. Black and white photograph. 1358cm x 1118cm.

Figure 26: Luke Kaplan. *Untitled (Night Road 2)*. 2012. Black and white photograph. 1358cm x 1118cm.

In all of these images, but specifically these last series, my intention has been to engage with the medium of photography in conversation. Photography is an unsurpassed tool for describing the world. It also allows for incredible control and precision in that description, so that the photographer can frame the image she wants, and work with the different elements, such as light and lens, to conform to that pre-visualisation. As spoken of, however, what was of interest to me was the relationship between what was outside the camera, and what happened inside. Rather than imposing an outcome on an image, I wanted to allow it to be an open conversation, between the world, the camera, and myself. I wanted to allow the world to present itself as the camera and I processes it; or, rather, I wanted to allow the camera to present the world as process. I was investigating the limits of the photographically representable, but in order to see what would then be presented; to see if some 'reasoning thing' would 'put forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask' (Melville: 1988: 145), using the aperture of the camera as a conduit – an open wound. This relationship, between me as photographer, camera, and world, however, is of course incomplete. The viewer makes up the final element, and as such, the conversation remains open, beyond even the gallery wall.

This conversation involving the film camera is augmented by a venture into the digital image. There is thus also a video component to the body of work. The video functions as a documentary of the world in which Eldrich lives and through which I travel; it evokes the landscapes and scenes, as well as beginning to enter into, or describe, the half-dream dusk experiences within that world. In a slightly different way to the images, the video explores his inner vision, the world that he inhabits and imagines. This component is projected onto the floor of the gallery, creating a space in the middle which is in conversation with the images that work around the walls.

As mentioned earlier, in my enactment of Eldrich, and as I followed him and merged with him, I dressed as he did. The clothes, shoes, and bag which I used, and which Eldrich is imagined to have used, are exhibited within the gallery as well. They bring in a physical, three-dimensionality to the presentation of this character, and his world and way of life. They are physical traces of Eldrich and of myself, outlining his and my body and physical presence/absence. They operate as more than mere found objects; the boots, for instance, were worn down during the duration of this Masters project by walking the roads I photograph and write about. They thus bear the trace of the roads, landscapes, and lifestyle; they, like the bag and other clothes, were sculpted and moulded into their present forms by the physical exertion of the life described. The bag also becomes a central piece in the exhibition. It is a potent metaphor for that which is carried through life – it

contains the handed down weight of previous generations and lives, the 'burden of the dead' (Schama 1995: 574). Yet it also contains that which sustains; it carries water, food, and dry clothes; it contains the strength needed if the walk is to be undertaken at all.

Apart from the series of photographs, there are elements of the written word. These were written almost as journal entries while out walking; they refer both to the phenomenological experience of the days and nights spent on the road, as well as to the more mystical possibilities and meanings of those experiences. As such, they are a link between the real physical world and the more imaginary landscapes. They are, in fact, a link between Eldrich and myself: they were conceived as a way for me to record in writing both my own and his experiences – to write him and those other worlds into being. They come from the imaginative and liminal place between us; they are in a sense co-authored. They also form an important link between the practical, photographic component of this masters submission, and the thesis – this writing forms a part of, and speaks from and to, both aspects, drawing them together. At the same time, and conversely, as it slices into and through this thesis, splicing the different elements and characters, it also brings up a schizophrenic element, which is perhaps just as present in the attempt to join an other person, or to seek the edges of the self.

I have described the written aspect of this body of work as being co-authored, and have alluded to the clothes being both Eldrich's and mine. Yet it must be said that this is true of the photographs, and the entire body of work as a whole. It is a description of a world that has arisen out of a dialogue between myself and another. The images themselves do not merely attempt to speak of or to reference, or to engender feelings of, the liminal. As has been explored, they are made with an instrument – the camera – which embodies the movement through liminality. But even more than this, they arise, as idea and actualisation, from within the liminal space between Eldrich and me. The body of work comes from the space where I begin to cease to be myself, where my borders shift and dissolve; it arises out of the place where I and he are one, yet neither of each other; the indefinite, misty, sublimed place of between.

Conclusion

A renowned hunter rests beside a river one day while out hunting, his bow and quiver slung across his back. The day is hot, and he bends over the water to drink. As he does so he feels a wind move the air over his back, and senses a great shadow passing over the river and over himself, and fleetingly sees, reflected in the water, the shape of a huge white bird. He immediately pulls up, but by the time he lifts his head to look up, the bird has flown on, disappeared over the horizon. From that experience the hunter leaves home, unable to forget his glimpsed encounter. He tracks the bird, following hints, legends, and second-hand guesses, for days that become weeks, and months into years. Finally, an old man, frail and week, in lands far from where he started, he is pointed to a high mountain, on the top of which the great white bird is said to have its eyrie. With the last of his ebbing strength, he begins the long ascent. Hours of slow toil later, he finally comes to a stop under the sheer rock face of a cliff, which stretches vertically above him, reaching towards the sky. The old hunter sinks to his knees, beaten; there is no way he can scale this last obstacle – he is defeated. He knows that he is at the end of his life, its goal and purpose unachieved. He lifts his head, one last despairing look at the glassy precipitous cliff and the cold blue impartial sky, when from out of that sky a small object appears. He watches as it becomes slightly larger, more distinct, floats down through the still air towards him. A single, great white feather drifting, and finally landing on the stones beside him. The hunter clutches it to himself, in gratitude; knowing that all which he set out for has now been accomplished, his breath fades and he dies upon the rocks, content.[18]

I had first become interested in Eldrich as a fascinating case, an intriguing, idiosyncratic individual, whose life I struggled to fathom. It seemed certain that he must have some fascinating story which had brought him to his current position, and also that his current position must offer a rich story in itself. I thought that I could observe him, watch him, study him, understand him – gain his story – from an objective standpoint; that is, without investing my own self in the study. This proved a vastly inadequate method.

[18] This tale is supposedly an old legend, perhaps of San origin. Laurence van der Post recounted a version of it, as did Olive Schreiner in *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), though hers was a far more ornate telling. The version told here comes from oral accounts from my own childhood.

My decision to walk his road, to track his foil and follow his spoor came closer to what was needed. I dressed as he did, walked as he did, ate, slept, and knelt for ablutionary ritual as he did. And this took me to within inches of him, of the authenticity of his lifestyle. Yet it could not close the gap. What I least expected, and what was perhaps inevitable, was that some movement came from him towards me, even as fictional character, to meet my move towards him. Though I did not, could not, know it at the time, Eldrich was something of an agent provocateur, luring me to the edges of myself, to my own boundaries, to the places of transgression – the liminal. Like some stumbling *film noir* detective, it took me till very nearly the end of the film to realise that the man I had been set to track was in a sense tracking me. And like the hunter in the story above, I was never allowed the conclusive ending, but merely a feather – something so insubstantial that my own breath would be enough to make it float away again.

It is partly this sense of insubstantiality that I have tried to evoke in my photographs. The essential thrust of photography seems often to be to track down the bird entire, to capture and fix it as fact, a document of truth, verifiable and unambiguous. I have been more interested in that momentary vision in the water, that reflection, intimation of the thing, since the thing itself cannot be seen. It is seen only by looking away. I have tried to show the rippled reflection, the floating feather, since to shoot the bird itself is to kill it.

I have tried also to give an account of the journey to that mountain eyrie, since without the journey the feather is never gained. The journey outwards is invariably a metaphor for, but also allows for, the journey inwards; the journey towards the Other is a journey towards the Self. As has been discussed, the outer landscape and the inner landscape are connected; they inform and mould each other, and it is here both the outer and the inner landscapes which I have tried to describe, both in the context of this thesis and in the exhibition. The mountain eyrie – those liminal places and experiences within the world – exist both without and within. Their liminality and sublimity reside, in great part, in the fact that they can create a fissure in the bulwarks between the two, between outer and inner; can open the crack that liberates us from our bounds.

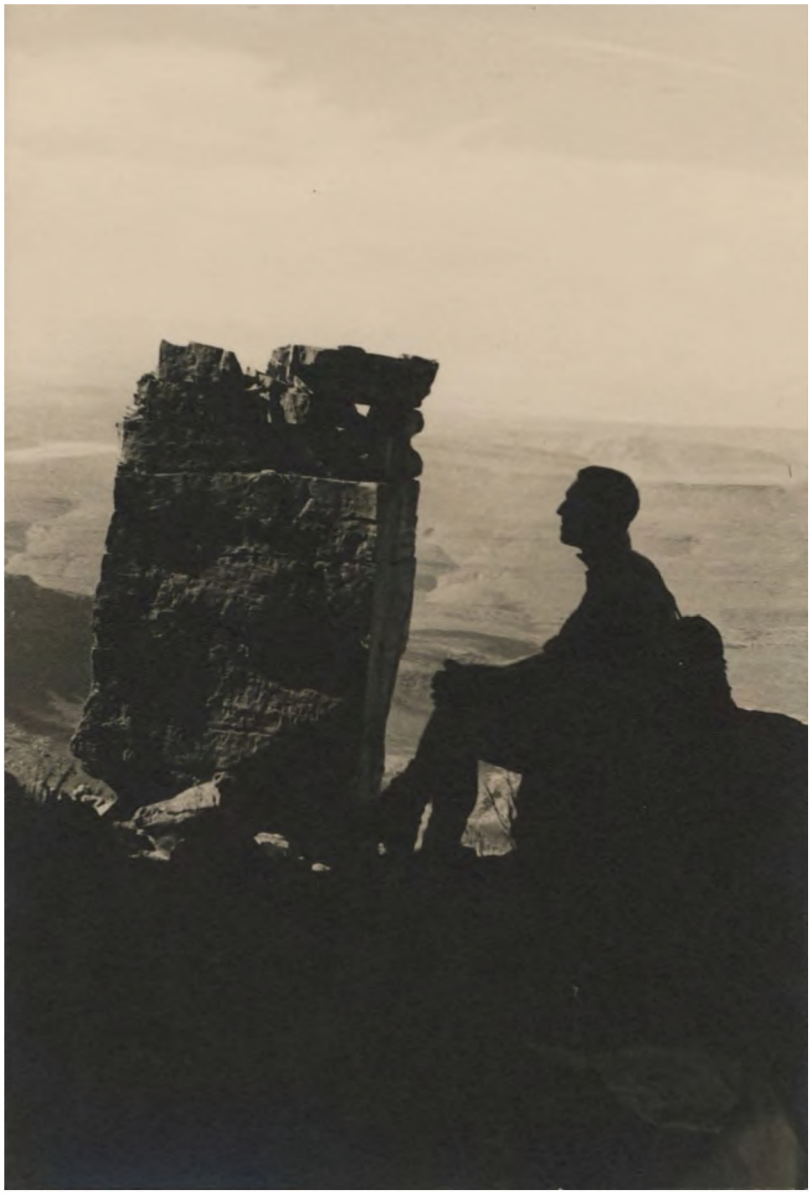

Figure 27: Donnie Yasvoin. *Untitled (Charles Kaplan, Cederberg).* 1942. Black and white photograph, 10cm x 15cm.

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