

Out Of The Labyrinth Of The Mind: Manifesting A Spiritual Art Beyond Dualism



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Doctorate of Creative Arts

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Abstract

This Doctorate of Creative Arts thesis consists of a raft of creative arts projects bound together by a critical essay which examines their intersections and situates them within the evolving body of the artist's creative work and a broader context of critical thinking and creative ideas and practices. In particular, the essay focuses on the spiritual as a throughline between a group of art works which explore the media of poetry, dance, film, digital media, performance, and poetic fiction. Addressing some of the artistic and critical challenges arising out of working across this range of different forms, the philosophy and practice of Yoga is the primary system of thinking utilised to articulate a linking or underlying aesthetics.

Six works make up the whole:

1. The critical overview essay:

Out Of The Labyrinth Of The Mind: Manifesting A Spiritual Art Beyond Dualism.

2. An anthology:

Performing the Unnameable: An Anthology of Australian Performance Texts

3. A poetry book:

Thursday's Fictions

4. A short comic dance film:

Rubberman Accepts The Nobel Prize

5. A short dance drama film:

No Surrender

6. A work of poetic fiction:

The Kamikaze Mind

By placing these six works in relationship to each other in one larger presentation, the aim is to create, in its overall structure, as well as in the interrelations between and within its multi-layered parts, a thesis which suggests a model of knowledge, experience and consciousness characterised by the movement between things rather than the static stand-aloneness, separate wholeness, of things. Given that this approach implies that meaning is in the spaces between things – or in the energies across the spaces between things - as much as in things themselves, it is not necessarily linear, obvious or direct, but just as often lateral, oblique or circular. The content, form and mode of address of each of the works is individuated, but by collecting them into a cluster of hybridised artistic works and their critical commentary, this thesis proposes a dialectic between knowing, intuiting and becoming. The juxtaposition of art works seeks to demonstrate how seeming oppositions and contradictions are brought together into a larger, dynamic, multi-dimensional, and never finally resolved art practice, animated by paradox. This Doctorate of Creative Arts thesis is an invitation for the reader and audience to participate in a multi-directional spaciousness in which there ultimately are no boundaries to the dynamics of creativity. The critical essay, in particular, which reviews the artist's evolution as a writer, performer, choreographer and filmmaker, and which explores themes in his current interests in Yoga and meditational philosophy, addresses core issues in a multi-form idea of creative practice.

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I would also like to acknowledge my co-supervisor Dr Ross Gibson and my guest supervisor Dr Marilyn Chin for their valuable input at key stages in the process. In addition, it is important to point out that the creative works presented as part of this Doctorate of Creative Arts involve numerous artistic collaborators, sponsors and supporters without whom the visions of these works could not have been realised. These individuals and organisations are acknowledged in the credits and special thanks sections of each particular work. Since *The Kamikaze Mind* is as yet unpublished I would like to acknowledge a particular debt of gratitude to Judith Beveridge for her belief in this work.

I dedicate this thesis

*to my first Yoga Gurus, Sharon Gannon and David Life;
to Ram Dass, whose words are always with me;
to my mother, Jocelyn Allen, who has always stood by me;
and to my wife, Karen Pearlman, who is my rock;
to our children, Samuel and Jadzea, with boundless love,
and to my father, Robert Allen,
who died during the final stages of its preparation:*

He lived in the moment, he lives in eternity.¹

Namaste.

¹ This line is slightly adapted from Richard James Allen, "Headstone", *The Kamikaze Mind*, unpublished typescript, Sydney, 2004, p. 51.

Out Of The Labyrinth Of The Mind:

Manifesting A Spiritual Art Beyond Dualism

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Good Timing: A Personal Note for a Preface

Navigate Gliding on the invisible winds of the universe -
pressing the soft button of intuition
to find out what's meant to be
before it has already happened.²

Looking back at the pathway of my work, as this essay does, the pathway that has led me to this moment, I can see that I have always gone against the grain. Perhaps it was something to do with growing up as an outsider for my first ten years in Asia, and then feeling like an outsider on my return to Australia for something over the next ten years, and then being an outsider again in Europe and the USA for the first ten years of my professional life, and now still not feeling at the centre of the culture to which I have returned to try to make some contribution back 'home' in Australia. Perhaps this sense of cultural dislocation, of seeing things from the outside, has encouraged me to see all forms that people invest in as just that - as forms, as constructions and as transient. Perhaps this is part of the reason why I have usually not gone with the prevailing form, which I have often found stale and outmoded, past its use-by date in terms of creativity, and instead tried to take the next step or go back to a much earlier form and try to reinvigorate it – in either case to find or create a form that seemed to me to have the potential to be more alive, more relevant to the moment, a livelier vehicle for the creative spirit.

Looking back it would be fair to say that my whole career has been blessed and cursed by this impulse. This essay is something of a dig, archaeologically, so to speak, into one specific aspect of my work - the origins of my impulse towards spirituality in my art practice and an examination of how that impulse has particularly developed in my

² *ibid.*, p. 73.

creative work in recent times under the influence of Yogic spiritual practice and philosophy. It cannot examine in more depth this more personal issue which I mention only here in the Preface.

But, at the same time, I have to acknowledge a quite contrary impulse. This has been the desire to want to be part of the culture that I have found myself in, to want to be accepted, to want recognition for my contributions, however alternative or outlandish, from those whom, in a sense, I have been inadvertently criticising by doing something different. This continued attachment to the world, this ‘wanting to have my cake and eat it too’, which as we will see in the course of this essay brings to mind the dilemma of the title character in my book *Thursday’s Fictions*³, has led my career into a ‘double-helix-like’ paradox, a double bind, which I am only now coming to terms with. This dissertation itself, in fact, in its broader examination of spirituality as an inclusive path to overcoming dualism, is something of an attempt to deal with the often uncomfortable auto-dualism of attachment and non-attachment, which has sometimes created perfect balances, and sometimes led to traffic jams.

Keith Gallasch, co-editor of the Australian arts magazine *RealTime*, commenting about some of the things that my partner Karen Pearlman and I had done that were arguably ‘before their time’ – hybrid arts, text and dance, dance film, creating defacto touring circuits - was typically insightful and practical. He did not congratulate me on being a great avant-garde pioneer. He said, “You have bad timing”⁴. I think he was right. One of the reasons that I am so drawn to spirituality is that it puts one much more deeply into tune with the moment, it finds one a home in the present, and in practical terms gives one a much better sense of timing. All of which I will need if I am to survive the next twenty-five years or hopefully more of my career. The consciousness in my recent manuscript, *The Kamikaze Mind*, floating in what *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*⁵ might

³ Richard James Allen, *Thursday’s Fictions*, Five Island Press, Wollongong, 1999.

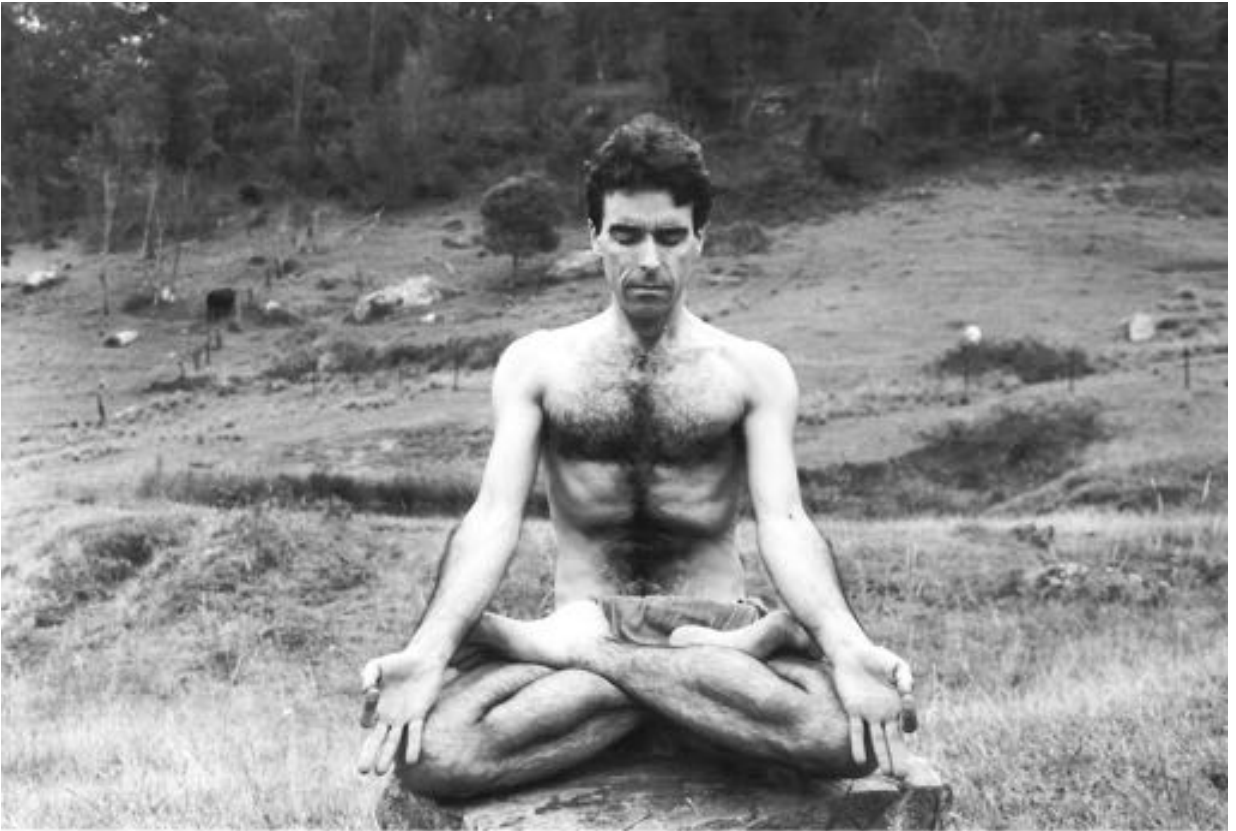
⁴ Keith Gallasch, in conversation with Richard James Allen.

⁵ See *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation Through Hearing in the Bardo* by Guru Rinpoche according to Karma Lingpa, translated with commentary by Francesca Fremantle and Chögyam

describe as a Bardo-like post death state⁶, looking back at the glorious and hideous moments of good and bad timing in its life, but trying to find the way beyond all this desire and attachment, gets a glimpse of this, as suggested in the epigraph to this Preface, surrendering to “intuition/ to find out what’s meant to be/ before it has already happened”.

Trungpa, Shambhala, Boston and London, 1987. I have also found Frank J. MacHovec’s Modern English translation, The Peter Pauper Press, Mount Vernon, New York, 1972, clear and useful.

⁶ “Bardo means gap; it is not only the interval of suspension after we die but also suspension in the living situation; death happens in the living situation as well. The bardo experience is part of our basic psychological make-up. There are all kinds of bardo experiences happening to us all the time, experiences of paranoia and uncertainty in everyday life; it is like not being sure of our ground, not knowing quite what we have asked for or what we are getting into.” Fremantle and Trungpa, “Commentary”, *ibid.*, pp. 1-2.





A Finger Pointing At The Labyrinth

There is a line in my new manuscript, *The Kamikaze Mind*, “**Alchemy** Why did I expect I could bring the unknown into the known without changing it?”⁷ At the heart of this question lies one that has exercised human minds and spirits for millennia – how can we have access to sacred knowledge, to the spirit? Caught up as we are in our delusions – our needs, our wants, our desires - how can we hold onto those moments of illumination, those glimpses at enlightenment, that we all experience from time to time in our lives? Grounded in the body, how can we live in the spirit? In the current age, conventional religions have lost much of their allure as guides and pathways to the spirit, seeming rather to be encumbered by all those things which a seeker might want to transcend – materialism, bigotry, power lust, sadism. Some alternative, “New Age”, pathways seem to lack rigour and smack of commercialism, even though they may be

approached with the best of intentions. Caught between ‘old money’ power machines ‘slouching towards Bethlehem’ and ‘mallworld’ spirituality-lite ‘to go’, where can one turn for guidance? While there are undoubtedly a number of traditions that are honest and intelligent enough about our humanity to find ways to transcend it, I have found that the tradition, practice and philosophy of Yoga has been particularly helpful guide on my path.

Yoga is an experiential practice that has been handed from teacher to pupil in an aural tradition stretching back into prehistory. Its principles were summarised in the Second Century BCE in the *Yoga Sutras* by Patañjali⁸. This text has been interpreted and commented upon ever since. However, as Sharon Gannon and David Life, two contemporary commentators and Yoga teachers note:

As modern yogis, it’s exciting to realize that we have access to the *Yoga Sutras*. But the *Yoga Sutras* won’t tell you in words the meaning of life. All mystical writing is like musical notation: ... You have to play the notation to hear the music. In the same way, Patañjali doesn’t describe samadhi; he gives you instructions. If they are followed, you will have an experience that could never be described in words.⁹

⁷ Allen, *The Kamikaze Mind*, op. cit. p. 4.

⁸ Numerous translations and commentaries on this work exist. In particular, I have found useful and informative Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-Sutra of Patañjali: A New Translation and Commentary*, Inner Traditions International, Rochester, Vermont, 1989, and B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, Thorsons, An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, London and San Francisco, 1993.

⁹ Sharon Gannon and David Life, *Jivamukti Yoga*, Ballantine Books, New York, 2002, p. 23.



Many traditions have questioned the value of language in the journey towards enlightenment. Even the greatest spiritual texts, as the contemporary spiritual philosopher Ram Dass has suggested, can only be “fingers pointing at the moon”, not the moon itself¹⁰. Spiritual wholeness can only be experienced – it cannot be analysed or

¹⁰ Ram Dass, “Spiritual Philosophy: Truth and Being”, Lecture # 13 II, *The Listening Heart*, a series of lectures given on retreats in the summer of 1989, published by the Hanuman Foundation Tape Library, San Anselmo, California, 1989, audio tape side A. See also his *The Yogas of the Baghavad Gita*, a series of lectures given at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado, published by the Hanuman Foundation Tape Library, San Anselmo, 1974, and his book, *Be Here Now*, Kingsport: Hanuman Foundation, Kingsport Press, 1978. Or as Edward Foster has phrased it: “the Buddhist...knows that words and the Real are never the same, that in effect the word cannot be made flesh, and all we can do is point toward the truth, not name it.” This quote is drawn from his recent analysis of the poetry of William Bronk - Edward Foster,

described in language since language is necessarily dualistic¹¹. Thus, without in any way paying disrespect to the legacy that Patañjali has left us, the guru of Ashtanga Yoga Sri K. Pattabhi Jois can justly say that “Yoga is 1% theory, 99% practice”¹³.

I am not a spiritual philosopher, and lay no claim to adding to this body of knowledge. But as an artist, whose practice is to study these spiritual texts and methods, and whose job is to give people experiences, I believe that I may be to add to ‘a body of experience’. My aim has been to create works that allow those people who engage with them to experience the spirit through the vicissitudes of their humanity. The works in this Doctorate of Creative Arts are each, in their own way, ‘fingers pointing at the moon’, and hints, to extend the metaphor, hopefully lasting a little longer than a transient moment, of what it might be like up there. To quote again from *The Kamikaze Mind*, their “**Mission** To smuggle the magic through from the other side.”¹⁴

This Doctorate of Creative Arts is made up of a critical essay and a ‘raft’ five creative arts projects:

Answerable to None: Berrigan, Bronk and the American Real, Spuyten Duyvil, New York City, 1999, p. 69.

¹¹ It is a paradoxical situation, but paradox, as will be seen, it not something that is shied away from in this essay. As Foster notes in a recent interview with Anne Waldman: “Nagarajuna raises questions here, and I think what he says is implicit throughout Buddhism. The Dharma has to be apprehended directly; you can’t get there simply by analyzing words. But you can’t escape the paradox: you have to use words to say don’t use words – like Thomas Aquinas reasoning brilliantly to prove in the end all that matters is belief.” Edward Foster (editor), *Poetry and Poetics in a New Millennium*, Talisman House, Publishers, Jersey City, New Jersey, 2000, p. 140.

¹² The spelling of Sri or *Shri* appears to be inconsistent through different authors. I have tried to follow the spelling used by each writer or reference cited.

¹³ David Swenson, one of the first Western students of Pattabhi Jois, writes: “Patañjali, the author of the Yoga Sutras, described the eight aspects of yoga as limbs of a tree...Patañjali’s analogy is the perfect image. Wisdom and spirituality unfold in the same manner as a tree grows. Nature is steady and gradual...When practiced with regulation and awareness, the tree described by Patañjali begins to sprout. Practice is the only means of feeding it. K. Pattabhi Jois is fond of saying, “99% Practice and 1% Theory: I have grown to appreciate the depth of this simple statement. Only through practice may we taste the fruits of the yoga tree. Without it we are left to speculate or theorize.” David Swenson, *Ashtanga Yoga: The Practice Manual*, Ashtanga Yoga Productions, Houston, Texas, 1999, p. 7.

¹⁴ Allen, *The Kamikaze Mind*, op. cit. p. 76.

1. ***Out Of The Labyrinth Of The Mind: Manifesting A Spiritual Art Beyond Dualism***
This exegesis comments on the creative works that make up the Doctorate of Creative Arts, exploring some of their sources and inspirations in Yogic spiritual ideas and the thoughts and works of other spiritual artists. Its appendices include a overview of a body of professional practice over the last twenty-five years that includes creative work in poetry, dance, and film, and various hybrids of these and other media.

2. ***Performing the Unnameable: An Anthology of Australian Performance Texts***¹⁵
This anthology, published at the beginning of 1999, gives form to an often ill kept or unrecorded field of practice and provides one possible context in which to view the other discrete artworks that follow.

3. ***Thursday's Fictions***¹⁶
This poetry book, published later in 1999, explores the boundaries of the poetic form with monologues, dialogues, prose poems, and a radio play, in addition to traditional lyrics. An excerpt of this work appears in *Performing the Unnameable* along with discussion of how it was interpreted for the stage as a large scale hybrid arts work.

4. ***Rubberman Accepts The Nobel Prize***¹⁷
This comic short film, premiered in 2001, picks up on the hybrids of text and dance and other media discussed in the commentary on *Thursday's Fictions* in *Performing the Unnameable*, and adds in the medium of film - and with it numerous imaginative collaborations in design, costume, and sound, amongst others, and, in particular, digital visual effects.

¹⁵ Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman (editors), *Performing the Unnameable: An Anthology of Australian Performance Texts*, Currency Press and *RealTime*, Sydney, 1999.

¹⁶ Allen, *Thursday's Fictions*, op. cit.

¹⁷ *Rubberman Accepts The Nobel Prize* was co-written, choreographed and performed by Richard James Allen, and co-written and directed by Karen Pearlman. Produced by Daniella Ortega and Richard James Allen, it was a Physical TV Company Production in association with the Australian Film Television and Radio School, 2001.

5. *No Surrender*¹⁸

This dance drama short film, first broadcast in 2002, was originally inspired by a poem of the same title¹⁹. However this was cut from the final work as it became unnecessary to repeat what had already been said physically and cinematographically. The physical and cinematic languages took over and became a poem of their own on the same subject. Leaving the text in at this stage would have been an unnecessary mental distraction from the fully immersive experience into which the viewer is drawn.

6. *The Kamikaze Mind*

An as yet unpublished work of poetic fiction, this book examines the distractions of the mind in a sometimes comic and sometimes moving attempt to transcend them.

¹⁸ *No Surrender* was written, choreographed and directed by Richard James Allen. Produced by Isabel Perez, Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman, it was a Physical TV Company Production in association with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2002.

¹⁹ The poem:

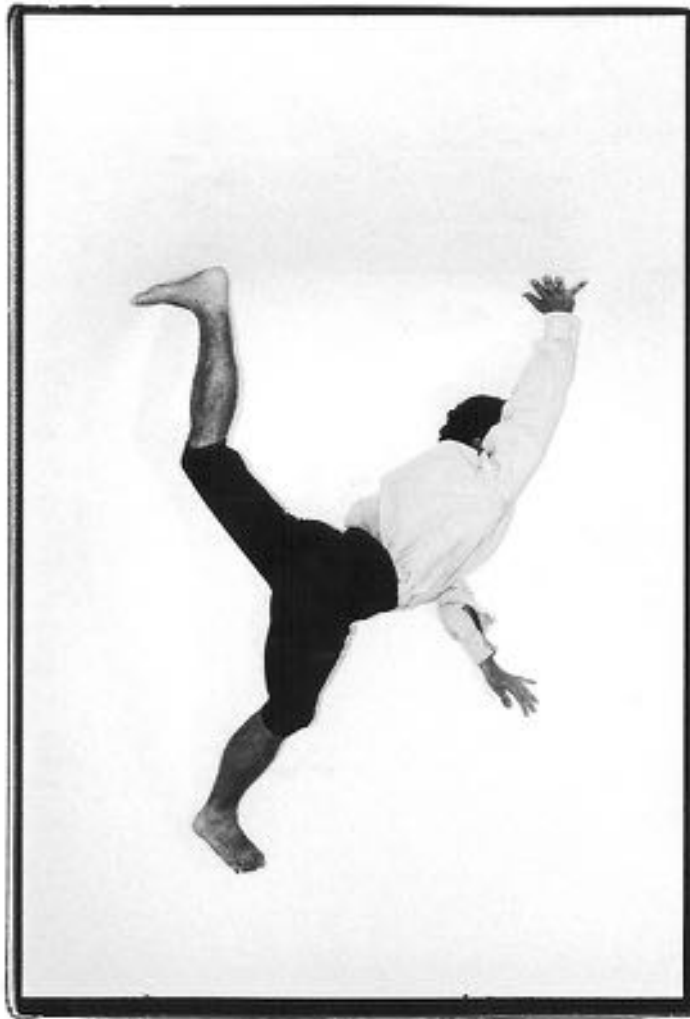
No Surrender

Faith is flimsy
in the face of
death, madness, war

but inside us
it burns
like little fires.

Be terrified
of the glow
in our eyes.

First published in Santosh Kumar (editor-in-chief), *The Golden Wings: An Anthology of World Poetry*, Cyberwit.net, Allahabad, India, 2002.



The Way In

During the course of 25 years of artistic practice²⁰ I have worked in the forms of poetry, dance, contemporary performance, film and video, and a diversity of hybrids of these disciplines. My polyvalence in form is a manifestation of my artistic concerns. I have used the period of my Doctorate of Creative Arts (1999-2004) to make considered works across many of these forms, and to examine the relationship of these forms to the ideas expressed within them. In particular, I have taken a critical look at the question of my mobility across forms and its underlying sources and meanings. While there might be many frames through which to view this question, I have, in this essay, focussed on the spiritual as my overarching trope. Thus I have, through this process, come to understand a relationship between my spiritual pathway and my creative pathway which I believe goes some way towards contextualising and connecting the individual pieces within my raft of projects.

This essay will attempt to open up this context and these connections by identifying some of the personal, literary and philosophical sources of my artistic inspiration in spiritual ideas. Its purpose will be to consolidate these ideas, measure my progress in their context, and direct me on a pathway of ongoing growth and development in my artistic work in relation to them. In order to do this, I will ask how each of my five DCA projects represents a ‘play’ of universal energies ‘in the fields of form’. I will answer this

²⁰ 1978-2003. My first ‘professional’ publication, as opposed to earlier student publications in the Sydney Grammar School *The Sydneian* (1976, 1977, 1978), was the poem ‘Tooth’ (written, as I recall, when I was sixteen), which appeared *Messages in a Bottle: Poetry by Young Australians*, edited by Michael Dugan, Barbara Giles, and J.S. Hamilton, BHP/FAW (The Broken Hill Propriety Co. Ltd and the Fellowship of Australian Writers), Richmond South, Victoria, 1978, pp. 1-3. “Poem” appeared in the next volume of this initiative, *Of Human Beings and Chestnut Trees*, edited by Michael Dugan, Barbara Giles, and J.S. Hamilton, BHP/FAW (The Broken Hill Propriety Co. Ltd and the Fellowship of Australian Writers), Caulfield South, Victoria, 1980, p 1. In that year “Song” appeared in the journal *Aspect: Art and Literature*, edited by Rudi Krausmann (Volume 4/4, 1980, p 44). In 1980 I also won the Under 21 section of the English Teachers Association of NSW National Writing Competition to Celebrate the International Conference of English Teachers held in Sydney, Australia, the winners of which were eventually published in Dot Jenson (editor), *Look What I Have Written*, English Teachers Association of NSW, Sydney, 1982. By this time, poems were regularly appearing in magazines and journals. I had performed in the Sydney Opera House as a child singer in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in 1973 (as well as again, numerous subsequent student performances in the Sydney Grammar school choir, orchestra and in at least one school play that I can recall), but this was more of a pre-professional start to my later performing a career.

by looking at the different forms of the works themselves and some ideas about ‘form’ in spiritual philosophy which I find compelling and which I try to put into practice²¹.

I will also address the common theme within the works which is that each requires or depicts a ‘letting go’ into paradox beyond dualistic mental structures. Dualistic mental structures are deeply ingrained in culture and thinking; the effort to participate in human interaction without them is a task of enormous proportions. (For example, just using the word ‘enormous’: immediately its opposite is implied and dualism is the present and ordering force.) However, to undertake a full description of dualism is beyond the scope of this essay. Therefore, dualism as an underlying premise in the construction of thought will be assumed, and I will look at the ways in which the different art works in my ‘raft’ are about dualism or the effort to transcend it.

The primary strand of spiritual philosophy which I am using to contextualise my work is Yoga. Within the essay I will touch on some types of Yoga, their underlying approaches to *yuj* (union) and their impact on my own thinking and creativity. These particular meditations lead me to conclude that each of the works I have created in the context of this DCA lives an ‘undecideable’ kind of double life. They draw their audience into constructing a *Jivanmukti*-like dual awareness, facilitating ‘an experience of eternity through the vicissitudes of mortality’²². Use of the word ‘dual’ here refers to the two parts of the Sanskrit word *Jivanmukti*: *Jivan* (living) and *mukti* (liberation). In this particular strand of Yogic spiritual philosophy dual becomes a sense of partnership not opposition – a reconciliation of opposites by experiencing both at the same time. This premise, which has been absolutely core to my exploration of creativity and spirituality will be described and considered in relation to the creative output under discussion.

²¹ This essay focuses least on the anthology *Performing the Unnameable: An Anthology of Australian Performance Texts* because it is a critical work of its own, having its own introduction and intellectual framework that it would be redundant to reproduce here. Nonetheless, its relationship to the themes that bind all the works in this DCA ‘raft’ of creative arts projects is articulated here.

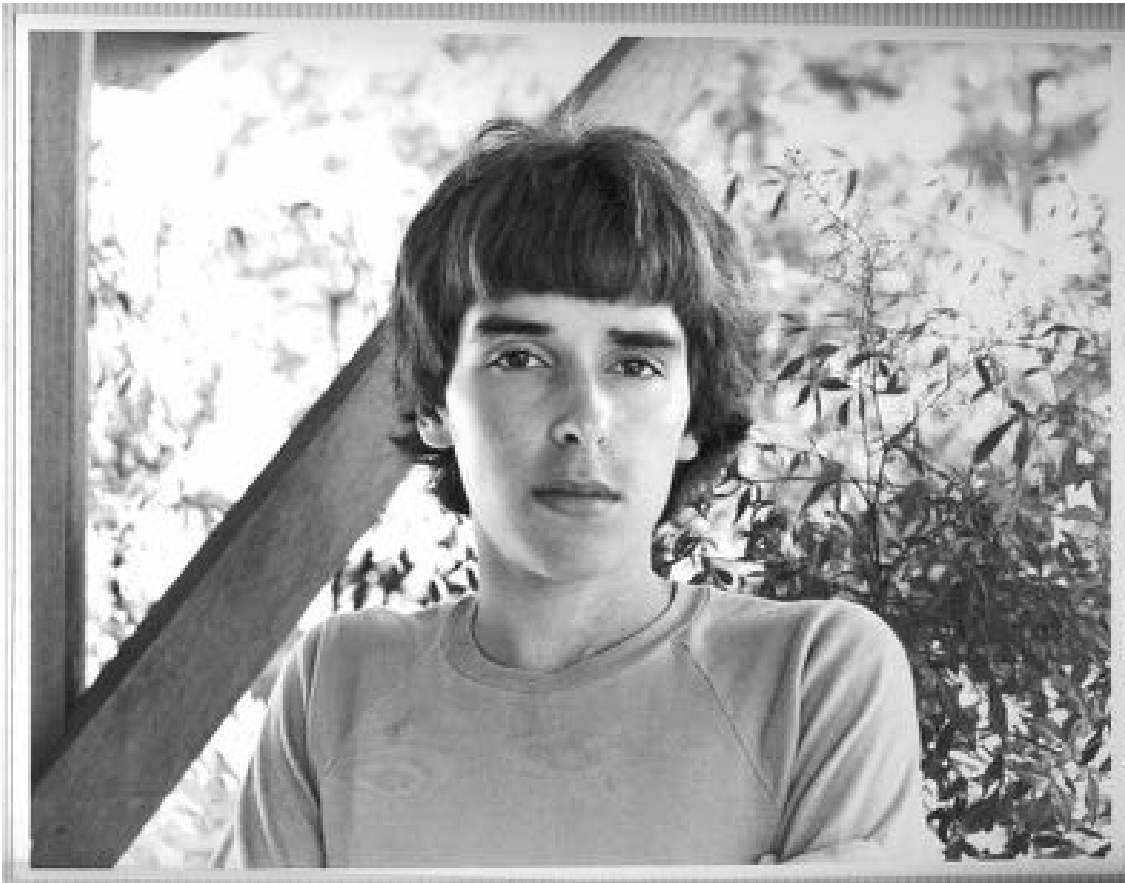
²² Joseph Campbell, *Transformations of Myth Through Time*, Harper & Row, Publishers, New York, Grand Rapids, Philadelphia, St. Louis, San Francisco, London, Singapore, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto, 1990, p. 142.

This essay acknowledges that enlightenment and transcendence remain quests, ideals, beacons on the pathway which is in itself an obstacle. It also suggests that while each of the works in my 'raft' of projects is a kind of spiritual work it is also a kind of anti-spiritual work. Just as each represents a step on the challenging pathway towards enlightenment - a striving toward the condition of being a form of Yoga, a release of personal identity into identitilessness; each one also embodies the struggles of the ego identity – its resistances to being subsumed into the universal consciousness, and the many tricks the mind plays, from charm to delusion to fear to violence, to distract us from this path. The tensions of recognizing duality and simultaneously being trapped inside it – an example of which has been making works about spiritual ideals which also seek recognition, form and function in the material world - are part of the path of this *Jivan* who teeters towards *mukti* but only rarely glimpses the wonders over the precipice. This paradox may be one of the ways in which it is possible to describe these works as art works, as opposed to textbooks of spiritual philosophy. Or rather, perhaps expressed more accurately, this paradox shows how the works exist between a dualistic definition of an art work and a Yogic definition. They both explore our humanity and attempt to transcend it.

This essay, then, is an active meditation on the duality within my creative arts works, in particular those included as part of this Doctorate of Creative Arts. It looks at the paradoxes inherent within them, the shafts of light and depths of darkness that make up their forms and form the process of creating them. Its conclusions may be steps towards the recognition and removal of obstacles in the realm of creativity within dualisms, or may possibly even point a way for me towards the removal of obstacles on the path to enlightenment.

A Memory

To begin with a memory. Many years ago, as a teenager in Sydney in the nineteen seventies, I read Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*. At the end of this novel Siddhartha's friend Govinda, asks him for help. "Give me something to help me on my way, Siddhartha. My path is often hard and dark." Siddhartha opens up a vision for him which in a sense started me on my pathway, and continues to resonate with the 'shapeshifting' forms of my artistic practice:



He no longer saw the face of his friend Siddhartha. Instead he saw other faces, many faces, a long series, a continuous stream of faces – hundreds, thousands, which all came and disappeared and yet all seemed to be there at the same time, which all continually changed and renewed themselves and which were yet all Siddhartha...He saw all these forms and faces in a thousand relationships to each other, all helping each other, loving, hating

and destroying each other and become newly born. Each one was a mortal, a passionate, painful example of all that is transitory. Yet none of them died, they only changed, were always reborn, continually had a new face: only time stood between one face and another. And all these forms and faces rested, flowed, reproduced, swam past and merged into each other, and over them all there was continually something thin, unreal and yet existing, stretched across like thin glass or ice, like a transparent skin, shell, form or mask of water – and this mask was Siddhartha’s smiling face which Govinda touched with his lips at that moment.”²³

Hesse’s vision left me stunned. It was as if I too had had a glimpse of another world, or rather seen this world in another way. It became a spiritual anchor for me and, in ways that I am only now coming to understand, a kind of strange inspiration or idealized image of my pathway as an artist. A ‘strange’ inspiration because, while in an art work, it was not a vision of art but a vision of eternity. Yet what Siddhartha showed Govinda was not an abstract vision, dislocated from what we generally agree on as ‘reality’. It was a vision of eternal energy manifesting in a flow of forms in the here and now. The experience that I had in reading this book brought me to a place where ‘I’ could become, as I only articulated as recently as in *The Kamikaze Mind*, “the central train station through which the rest of my personality passes”²⁴. It allowed my subsequent traffic through a series of births, deaths and rebirths, a ‘transmigration’ of my artistic ‘soul’²⁵ into different forms, shapes, and media.

An example of this and an echo of Siddhartha’s speech, transmogrified, but still an echo, can be heard years later, in my poetry book *Thursday’s Fictions*, itself a series of shifting forms, when the character of “Tuesday” speaks:

²³ Herman Hesse, *Siddhartha*, translated by Hilda Rosner, Macmillan India, 1974, pp. 117-118.

²⁴ Allen, *The Kamikaze Mind*, op. cit., see the ‘definition’ for “Central”, p. 18.

²⁵ See James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books; and Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Books Australia, 1973, p. 66, 67: “- Metempsychosis, he said, frowning. It’s Greek: from the Greek. That means the transmigration of souls...They used to believe you could be changed into an animal or a tree, for instance.” See also “Transmigration Buy one life, get one free” - Allen, *The Kamikaze Mind*, *ibid.*, p. 126.



“(And I, caught like a bird,

spying on the ocean.)

(at play

in the fields of form,)

(fall like a rainbow

across the beatitude)

(of the sea.”²⁶

At this moment in the narrative of *Thursday's Fictions*, the character Tuesday has broken the laws of time and space. During an earlier rebirth she became conscious of being reincarnated. But like a ‘bad’ Yogi who misuses his or her ‘*siddhis*’ (special powers gained from spiritual practice) for personal ends, she has tried to use this knowledge to her advantage, thus creating havoc all around her. And yet there is also something very beautiful about this, something breathtakingly human about the grandeur of her reckless ambition. The character herself is a ‘shapeshifter’ – changing identities regularly. First she is Thursday,



then she is reincarnated as Sunday,



and finally Tuesday.

It is only on this last day that she learns to let go of her need for an audience and let her work resonate where it may (or may not) as she herself moves on to perhaps a higher form of being. Her character, perhaps not unlike my own, has managed to absorb some teachings of the Eastern spiritual philosophies and yet

²⁶ Allen, *Thursday's Fictions*, op. cit. p. 88.

struggles with them in the context of her own, very Western, ambitions for her art. Only as she sees that she cannot take things with her as she changes form does she begin to learn to let go of her attachments.

The vision Siddhartha showed his friend Govinda is the first image that struck my mind with the potential of form to interplay with the formless and it has continued to resonate in my consciousness as a goal. And yet, at the time I was also aware that Siddhartha had arrived at his understanding by leaving the safety of home and later the safety of dogma by venturing forth into the world on his own terms. And like Everyman in *Pilgrim's Progress*, I felt I had to take my own journey and find my own way. So in this way, too, the image of Siddhartha has informed some of the unusual and less conventional choices and turns I have taken on my artistic pathway.

Unblocking

In 1983 I left Australia to join a dance theatre performance company in Holland called KISS International Research Group. The group, under the artistic directorship of Jean-Pierre Voos²⁷, saw itself on the nexus between the work of avant-garde theatre visionaries such as Jerzy Grotowski²⁸, for whom the actor was the essential element to be developed to create with the audience the physical and spiritual ritual of theatre, and Peter Brook²⁹, for whom adaptations of classic texts allowed the 'empty space' of the theatre to resonate with vitally original and yet powerfully archetypal visual imagery, and dance theatre creator Pina Bausch³⁰, for whom 'project'-based construction methods drew a deeply

²⁷ See Jeffrey Burnett (editor), *Theatre Research Book KISS*, Boekmakerij, Uitgeverij Luyten, Amstelveen, Holland, 1982, for details of the International Theatre Research Group KISS's history, philosophy, plays, training, group structure and dynamics.

²⁸ See Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968.

²⁹ See Peter Brook, *The Shifting Point, 1946-1987*, Harper & Rowe, Publishers, New York, Cambridge, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Washington, London, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Singapore, Sydney, 1987.

³⁰ There are numerous articles and books written about Pina Bausch, but I am unaware of her having written a theoretical work herself.

personal physical storytelling from her dancer/actors into a non-linear associative nightmare/dreamscape.



Having travelled extensively in South East Asia as a child and as a teenager and in Western Europe in my early twenties, I wanted to take this opportunity to go somewhere that would take me through the other side of the mirror of culture that I had hitherto experienced. So I travelled through India on my way to Holland. There I was overwhelmed by the teeming atmosphere of heat, history and endless numbers of people living with complete conviction in an entirely different imaginative space than I had experienced in Sydney, London, Madrid, Tokyo or Paris. And, in contrast to this, there was the awe-inspiring timelessness, soundlessness and spaciousness that seemed to float like an atmosphere around ancient works of art and architecture, and which one might come upon almost alone. On the trundling unairconditioned buses and next to the stupas

I wrote a poem that also passed through the inspirational looking glass of Marguerite Duras' film³¹, which I had seen in my Cinema Studies course at Sydney University, and from which the title was drawn, *India Song*.

India Song

& you were mentioning india
reminding me of india
surrounding me with india

& they will wash in india
surfacing in india
breathing in india

& we are waking in india
forgetting india
arriving in india

& she sat down with india
born in india
left india

& i am dreaming india
become a dream of india
becoming india

³¹ Marguerite Duras (director, writer), *India Song*, France, 1975.

thousand thousand thousand
the thousand states & mountains
& valleys & courtyards thousand
gates & gardens & palaces &
corridors thousand cows & carpets
& temples & dialects & forts &
flies & beggars & bicycles &
face after face after face
stall after stall after stall
son following father following

he stopped
in the rain

she is turning
in the heat

we will pass
in the street

you were bent
in the mud

they squat down³²

In Duras' film everything happens off screen, the camera circles and circles and all that is important is heard obliquely. The poem inspired by that film was perhaps my first

³² First published in Philip Benham (guest editor), *Poetry Australia*, No 96, 1984, *Young Poets' Issue*, p 9, *India Song* subsequently appeared as the last poem before the title sequence in my first book, *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1986, pp. 68-69.

artwork on my journey away from the ‘self’, from the Western, perspectival, experience-framing ‘I’. It is a decentred experience in which the ‘i’, already diminished to a lower case, at first finds itself surrounded by swirling, shifting points of view – memories, dreams and projections - from and about different people at different times, all on a subject which is so vast it is impossible to grasp. By the end of the poem the endless sense of multiplicity and flux has slowed down to a series of ‘snapshot’ recollections, a series of moments of remembered movement, from which the ‘i’ has disappeared.

I continued on from India to the Netherlands to live in a houseboat and “unblock” my unconscious and my creativity, peeling away the trappings of logic and mental encrustation in the Grotowskian sense, as a writer and performer. I was looking for a method, a practice, that would assist me. I was inspired by G.I. Gurdjieff’s *Meetings with Remarkable Men*³³ and in particular Peter Brook’s film of the same title³⁴. At the end of his searching, the protagonist in the film finds a monastery somewhere in the mountains, where everyone is engaged in a beautiful dance-like physical training/meditation. I had relished the dance and acting training I had already been undergoing in various studios in Sydney and but I wanted to go deeper and hoped I might find in KISS’s nexus of different movement and theatrical forms and its dedicated monastic focus some answers, or at least my next step.³⁵

I also believed that this environment, though physically and emotionally challenging, and a very dramatic way to ‘leave home’, would be in the right one for me to research a new, large scale poetic project that had been germinating since 1982. The idea for this work, to be called *The Way Out At Last*, formed in my mind while completing my undergraduate thesis, but I didn’t feel I could write with authority about the ideas I had in mind without experiencing them physically. I didn’t believe I would do this by staying in Sydney University’s Fisher Library. I had always striven to balance the Italian ideas of

³³ G.I. Gurdjieff, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, E. P. Dutton, New York, 1974.

³⁴ Peter Brook (director, writer), *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, UK, 1979. See Brook, *The Shifting Point*, op. cit., pp. 211-212, for comments on how the film has a different structure from the book.

³⁵ See Burnett, *Theatre Research Book KISS*, op. cit., Section III – Training, pp. 91-128.

the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, relishing the balance, for example as a young teenager, between studying karate and tai chi and writing incipient verse in endless diaries, and a little later studying contemporary dance and classical ballet and writing poems that were beginning to appear in journals. And I still loved and valued books. But in the same way that people are now again perhaps turning away from organised religion in favour of alternative (often Eastern) spirituality, I had begun to doubt the usefulness of what one might call ‘organised thinking’.

Epitaph for the Western Intelligentsia

The origins of this doubt and my journey to somewhere else lay in my experiences at university. While on the surface I found campus life during my undergraduate degree at Sydney University a disappointment after all I had read about the Generation of '68, in many ways they were intellectually turbulent times for me. I had had a Western Classical education at Sydney Grammar School (English, History, Music, French, Latin, Mathematics) and grew up in a very aesthetically conscious household. Readings of Samuel Beckett plays were common³⁶ and I was undoubtedly influenced by the aesthetics of my two older brothers, particularly towards the creation of large scale experimental literary works. One of my brothers, Andrew Allen, did his Phd on James Joyce's *Ulysses*³⁷ and the other, Christopher, did his Honours thesis on Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*³⁸. When I reached Sydney University I found myself bombarded in the Fine Arts Department by the dying days of dogmatic Marxism, coupled with early challenges of Foucauldian and Derridean poststructuralism, following the early

³⁶ In particular, I remember *End Game* and *Waiting for Godot*. See Samuel Beckett, *End Game*, Grove Press, New York, 1958, and Faber and Faber, London, 1958 (first published in French as *Fin de Partie*, Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1957; and *Waiting for Godot*, Grove Press, New York, 1954, and Faber and Faber, London, 1956 (first published in French as *En Attendant Godot*, Editions de Minuit, Paris 1952).

³⁷ Joyce, *Ulysses*, op. cit.; Andrew Allen, *Warring Myths: History, Transformation, Regeneration in James Joyce's "Ulysses"*, Ph.D. Thesis, The Department of English, University of Sydney, 1989.

³⁸ Christopher Allen, "A la recherche du temps perdu" by Marcel Proust, Bachelor of Arts Honours Thesis (First Class Honours), The Department of French, University of New South Wales, 1975.

seductions of Roland Barthes' pleasures of the text³⁹. It was also the beginnings of the tide of a highly theoretical and psychoanalytic approach to Cinema Studies⁴⁰. In the History Department, on the other hand, I encountered academics hanging on for dear life to the nineteenth century ideal of 'the past as it really was'⁴¹. While I felt it necessary to fully research and understand all points of view I found them all ultimately fictitious and self-serving. This disillusionment was reflected in my Bachelor of Arts Honours Thesis, *A Disappointed Bridge: The Architecture of Historical Knowledge from Bruni to Vico*⁴², which was a farewell to the idea of the search for empirical 'truth' in historical writing to embrace the conscious illusions of artmaking. Some of these feelings are captured in perhaps my most anthologised poem, written at the time:



³⁹ See Roland Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte*, Paris, 1973; English translation, *The Pleasure of the Text*, New York, 1975, London, 1976.

⁴⁰ Which is only now being reexamined in the cognitive approach of Noël Carroll and others. See, for example, Noël Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, 1996.

⁴¹ "Wie es eigentlich gewesen". For a discussion of "orthodox historiography" and its adherence to what J.H. Hexter calls the "'Reality' Rule", see J.H. Hexter, "The Rhetoric of History", *History and Theory*, 6, 1967, pp. 3-13.

⁴² Richard James Allen, *A Disappointed Bridge: The Architecture of Historical Knowledge from Bruni to Vico*, Bachelor of Arts Honours Thesis (First Class Honours), The Department of History, the University of

Epitaph for the Western Intelligentsia

what we come round to
 in the end
 is that all our thinking
 has brought us nowhere

that the trail-blazing journey
 has ended where it began
 that thought is at best
 a protection against further thought

that the heathens we sought to save
 the masses to educate
 need neither our salvation
 nor our education

that we therefore
 serve no particular purpose
 perform no particular function
 have no particular place to go

& we roll to the ground
 & we cry out like children
 & we bark like dogs
 & we learn to wag our tails⁴³

Sydney, 1982. In particular, see “Epilogue: Friedrich Nietzsche”, pp. 126-139, and “Supplement”, pp. 140-155.

⁴³ Also first published in Benham (ed.), *Poetry Australia*, op. cit., p. 15, this poem has been anthologised several times including as the last poem in the 1st edition of Les. A. Murray (editor), *The New Oxford Book of Australian Verse*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, Oxford, Auckland, New York, 1986, p. 380 (now in its 3rd Edition, 1996, see p. 413), and in Les A. Murray (editor), *The Collins Anthology of Australian*

Escape from the Self

Instead of going to Harvard to pursue a career as a historian, as I had originally planned, I decided instead on the path of an artist – a poet and a dancer and ultimately a filmmaker. So I joined KISS, where I felt I would get a unique chance to learn about physical performance, theatre and acting, and to connect to local overseas dance companies to pursue my dance training.

As a poet, my plan was to write *The Way Out At Last*, a long poem inspired by a tradition that includes in the 20th century Ezra Pound's *Cantos*⁴⁴, Charles Olson's *The Maximus Poems*⁴⁵, Louis Zukofsky's *A*⁴⁶, William Carlos Williams' *Paterson*⁴⁷, Federico Garcia Lorca's *A Poet in New York*⁴⁸, Rainer Maria Rilke's *The Duino Elegies*⁴⁹, Anna Akhmatova's *Requiem*⁵⁰, and César Vallejo's *Trilce*⁵¹, amongst others. Its sources went back further, of course, to spiritual poems like Gerard Manley Hopkins "The Wreck of the Deutschland"⁵² and Arthur Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell*⁵³, and even earlier to William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*⁵⁴ and *Songs on Innocence and Experience*⁵⁵,

Religious Poetry, Collins Dove, Blackburn, Victoria, 1986. It appears in my first book, *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, op. cit., p. 45.

⁴⁴ Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, Faber and Faber, London, 1987.

⁴⁵ Charles Olson, *The Maximus Poems*, Cape Goliard, London, in association with Grossman Publishers, New York, three volumes published in 1960, 1968 and 1975.

⁴⁶ Louis Zukofsky, *A*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978.

⁴⁷ William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, New Directions, New York, 1963.

⁴⁸ Federico Garcia Lorca, *Poet in New York*, translated by Ben Belitt, with an introduction by Angel del Rio, Grove Press, Inc., New York, 1955.

⁴⁹ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, the German text, with an English translation, introduction and commentary by J.B. Leishman & Stephen Spender, Hogarth Press, London, 1942.

⁵⁰ Anna Akhmatova, *Requiem; and, Poem without a hero*, translated by D. M. Thomas, Elek, London, 1976.

⁵¹ For bilingual excerpts from *Trilce*, see César Vallejo, *Selected Poems*, selected and translated by Ed Dorn and Gordon Brotherston with a critical assessment by Gordon Brotherston, Penguin Books, 1976, pp. 27-71.

⁵² Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, selected with an introduction by W. H. Gardner, Penguin Books, 1963, pp. 12-24.

⁵³ Arthur Rimbaud, "A Season in Hell", in *Complete Works*, translated from the French by Paul Schmidt, Harper Colophon Books, New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London, 1976, pp. 193-213.

⁵⁴ William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell; and A song of liberty*, with an introduction by Francis Griffin Stokes, printed for the Florence Press by Chatto and Windus, London, 1911. See also William Blake, *William Blake: A Selection of Poems and Letters*, edited with an introduction by J. Bronowski,

and Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*⁵⁶. It was from the very first to be a spiritual poem, a release from what I perceived as the trap of the mind, a journey beyond the intellect and the ego. In Holland, working at KISS through various movement and theatre exercises that delved into the primal and the unconscious, I still looked for intellectual inspiration and guidance. By chance, I picked up a book by Karl Malkoff, *Escape from the Self: A Study in contemporary American poetry and poetics*, and found his ideas echoed with my instincts:

For most of man's history, he has identified his consciousness with the spiritual...But the absolute separation of spirit and matter, which was probably given its most effective formulation by Descartes, has been especially significant in western intellectual traditions. Eastern thought, particularly religious thought, while aware of this separation, has viewed it as largely illusory. There is an underlying oneness of being that transcends the superficial separateness of bodies and conscious minds. The Self is the One.⁵⁷

“In the west,” Malkoff notes, “there have been many mystics who would subscribe to that doctrine”. However, on the whole, “western man has decided to stand or fall by the success of the finite, separate individual to organise experience and give shape to the universe in both its material and spiritual aspects.”⁵⁸

While I had had a Classical Western education in my teens, imbued with this metaphysics, I had also spent the first ten years of my life living in Asia – four years in

Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Baltimore, Ringwood, 1958: “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell”, c.1793, pp. 93-109.

⁵⁵ William Blake, *Songs of innocence and experience*, Peter Pauper Press, Mount Vernon, New York, 193-? See also *William Blake*, edited by Bronowski, *ibid.*, “Songs of Innocence”, 1789, pp. 26-40, and “Songs of Experience”, 1794, pp. 41-59.

⁵⁶ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Geoffrey L. Bickersteth (translator), Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford and New York, 1986 (this translation first published by Shakespeare Head Press, 1965).

⁵⁷ Karl Malkoff, *Escape from the Self: a study in contemporary American poetry and poetics*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1977, p. 1.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 1, 2.

Vietnam and six years in Japan. Perhaps in part because of this, I had never felt very comfortable with the mainstream intellectual traditions of the West, and was drawn instead to Eastern traditions and Western mystical traditions. Thus when I set out to write my poem of escape from the trap of the mind, I found resonance in Malkoff's assertion that "the common characteristic" of contemporary poetry is "the abandonment of the conscious self, the traditional ego, as the inevitable perspective from which reality must be viewed," and:

The escape from the self is the expression of a broader act of cultural imagination, of the recognition as being outmoded and nearly useless the definitions of self conventionally employed in psychology, philosophy, politics, history, in fact in all the disciplines from which we expect guidance about how to conduct our lives.⁵⁹



⁵⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 2, 17.

Between this time and the period, a decade and a half later, of this DCA, there have been too many stories on my pathway to tell or do more than gesture towards in this essay.



But while there has been much change in my ‘career’, many twists and turns on the pathway, there has also been a deep sense of continuity, a continuation of the search, the development of abiding themes and interests. Both the change and the continuity lie at the roots of the investigations of my DCA period. In this context it is worth quoting Peter Brook, in his discussion of the film *Meetings With Remarkable Men*:

The end of the story is nothing like what people naively believe: it is not the tale of a man who searches and finds an answer. The end of the story shows us, quite directly, how a man who searches finds the material which enables him to go still further.⁶⁰

I mentioned my pathway of searching, my sense of a need to go beyond the intellect, the ego and the self, and the beautiful dance-like physical training/meditation that the searcher in Brook’s film finally discovers at the end of the film. After many years of dancing, studying with some remarkably intuitive and physically wise teachers like Zvi Gotheiner and Maggie Black, but mostly operating out of a New York City artistic environment which could be thrilling, dynamic, challenging, but also very ‘cool’, mostly eschewing content for form, meaning for irony, and certainly spirituality for cynicism, I found my version of Brook’s/Gurdjieff’s vision of something else up a few flights of steps in a little studio on 2nd Avenue called Jivamukti Yoga.

⁶⁰ Brook, *The Shifting Point*, op. cit., pp. 212-213.



The work that my artistic collaborator Karen Pearlman and I had done as *That Was Fast* based in New York was unique at the time, as the reviews attest⁶¹. In the mid-eighties we were some of the first people to bring highly sophisticated text and dance together successfully in performance, and among the first to introduce content and meaning which were not only self-referential back into postmodern dance and performance in an environment in which, until the advent of AIDS, artists generally ran in the opposite direction. We operated quite successfully in the ‘downtown’ scene. We received generally good notices in *The New York Times* and the *Village Voice*, had our work

⁶¹ An example: “The text’s intensity consistently matched that of the choreography. Ms. Pearlman and Mr. Allen achieved real harmony of poetry and dance without making either art imitate the other,” Jack Anderson, “Choreography Combines Poetry and Speed”, *The New York Times*, Saturday, March 26, 1988. Another: “What Karen Pearlman and Richard Allen do – dance to poetry composed by Allen – has an ominously familiar ring to it. Haven’t we all had it with the angst-ridden choreographic response to portentous verse? Relax. Their duo company *That Was Fast* proved at Dance Place over the weekend that text and movement can be melded in refreshingly new ways.” Suzanne Levy, “Sensual Poetry & Motion”, *The Washington Post*, Monday, December 5, 1988.

produced by leading theatres known for ‘cutting edge’ work like PS 122 and the St Marks Danspace and Poetry Projects, had regular audiences which came to see our shows, and had our share of funding. In a city rife with crack, homelessness and violence, where ‘surviving was succeeding’, we achieved a great deal more than that: a distinctive and innovative style, a body of work, an internationally recognised level of excellence in our practice. But any impulse towards the spiritual was neither supported nor inspired. However, going into a Yoga class in the early nineties with Sharon Gannon and David Life at Jivamukti Yoga Centre reopened that door for me. I knew immediately that I had discovered another kind of home, a home in the spirit. But this, of course, was only the beginning of another unfolding journey.

Imaginary Landscapes

‘Yoga’ is a Sanskrit term meaning ‘to yoke’. As Sharon Gannon and David Life explain it, “The yoga practitioner seeks to yoke his or her individual soul with cosmic consciousness”⁶². The term is first found in the most ancient prehistoric scripture, the *Vedas*⁶³, and there are images of Yoga ‘*asanas*’ or postures on sculptures dating back thousands of years⁶⁴. The various practices of Yoga were systematized around the

⁶² Gannon and Life, *Jivamukti Yoga*, op. cit., p. 3.

⁶³ *ibid.*, p 21.

⁶⁴ For example, Jane McIntosh and Clint Twist note in their *Civilizations: Ten Thousand Years of Ancient History*, BBC, 2004?, that the civilisation in the Indus Valley, the only non-violent one in prehistory, dating back to 2600 BCE (p. 58): “contains...hints of later developments, strongly suggesting that many aspects of Hinduism have their roots in Indus religion. A seal from Mohenjo Daro, for example, shows a figure very similar to the Hindu god Shiva, seated in a yoga position and surrounded by wild animals” (p 65). Michael Jordan also writes, “It is suggested that [Yoga] may have been practiced since very early times in India and the argument is supported by engraved seals discovered at Mohenjo Daro, one of the two main centres of the Indus valley civilisation. Some of these seals depict postures which compare closely with at least one of the meditative postures or *asanas* described for classical *yoga*.” Michael Jordan, *Spirit of the East*, Carlton Books Ltd, London, 2003, p. 58. For a more in depth discussion of the discovery of these seals in the context of a broader discussion of the origins and nature of yoga, see T.K.V. Desikachar, written with R.H. Cravens, *Health, Healing and Beyond: Yoga and the Living Tradition*, Aperture Foundation, New York, 1998, “Chapter Three: The Ancient Teachings”, pp 51-83, in particular pp 51-53.

second century BCE by the *rishi* or sage named Patañjali in the *Yoga Sutras*.⁶⁵ Yoga was introduced to the West in 1893 by Swami Vivekananda, a devotee of the nineteenth century Indian saint Ramakrishna.⁶⁶ There have been many gurus and Yoga schools since that time.⁶⁷ The lineage that I owe most of my training to comes through Rama Mohan Brahmacharya to Sri T. Krishnamacharya to Sri K. Pattabhi Jois, with whom I have studied. B.K.S. Iyengar, T.K.V. Desikachar, and A. G. Mohan are other significant students of Krishnamacharya who have undoubtedly influenced my understanding of Yoga through their students with whom I have studied and/or through their writings.



⁶⁵ Gannon and Life, *Jivamukti Yoga*, op. cit., pp. 21-3. For the debate over the dating of Patañjali's *Yoga Sutras*, see Diane Collinson, Kathryn Plant, and Robert Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, Routledge, London and New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 82.

⁶⁶ Gannon and Life, *ibid.*, p. 235. See Vivekananda, Swami, *Vedanta Philosophy: Raja Yoga*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, Ltd, London, 19--?. For a discussion of Vivekananda life and thought, see Collinson, Plant, and Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, *ibid.*, pp. 140-149.

⁶⁷ For the deeper roots of yoga, see Feuerstein, *The Deeper Dimensions of Yoga*, op. cit., "What is Yoga?", pp. 3-9, "Mapping Yoga", pp. 10-12, "Ten Fundamental Principles of Yoga", pp. 21-24, "Traditional Definitions of Yoga", p. 31, "Yoga in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism", pp. 32-35, "Forty Types of Hindu Yoga", pp. 36-38, "The Tree of Hindu Yoga", pp. 39-52. For a discussion of contemporary manifestations, see "Styles of Hatha-Yoga", pp. 53-56. Rebecca Somerville provides a lucid introduction to the history of Yoga in "Yoga through the Ages", *Australian Yoga Life*, Issue 3, 2002, pp. 38-41. This series continues in later issues with Anna Nolan, "A History of Yoga in Australia", *Australian Yoga Life*, Issue 4, 2002, pp. 38-41, and Anna Nolan, "A History of Yoga in Australia", *Australian Yoga Life*, Issue 5, 2003, pp. 38-42.

Since I began a serious study of Yoga⁶⁸, inspired by Gannon and Life's very radical "vision of a modern yoga method based on the ancient traditions"⁶⁹, the practice has seeped progressively into my consciousness and my artworks. The first signs of it can be seen in works in the early nineties like *Blue Cities*.



⁶⁸ I actually first began Yoga as a child in Australia with my mother, Jocelyn Allen, who was practicing with Swami Sarasvati books and television programs in the early seventies. For example, see Swami Sarasvati, *Enjoy Living through Yoga*, Sarasvati Presentations, Kenthurst, NSW, 197-?. (Earlier in Japan, I had also studied Judo in a traditional Japanese way. After arriving in Australia, from the age of ten, I also studied figure skating, going regularly to the ice rink with my father, Robert Allen, who loved ice dancing.)

⁶⁹ Gannon and Life, *Jivamukti Yoga*, op. cit., p. 11.

Blue Cities began as a workshop piece at Sidetrack's Contemporary Performance Week in Sydney (1991), developed into short character based dance and text duet commissioned by Colloquium Contemporary Dance Exchange in New York (1991-2), was made into a short dance film in collaboration with Stephen Burstow of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (1993)⁷⁰, then workshopped in an Australian Film Television and Radio School scriptwriting course (1994), to become a full evening 'dance play' performed by Karen Pearlman and myself, which toured through Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra, Armidale and Maitland, and back to the US including performances at the American Association of Australian Literary Studies Conference at Vassar College (1994), after which it was expanded into its final form, with a larger cast of characters, for Tasdance (1995), the state dance company of Tasmania that Pearlman and I co-directed. To coincide with these final performances, the text was published as part of my fourth book, *What To Name Your Baby*⁷¹.

At its heart, *Blue Cities* features a confrontation on the border of heaven between a wild, grasping and ditsy 'Murderer' or 'Party Girl' and a controlled, solemn and melancholy 'Border Angel'. For better or worse, it was one of the first works that I was aware of before what seemed like an enormous international wave of artworks which revisited the metaphor of the angel to examine the predicament of our human and spiritual selves. The exception being, of course, Wim Wenders and Peter Handke's dreamlike poetic film masterpiece, *Wings of Desire*, which arguably inspired the whole 'movement'⁷². *Wings of Desire*'s seamless mix of poetry, image, sound and acrobatics certainly was an integer for me in possibilities of cross artform work melded with narrative cinema. To my mind, it was the greatest of the contemporary 'angel' artworks, matched only, perhaps, by the

⁷⁰ Stephen Burstow (director), Richard James Allen (writer), Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman (choreographers), *Blue Cities*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation in association with That Was Fast, Sydney, Australia, 1993. First broadcast nationally in 1994 and rebroadcast regularly since that time.

⁷¹ Richard James Allen, *What To Name Your Baby*, Paper Bark Press, Paper Bark Press in association with Tasdance, Brooklyn and Launceston, 1995, pp. 17-30. The text for *Blue Cities*, in a slightly earlier form, was first published in Manfred Jurgensen, *Riding Out: New Writing from Around the World*, Outrider/Phoenix Publications, Brisbane, 1994, pp. 432-450.

⁷² Wenders, Wim (director), Wenders, Wim and Handke, Peter (writers), *Wings of Desire*, A German-French co-production between Road Movies GmbH, Berlin and Argos Films S.A., Paris together with Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Köln, 1987.

last great work on this theme, Tony Kushner's theatrical epic on the subject of AIDS, *Angels in America*⁷³, perhaps the most important work of 'traditional' mainstage American playwrighting since the heyday of Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, William Inge and Eugene O'Neill.

It is possible to see in *Blue Cities* the beginnings of a greater influence of Yogic spirituality in the choreographic contrast between an 'information age' Western dance vocabulary and ancient Eastern Yogic physical vocabulary, and in the struggle between Western and Eastern philosophical traditions of ideas about dying and the afterlife. As Pearlman says:

How can we know anything about the after life? It could be a place (if it is a place), as in *Blue Cities*, where people have to let go of their attachments before they can gain admittance into paradise. Then again, maybe not. We chose this imaginary landscape precisely because no one could tell us what would happen there. It was therefore a very fertile ground for our imaginings.⁷⁴

Yogic spiritual themes and concerns, in particular the idea of letting go of attachments to move to the next level of consciousness (as well as other practices referred to here, in particular the creative strategy of using imaginary landscapes to create a broader palette for creativity; and the practice of evolving ideas over a number of years, in a number of diverse contexts and across a number of hybrid arts forms), develop further in the works undertaken during the DCA. In fact it might be said that the further I have progressed in my practice of Yoga and understanding of its philosophy the more these influences can be detected. In the next section I will begin to consider in greater depth some of the philosophical ideas behind Yoga which I have found useful in my artistic path.

⁷³ Tony Kushner, *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches*, Theatre Communications Group, New York, 1993. For a list of the play's professional productions from its first workshop production in 1990 to the time of publication, see pp. v-vii.

Mental Fluctuations

Mohan, in his *Yoga for Body, Breath, and Mind: A Guide to Personal Reintegration*, writes about the way in which Yoga can help with the discomforts of living with a fractured sense of self which Malkoff, quoted earlier, and many others have spoken about and I have often experienced:

All of us have experienced times when it felt as though everything was coming apart, disintegrating around us into so many pieces, and we were without a way of holding them together. Yet often what is most fragmented and chaotic about the situation is not the events themselves, but the state of our own minds.⁷⁵



⁷⁴ Karen Pearlman, “Co-Artistic Director’s Statement”, in Allen, *What To Name Your Baby*, op. cit., p. 31.

⁷⁵ A. G. Mohan, *Yoga for Body, Breath, and Mind: A Guide to Personal Integration*, edited by Kathleen Miller, Rudra Press, Portland, and International Association of Yoga Therapists, Los Angeles, 1993, p. 3.

In other words, rather than experiencing the world as either disordered, falling to bits, or even its dualistic opposite, chaos becoming ordered, Mohan sees that it is *the mind* that creates its own fragmented and chaotic state of being and then participates in identification with its point of view on this state of being. However, he suggests that there is also the potential for the mind to move toward an enlightened state:

On the other hand, we have also had occasions – albeit temporary – when we have experienced a state of integration. This is a state in which our minds perceive things clearly, when an underlying sense of order seems to prevail, and we feel full of a sense of love for everything around us. In short, we feel free.⁷⁶



⁷⁶ *ibid.*

This ‘underlying sense of order’ that he refers to is not the order imposed by the mind on ‘reality’, but the order that is perceived once one is free from the delusory ordering or disordering patterns of the mind. It is freedom from the mind. How is this possible?

We all wish to experience that state again. We even hope to find some way to actually *live* that way, instead of repeatedly falling into the clutches of our desire, anger, greed, frustration, sorrow, and despair...Reintegration is the process of bringing us back to that state. It is the process of changing a wandering mind into a centred one, a wanting mind into a contented one, a self-indulging mind into a self-fulfilling one. It is a process called yoga.⁷⁷

With his particular focus on yoga therapy, Mohan takes a very practical approach to this problem. Personal reintegration can be translated as:

A clear, unimpeded mind that sees clearly...We can also use the word *samadhi*, or “unity” to describe this state of integration. It is a state in which we are entirely absorbed or joined with the object of perception. No separation exists. In short, the state of integration is yoga.⁷⁸

What prevents us from having “a clear, unimpeded mind that sees clearly” is precisely the mind itself:

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 3-4.



This state of integration, or unity, is not something we create from scratch by diligent study or practice. At our center we are already integrated. We are all inherently capable of clear perception. The deepest state within us is always one of integration. Our minds are what mask that clarity, causing distortion and errors in action and judgement that lead to distress...It is in the mind that the lack of integration occurs...The foremost symptom of this situation is known as *dukha*, or “suffering”.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 4, 7.



Mohan is of course basically restating in practical terms the philosophy that Patañjali outlined in the *Yoga Sutras*. As Diane Collinson, Kathryn Plant and Robert Wilkinson summarise it in *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, for Patañjali, Yoga is a method for “freeing the mind from false beliefs” leading to an “insight into ultimate reality”. “The awareness of the ego leads us to the mistaken belief that sense impressions and reactions belong to it...are private and subjective.” This is an error, according the *Yoga Sutras*, which argue that:

All impressions and reactions are... ‘mental fluctuation’ or ‘thought-waves’, and ‘yoga is the control of thought-waves in the mind’. When we reach the stage of perfect contemplation, we enter our real nature, the *purusha*, which is different from the empirical mind...we rid ourselves of the false notion that we are separate, unique individuals. Instead, our true selves are not differentiated from each other, but are *atman*...Through yoga, the phenomenal mind rids itself of itself to allow...the union of *atman*, or that within the self which is ultimately real, with *Brahman*, or ultimate reality in its universal aspect.⁸⁰

Each of the artworks in my DCA resonates with these Yogic ideas of “freeing the mind from false beliefs” to reach an “insight into ultimate reality”. So, for instance, Rubberman in the film *Rubberman Accepts The Nobel Prize* must let go of a limited understanding of himself to realise his greater potential and survive. The terrorised woman in the film *No Surrender* must die in the ‘real world’ in order to be taught by her spiritual self the true scope of her inner resources. Only then is she reborn and able to fight back in the ‘real world’. Thursday in the book *Thursday’s Fictions* must let go of her attachment to her personal identity and even her beautiful ‘thought waves’ (her poems⁸¹) in order to reach a final release from the pain brought about by the cycle of her ambitions. In the next section I will begin to look at the confluence of these ideas with *The Kamikaze Mind*.

⁸⁰ Collinson, Plant and Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, op. cit., pp. 81, 83. For a definition of *atman*, see Georg Feuerstein, *The Shambala Encyclopedia of Yoga*, Shambala Press, New York, London, 1997, pp. 41-42. For an in depth discussion of the idea of *atman*, see Prem Lata Sharma, “Atman”, in Bettina Baumer (editor), *Eight Selected Terms*, in Kapila Vatsyayan (general editor), *Kalatattvakosa: A Lexicon of Fundamental Concepts of the Indian Arts*, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, and Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1988, pp. 41-70. For a definition of *Brahman*, see Feuerstein, *ibid.*, pp. 62-63; for an in depth discussion see Bettina Baumer, “Brahman”, in Baumer/Vatsyayan, *ibid.*, pp. 1-22.

⁸¹ Published to coincide with the original stage production of *Thursday’s Fictions* in Richard James Allen, *The Air Dolphin Brigade*, Paper Bark Press (Australia) & Shoestring Press (United Kingdom) in association with Tasdance, Brooklyn, Launceston, and Nottingham, 1995.

The Essential Nature of Mind

Sogyal Rinpoche's ideas reflect the Tibetan Buddhist tradition rather than Yoga. Nonetheless he speaks about the false notions of the mind in ways that echo Patañjali and the Yogic tradition⁸². In his *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, Rinpoche writes: "Confined in the dark, narrow cage of our own making which we take for the whole universe, very few of us can even begin to imagine another dimension to reality." It is:



⁸² Since first making this observation in an earlier draft of this essay, and working with it as a creative inspiration earlier still, I have found that in his most recent work, *The Deeper Dimensions of Yoga*, Feuerstein, perhaps the foremost Western scholar of Yoga, also finds "that, *in practice*, there is a striking similarity between Hindu and Buddhist forms of Yoga", such that, he says, "very recently...I began to think that, perhaps in the near future, I ought to turn my attention as a writer also to Buddhist Yoga in the

The mind that thinks, plots, desires, manipulates, that flares up in anger, that creates and indulges in waves of negative emotions and thoughts, that has to go on and on asserting, validating, and confirming its ‘existence’ by fragmenting, conceptualizing, and solidifying experience. The ordinary mind is the ceaselessly shifting prey of external influences, habitual tendencies, and conditioning.⁸³

This is the mind as I sought to portray it in *The Kamikaze Mind*, which originally had the subtitle, “A Portrait of the Fluctuations of the Mind”. But Rinpoche also argues that beneath this “flickering, unstable, grasping” mind, caught in an illusory cycle of life and death, is “the very nature of mind, its innermost essence, which is absolutely and always untouched by change or death”, what the Tibetans call “buddha nature”:

Gradually, then, we become aware in ourselves of the calm and sky-like presence of what Milarepa calls the deathless and unending nature of mind. And as this new awareness begins to become vivid and almost unbroken, there occurs what the Upanishads call “a turning about in the seat of consciousness,” a personal, utterly non-conceptual revelation of what we are, why we are here, and how we should act, which amounts in the end to nothing less than a new life, a new birth, almost, you could say, a resurrection.⁸⁴

This is also the mind that I sought to portray, or at least hint at, catches glimpses of, in *The Kamikaze Mind* – which is the portrait of the mind of a metaphorical astronaut who has destroyed his mind in order to free it. It is the portrait of a mind, caught in its delusions, but also attempting to ‘turn about in the seat of consciousness’.

Hesse’s *Siddhartha* gave me a first glimpse of this ‘turning about in the seat of consciousness’ and perhaps in part because I received this inspiration through an artwork,

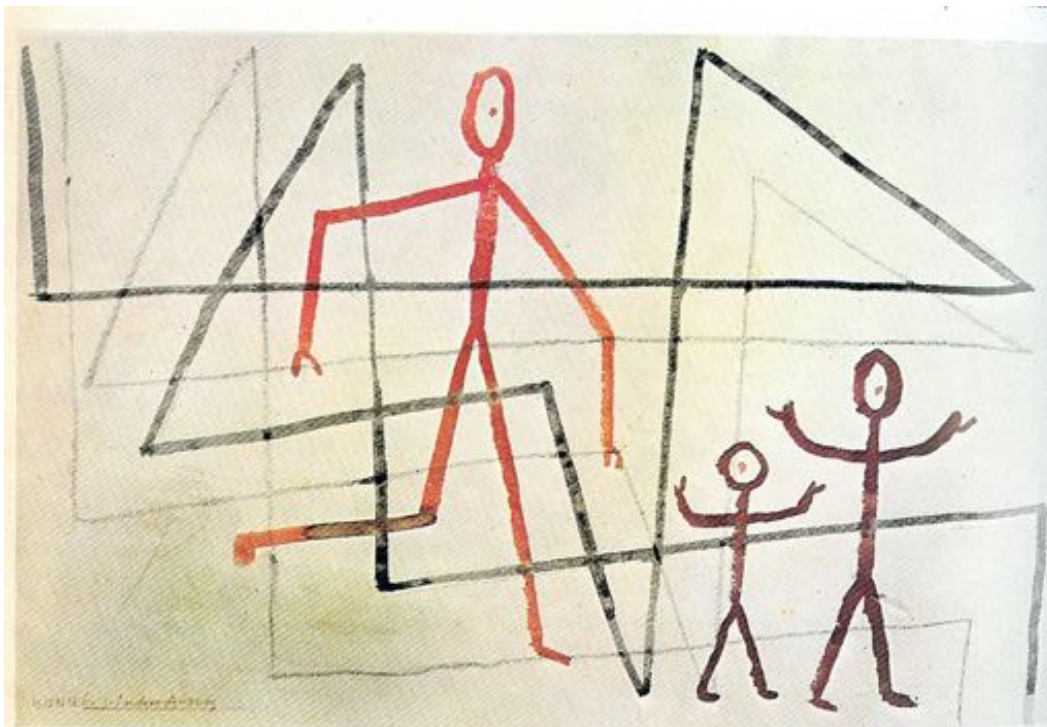
form of Tibetan Buddhism.” See “Crossing the Boundary between Hinduism and Buddhism via Tantra-Yoga”, Feuerstein, *The Deeper Dimensions*, op. cit., pp. 57-59. The quotes are from pp. 58 and 57.

⁸³ Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, edited by Patrick Gaffney and Andrew Harvey, Rider, 1992, p. 41, 46

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 46, 40, 47.

I have continued to interpret it artistically. Yoga and other spiritual study have intensified this process for me and I have come to see both artistic and spiritual practices as informing each other in a double helix, both becoming ‘turnings about in the seat of consciousness’. Other images, fed into this creative vortex over the years, have also been potent for me in the exploration of the paradoxes of the human mind. In the next section I will discuss one that resonates with my Western heritage and provides the structural metaphor for this essay - the idea of the labyrinth.

Escape from the Labyrinth



The title for *The Way Out At Last* was borrowed from the title of a Paul Klee painting, *L'Issue enfin trouvée*, which I interpreted to be of a man and two children finding their

way out of the labyrinth of the mind.⁸⁵ This poem became the seedbed for an expanding cycle of poetic works that bears its name. The latest installment of *The Way Out At Last Cycle* is *The Kamikaze Mind*, which is a portrait of a mind caught in a linguistic labyrinth, the form of which is a dictionary. As one of the lines reads:

Labyrinth She complained that my mind was a labyrinth, she got lost in it.⁸⁶

The Kamikaze Mind takes the Western logical informational form of the dictionary and turns it into a multidirectional reading playground. The ‘dictionary’ can be experienced in linear and non-linear pathways. It is possible to travel through it with the sense that it has some kind of a beginning, middle and end, some sense of a story and the development of characters. At the same time, it is possible to skip, hop, trip, tumble and slide across it laterally, backwards and forwards, leaping from association to association, following the thread of a character or a metaphor, finding connections and disconnections by chance⁸⁷. This latter way of reading, while liberating, could also lead one to feel trapped within it, within the fascinations and horrors of the mind – with “no exit”, “huis clos”, as Jean-Paul Sartre put it⁸⁸ – no “way out”. This is made explicit in some of the lines/‘definitions’:

X If ‘X’ marked the spot, it might be easier to discover the way out at last.⁸⁹

Way Out Once inside, one can never leave. There is no outside.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ See Paul Klee, *Klee*, text by Marcel Marnat, Leon Amiel Publisher, New York, 1974, plate 69 *L’Issue enfin trouvée*, 1935, *The Way out at Last*. See also plate 81, *Avec les deux égarés*, 1938, *With the Two Lost Ones*. In the later painting two people are lost inside a labyrinth, the linear patterns which gives direction and energy to the earlier painting are instead floating, fragmented and disjunctive. Not coincidentally, in terms of the themes discussed in this essay, Klee, a remarkably independent creative artist, summed up his creative credo with the phrase, “Art does not reproduce what can be seen: it makes things visible.” This phrase is quoted in Marnat’s introductory essay to the paintings, which also discusses the “baptismal ceremony”, as Klee jokingly described his naming process, which added another dimension, often poetic, charming or humorous, to the artworks.

⁸⁶ Allen, *The Kamikaze Mind*, op. cit., p. 66.

⁸⁷ An example of this kind of reading is given in the last section of this essay, “The Way Out: A Play and a Dream”, pp. 194-198.

⁸⁸ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Huis Clos*, translated as *No Exit*, see *No exit, and three other plays*, Vintage Books, New York, 1956.

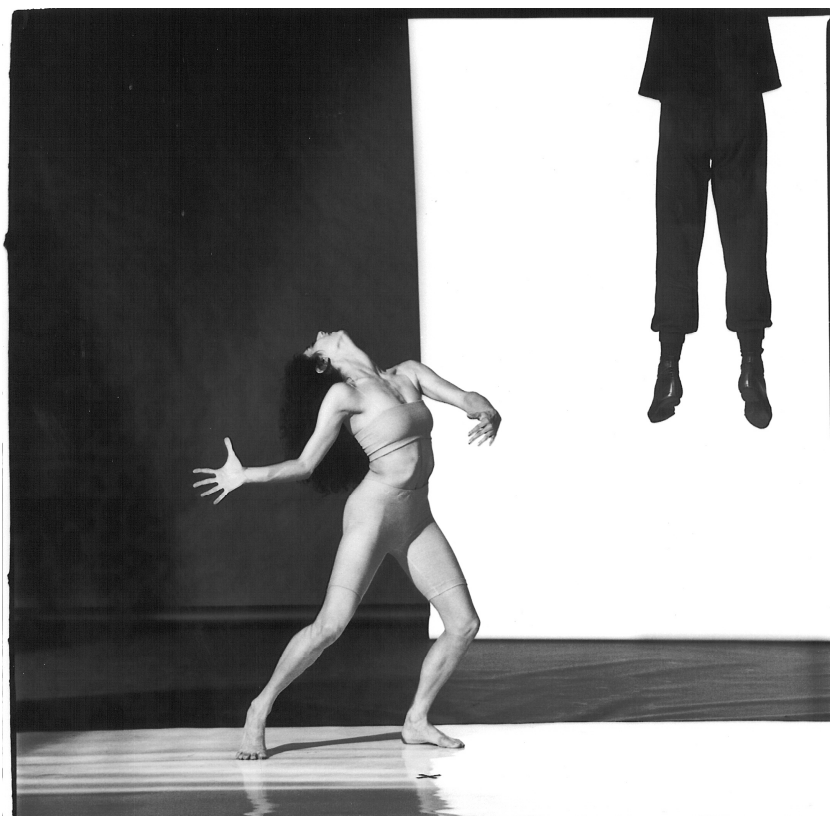
Out You reach out to me, bringing me back to the present. “Don’t imagine that you are destined to discover the way out at last when you are wandering inside yourself.”⁹¹

But then the text circles around and contradicts itself:

Presume You would be presuming to think that I want to get out of here or find the centre of this labyrinth.⁹²

There was even a line, now cut from the final manuscript, as too literal, which read:

Labyrinth A poem to get lost in, literally.



⁸⁹ Allen, *The Kamikaze Mind*, op. cit., p. 142.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 135.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 86.

So, following the thread of this metaphor, if the unenlightened mind is a labyrinth, then, particularly for an artist, what is the pathway through the labyrinth of the mind? Can art be that pathway? Are there many pathways? Are there *just* pathways? Or do they lead to a ‘centre’? If so, how does one reach it? Is the ‘centre’ a dualistic Western idea, implying, as it does, a periphery? Or does it parallel the Eastern idea of focusing the mind, seeing clearly - the “state in which we are entirely absorbed or joined with the object of perception”⁹³ In a definition very close to this definition of Yoga, D. H. Lawrence defined art as “a form of supremely delicate awareness and atonement – meaning at-oneness, the state of being at one with the object”⁹⁴ If the dualism dissolved, would not the labyrinth dissolve with it, like a mirage? And would not the seeker lost in it also dissolve? But how to get from ‘here’ to ‘there’?

In seeking to define pathway, I find two contradictory ideas, each of which is accurate, and, which together echo with my journey. In his *The Shambala Encyclopedia of Yoga*, Georg Feuerstein defines:

Path. Spiritual life is almost universally represented as a path that leads from a state of spiritual ignorance (avidya) to wisdom or enlightenment”⁹⁵

On the other hand, in *A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, I find the more mundane “**Path** Whence pathfinder, pathway, footpath, derives from Old English path, paeth, Old Frisan and Old Saxon, path, Middle Dutch paden, to walk along,”⁹⁶ And a bit further down on the same page the laterally relevant, though perhaps etymologically

⁹² *ibid.*, p. 94.

⁹³ Mohan, *Yoga for Body, Breath, and Mind*, op. cit., p. 4.

⁹⁴ D. H. Lawrence, *Assorted Articles*, New York, 1930, reprinted in *The Later D. H. Lawrence*, edited by William York Tindall, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, New York, 1952, p. 203, quoted in Ethel F. Cornwell, *The “Still Point”: Theme and Variations in the Writings of T. S. Eliot, Coleridge, Yeats, Henry James, Virginia Woolf, and D. H. Lawrence*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey: 1962, p. 246.

⁹⁵ Georg Feuerstein, *The Shambala Encyclopedia of Yoga*, op. cit., p. 218.

⁹⁶ Eric Partridge, *A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, Routledge and Kegan-Paul, London, Melbourne and Henley, 1966, p. 475.

unrelated, “**pathic** Latin, pathicus, Greek pathikos, derives from Greek pathos, suffering, adopted...by English with accruing senses: from pathein, to suffer”⁹⁷

Is a pathway a road from ignorance to enlightenment, or simply a place to walk along? Is it a movement toward a release from suffering or a lively engagement with suffering, which might, in other terms, be called ‘drama’? These and other questions have exercised my mind in its artistic path, keeping in mind, of course, in true Zen Buddhist style, that the path can be a distraction from the path. Returning to *The Kamikaze Mind*:

Conundrum Using the mind to examine the mind is like shaving with a blowtorch.⁹⁸

And this essay, it must not be forgotten, though perhaps benefiting from a momentary backward glance, is nevertheless only one more step along that complex and contradictory pathway. Next I will examine one of my guides on this path.

The Peace Which Passeth Understanding

When Lawrence defined art as “the state of being at one with the object”, he said that this state was reached “from the depth of my religious experience”.⁹⁹ In contrast to this, I do not regard my work as ‘religious’. In his essay, “Dante”, Eliot draws a distinction between what I might call ‘a poet of the spirit’ and a ‘religious poet’ which I find helpful.

We have...in English literature great religious poets, but they are, by comparison to Dante, *specialists*. That is all they can do. And Dante, because he could do everything else, is for that reason the greatest

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

⁹⁸ Allen, *The Kamikaze Mind*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

⁹⁹ D.H. Lawrence, *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Aldous Huxley, New York, 1932, p. 192, quoted in Cornell, *The “Still Point”*, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

‘religious’ poet, though to call him a ‘religious poet’ would be to abate his universality. The *Divine Comedy* expresses everything in the way of emotion, between depravity’s despair and the beatific vision, that man is capable of experiencing.”¹⁰⁰

A “width of emotional range” has always been a goal in my writing. And it underlies my attempt, like Dante and Eliot, to explore the long form poem as a vehicle for expressing the heights and depths of human emotion. Eliot and behind him Dante have also been my guides in spiritual aesthetics. The former wrote, in his essay “Poetry and Drama”, of the function of art as a pathway towards spiritual reintegration, wholeness and unity:

For it is ultimately the function of art, in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of an order *in* reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness, and reconciliation; and then leave us, as Virgil left Dante, to proceed toward a region where that guide can avail us no farther.¹⁰¹

It was not lost on me from my first reading of it in high school, that even Eliot’s great labyrinthine masterpiece of the fragmentation of the self, *The Waste Land* –

‘On Margate Sands,
I can connect
Nothing with nothing...

These fragments I have shored against my ruins¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ T.S.Eliot, “Dante,” *Selected Prose*, edited by John Hayward, Penguin Books, Melbourne, London, Baltimore, 1953, p. 101.

¹⁰¹ Eliot, “Poetry and Drama,” in *ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

¹⁰² T. S. Eliot, “The Waste Land”, in *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot*, London: Faber and Faber, 1969, pp. 70, 75.

– (originally titled ‘He Do The Police In Different Voices’¹⁰³) ends with a similar call to peace: “Shantih shantih shantih”. In his footnotes, Eliot writes: “Shantih. Repeated as here, a formal ending to an Upanishad. ‘The Peace which passeth understanding’ is our equivalent to this word.”¹⁰⁴ So a yearning for ‘union’ underlies even this magnificent manifestation of chaos.



Although *The Way Out At Last Cycle* follows a different architecture from *The Waste Land*, this idea of a yearning for union underlying a magnificent manifestation of chaos would be a perfect way to describe its latest instalment, *The Kamikaze Mind*. There are, of course, many other influences upon it, and multiple worlds of ideas with which it interacts beyond Eliot’s, some of which shall be discussed later in this essay. But I acknowledge this guidance from one who turned to the East for his illumination of a sense of unity that he felt lacking in the shards of Western civilisation. And, on a very practical level, having read Eliot’s poem, I never approached with resistance or mistrust the repeated utterance of “Shantih”, along with various other chants, ‘Om’s, and mantras, that often occur at the beginning and the end of a Yoga practice, to help connect the

¹⁰³ See Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot: A Life*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1984, p. 110.

practitioner with the divine within and around them. It made intuitive sense to me that Patañjali should write in the *Yoga Sutras*: “Always chant OM; God is OM, supreme music”¹⁰⁵.

Not that Eliot made it seem easy, to find a pathway from fragmentation and despair towards some kind of wholeness, as we will see in the next section.

Shabby Equipment

In the *East Coker* section of *Four Quartets* Eliot wrote about the difficulties of the artistic pathway in a surprisingly honest and vulnerable way.

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years –
 Twenty years largely wasted, the years of *l’entre deux guerres* -
 Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt
 Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
 Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
 For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
 One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture
 Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
 With shabby equipment always deteriorating
 In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
 Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to conquer
 By strength and submission, has already been discovered
 Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
 To emulate – but there is no competition –

¹⁰⁴ Eliot, “The Waste Land”, in *The Complete Poems and Plays*, pp. 75, 80.

¹⁰⁵ Patañjali’s *Yoga Sutra* I:27, translated by Gannon and Life, *Jivamukti Yoga*, p. 217. See Chapter 11: Nadam: Listening for the Unstruck Sound”, pp. 217 -229, for further discussion of chanting and mantras.

There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
 And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
 That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
 For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.¹⁰⁶

Perhaps because of my own experience of it, I have always been drawn to that moment of self-conscious acknowledgement by the artist of both the humanity of their struggle and the fragility of their efforts. Guiseppe Ungaretti's work seemed to capture that for me – where all that is left of the transience of the moment was the carefully balanced memory of a moment, perhaps on a bridge, always ready to collapse like a house of cards. This quality is caught with delicate fierceness in his poem “Night Watch”:

Night Watch

All through the night
 bundled
 beside a friend, his dead body
 still warm
 his grinning face watching
 the full moon
 with his flushed hands
 piercing
 my solitude
 I have written letters
 crammed with love
 And never
 have I grasped life
 so tight¹⁰⁷

See also Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati (Ramamurti S. Mishra, M.D.)'s resonant *Nada Yoga: The Science, Psychology, and Philosophy of Anahata Nada Yoga*, Ananda Ashram Press, Monroe, New York, 1989.

¹⁰⁶ T.S. Eliot, “East Coker”, from *Four Quartets*, in *The Complete Poems and Plays*, p 182.

Ungaretti's poems are like fragile "letters / crammed with love", a grasping on to life while eyeballing death.

The richness, struggle and fragility of the creative moment were there in one of the first poems I ever read, John Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale". A flight of fancy lifts him, inspired by the "light-winged Dryad of the trees"¹⁰⁸, "on the viewless wings of Poesy"¹⁰⁹. The realm of art would seem to hold within it the opportunity for transcendence. Hence, the very famous lines:

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Giuseppe Ungaretti, *The Buried Harbour: Selected Poems of Giuseppe Ungaretti*, translated by Kevin Hart, The Leros Press, Canberra, 1990, p. 25. The original Italian reads:

Veglia

Cima Quattro il 23 dicembre 1915

Un'inter nottata
buttato vicino
a un compagno
massacrato
con la sua bocca
digrignata
volta al plenilunio
con la congestione
delle sue mani
penetrata
nel mio silenzio
ho scritto
lettere piene d'amore

Non sono mai stato
tanto
attaccato alla vita (ibid., p. 24)

¹⁰⁸ John Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale", I, in John Keats, *Selected Poems*, edited with an introduction and notes by John Barnard, Penguin Books, London, 1988, p. 171

¹⁰⁹ Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale", IV, ibid., p. 170.

But he cannot sustain it:

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
 Adieu! The fancy cannot cheat so well
 As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.¹¹¹

Keats's question at the end of poem, "Was it a vision, or a waking dream?...- Do I wake or sleep?"¹¹² has echoed for me from the beginning of my artistic practice, resonating as it does with the waking/sleeping qualities of the unenlightened mind that has caught glimpses of something transcendent but can't quite seem to hold onto them. The first poem in my first published book, *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems* is called "Half-light". Its subject is the half-awake, half-asleep, moment of creativity and insight. As in the Keats poem, its speaker wants to escape the unforgiving, outside world:

Close the door, I hate the footsteps
 in the hall
 knocking like a dry heart.¹¹³

A leap towards the other, creative world, the poem ends with the lines:

Open the dying sun
 let us climb inside.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale", VI, *ibid.*

¹¹¹ Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale", VIII, *ibid.*

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ Allen, "Half-light", written in 1979, first published in *Neos:Young Writers*, Volume 1, Number 2, February 1982, p. 10, and republished in *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*



The dreamlike and yet self-conscious state of creativity is portrayed again but in a different way in *Thursday's Fictions*. A formal experiment, the book is divided into seven sections to correspond to the seven days of the week. Each is anthropomorphised as a character who carries forward the narrative. In the second section, "Friday's Reward", Friday's brain has split into two warring halves, as a result, it eventually becomes clear, of having committed a terrible crime. In a sense Friday's Left Brain becomes the audience, albeit a very critical and suspicious one, for the apparent flights of fancy of Friday's Right Brain. Friday's Right Brain, which "hate[s] reality", but which, through a series of metaphors, will eventually evoke it, says:



I feel it now.

The wonderful cloud
is around me. This
is heaven...I don't know
how many moments like
this I have left. When
the rain of heaven
descends upon me like
a warm golden shower.
Everything is in slow
and full motion. Was
the womb like this?¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Allen, *Thursday's Fictions*, op. cit., pp. 28, 31, 32.

After imagining the visitation of an Indian God, who “gives me these /medications in sleep, /these meditations /in sleep”¹¹⁶, Friday’s Right Brain goes too far for his hard-nosed, logical and practical Left Brain, who rudely awakens him from his reverie with the words: “Celebrating the need /to hallucinate again, /are we?”¹¹⁷



This self-conscious awareness of the delicate dreamlike construction of the artwork, to which must be added the realisation that it is an imaginative construction based on blue prints offered by the artist but erected ultimately in and by the mind of the reader/viewer/audience, has been a key part of my work. It can be found throughout my work, as we shall see in the next section, starting with a poem from my first book, in which the reader or listener is invited through direct address to participate in the making of the art work.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 33.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 34.



Thoroughly Modern, Postmodern, Post-Postmodern

In *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems* the following appears:

The Thoroughly Modern Poem

is a jug to be filled

a mouth to be fed

a closet to hide

the bones

a canvas unpainted

an instrument unplayed

a weapon ready

to kill

the thoroughly modern poem

ready aim fire¹¹⁸

The poem is not simply an illustration of a theory of reader/viewer/audience participation in the creation of the art work, although it plays with and comments on the theory. It is both whimsical and dark. The title, while apparently serious is also ironic, a take on the film *The Thoroughly Modern Millie*, about the intoxicating, flighty excitement of ‘the new’ in 1922¹¹⁹. As the poem progresses the participation required of the reader is increasingly grim – from the still life serenity of “a jug to be filled”, to the social realist hunger of “a mouth to be fed”, to the gothic “a closet to hide/the bones”. In the second stanza, in a swift and slightly futurist and surrealist montage, art (“a canvas unpainted”),

¹¹⁸ Allen, “The Thoroughly Modern Poem”, in *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, op. cit., p. 43. Also published in Peter Porter (editor), *The Oxford Book of Modern Australian Verse*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, Oxford, Auckland, New York, 1996, p. 269.

jumps to music (an instrument unplayed”), which transmogrifies in the reader’s hands, unexpectedly, but paralleling the turn to something darker at the end of the first stanza, and echoing the appearance of a knife in the hand in Luis Buñuel’s film *Chien Andalou*¹²⁰, into “a weapon ready/to kill”. The last lines challenge to reader to act. But in a way perhaps similar to what we shall see later in the film *No Surrender*, it is finally up to the reader to decide if he or she will follow the potentially dangerous logic/illogic of the rush of ideas that has been presented to them. Opening up a space into which our desires and fears can enter can have unintended consequences. Aesthetics is a serious business and with participation comes an edgy responsibility.



In a more recent example, the monologue *More Lies* also plays with the audience/reader’s perceptions of their role in the events and characters unfolding before them, until at the climax, unexpectedly, everything is turned on its head. The narrator, the purveyor of an increasingly gymnastically elastic series of truths, suddenly turns on the reader/audience and says:

¹¹⁹ George Roy Hill (director), Richard Morris (writer) *The Thoroughly Modern Millie*, USA, 1967.

¹²⁰ Luis Buñuel (director), Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali (writers), *Chien Andalou*, France, 1929. (Also known as *The Andalusian Dog*.)

You want to get into my dreams? You want the driving map of my dreams? You want to find the combination to the big safe? Let me give you another perspective on that idea. Try and get *out* of my dreams. Who says who is asleep and sleepwalking here? Who says who is surveying whom? Who's to say I haven't been monitoring you ever since you picked up this God damn book? Now you didn't think of that, did you? Eavesdropping in on you, watching your every move, this whole time, through some tiny device implanted in this book? Yea, a microchip receiver, a video camera. Who's to say this whole text isn't a trick to keep you in the one place, or, more precisely, to allow you freedom of movement, but for us to know exactly where you are at all times? And exactly what you are doing. Yes, yes, an elaborate homing device. Quite simple in its construction, actually, but clever in its tactics. Read your opponent before he reads you, or, as we see in this case, while he thinks he is reading you. Make him think he has you on the run.¹²¹

The dynamic relationship of the artist to their audience is a throughline between the works and the ideas about the works included in this Doctorate of Creative Arts. The audience is directly addressed, their engagement is demanded. Direct address is better not thought of as a theme or a form or a process, but a mode. The audience is not just an observer but a participant. In whatever medium – page, stage, or screen - the works are what one might call ‘performative’ in that they play themselves out with an awareness of the audience’s gaze. Now it could be argued, particularly since Roland Barthes’ essay “The Death of the Author”, that any artwork requires an audience to complete it. As he wrote:

A text is made of multiple writings,...but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto

¹²¹ An excerpt from Richard James Allen, “Chapter 11: This Is The End, Etc.”, *More Lies*, Sydney: unpublished typescript, 2000, pp. 42-43. A text that has been in development for a number of years, *More*

said, the author... a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination... the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.¹²²



But what distinguishes the works submitted as part of this DCA is that a self-conscious awareness of the reader/viewer/audience's role in creating the artifact and a manipulation of this process are built into the actual works themselves.¹²³ In the next section we will

Lies was presented at the Sydney Writers Festival in 2000 in a staged reading which Allen directed featuring actor and dramaturg Christopher John Snow.

¹²² Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", *Image – Music – Text*, Essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath, Hill and Wang, A Division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1977, p. 148. See also my comic take on these ideas in a poem, which, like *The Thoroughly Modern Poem*, also plays with ideas of aesthetics and moral responsibility, entitled "The Death of the Author", in Allen, *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, op. cit., p. 49.

¹²³ While there is not the opportunity to explore it further in this context, I would like to note that I think that this idea and this approach to artistic construction may have some grounding in recent developments in science. As S.C. Malik notes in "Matter is Consciousness": "Twentieth century has thus exploded a metaphysical bomb, namely, quantum physics. It shows that the scientist is inextricably tangled with the objects she observes, as no longer is she a passive observer as it was believed one could observe the pendulum swing without changing its motion... The answers scientists get to their questions depend on the way they ask the questions... A baffling experiment in quantum physics, called the double-slit experiment, demonstrates how 'the observer' finds that he is not really an observer but part of the experiment." S.C. Malik, "Matter is Consciousness", in Jayant V. Narlikar (editor), *The Nature of Matter*, Volume 4 of Kapila Vatsyayan (general editor), *Prakriti: The Integral Vision*, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, and D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd., New Delhi, 1995, p. 61.

see how this practice of interactivity places the work in the context of certain ideas in recent poetics.

Radical Artifice

In *Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media*, Marjorie Perloff sums up the debate between three major strands of contemporary poetics:

Whereas Modernist poetics was overwhelmingly committed, at least in theory, to the “natural look”, whether at the level of speech (Yeats’s “natural words in the natural order”), the level of image (Pound’s “the natural object is always the adequate symbol”), or the level of verse form (“free” verse being judged for the better part of the century as somehow more “natural” than meter and stanzaic structure), we are now witnessing a return to *artifice*, but a “radical artifice”, to use [Richard] Lanham’s phrase, characterized by its opposition, not only to “the language really spoken by men” but also to what is loosely called Formalist (whether New or Old) verse, with its elaborate poetic diction and self-conscious return to “established” forms and genres. Artifice, in this sense, is less a matter of ingenuity and manner, of elaboration and elegant subterfuge, than of the recognition that a poem or painting or performance text is a *made* thing - contrived, constructed, chosen - and that its reading is also a construction on the part of its audience. At its best, such construction empowers the audience by altering its perceptions of how things happen.”¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Marjorie Perloff, *Radical Artifice: Writing Poetry in the Age of Media*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991, pp. 27-28.

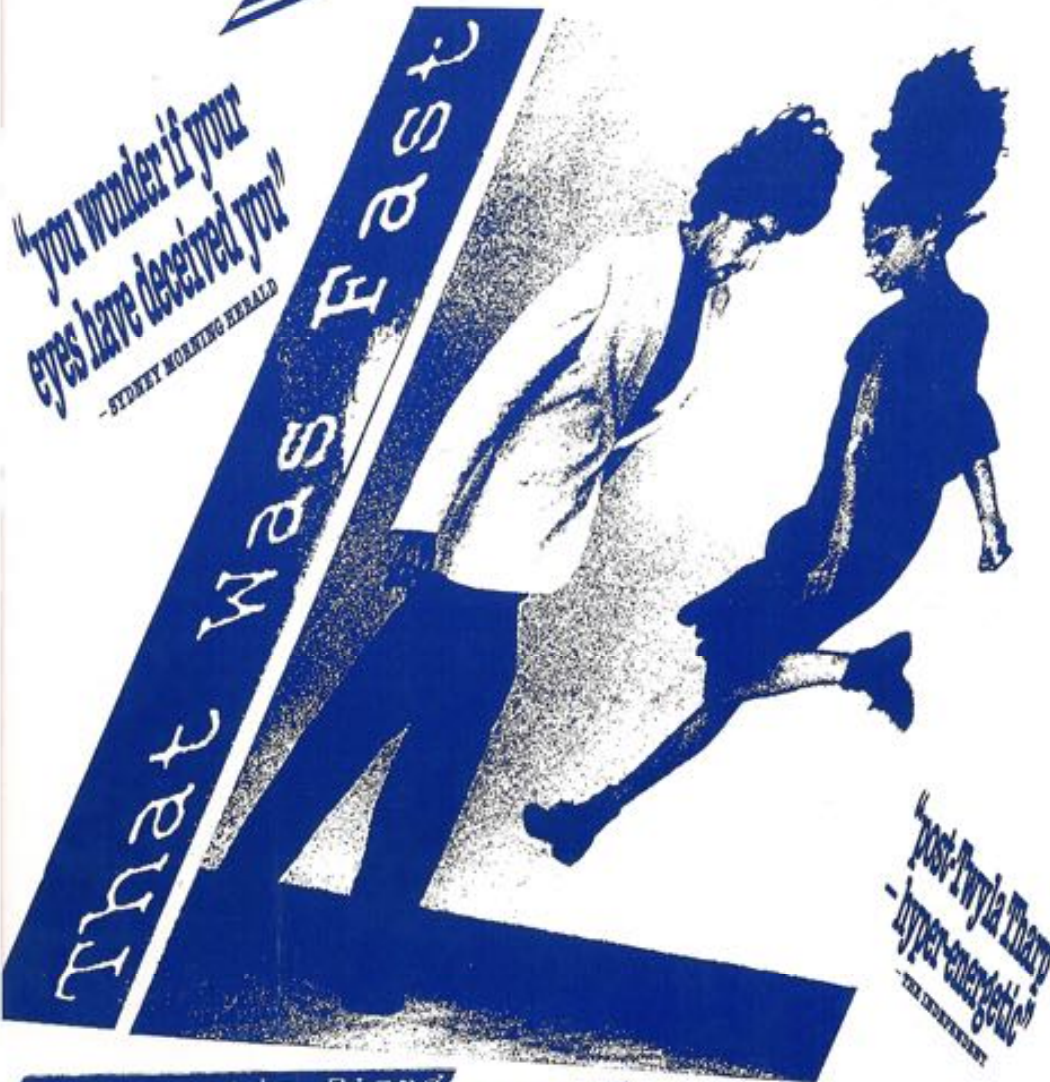
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The example of “radical artifice” she chooses to illustrate this thesis is John Cage’s *Lecture on the Weather*, a work with “permeable boundaries...between the inside and the outside”.

Here, then, is a text particularly for the time. *Lecture on the Weather* is a verbal-visual-musical composition that relies on current technology for its execution. There is no complete written text, since the printed page cannot reproduce the simultaneous visual and sound features of the “lecture”. The coordination of vocal elements, sound, and film image is achieved by elaborate computer calculations. Yet...the availability of such technology by no means implies that we are now slaves to automation and commodification, that we have come to the endgame of art. On the contrary...¹²⁵

Radical artifice plays freely across a number of media to achieve its aims. Boundaries between art forms, stylistic and ideological protectionism – these things become irrelevant. In this thesis, the underlying argument is being made that an artist manifesting the unnameable brings a creative sensibility to any art form which he or she encounters. At the moment, as Perloff notes:

poets who question the official cultural space of “diversity”, a space in which the dominant paradigms of representation remain quite intact, who believe that oppositionality has to do, not only with what a poems says, but with the formal, modal, and generic choices it makes - its use, say, of a

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 25-26. First commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Perloff references various incarnations of *Lecture on the Weather*: performances at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia in March 1984 and at the John Cage Symposium at the Strathmore Hill Arts Centre, Rockland, Maryland, in May, 1989 (pp. 23-25), and the incomplete but illuminating John Cage, “Preface to *Lecture on the Weather*”, *Empty Words: Writings '73-'78*, Wesleyan University Press, Middleton, CT, 1979, pp. 3-5.

non-traditional rhythmic base, a particular vernacular, or an incorporation of cited nonpoetic material - these poets continue to be relegated to the margins.¹²⁶

My most recent text, *The Kamikaze Mind*, is, I believe, in Richard Lanham and Marjorie Perloff's terms, a work of 'radical artifice'. If, as Hank Lazer says in *Opposing Poetries* (1996), "poetic practice is undergoing a significant shift in governing assumptions...from the self to language"¹²⁷, *The Kamikaze Mind* is a work with a dynamic relationship to that shift. Its theme is the self - pushed to its extreme. Its lines are like multiple mini-lyrics, semiotic haikus, paradoxical wobbles of the mind. Indeed, it is a deconstruction of the self into language.

The Kamikaze Mind also interfaces the contemporary poetics debate with ancient and contemporary ideas about spirituality. The book is a portrait of a small 's' self in fragmentary lyrical illusions and delusions. It shows the mind as a construction of nervous energy and that construction to be linguistic. At the same time, by being a deconstruction of language, it moves further in the spiritual quest than any of my previous works. My theory is that an artist manifesting the unnameable has to burn off language and the illusion of the self in order to siphon the spirit. *The Kamikaze Mind* is a dictionary of this process. Its definitions are a re-setting of language so that it can conduct spirit again. As articulated in *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*:

If it is possible to conceive of non-relational mind (prajna) and a non-linguistic mode of its cultivation and extension (upaya) the possibility of any person becoming the Buddha cannot be ruled out.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 11.

¹²⁷ Hank Lazer, *Opposing Poetries*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois., 1996, p. 2.

¹²⁸ Pandeya, Ram Chandra, and Manju, *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*, Eastern Book Linkers, Delhi, India, 1991, p. xxvi. For an introduction to Nagajuna, the founder and promulgator of the Madhyamika branch of Mahayana Buddhism, see Collinson, Plant and Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-103.

But, as we will see in the next section, *The Kamikaze Mind* cannot be tied down to a single tradition or context.



Undecideability

While not a narrative or in any traditional metrical form, *The Kamikaze Mind* does nevertheless, as has been noted, have a place in larger long poem cycle in progress since 1982: *The Way Out At Last Cycle*. In one sense this connects it with the movement of the so-called new “Formalists” such as Dana Gioia, Frederick Feirstein, Dick Allen, Frederick Turner, and others, who reacted to what they saw as deadening orthodoxy of university creative writing programs in the USA, with their academicisation and stultification of poetry in the promulgation of the short confessional free verse lyric. In a series of essays originally published in journals and later collected in *Expansive Poetry*, they called for a return to an array of poetic forms, including narratives and long forms, and in particular to traditional metres. As Gioia wrote in his essay “The Dilemma of the Long Poem”:

American poetry prides itself on its great scope and diversity, but one wonders if an outsider might not come away with a very different notion...Where are the narrative poems...the verse romances, ballads, hymns, verse dramas, didactic tracts, burlesques, satires, the songs actually meant to be sung, and even pastoral eclogues? Are stories no longer told in poetry? Important ideas no longer discussed at length? The panoply of available genres would seem reduced to a few hardy perennials which poets [work] over again and again with dreary regularity - the short lyric, the ode, the familiar verse epistle, perhaps the epigram, and one new-fangled form called the “sequence”, which often [seems] to be either just a group of short lyrics stuck together or an ode in the process of falling apart.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ Dana Gioia, “The Dilemma of the Long Poem”, first published in *The Kenyon Review*, New Series, Spring 1983, Volume 2, Number 2, and republished in Frederick Feirstein (editor), *Expansive Poetry: Essays on the New Narrative & the New Formalism*, with an introduction by Frederick Feirstein with Frederick Turner, Story Line Press, Santa Cruz, California, 1989, p. 3.

While their objections are agreed to by Perloff, she found the Formalists' argument that verse forms are not culturally, politically, historically bound to be untenable.¹³⁰ Lazer dismissed Gioia's arguments, refined in his essay "Can Poetry Matter?"¹³¹, as "myopic".

Such characterizations depend on a limited and limiting exposure to contemporary American poetry. To put it simply, there are many fine, important, and challenging poetries being written today, though most of them are inaudible in mainstream analyses, in the models used in creative writing courses, and in the "major" American literature and contemporary poetry anthologies.¹³²

Perhaps, then, shifting lanes in this traffic jam of poetics debates, *The Kamikaze Mind* fits more naturally into the tradition of long poem construction going back to W.B. Yeats and Ezra Pound and Velimir Khlebnikov and Louis Zukovsky and Georges Perec that Perloff identifies as "the mathematics of modernism"¹³³, or, in more recent work, as "procedural poetics"¹³⁴.

¹³⁰ Perloff, *Radical Artifice*, op. cit., p. 136.

¹³¹ Dana Gioia, "Can Poetry Matter?", *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1991, pp. 94-106.

¹³² Lazer, *Opposing Poetries*, op. cit., pp. 91-92. Interestingly, the debates must be continuing, because Gioia's essay, "The Dilemma of the Long Poem", is republished again in R.S. Gwynn (editor), *New Expansive Poetry: Theory, Criticism, History*, Story Line Press, Santa Cruz, California, 1999, pp. 204-208, along with another essay, "Notes on the New Formalism", pp. 15-27 (first published in *The Hudson Review*, Autumn 1987). Gwynn writes in her "An Expansive Moment: Introduction to the Revised Edition": "A decade has passed since the appearance of Frederick Feirstein's original edition of *Expansive Poetry*, and those years have witnessed the arrival of the poets and poetry it championed at a secure place in the contemporary canon...If neither movement has yet marked contemporary American poetry in as raucously public a way as the Beats or the Confessional Poets did forty years ago (and one can hardly imagine its poets actively seeking such notoriety), both new narrative and new formalist poetry continue to attract critical attention to a degree that, on the present scene, is rivaled only by the avant-garde Language poets," (ibid., p. 9).

¹³³ Marjorie Perloff, *Poetic License: Essays on Modernist and Postmodernist Lyric*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 1990, pp. 71-117.

¹³⁴ Perloff, *Radical Artifice*, op. cit., pp. 134-170.



Finally, *The Kamikaze Mind* is inextricably linked to the works that come before and after it in *The Way Out At Last Cycle*¹³⁵, a poetic cycle that already covers five publications – *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems* (1986), *To The Ocean & Scheherazade* (1989)¹³⁶, *Hope for a man named Jimmie & Grand Illusion Joe* (1993)¹³⁷, *The Air Dolphin Brigade* (1995), and *Thursday's Fictions* (1999). Marking, as it does, the beginning of the overall second half of the cycle¹³⁸, *The Kamikaze Mind* inhabits a space of Derridean “undecideability”. Does it stand on its own or is it part of a larger

¹³⁵ Some of the ideas behind *The Way Out At Last Cycle* will be discussed later in this essay in particular in the sections, “The New Science”, pp. 156-159, “Corso”, pp. 159-163, and “e Ricorso”, pp. 164-166.

¹³⁶ Richard Allen, *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1989.

¹³⁷ Richard Allen, *Hope for a man named Jimmie & Grand Illusion Joe*, Five Islands Press, Wollongong, 1993.

¹³⁸ The form of the other works that will finally make up the rest of the cycle remains open to future development, of course, and may shift this characterisation slightly, for example, if *The Kamikaze Mind* becomes the second stand alone work in a tripartite structure marking the beginning of the overall second half of *The Way Out At Last Cycle*.

work? From the level of a single line or definition, with its hypertextual links to other lines across the dictionary, to the level of this book being the third part of a four part cyclical outward spiralling structure which has been around four times already, giving it as many previous incarnations, *The Kamikaze Mind* unravels “the metaphysics of textual presence”. As Derrida writes in *Positions*:

The play of differences involves syntheses and referrals [*renvois*] which prevent there from being at any moment or in any way a simple element which is *present* in and of itself and refers only to itself. Whether in written or spoken discourse, no element can function as a sign without relating to another element which itself is not simply present. This linkage means that each ‘element’ ...is constituted with reference to the trace in it of the other elements of the sequence or system...Nothing, in either the elements or the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent.¹³⁹

And if, as has happened with the previous works in the cycle, other versions of the work end up being created in relation to other media - dance, theatre, performance, film/video, radio, or as is most likely in this case digital media - which will be the real, the authentic work, the original, and which the copy or adaptation? What, indeed, is a boundary? And what is a work? As Henry M. Sayre’s says in *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde since 1970*, “the medium of avant-garde art is itself “undecideable,” almost by definition interdisciplinary”.¹⁴⁰ He quotes Adorno: “Today the only works which really count are those which are no longer works at all”.¹⁴¹ This brings us back to John Cage whose work exists in some instances across media, in various forms, difficult to pin down. As Perloff notes:

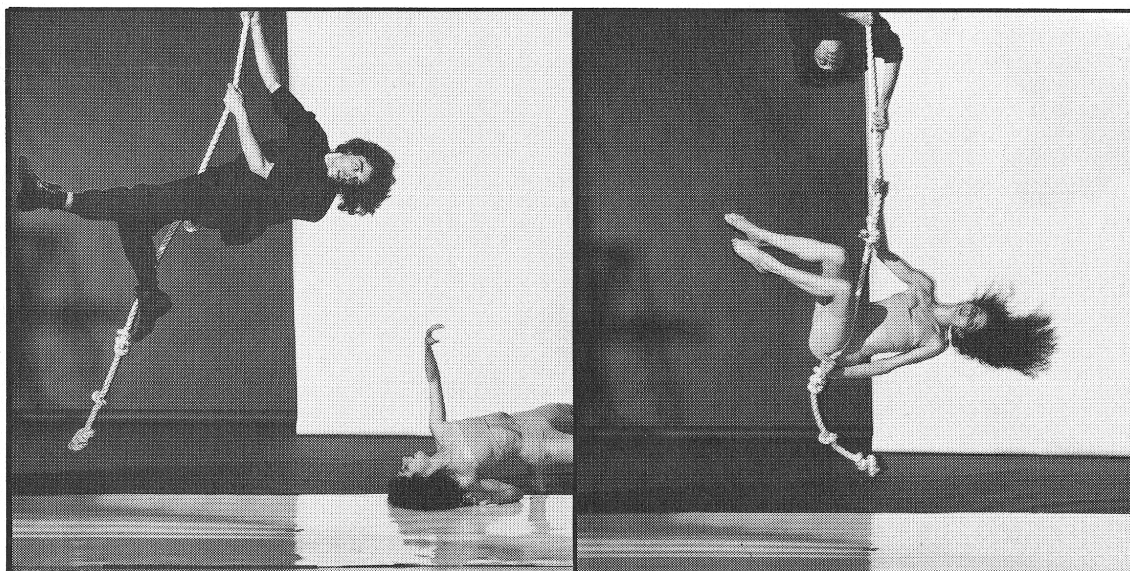
¹³⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, Paris, 1972, quoted in Jonathan Culler, “Jacques Derrida”, in John Sturrock, *Structuralism and Since: From Lévi-Strauss to Derrida*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1979, p. 164. For English translation of *Positions*, see A. Bass, The Athone Press, London, 1981.

¹⁴⁰ Henry M. Sayre, *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Guard since 1970*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1989, p. xiii, cited in Lazer, *Opposing Poetries*, op. cit., p. 70.

¹⁴¹ Th. W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Music*, Continuum, New York, 1973, p. 30, used as an epigraph by Sayre, *ibid.*, p. 1, cited in Lazer, *ibid.*

No single version of *Lecture on the Weather*, whether live or videotaped, can thus claim the authority of representing the “real” Cage text, which therefore functions as a score-to-be-activated rather than an art object to be replicated. Or, to put it in terms of chaos theory, which has many applications to Cage’s work, the performance functions as a “strange attractor” or “unpredictable system”, which “collapses to a point” at “a single instant in time,” only to change, “ever so slightly” at the next instant.¹⁴²

The Kamikaze Mind is all these things, and performs in a similar way, enacting interactivity and undecideability, hypertextuality and chaos theory, and in so doing may perhaps become (in Perloff’s phrase) “a text particularly for the time”¹⁴³. Or perhaps in Barthes’ terms a true “Text” as opposed to a “Work”, as we will see in the next section.



¹⁴² Perloff, *Radical Artifice*, op. cit., p. 24. Again, at the level of the footnote, it could be added that *The Kamikaze Mind* is also a work designed consciously to participate in what John Archibald Wheeler has described as the “participatory universe” of quantum physics. A world, as Malik puts it, where “there is no clear line between the observer and the observed. We are connected to nature. We are part of a whole...we shape the properties of the universe by our very observation of it.” Malik, “Matter is Consciousness”, in *The Nature of Matter*, Volume 4 of *Prakti: The Integral Vision*, op. cit., p. 79. Malik references Timothy Ferris, *The Mind’s Sky: Human Intelligence in a Cosmic Context*, Bantam Books, New York, 1991.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

Verbal Carnival

In his essay, “From Work to Text”, Roland Barthes offers seven “principal propositions” about the difference between the a “Work” and a “Text”. These “concern method, genres, signs, plurality, filiation, reading and pleasure”¹⁴⁴. Each, I believe, find a corollary in *The Kamikaze Mind*.

1...The Text is a methodological field...a process of demonstration...held in language, [it] only exists in the movement of a discourse (or rather, it is Text for the very reason that it knows itself as text...*the Text is experienced only in an activity of production...*¹⁴⁵

At the level of the relationship between ‘definitions’ and words, and at the level of the relationships between definitions, *The Kamikaze Mind* must be constructed, it can only be experienced as “an activity of production”.

2...the Text poses problems of classification (...one of its ‘social’ functions)... the Text is that which goes to the limits of the rules of enunciation (rationality, readability, etc)...the Text is always *paradoxical*.¹⁴⁶

Some of the paradoxes of *The Kamikaze Mind* as a multidirectional text, pressing at the boundaries of the rational and readable form of the dictionary, have been touched on earlier.

3... The work closes on a signified...The Text, on the contrary, practises the infinite deferment of the signified, is dilatory...The logic regulating the Text is not comprehensive (define ‘what the work means’) but metonymic; the activity of associations, contiguities, carryings-over coincides with a liberation of symbolic

¹⁴⁴ Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text”, in *Image – Music – Text*, op. cit., pp. 156.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 156-157.

energy...the Text is *radically* symbolic...like language, it is structured but off-centred, without closure...¹⁴⁷

The Kamikaze Mind is lateral, metonymic, symbolic, an invitation to endless association.

4. The Text is plural...an *irreducible* (and not merely an acceptable) plural. Text is not a co-existence of meanings but...an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination.¹⁴⁸

There no final interpretation, no final meaning, but a “*stereographic plurality*” to *The Kamikaze Mind*’s “weave of signifiers”¹⁴⁹.

5. The work is caught up in a process of filiation...the Text ...reads without the inscription of the Father...the metaphor of the Text is that of a network...It is not that the Author may not ‘come back’ in the Text, in his text, but he then does so as a ‘guest’...a paper-author...a paper-I.¹⁵⁰

In *The Kamikaze Mind* the imaginary thought waves left over from an imaginary suicide by an imaginary astronaut are collected and sorted by an imaginary editor. The author is dissolved into random waves of floating radiation.

6. The work is normally the object of a consumption...The Text ...decants the work...from its consumption and gathers it up as play, activity, production, practice. This means that the Text requires that one try to abolish (or...diminish) the distance between writing and reading...by joining them in a single signifying practice...We know that today post-serial music has radically altered the role of the ‘interpreter’, who is called on to be in some sort the co-author of the score,

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 157-158.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 158-159.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 159-160.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 160-161.

completing it rather than giving it 'expression'. The Text is very much a score of this new kind: it asks of the reader a practical collaboration...The reduction of reading to a consumption is clearly responsible for the 'boredom' experienced by many in the face of the modern ('unreadable') text, the avant-garde film or painting: to be bored means that one cannot produce the text, open it out, *set it going*.¹⁵¹

The Kamikaze Mind is nothing if not an interactive collaboration with the reader.

7. This leads us to pose...a final approach to the Text, that of pleasure...*jouissance*, that is a pleasure without separation...the Text participates in its own way a social utopia...the text is that space where no language has a hold over any other, where languages circulate...¹⁵²

One can only hope to provide pleasure, certainly *The Kamikaze Mind* is a spacious and democratic play space.



¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, pp. 161-163.

It is not an accident that *The Kamikaze Mind* operates more as a ‘Text’ than a ‘Work’ as I was originally inspired by Barthes’ distinction between the two in creating it. In fact I set out to make what John Sturrock encapsulates:

The Text is a sort of verbal carnival, in which language is manifestly out on parole from its humdrum daily tasks. The writer’s language-work results in a linguistic spectacle, and the reader is required to enjoy that spectacle for its own sake rather than to look through language to the world. A Text comes, in fact, from consorting with the signifiers and letting the signifieds take care of themselves; it is the poetry of prose.¹⁵³

So *The Kamikaze Mind* functions on many levels. Quite clearly on the simple level of being in the form of prose poetry or poetic fiction, as well as in the perhaps metaphoric way in which this phrase was used, it is “the poetry of prose.” It plays with the medium of the book, but must be entirely constructed in the mind of the reader. Its theme is the fragmentation of identity and its form is floating fragments, but these are sorted into the arbitrary but formal and impersonal structure of a dictionary. As a Text it is a bundle of paradoxes, but I would argue that it is held together not in spite of its paradox, but because of its paradox. In fact, in the course of writing this essay I have come to see that this is a characteristic of a number of my creative works, certainly all of those submitted as part of this DCA. In the next section I will place this idea of paradox into the context of a broader contemporary arts debate, and see how it applies to some of these other works.

¹⁵² *ibid.*, pp. 163-164.

¹⁵³ John Sturrock, “Roland Barthes”, in Sturrock (ed.) *Structuralism and Since*, op. cit., p. 69.

*Two Vast Armies Arrayed In My Eye*¹⁵⁴

In *The Object of Performance*, Henry Sayre notes that:

By the [nineteen] seventies the site of presence in art had shifted from art's object to art's audience, from the textual or plastic to the experiential. *Artform* magazine...inaugurated the eighties with a questionnaire asking a number of artists to consider the proposition that seventies art was "characterized more by a change in attitude toward the audience than by a change in actual forms, or even content." Specifically, the magazine's editors asked, "What shifts of emphasis, aesthetic or otherwise, have impermanence and specificity of project and performance brought about?"¹⁵⁵

Not everyone was happy about this development. Sayre quotes Michael Fried's attack on this kind of thinking "in perhaps the earliest essay to examine the aesthetic assumptions of performance art, his 1967 'Art and Objecthood'":

One of the distinguishing, and to him disturbing, characteristics of performance art is its *ideological* thrust. If art gives priority to the audience – the masses, as it were – then art must also divest itself of its more elitist assumptions, which tend to be defined in terms of the academy – that is, traditional literary and art criticism – most especially the academy's privileging of the art object as a formal, autonomous, and authoritative entity.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ A quote from my poem '2 Suns', in *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1989, p. 100 .

¹⁵⁵ Sayre, *The Object of Performance*, op. cit., p. 5, quoting from "Situation Esthetics: Impermanent Art and the Seventies Audience," *Artform* 18 (January 1980): pp. 22-29.

¹⁵⁶ Sayre, *ibid.*, p. 6.

According to Sayre, Fried particularly disliked minimal art:

“*Art degenerates as it approaches the condition of theatre*” (his emphasis) – because he is a formalist who recognizes the inappropriateness of a formalist approach to an art that “*depends on the beholder, is incomplete without him...has been waiting for him...refuses, obstinately, to let him alone – which is to say, it refuses to stop confronting him, distancing him, isolating him.*”¹⁵⁷

Fried holds what Sayre describes as a “a profoundly immanentist definition” of art:

For Fried it is neither the condition of music nor the condition of photography – certainly not theater – to which art ought to aspire, but “to the condition of painting and sculpture – the condition, that is, of existing in, indeed of secreting and constituting a continuous and perpetual present.”¹⁵⁸

My interest in direct address, audience engagement, and my acknowledgement of the performative, theatrical, constructed nature of an artwork, would seem to put me at odds with this position and more squarely into the camp of ‘avant-garde’ as elucidated by Sayre.

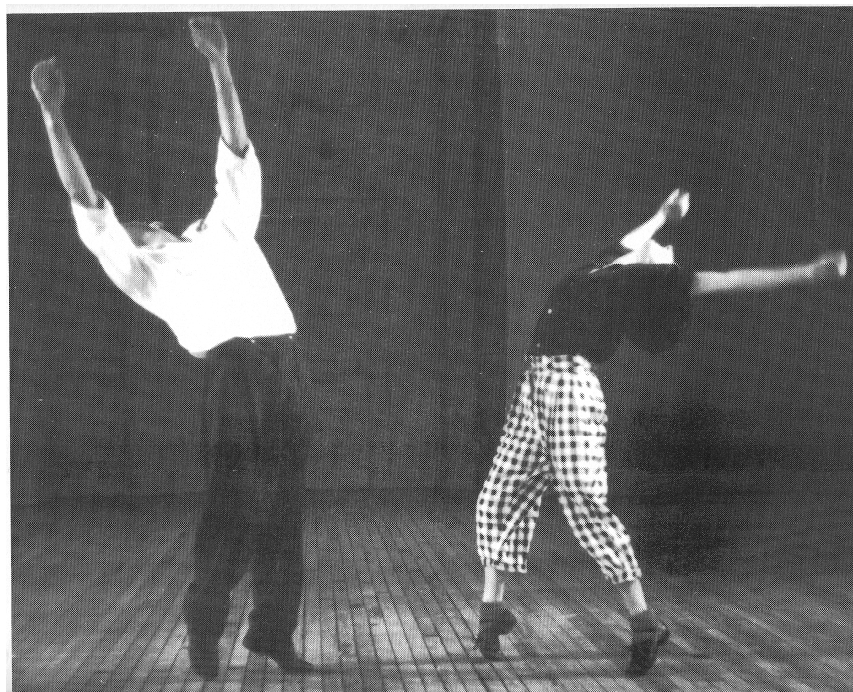
In contrast to ‘formalist/immanentist aesthetics’ which invests art with “uniqueness, the cult of individuality and “original” artistic “vision,” the dream of universality and transcendence”, Sayre posits “the work of the American avant-garde since 1970”, whose “performance model...– including its collaborative and intermedia aspects – can be traced back to futurist and dada performance, to the Bauhaus... and to the entire surrealist enterprise”. “The objects” of the “performative or theatrical production[s]” of these early

¹⁵⁷ Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” *Artform* 5 (June 1967), reprinted in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Gregory Battcock, Dutton, New York, 1968, pp. 140, 146, quoted *ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

experimenters “are not immanent. They are, rather, contingent, fragmentary, even disembodied. As such, they evoke, rather than an aura of full presence, the continual vanishing of the photograph. They announce their own absence.” In a similar way the later avant-garde in the USA valorised ““popular” art forms – such as photography...- over “high” art,” or at least blurred the distinction. It was ideological, “consistently engaged history...always in process, always engaged,...purposely *undecidable*. Its meanings [were] explosive, ricocheting and fragmenting throughout its audience. The work becomes a situation, full of suggestive possibilities, rather than a self-contained whole, determined and final.”¹⁵⁹

In many ways these words echo with the kind of approach I have taken to creating work and the work that I have made over the last twenty-five years or so. But looking at this dispassionately I can see that what has made my work somewhat peculiar is that it also echoes with some strains of the immanentist tradition. It becomes clear as I examine my works that they negotiate, play out and embody a number of contradictory impulses. The next section will examine this paradox in relation to *Thursday's Fictions*.



¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 5-9.

Contradictory Impulses

Thursday's Fictions is energised by this internal dialectic. It simultaneously and contradictorily privileges two opposing impulses, even two opposite worldviews. It is hardly surprising, considered in this light, that it features a character, Friday, mentioned earlier, whose brain is split into two warring sides – one that wants to live in the present, one that wants to dredge up the past.

Developing further from the transmigration of forms noted in the earlier work, *Blue Cities*, *Thursday's Fictions* is, in Derridean terms, an 'undecidable' text. It is not fully 'present' in any one form. It exists restlessly in and for at least two different media: the page and the stage. As a piece of theatre it privileges the fleeting but immediately engaged moment of performance – both for the performer and the audience. This places it more in the avant-garde tradition. As a book it strives for the hallowed timeless realm of art object. This places it more in the immanentist tradition. Is this a contradiction? Is it possible to exist in two places at once? Is it possible to reconcile contradictory impulses in an art work?

In attempting to describe the work in the media release that went out with the book at the time of publication, I wrote:

It is a poem for the stage of the mind that finds its physical presence as words choreographed across the pages of a book.¹⁶⁰

As with the concepts of direct address and audience engagement discussed above, *Thursday's Fictions*, as a work of theatre quite obviously, but also as a “poem for the stage of the mind,” requires an audience and a reader to complete it. And yet in the more solid form of a book it yearns for a “physical presence” in which the fleeting life force of

¹⁶⁰ Richard James Allen, “‘Thursday's Fictions’, Media Release for Five Islands Press publication”, 1999, p. 1.

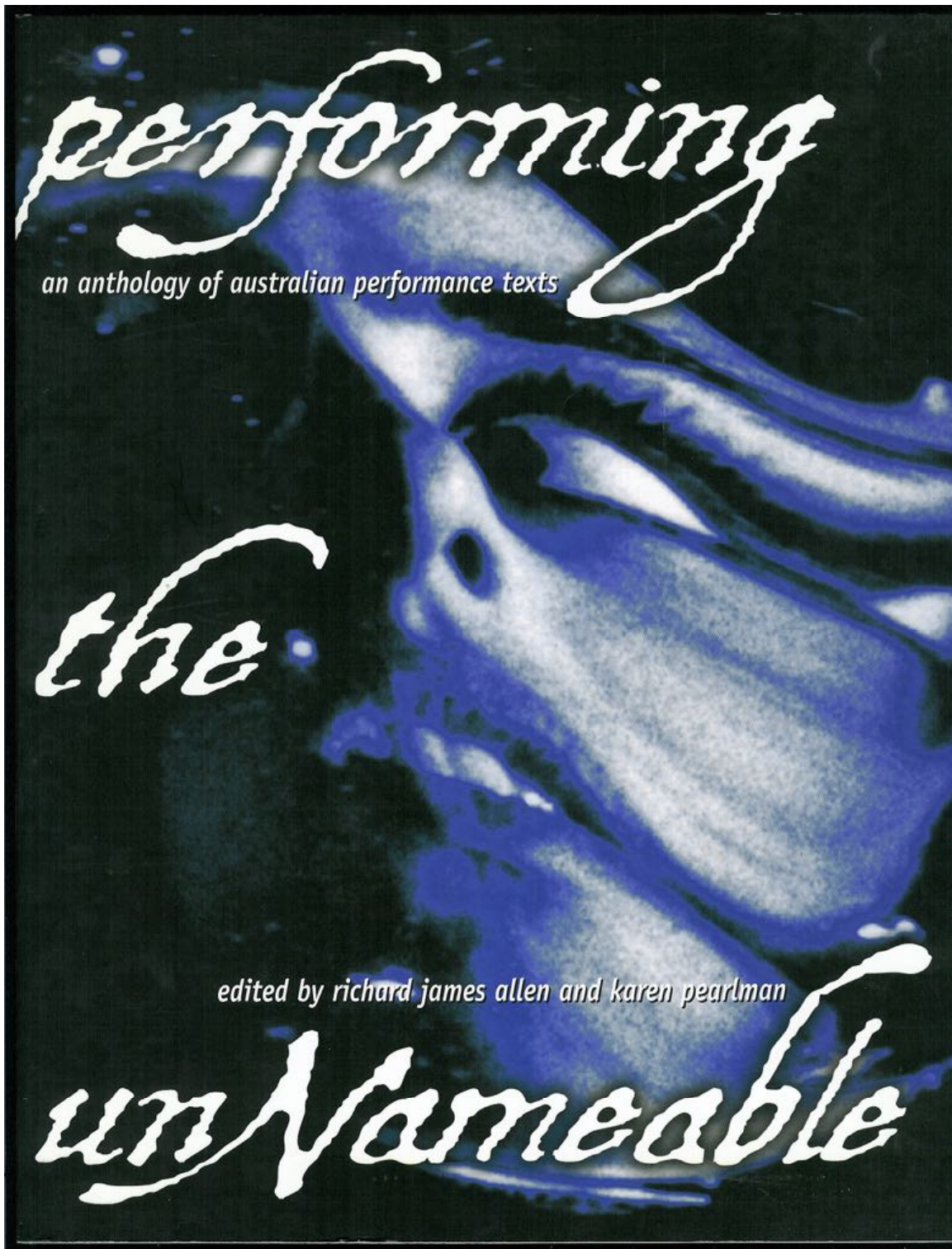
thoughts, expressed in this description in the metaphor of dance, has a permanent, immanent form “as words choreographed across the pages of a book”. This very struggle in the form of the book is the struggle explored thematically within its pages. To quote from the back cover of the book:

Thursday's Fictions tells the story of the conflict between talent and ambition in a writer who craves immortality and learns to accept death. It is an adult fairy tale, a fantastical parable of spirituality and excess, dealing with themes of crime and art, death and reincarnation.¹⁶¹

In the story, the central character, Thursday, as suggested earlier, tries to get a form of eternal life by cheating the cycle of reincarnation. Significantly, in terms of Sayre's distinctions discussed above, her idea is to bring Western concepts of permanence and individual identity to an Eastern system of belief in which the individual is by its very nature impermanent. This conflict between a desperate desire for personal immortality and its impossibility are what is played out in the drama of the book.



Two excerpts from the performance text of *Thursdays' Fictions* appear in *Performing the Unnamable: An Anthology of Australian Performance Texts* and this archaeological reconstruction of text-based live action events is animated by similar contradictions, oppositions and tensions, as we shall see in the next section.



¹⁶¹ Allen, *Thursday's Fictions*, op. cit., back cover.

Documenting the Wonder

As Naomi Black noted in her review in *Brolga*, “Like the central character in *Thursday’s Fictions*, *Performing the Unnameable* seeks artistic eternity”¹⁶². The book, not uncontroversially, is an attempt to reconcile the dualism of the ‘immanentist’ and the ‘forever in process’ approaches by making a permanent art object which records impermanence¹⁶³.

Interestingly, since creating the work, I have discovered that Linda Burnham, when she founded the magazine *High Performance* in 1978, found herself dealing with similar issues:

When I was a child in college, there was a Ginsberg poem going around with the refrain: “I am waiting for a rebirth of wonder.” For me performance art has that magic....Documentation of these events is almost antithetical to that ideal. It is almost a violation to request that they be written down, photographed. But as a journalist, I deplore the loss. And as a writer of fiction, I am drawn to documentation as a form in itself. Sometimes, like the tale of a pilgrim returning from a holy place, the story is better than the actual event.”¹⁶⁴

Performing the Unnameable is an attempt to bring back from forgetfulness what Burnham might have described as the ‘wonder’ of certain key moments of Australian

¹⁶² Naomi Black, “Immortalising performance?”, in *Brolga*, December, 1999, p. 61 (Michelle Potter, editor).

¹⁶³ As the co-editor Karen Pearlman and I noted in the “Introduction”: “There were several objectives at work in undertaking the archaeological excavation required to collect these works for publication. Many of these objectives have been and will be controversial within the field of performance, as will the book itself and its final contents. Even the simple objective of preventing the disappearance of performance works was contentious for some practitioners. While many agreed it would provide a much needed record, others felt that attempting to preserve fragments from the ever-changing form of performance was inappropriate – in other words, that to prevent a work’s disappearance was to corrupt it.” Karen Pearlman and Richard James Allen, “Introduction”, to Allen and Pearlman (eds), *Performing the Unnameable*, op. cit., p. xi.

performance from the 1980s and 1990s. It does this by gathering together original texts and photographs, along with retrospective artistic statements describing images and processes. But, a bit like Burnham's pilgrim's tale, it also aims for something else, a third option between remembering and forgetting – that out of this highly contingent form might be evolving a new kind of writing, a new artform. As it says in the introduction:

Innovations in performance practice, by providing platforms for writing in new ways, create the possibility for a new literary form. A text in performance is the writing which is required by that work – its form is defined by the needs and processes of a given work, not by literary conventions or traditions. Each selection in this book was created on a different platform – the processes, skills, and inventions of each deviser spawned a different method of writing or problem to be responded to in writing.¹⁶⁵

So *Performing the Unnameable* is not just an attempt to straddle both sides of an argument, it is a collection which poses a serious possibility that writing for contemporary performance, itself a new form of theatre, may be much more than simply writing plays strangely. It may be “an area of literary interest in and of itself – a space for new kinds of writing.”¹⁶⁶

It also, as we shall see in the next section, fits into, shall we say, not the rest of ‘my body of work’, but rather ‘the flow of bodies of my work’. It, too, is a ‘shapeshifting’ ‘play in the fields of form’.

¹⁶⁴ Linda Burnham, “Editor’s Note”, *High Performance*, Number 1 (February 1978), p. 1, quoted in Sayre, *The Object of Performance*, op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁶⁵ Pearlman and Allen, “Introduction”, to Allen and Pearlman (eds), *Performing the Unnamable*, op. cit., p. xii.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*

Shapeshifter

In an interview in *RealTime* about *Performing the Unnameable*, “Words beyond words”, I said: “We were trying to work with the medium of the book. This is a book and this collection is a performance of its own, an artwork of its own.”¹⁶⁷ This comment echoed an earlier statement I had made about *Thursday’s Fictions*:

Thursday’s Fictions is a spiritual thriller which resonates with some recent tendencies in contemporary Australian poetry - a resurgence of the narrative poem, a relationship to performance and continued commitment to the book form whilst experimenting with different literary approaches within its covers.¹⁶⁸

Keith Gallasch noted something of this in a *RealTime* Editorial:

Performing the Unnameable is a rich repository of the ways that performance texts work: through sets of directions, intense poetry, cut-up, the reproduction of verbatim voices, choral delivery, voice and action out of kilter, repetition and variation, multilingual interplay, and borrowing from other performance modes – the lecture, stand up comedy and the rhythms of everyday conversation.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ “Words beyond words: An interview with Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman, editors of *Performing the Unnameable*, the first collection of Australian performance texts” conducted by Keith Gallasch, *RealTime*, Number 28, December 1998 – January 1999, p. 4.

¹⁶⁸ Allen, “‘Thursday’s Fictions’, Media Release for Five Islands Press publication”, op. cit., p. 1. Interestingly, at the time of this writing, *Thursday’s Fictions* is also being made into a film - a third, larger umbrella form which can encompass the poetry and the performance while adding in set and costume design, lighting and framing, editing and sound, to create a whole world which the audience can inhabit.

¹⁶⁹ Keith Gallasch, “Editorial – Performing the Unnamable”, *RealTime*, Number 28, December 1998 – January 1999, p. 3.

John Hawke picked up on it in his “Reader’s Report for *Thursday’s Fictions*”, commenting on what I might now term ‘shapeshifting’¹⁷⁰:

What is most immediately remarkable about the book is its stylistic range: Allen employs a variety of formal models, including stream-of-consciousness soliloquy, dramatic dialogue, as well as free verse and prose-poetry, with equal assurance and sophistication.¹⁷¹

There is a similar comment in a review of an earlier work, *Hope for a man named Jimmie & Grand Illusion Joe*, by David Gilbey. It covers content, form and medium:

It’s almost impossible to deal adequately with Allen’s work in a brief review – it is so energetic, allusive, and various. It works best as both performance and artifact but attempts to elude and defy categorisation.¹⁷²

As part of the very nature of my artistic project I have consciously tried never to repeat myself, but rather allow the needs of the work shape the form in which it manifests. Thomas W. Shapcott noted the resultant variety of approaches in his launch speech for my first book:

Richard Allen, in ...*The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, as well as in his danceworks and performances, is clearly alive to the vitality of experiment and this book shows him rolling his tongue around the sound and the catalogue of words, as well as the spaces between words. The title sequence in particular takes all the space of each page to bring the reader into silent contemplation of the resonances of each small group of phrases. Poems like *The No. 1* and *Homage a Duchamp etc* on the other hand are

¹⁷⁰ I first used the term ‘shape-shifter’ to describe my work in a flyer for the first public reading/performance of *More Lies* at the 2000 Sydney Writers Festival.

¹⁷¹ John Hawke, “Reader’s Report: Richard Allen, *Thursday’s Fictions*”, March 10, 1999, written for Five Islands Press to be submitted with the book to the Australia Council for publication subsidy.

sound poems rat-a-tat-tatting without pause for breath to catch the knob-twiddling tempo of our moment. Then there are the simple lyrics, poems that sometimes play with gestures and catch themselves out with a grimace, or pause for a moment to contemplate or say what they have to say with elegance and focus.¹⁷³

In the next section I will examine the philosophical basis of this ‘shapeshifting’, which goes beyond the obvious but undoubted influence of 20th century avant-garde notions of “make it new”.



¹⁷² David Gilbey, “Poetry’s Promiscuous Relationship to Truth or Wollongong, Poetry Capital of Australia”, in *LiNQ*, Volume 21, Number 2, October 1994, p. 104.

¹⁷³ Thomas W. Shapcott, “Book Launch Speech for *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*”, at Harold Park Hotel, 1886.

The Will to Change

My artistic shapeshifting, my ‘will to change’ (to adapt Friedrich Nietzsche’s famous phrase ‘the will to power’) - this movement from one form to another - is not a straining after effect. It is grounded in a clear philosophical viewpoint which I articulated earlier, at the start of my working career, when I left behind the study of history for the creation of art.

At that time I had come to the Nietzschean conclusion, now less controversial than at the time, that “knowledge was a construction, a factum, something one built to maintain oneself and one’s world”¹⁷⁴, I then turned, for a way forward, to his image in *The Birth of Tragedy*¹⁷⁵. According to Friedrich Nietzsche, as Hayden V. White describes it in *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*, the Presocratic culture of Hellas was like:

a temple raised on piles sunk in the viscous mud of the Venetian lagoon; it provided an illusion of permanency and self-sufficiency, therefore allowed life to go on, but colored every act performed inside this edifice with a controlled awareness of life’s essential tenuousness, its awful finitude.¹⁷⁶

The Greeks, Nietzsche argued, were “the first to appreciate how much human life depended upon men’s mythopoeic faculties, his ability to dream a dream of health and beauty in the face of his own imminent annihilation”. In Tragic art, the delicate balance between Apollonian and Dionysiac spirits, they

¹⁷⁴ Allen, *A Disappointed Bridge*, op. cit., p. 139. See Samuel I. Ijsseling, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Conflict*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1976, p. 105.

¹⁷⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals*, F. Golffing, translator, Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1956.

¹⁷⁶ Hayden V. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1973, p. 338.

found a way to remind themselves that human culture was at best a complex of illusions, that it was at best a delicate achievement, that beneath it lay the void from which all things came and to which they must ultimately return, that a given complex of illusions had to be constantly tested and replaced by new ones, and that creative life was possible only when chaos and form were encompassed by a larger awareness of their mutual interdependence.¹⁷⁷

As White observed, this was “the dialectical art par excellence”:

a product of man’s movement toward the abyss from which he has sprung through the testing of images that had previously sustained him *and* a countermovement into a new set of images charged with a suppressed awareness of the illusory character of *all* form. This *movement* from chaos to form *and back* distinguishes Tragedy from all other forms of *poesis* (such as the epic and lyric) and from all *systems* of knowledge and belief (such as science and religion). All other prospects on human experience tend to freeze life in an apprehension of either chaos or form; only Tragedy requires a constant alternation of the *awareness of chaos* with the *will to form* in the interest of life.¹⁷⁸

Which returns us the idea of direct address, collaborative engagement, the artist and audience consciously constructing together their “precarious balance between perfect form and total chaos by keeping awareness of both possibilities consistently alive to consciousness”¹⁷⁹. I would not describe this as an easy process, but rather a dialectic of freedom and sadness, which, as we will see in the next section, is what the character of Thursday experiences at the end of her life in *Thursday’s Fictions*.

¹⁷⁷ White, *ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ White, *ibid.*, pp. 138, 140.

¹⁷⁹ White, *ibid.*



Freedom And Sadness

Having shapeshifted – reincarnated - across a number of forms and identities, driven by the desire to prolong her sense of herself, Thursday (now Tuesday) finds herself alone, misunderstood, an eternity criminal who has been caught and is being punished for her transgressions. Imprisoned, bereft, her only freedom is in letting go of her attachment to all forms. *Tuesday on the Rack* opens with her being tortured to death, still wisecracking:



(My enemies have reinvented the rack

and broken me on it.)

(I should be flattered.

Perhaps it is some kind of honour.)

(having a piece of medieval equipment

rebuilt especially for you.)

... (They wanted to know
why I was digging up a grave)
(and I really couldn't tell them.
It wasn't just the language thing.)
(I just didn't think
they were sensitive enough)
(to cope with the whole story,
let alone believe it.)
(I mean, it was my own grave
I was digging up.)
(it wasn't like
there was an issue of theft here.)
(I was digging up my grave,
or rather the grave of my ancestor.)
(because I had - well, she had -
left something there for me to pick up.)
...(except that I never found them.
They weren't there.)
...(I didn't find a damn thing,
except some)
(lethal smelling mud
and a few old bones.)
(But these oafs found me,
and, unable to make head nor tail of me.)
(they are now translating
their penal code onto my body.)
(Apparently in this country
grave robbery is a capital offence.)
(Jesus, where's their sense of humour?¹⁸⁰)

¹⁸⁰ Allen, "Tuesday on the Rack", in *Thursday's Fictions*, op. cit., pp. 76, 77, 78.



Thursday (as Tuesday) is raped by the guards, but does not engage with them, instead relaxing her mind and travelling to that place that Patañjali might have called her “real nature”, Krishnamacharya her “natural state”¹⁸¹, Swami Sivananda her “true nature”¹⁸² and Sogyal Rinpoche the “all-embracing boundlessness” of “buddha nature”¹⁸³:

(I do not satisfy them	but find the beach)
(literally bathing	in the eternal,)
(become one with the beach,	breathing in the eternal,)
(the waves of my breath	are breakers of sighs,)
(the white water	making my inner body)
(salty and white.	And what I breathe in)
(from all sides	from all sidelessness)
(is beyond geometry	beyond mathematics.)
(And nothing else matters	so long as I)
(transform the world	- which is impossible -)
(- futility under the sun -	but even that)

¹⁸¹ See T.K.V. Desikachar, *The Heart of Yoga: Developing a Personal Practice*, Inner Traditions International, Rochester, Vermont: 1995, p. xviii.

¹⁸² Lucy Lidell with Narayani and Giris Rabinovitch, *The Book of Yoga: The Sivananda Yoga Centre*, Book Club Associates, London, 1985, “Auto-suggestion”, p. 27.

¹⁸³ Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book*, op. cit., p. 49.



(doesn't matter

so long as I)

(transform the world

into the impossible.)¹⁸⁴

Thursday's experience of "transforming the world into the impossible" is perhaps my way of formulating Nietzsche's Tragic balance of Apollonian and Dionysian forces, his statement that "we have art in order not to die of the truth"¹⁸⁵

Finally, Thursday lets go of everything – her ambition, her art, her life – all of what "God" describes to her in her visions as "the irrelevance of your thoughts,)/ (the coil/ of your individual destiny.)/ (Illusions/ like jumping dogs,)/ (playing go fetch/ with your hopes.)"¹⁸⁶. She travels into timelessness:

"Give me)

(your golden hand,"

God has returned.)

(Is this the forgiveness?

"We won't be)

(available forever."

He is talking)

(about ourselves.

I take it,)

(for a moment,

which opens out)

(a space beyond time,

a fluency)

¹⁸⁴ Allen, "Tuesday on the Rack", in *Thursday's Fictions*, op. cit., pp. 88, 89.

¹⁸⁵ Nietzsche quoted in White, *Metahistory*, op. cit., p. 138, 140.

¹⁸⁶ Allen, "Tuesday on the Rack", in *Thursday's Fictions*, op. cit., p. 89.

(beyond the stutter
 of eternity)
 (- what else
 am I to do? -)
 (and, touching
 the wings of God,)
 (like a blind man
 starting to see,)
 (like a deafened woman
 hearing music)
 (as if
 for the first time,)
 (forget to wonder
 to myself)
 (which illusions
 make the most difference.)¹⁸⁷

At the climax of the dance film *Rubberman Accepts The Nobel Prize*, the eponymous hero also lets go. In the next section we will see how the superhero, or perhaps the ‘Superman’ in Nietzsche’s terminology, also has to learn to surrender to become the ‘supraman’.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p. 90.

An Endless Chameleon



Rubberman, as his Translator tells us, interpreting “his native language of dance”, struggles with the paradox of “making the human condition unconditional”¹⁸⁸. To quote from the film script:

¹⁸⁸ Karen Pearlman and Richard James Allen, *Rubberman Accepts the Nobel Prize*, unpublished film script, final version after picture lock off, The Physical TV Company, Sydney, 2001, corrections 2004, p. 2, 3.

TRANSLATOR

(V.O.)

Rubberman is telling us that his home is the centre of the earth, which is molten rubber. He says he came to the surface to demonstrate the elasticity of all things. How all of life is suspended in the air above a great trampoline. How we must learn to bounce.¹⁸⁹

Like the character of Thursday, but in a different way, Rubberman is having trouble with his relationship to the world.

TRANSLATOR

(V.O.)

His narrow-minded critics say his ambitions are over-stretched. But they don't understand that his capacity to stretch is limitless. They lock him into a comic book, terrified of what he might achieve in the real world. During the recent alien invasion, Rubberman escapes through a trapdoor in the cartoon and...

Rubberman bursts out of the comic book frame, jumping straight up into the air. As he falls through the frame his descent is extended dropping him feet first into:

SCENE 3 / EXT./NIGHT/IMAGINARY URBAN LANDSCAPE

Rubberman charges into a fury of fast attacking moves, dance moves like kicks and swings, directed at an imaginary enemy.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 4.

TRANSLATOR

(V.O.)

...catapults into action.¹⁹⁰

Rubberman “neutralizes their worldwide electric super conductive shock weapon”.



However, “the alien enemies of the earth soon find his weak point: fire.” He ends up cornered, “melt[ing]...into a small, sticky, bubbling pool.”¹⁹¹ But it is at this point, defeated, his form breaking down, his identity literally dribbling away, that Rubberman realises his true nature:

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

TRANSLATOR

(V.O.)

Lying in that puddle, a black reflection of the sky, it comes to Rubberman that his substance can exist in many forms: that rubber, like water, is an endless chameleon. Reassuming in a snap his former shape,

SCENE 5 / EXT./DAWN/IMAGINARY URBAN LANDSCAPE

Rubberman jumps up and takes off confidently in a sort of weirdo Rubberman version of Fred Astaire, skimming across the floor.



¹⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 6.

TRANSLATOR
(V.O.)

he thanks his attackers for forcing him beyond the limits he had imagined for himself. And it is with this knowledge - this elision of durability, malleability and flexibility - that he puts behind bars those alien entrepreneurs who tried to franchise and outsource the earth. And to safeguard future generations he creates the Rubberman Defense System, designed to bounce any future invaders deep back into their own reality.¹⁹²



¹⁹² *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

Rubberman Accepts The Nobel Prize plays with the science fiction genre, the hero's journey, the dance film, and a good helping of humour and irony to tell the tale of a shapeshifting Yogic superhero who comes to understand his true 'Self' by surrendering his limited concept of 'self'. Like the character of Thomas Anderson/Neo in the Wachowki Brothers' science fiction film *The Matrix*, he surrenders his attachment to a limited view of the nature of himself and the world around him¹⁹³. Interestingly, the director of the film, Karen Pearlman likes to joke that *Rubberman* is "a documentary about an event that never happened", that she conceived of the character as a portrait of me, that I then collaborated in writing and creating¹⁹⁴. Like many jokes, this one probably has some truth in it.

Rubberman, as his name might suggest, leads us, in the next section, back to a discussion of Yoga, in particular as a movement and breathing practice.

Vinyasa

To a far greater extent than was seen in the earlier work discussed, *Blue Cities*, Yoga is one of the movement languages used in *Rubberman* and one of the philosophies underlying it. And the metaphor of a 'rubber-man' and the physical practice of Yoga are useful in illuminating my shapeshifting creative practice.

Yoga is a practice of dematerialising and rematerialising the understanding and experience of the self. It is a chameleon act at which a person trains in a daily 'shapeshifting' practice of Yoga *Asanas* (postures)¹⁹⁵. What is unchanging and what sustains the flow of physical forms is the breath. The entwining of the movement

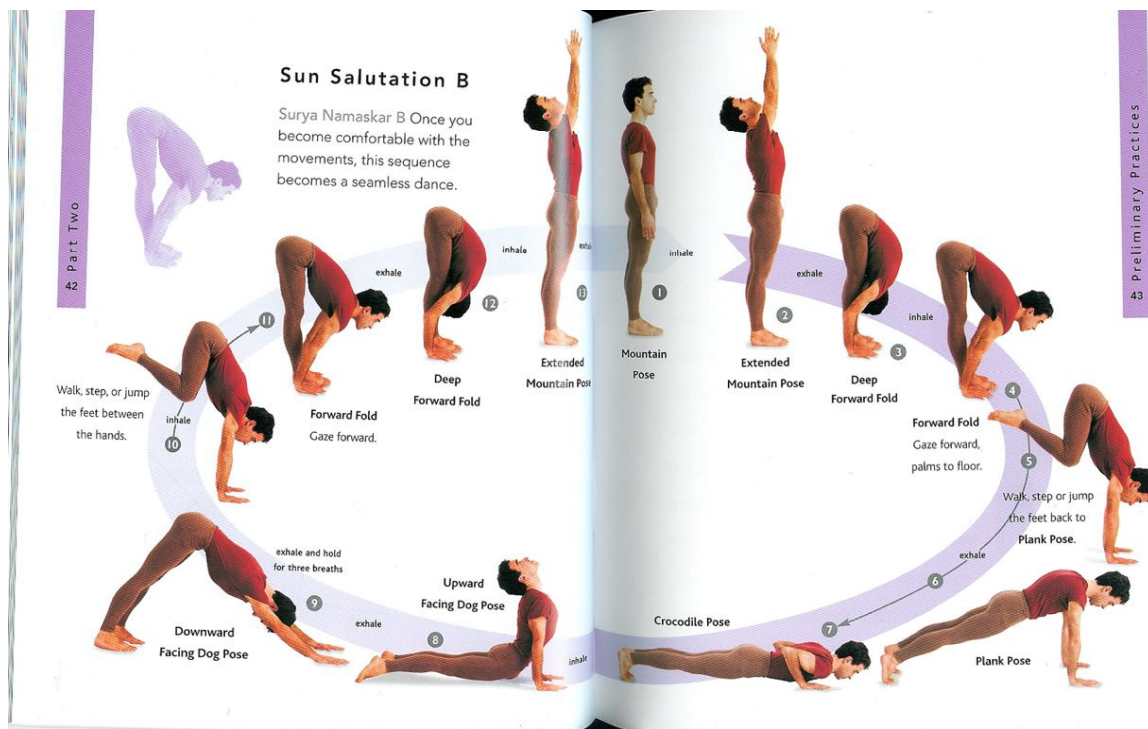
¹⁹³ Andy Wachowki and Larry Wachowki (directors and writers), *The Matrix*, USA, 1999. This character's journey of discovery continue through the next two part of this trilogy, *The Matrix Reloaded*, USA, 2003, and *The Matrix Revolutions*, USA, 2003.

¹⁹⁴ Karen Pearlman, introductory speech to a screening of *Rubberman Accepts The Nobel Prize* at Dance Briefs, Omeo Studio, Sydney, Australia, Saturday 20, September, 2003.

¹⁹⁵ For a definition of *asana*, see Feuerstein, *The Shambhala Encyclopedia of Yoga*, pp. 34-35.

through forms coordinated with the breath is known as *Vinyasa* or *Vinyasa Krama*. Yoga is a dance of ever changing transient physical forms united by the flow of universal energies, *Prana* - “the life force or vital energy”¹⁹⁶ - drawn into the body by the breath. As Gannon and Life expressed it in classes I attended with them in New York and in their recent book, *Jivamukti Yoga*:

Asana practice clears the subtle pathways through which prana flows. As we become aware of the movement of prana, we become aware of our expansive potential. We realize that we are not limited to one unchanging static form...Asana encourages awareness of prana by giving us an opportunity to put ourselves into the various shapes and patterns of existence and experience the dynamic force that animates all form.¹⁹⁷



¹⁹⁶ Lidell with Narayani and Rabinovitch, *The Book of Yoga: The Sivananda Yoga Centre*, op. cit., p. 70. For a further description of *prana*, see, Feuerstein, *The Shambhala Encyclopedia of Yoga*, pp. 224-225. For an in depth discussion of *prana*, see H.N Chakravarty, “Prana”, in Baumer (ed.), *Eight Selected Terms*, in Vatsyayan (gen. ed.), *Kalatattvakosa*, op. cit., pp. 97-116.

The sequencing and flow of postures, the shapeshifting from one position to another, is an important element. As Gannon and Life note:

Many books illustrate asanas as static postures. Learning only static postures does not reveal the incredible potential of asana, however. When individual asanas are linked together correctly in a sequence, the result is a physiological mantram, a fleshy vortex of intersecting rivers of everything.¹⁹⁸

They explain the concept of Vinyasa Krama, “the forgotten language of sequencing postures”:

The word vinyasa means “a joining or linking mechanism.” Krama means “the process”; it refers to the succession of changes that occurs from moment to moment. Vinyasa krama means the succession of changes undertaken with a single pointed intention, free from fluctuations...The breath is the outer vinyasa, or connecting element; the intention is the inner vinyasa.¹⁹⁹

This last point is especially noteworthy:

When you practice a sequence of asanas, you link them with conscious breathing. The real vinyasa, or link, however, is the intention with which you practice asanas. It is the intention that links the postures with consciousness, instead of unconsciousness. The breath is merely a metaphor for that intention.²⁰⁰

Intention to what end?

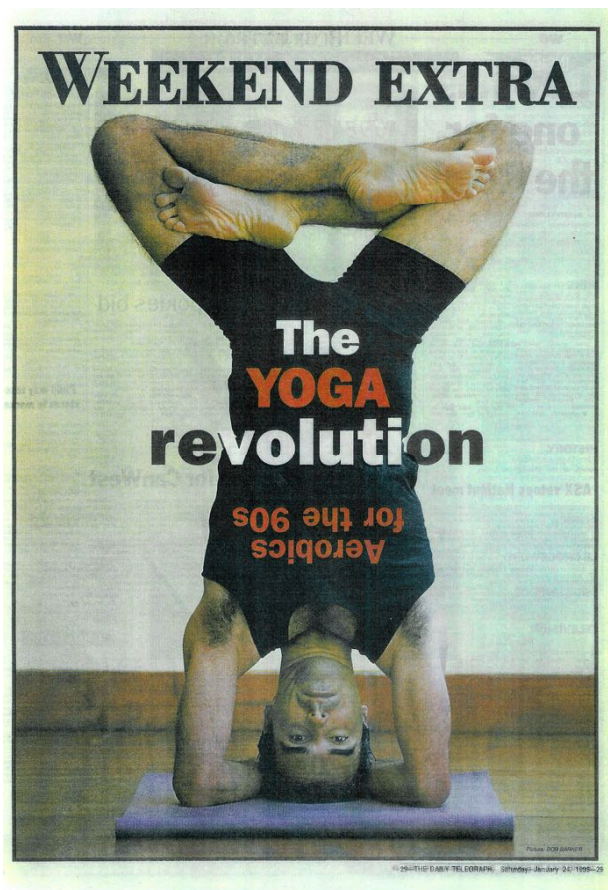
¹⁹⁷ Gannon and Life, *Jivamukti Yoga*, op. cit., p. 141.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 143.

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 143, 148 (box).

If your intention is to practice asana to realize the Self, every breath you take will help break down your sense of separation from others. You will realize that the atmosphere is filled with atoms of air that once filled the lungs of everyone who ever lived. We are breathing each other. From this realization, it's not hard to leap to the realization that we are all sharing consciousness in the same way that we share the air we breathe.²⁰¹

The practice of Yoga becomes a gift to others, not a small-minded, small 's' selfish act but a big hearted, big 'S' one. An act of compassion. "The awakening of consciousness will benefit all others, because we all share in the consciousness and its awakening."²⁰²



²⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 144.

²⁰¹ *ibid.*, pp. 145, 147.

²⁰² *ibid.*, p. 147.

Ashtanga

The particular form of Yoga that I primarily practice is called Ashtanga Yoga²⁰³. In what I think of as a moving meditation, the Asanas in Ashtanga Yoga are grouped into six carefully structured, progressively more challenging sequences or series. As Betty Lai, curator of the international Ashtanga Yoga website writes:

Ashtanga Yoga is the name given the system of *hatha yoga* currently taught by Sri K. Pattabhi Jois, a renowned Sanskrit scholar and yogi in Mysore, India. However, the historical definition of *ashtanga yoga* is “eight-limbed yoga,” as originally outlined by the sage Patañjali in the *Yoga Sutras*...The path of yogic maturation consists of the following eight limbs or practices:

Yama (moral observance)

Niyama (inner integrity)

Asana (postures)

Pranayama (breath control)

Pratyahara (sensory withdrawal)

Dharana (concentration)

Dhyana (meditation)

Samadhi (contemplation)²⁰⁴

Lai describes the origin of Ashtanga Yoga and clarifies the relationship between Patañjali and Pattabhi Jois:

²⁰³ Appendix E provides a copy of “Ashtanga Yoga in the Tradition of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois”, compiled by Annie Grover Pace and published on the Ashtanga Yoga website. This has been provided in full and not quoted from selectively out of respect for the note provided at its conclusion, which reads: “© This information has been generously provided with approval of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois. Please honor its authenticity and distribute only in unaltered form.” See pp. 265-266.

²⁰⁴ Betty Lai, “Ashtanga Yoga: Background”, on the *Ashtanga Yoga* website, www.Ashtanga.com accessed 19/2/1999. Since this time Lai’s statement has been developed and added to with information useful to the Yoga practitioner: additional details of explication concerning “the eight limbs”, quotes from interviews with Sri K. Pattabhi Jois, and references to articles.

Ashtanga Yoga as taught by Sri K. Pattabhi Jois began with the rediscovery, early in this [the 20th] century, of the *Yoga Korunta*, an ancient manuscript describing a unique system of hatha yoga practiced and created by the ancient sage Vamana Rishi. Under the direction of his guru Sri T. Krishnamacharya, Sri K. Pattabhi Jois helped decipher and collate this system of practicing *asana* (postures). Entrusted with preserving, refining, and teaching the system described in the *Yoga Korunta*, Sri K. Pattabhi Jois named this system “Ashtanga Yoga,” believing it to be the original asana practice as intended by Patañjali.²⁰⁵

Ashtanga Yoga is, as Lino Miele notes in his *Ashtanga Yoga*, “renowned for the Scientific Vinyasa...the famous words of Rishi Vamana were “Oh Yogi! Don’t do Asana Without Vinyasa”²⁰⁶ Lai elaborates:

The *Yoga Korunta* emphasizes vinyasa, (meaning “breath-synchronised movement”), a method of synchronizing progressive series of postures with a specific breath technique (*ujjayi pranayama*) – a process producing intense internal heat and a profuse, purifying sweat that detoxifies muscles and organs. The result is improved circulation, a light and strong body, and a calm mind.²⁰⁷

Vinyasa also aids in the integration of the eight limbs:

The Vinyasa concept of continuous flow aids the practitioner in integrating the eight limbs of yoga described by Patañjali. Movement through postures (*asana*) purifies the physical body, while mastery and refinement of the breath (*pranayama*) through concentration (*dharana*) quiets the senses (*pratyahara*), preparing the practitioner for meditation

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Lino Miele, *Ashtanga Yoga: Under the Guidance of Yogasanavisharada Vidwan Director Sri K. Pattabhi Jois*, Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute, Mysore, Published in Rome, Italy, 1994, p. xvi.

(*dhyana*) and eventually, *samadhi*, the union of the soul with the divine.

A balanced asana practice rests on ethical behaviour (*yama*) and self-discipline (*niyama*). Under the guidance of a qualified ashtanga instructor, the practitioner properly can begin to cultivate the eight limbs.²⁰⁸

When I asked Pattabhi Jois about why he had called the sequences of asanas Ashtanga Yoga, he said it was “a beginning”²⁰⁹. By this I understood him to mean that it was a way in, a place to start and the other practices would follow. Or as his famous phrase goes: “Do your practice and all is coming”²¹⁰. While there may be some differences of emphasis in what he and Desikachar have drawn from the same source, Krishnamacharya, on this idea they agree. As Desikachar writes:

It fascinates me that the change in people who practice yoga is not the result of philosophical consideration or the study of spiritual ideas. Merely by following the careful instruction of connecting breath to the body in appropriate ways, as Krishnamacharya taught, and practicing on a daily basis, something shifts: insights come, the ability to focus on tasks and achieve goals develops; new ways of handling difficult emotions and situations are recognized; feelings of stillness, peace, certainty, happiness, love, or connectedness spontaneously occur...All eight limbs of yoga develop concurrently as a result of doing an appropriate practice of posture and breathing under the guidance of a knowledgeable teacher.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ Lai, “Ashtanga Yoga: Background”, op. cit.

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*

²⁰⁹ At a question and answer session at Yoga Moves in Sydney, Australia, in 1998.

²¹⁰ Shri K. Pattabhi Jois, quoted in Eddie Stern (Sanskrit and Translations), and John Scott (Drawings), *Astanga: Astanga Yoga as Taught by Shri K. Pattabhi Jois*, a pamphlet, Mysore, 1993. For a number of years these translations and drawings were the only widely distributed written record of Ashtanga yoga, more recently a number of books and pamphlets have come out with pictorial representations of the series, including one by John Scott, *Ashtanga Yoga*, with a foreword by Shri K. Pattabhi Jois, Simon & Schuster, East Roseville, N.S.W., 2000. David Swenson’s *Ashtanga Yoga: “The Practice Manual*, has already been cited. Matthew J. Sweeney has brought out the most comprehensive series of pictorial images thus far, “a visual workbook”, in *Astanga Vinyasa Yoga: As It Is*, The Yoga Temple, 2000, which includes the Primary, Intermediate, Advanced A and B Series.



²¹¹ Desikachar, *The Heart of Yoga*, op. cit., p. xxvii

Detachment

The various forms of Hatha Yoga create their own sequences from the myriad of poses that exist. Most emphasise the importance of adapting the practice to the particular developmental needs of the particular student.²¹² But what is significant in terms of the analogy I am making between Yoga and art is that while the sequences are carefully designed for specific results²¹³, there is no attachment to particular transient forms. When practiced correctly, the identification is with the spirit that animates them. As the *Shankaracharya* chant says: “I am not the body and mind, although I have a body and mind”²¹⁴ Or in Sri Brahmananda Sarasvati’s words, “You are not the Body and Mind, you are the Cosmic Self, the I-AM”²¹⁵. As Gannon and Life suggest, using the example of *Surya Namaskar* or the Sun Salute, “the vinyasa krama with which most yoga students are familiar”: “as we change from form to form – from dog to warrior to mountain – one thing stays the same: the breath and our sense of “I-AM”²¹⁶.

In fact, Yoga encourages detachment in general, as B.K.S. Iyengar notes in *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*: “The yogi differentiates between the wavering uncertainties of

²¹² Despite the apparent differences in their approaches, B.K.S. Iyengar, Sri K. Pattabhi Jois and T.K.V. Desikachar and A.G. Mohan all emphasise this basic point, a central tenant of the teacher and guru they all share Sri T. Krishnamacharya.

²¹³ See Appendix E for a description of the differences between the six Ashtanga Yoga series, pp. 265-266. As Gannon and Life note on sequencing in general, in a way that returns to the idea of shapeshifting:

Vinyasa Krama is the sequential arrangement of asana for specific results. Some sequences are invigorating, some are very refined, some involve balance, some are therapeutic, some are dance-like, some are martial, some tell stories, and all my lead to samadhi: enlightenment! Sequencing adds prayerful potency, elements of physical challenge, artistic refinement, and therapeutic effect to the asana practice (Gannon and Life, *Jivamukti Yoga*, op. cit., p. 149).

Their emphasis on art and language are particularly relevant to a thesis about the connection between yoga practice and art practice:

Each asana has a discrete vibrational essence, much like the individual phonetic sounds that make up the alphabet of language. When asanas are linked properly, they form invocations that yield results according to the nature of the intention and the content of the invocation (ibid.).

²¹⁴ Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati (translator), *Shankaracharya* chant, quoted ibid., p. 186.

²¹⁵ Quoted by Gannon and Life from teachings by Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati heard at Ananda Ashram satsangs, ibid., pp. 89, 263.

thought processes and the understanding of the Self, which is changeless. He does his work in the world as a witness, uninvolved and uninfluenced.”²¹⁷. As Ram Dass elaborates in this his *Yogas of the Bhagavad-Gita* lectures:

“Yoga, union, is then extracting oneself from the illusion of separateness, extracting yourself from identifying...with your lower mind - with all the thoughts that are rushing through, with your sense data, with the sense objects. So instead of me and mine, and my thoughts and my feelings and my senses, all this stuff is just stuff...just appearing stuff - just apparently stuff. And you are slowly getting free of attachment to this... You getting free of attachment and going back inward towards this *atman*, where you will rest in the *atman*, rest in the light, the undifferentiated, unconditioned light.”²¹⁸



²¹⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 147, 148.

²¹⁷ B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, op. cit., p. 8. See also B.K.S. Iyengar *Light on Yoga*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1966.

²¹⁸ Ram Das, “Jnana Yoga II,” Lecture # 6, 6/22/1974, *The Yogas of the Bhagavad-Gita*, at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado, published by the Hanuman Foundation Tape Library, San Anselmo, California, 1974, audio tape side A. See *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, Los Angeles, Borehamwood, Herts., Sydney, 1983.

Yoga

Thus the aim of Yoga Asana practice, as the three of the major Indian Yoga gurus who draw their lineage from Krishnamacharya agree, is to manifest the spiritual energies believed to be inherent in the breath in an array of different physical forms. Desikachar writes in *The Heart of Yoga: Developing a Personal Practice*:

By means of linking breath to the body in moving and stationary postures, the mind is connected with the body. We are brought into existence by the power of the universe...When we attend to the process of linking breath with the whole body, the mind and the senses merge with the power of the universe. We might call this power *consciousness* and its active principle *energy*, or in yoga terms *purusa* and *prana*. Through yoga, mind and senses become the communication mechanism of consciousness and energy rather than having apparently random and sometimes disturbing lives of their own.²¹⁹

Iyengar again:

Asanas act as bridges to unite the body with the mind, and the mind with the soul...Through *asana*, the *sadhaka* comes to know and fully realize the finite body and merge it with the infinite – the soul. Then there is neither the known nor the unknown and only then does the *asana* exist wholly.²²⁰

²¹⁹ Desikachar, *The Heart of Yoga*, op. cit., p. xvi. In his “Glossary”, Desikachar defines *purusa* as “source of consciousness, perceiver”, *ibid.*, pp. 241. For a further description of *purusha*, as he spells it, see Feuerstein, *The Shambhala Encyclopedia of Yoga*, op. cit., pp. 236-237. For an in depth discussion of *purusa*, see Bettina Baumer, “Purusa”, in Baumer (ed.), *Eight Selected Items*, in Vatsyayan (gen. ed.), *Kalatattvakos*, op. cit., pp. 23-40.

²²⁰ Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, op. cit., p. 29.

And Pattabhi Jois in *Yoga Mala*:

An aspirant, by the grace of his Guru and constant practice of yoga, can someday realize, before casting off his mortal coil, the Indweller that is of the nature of supreme peace and eternal bliss, and the cause of the creation, sustenance and destruction of the universe. Otherwise, an aspirant will be unable to see anything in this world but turmoil.²²¹

As Gannon and Life suggest: “Yoga practices shift our identity away from the ego-personality and its struggles so that we can begin to reconnect with the essential nature of our being, which is bliss.”²²² Ego-personality versus bliss leads us, in the next section, to draw out more connections out between Yoga and *The Kamikaze Mind*.



²²¹ Sri K. Pattabhi Jois, *Yoga Mala* (2nd Edition), Eddie Stern/Patañjali Yoga Shala, New York, 1999 (a translation of the first Kannada edition 1962), p. 17. There is now also a 3rd edition from North Point Press, 2002.

²²² Gannon and Life, *Jivamukti Yoga*, op. cit., p. 13.

Maya

Joseph Campbell explains the purpose of Yoga in a beautiful image:

The goal of ...yoga is to make the mind stand still. Why should you want to do that? We're coming to a basic idea in this perennial philosophy – namely, that everything is experienced through the mind. This is maya. The mind is in an active state. The image is given of a pond rippled by the wind. The rippling pond with its waves reflects images that are broken...What we do is identify ourselves with one of those broken images, one of those broken reflections on the surface of the pond. Here I come: There I go. That links us to the temporal flow, time and space – maya. Make the pond stand still, one image. What was broken and reflected is now seen in its still perfection, and that's your true being. But that's everybody else's true being also. This is the goal of yoga, to find the reality of consciousness which is of you and of everybody else.²²³

As was indicated earlier, *The Kamikaze Mind* is a portrait of the fluctuations of the mind, a study in its chaos that perhaps gestures towards its underlying harmony. Pattabhi Jois notes: “Focussing the mind in a single direction is extremely important. Since the mind is very unsteady, it is difficult for it to maintain itself in this way.”²²⁴ Reflecting the unbounded chaos of the mind, *The Kamikaze Mind* is a multi-directional text: decentred, non-linear. As Mohan writes, “according to the philosophy of yoga, the mind normally moves in many directions”:

²²³ Campbell, *Transformations of Myth Through Time*, op. cit., p. 133. I have also found helpful in my research into spirituality and culture the two audio tape sets of Joseph Campbell's *The World of Joseph Campbell*, Volume I: *The Soul of the Ancients*, and Volume II: *Transformation of Myth Through Time*. In particular, in this context, “From Id to Ego in the Orient: Kundalini Yoga Part 1” and “From Psychology to Spirituality: Kundalini Yoga Part II”, Programs 2 and 3 of *Volume II: Transformations of Myth Through Time Series*: HighBridge Productions, 1990.

²²⁴ Jois, *Yoga Mala*, op. cit., p. 32.

At the same time, we know that it is possible to direct all this movement, which suggests that some entity other than the mind is doing the directing. This entity we will call the Perceiver. The Perceiver itself is constant and unchanging. Just as the mind experiences the world through the senses, so the Perceiver “sees” through its own instrument of perception, the mind...When the mind is not clouded over, or veiled, by the habits, tendencies, and associations it has accumulated over time, the Perceiver sees clearly. However, these other distorting factors are usually present, resulting in misperceptions, wrong actions, and painful consequences.²²⁵

He continues:

In the latter state, the mind is obscured by what the philosophy of yoga refers to as *kleshas*, or “impurities”. It is as if the Perceiver must look through a dirty window. These impurities include the desire, hatred, fear, prejudices, reactions and residues of our past experiences...The real problem arises when we identify with our minds and these distorted perceptions...The foremost symptom of this situation is known as *dukha*, or “suffering”.²²⁶

The Kamikaze Mind is a study in this kind of mental distortion and suffering, a poetic textbook of the delights and discomforts of ‘maya’. To quote one line:

Contents Definitions of pain.²²⁷

At the level of its very fragmentary structure, it is also a Yogic deconstruction of our experience of time. As John Schumacher and Patricia Walden point out in their article, “The Law of Karma”, in *Yoga Journal*:

²²⁵ Mohan, *Yoga for Body, Breath, and Mind*, op. cit., p. 6.

²²⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 6, 7. For a definition of *klesha*, see Feuerstein, *The Shambhala Encyclopedia of Yoga*, op. cit., p. 156.

We normally experience time as an unbroken flow, but yogic philosophy, based on the experiences of yogis in deep meditation, tells us that time is really a series of distinct moments. Yogis, by the way, are not the only ones to have observed time in this manner. Feuerstein points out in his commentary on [Patañjali's Yoga] sutra IV, 33, that this realization “foreshadows in certain respects contemporary ideas about the discontinuous nature of time and the space-time continuum.”²²⁸

The Kamikaze Mind draws the reader in to this experience of mind as fragmentation and pain, thereby taking the mode of direct address/audience participation/interactivity a step further. If the poem is a portrait of a mind which is already quite broken and can only be (only ever partially) put back together in the mind of the reader, the reader must make their own choices in the struggle between ego and transcendence, selfishness and selflessness, passion and irony – choices about identifying with the ‘Perceiver’ or the ‘mind’ in a quest for identity. Placing moral, ethical and spiritual choices in the hands of the audience is a project at the heart of the dance and drama film *No Surrender*, as we shall explore in the next section.

²²⁷ Allen, *The Kamikaze Mind*, op. cit., p. 23.

²²⁸ Schumacher and Walden, op. cit., pp. 172-173., quoting from Feuerstein, *The Yoga-Sutra of Patañjali*, op. cit., p. 144.



A Dramatic Reversal

The synopsis tells the story of *No Surrender*:

A young Indigenous woman...is invaded, terrorised and physically attacked by an unseen intruder wielding a camera. As she nears the point of surrender, the woman's spirit separates from her body and, through the language of dance and spiritual movement, she finds the strength to fight back and overcome her attacker."²²⁹

While at one level, there is a clear sense of 'good guys' and 'bad guys' in *No Surrender*, nonetheless the film deliberately places the audience in the morally ambiguous position of identifying at different times in the story with both the intruder and the victim. *No Surrender* draws the viewer into a nightmare world of unconscious desires and terrors. Never seeing the intruder, seeing only through the intruder's eyes, implicates the audience in this character's actions. The audience finds itself taking at first a titillating, then voyeuristic and finally sadistic journey with the camera. But the journey changes radically when the young woman finds the resources within herself to fight back in spite of everything. Then it is as if the audience is under attack and being punished for its former complicity.

This is a form of the direct address/audience engagement technique discussed earlier, but an ironic one. As Keith Gallasch noted in his review in *RealTime*, it is "a dramatic reversal of one of cinema's favorite tropes, the pursuit of the terrified woman" and "a rare experience for the audience being cast as the baddy"²³⁰.

²²⁹ Richard James Allen, "'No Surrender', film synopsis", The Physical TV Company, Sydney, 2002.

²³⁰ Keith Gallasch, "Seen: No Surrender", *RealTime/On Screen: film*, Number 49, June/July 2002, p. 18.



Some might find the ambiguity they feel in watching the film disturbing. My answer to this is that the film is both honest about who we are and also offers us a chance to make some choices about who we want to be. *No Surrender* gives the audience the opportunity to decide at which point it engages unconsciously in the construction of the narrative and when, where and why it might depart consciously from this in order to construct a different moral view of the universe.

An inspiration for this was the famous Colonel Kilgore's air cavalry helicopter attack in Francis Ford Coppola's film *Apocalypse Now*²³¹. This scene, with its speeding aerial camerawork, dynamic editing and visceral sound design, all of which is given emotional charge by Richard Wagner's emotionally rousing *Ride of the Valkyries* music, draws the audience into an experience of the thrill of war. Soon afterwards this rush turns to horror and disgust as we are confronted with the hurt and the pain, the senseless and wanton destruction, that are its consequences. It is a confronting experience, because we are forced to question ourselves and the ease with which we get caught up in things and are willing to go along with them. *No Surrender* takes the audience on a different journey but it is also one of excitement followed by moral self-questioning.

While *No Surrender* was a much much smaller, and much more focussed, production than this notoriously troubled four year epic²³², it was nonetheless broadly inspired by Coppola's masterpiece in a number of other ways, as we shall see in the next couple of sections.

²³¹ Francis Ford Coppola (director), *Apocalypse Now*, Francis Ford Coppola and Milius, John (writers), *Apocalypse Now*, San Francisco: Omni Zoetrope, 1979. Also see the revised version with various originally cut scenes reinstated: Francis Ford Coppola (director), Francis Ford Coppola and John Milius (writers), *Apocalypse Now Redux*, Hollywood, California: Paramount Pictures/Omni Zoetrope, 2000.

²³² See the documentary on the making of *Apocalypse Now*: Fax Bahr with George Hickenlooper (directors, writers) and Eleanor Coppola (director of documentary footage), *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*, USA: ZM Productions in association with Zoetrope Studios, 1991.



Gesamtkunstwerk

At the heart of Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* was the premise that film was not just an art form in its own right, but more than that, a grand scale art form which could encompass and integrate other art forms. It was a restatement of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* ('complete-art-work') idea and it can be hardly a coincidence that Wagner's music is used to such great effect in the film. Coppola's interpretation of this grand form centred around the notion of film opera. I was inspired by the integrated richness of what he achieved but my interests are more in the direction of dance. Thus in the attempt to make *No Surrender* a richly layered and fully immersive experience, I worked with a dialectical mix of choreography and drama at every level of the filmmaking process from concept to script to choreography to design to location to lighting to camerawork to directing to editing to sound design to music to sound mix.

Beneath this approach is also another idea – that of 'stories told by the body'. 'A story told by the body' is a concept devised by Karen Pearlman and myself to describe the kind of work we have been engaged in since the creation of Physical TV in 1997. It creates a sharp distinction between what I would term the 'dance films' of this period and the 'video dances' that we made earlier²³³. It also distinguishes us from other artists involved in the current international wave of this developing artform²³⁴. While the general

²³³ See "Appendix A: List of Creative Arts Works, 1979-2004: Film and Video Works", pp. 205-211.

²³⁴ Interestingly, and to my mind not entirely appropriately, in Europe the term video dance continues to be most used. This is done quite self-consciously. To quote the SK Cultural Foundation on the Dance and Media section of their website: "What's video dance? Video dance arose out of a fusion of stage dance and motion picture. It is not a question of filming dance performed on the stage, but rather of a choreographic creation uniquely and solely for the camera view. The moving camera can follow dance from any distance or perspective, and be actively involved in creation. It not only observes the dancer, it "dances with" the dancer. And the effect of montage and animation techniques and electronic image editing are such that it is not only the dancer in a video dance who is moving. The space surrounding the dancer, be it exterior space, everyday interior space or a fictitiously created world is also set in motion... This genre uses the both qualitative advantages of celluloid film and the merits of the far less expensive medium of video and, recently, the possibilities of multimedia as well. To be absolutely precise, it should be called "film and video dance". The name "video dance" is generally accepted in German language usage and will be retained here." Website: http://www.sk-kultur.de/videotanz/english/wasist_e.htm Accessed February 6, 2004. Interestingly, Erin Brannigan, the curator of ReelDance International Dance on Screen Festival in Australia, in her research, uses the term 'dancefilm'. However, as I understand it, her point of view is much more concerned with the idea of capturing movement on a screen as having been a central but

approach is to find interesting ways to film or ‘capture’ dance on the screen (which is certainly what we tried to do in early works like *Think Too Much*²³⁵ and *International Bestseller: Over 10 Million Copies Sold*²³⁶) or to create a dance work that only exists in the filmic or more recently digital medium (which we did with works like *Blue Cities* and parts of *What To Name Your Baby*²³⁷), we are now incorporating these earlier stages but adding a third: to film stories which are told through cinematic choreography. This means drawing on the richness of the cinematic medium and its traditions as equal partners in the creative process at every level. But it also means attempting to avoid the bane of many Hollywood musicals, the moment when the characters, for no justifiable reason, ‘just dance’. There is no moment like this in our recent films, including *Rubberman Accepts The Nobel Prize* and *No Surrender*. On the contrary, the idea of dance and the dance itself has been thoroughly integrated into, and thus given credibility by, the context and the story. The narratives have been conceived from their inception as ‘dance stories’.

Thus for example in *Rubberman*, the central character dances because it is his language. This fact is highlighted by his need for a verbal translator, and from the disjunction between these two languages some of the humour of the piece also arises. In *No Surrender*, the young woman does not dance when she is attacked. She backs away, scrabbles, slips, runs - pedestrian actions. It is her spirit, emerging from the rock after she has been knocked out or perhaps killed, that teaches her to dance, reconnecting her to deep spiritual heritage and giving her a physical language with which to fight back and overcome the attacker.

largely unacknowledged core aspect of cinema history, compared to our idea of fully integrating the highly developed cinematic arts of storytelling with the creative possibilities of choreography and movement.

²³⁵ Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman (directors and choreographers), Richard James Allen (writer), *Think Too Much*, That Was Fast, New York, 1986.

²³⁶ Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman (directors and choreographers), Richard James Allen (writer), *International Bestseller: Over Ten Million Copies Sold*, That Was Fast, New York, 1987.

²³⁷ Moshe Rosenzweig (director), Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman (choreographers), Richard James Allen (writer), *What To Name Your Baby*, Special Broadcasting Corporation (SBS) in association with That Was Fast, Sydney, Australia, 1995.

Working in this way has also necessitated some (potentially) new methods of directing, which I touched on in a recent paper entitled “Action and Actions: Directing in dancefilm”²³⁸, but which I hope to articulate further in some other context. These will be briefly discussed in the next section.



²³⁸ Richard James Allen, “Action and Actions: Directing in dancefilm”, a paper delivered at Dance, Corporeality, the Body and Performance Practices, a Symposium at University of New South Wales on 14 November, 2003. This presentation summarised key aspects of this DCA research and pointed towards possible future areas of research and practice.



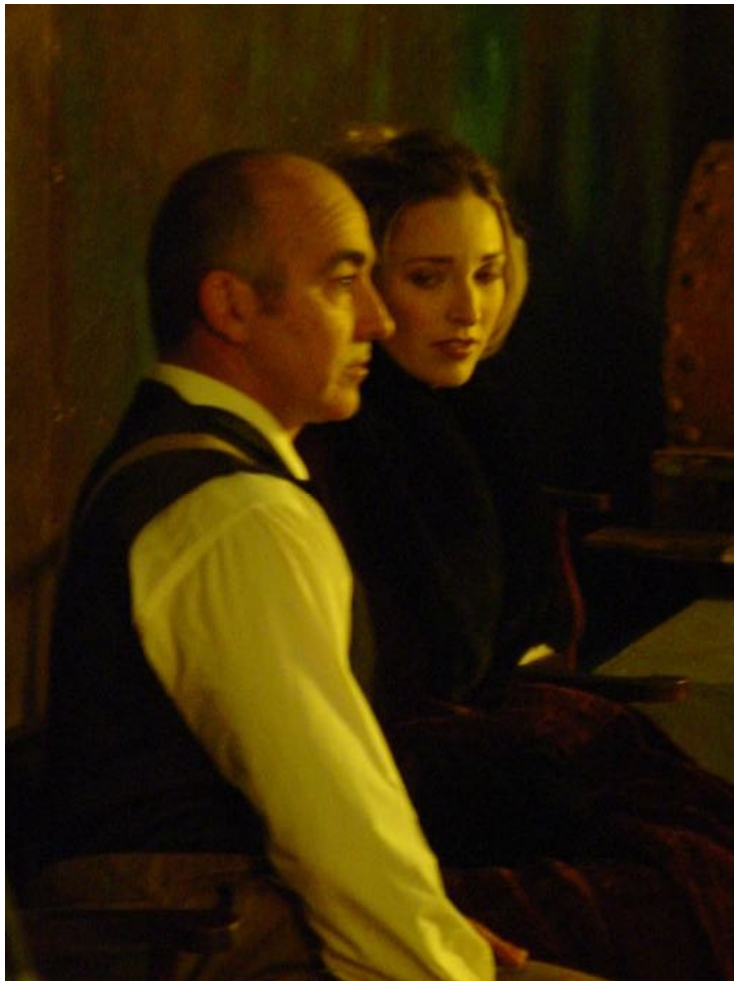
Action and Actions

There are many methods of directing. However, broadly speaking, in current drama directing, the director inspires the actor through a detailed reading and rehearsal of the script. The director helps the actor find a genuine response to the situation and aids in the creation of a character with objectives, actions, and obstacles.

There are many methods of scriptwriting. However, broadly speaking in current scriptwriting practice, the scriptwriter creates a document that includes the time and place, the characters, and their journey through the story.

There are many methods of choreography. However, broadly speaking in current dance practice, the choreographer creates a movement sequence either by making up movements on their own body and teaching it to the dancers, or giving the dancers a series of ‘problems’ to solve or ‘projects’ to create. Often a combination of such approaches takes place.

This places choreography in an interesting relationship to directing and to writing. In a dance film, that is to say a film in which the action of the film is expressed in a dominant manner by movement, the choreography becomes a key part of the directing and the scriptwriting. Depending on the individual project, the choreography becomes an essential, sometimes unwritten, part of the script. Characters ‘speak’ in a movement language. The ‘text’ of the film is expressed physically, and interestingly, I would argue, so is the ‘subtext’.



My aim in *No Surrender* was to put into practice this idea that directing and scriptwriting could be enriched by the tools and crafts skills of choreography and choreography could be enriched by the tools and crafts skills of scriptwriting and particularly directing. As the writer, director and choreographer, I tried to make a larger practice that encompassed all three disciplines to create a dynamic, dramatic, physically and psychologically expressed film story and performance. At every moment in building these layers of film choreography and storytelling, questions such as, “Can the outer and inner worlds of what a performance ‘looks like’ and what it ‘feels like’ be combined fruitfully?”, and, “Can a character’s actions (in an acting sense) and their actions (in a choreographic sense) be interfolded?”, were addressed and balanced in my working with the performer and interestingly, with the cinematographer, who functioned as the second (unseen) actor/dancer in film.²³⁹

²³⁹ The “Stanislavski” method of training actors, which is by far the most influential and pervasive training method for Western actors since the second half of the twentieth century, uses the word “action” to describe an actor’s intention when saying a line or performing a scene. “Actions”, in this sense, are what the character wants and how they get it. They are the defining force in playing narrative drama, used by actors and directors to determine what the actor does, when, where, with how much energy or force and why. This word is foreign to dance and dance makers in this sense, and yet, it could be said that what dancers do all day long is action – they move here and there, performing this action and that, and the culmination of this activity is the composition of actions into the dance’s form, whatever that may be. What I have been interested in has been the overlapping of these two ideas about “action” in dancefilm. How can the notion of “action” in the Stanislavski sense be fruitfully applied to a dancer’s activity or action? And what about vice versa – if an actor is directed as a dancer often is, by having their activity demonstrated and defined for them, do they necessarily lose their “action” or can they learn to use their body as a way cueing of their expressive intention into “action”? Can these two methods be woven together – allowing for movement which has range and creativity but also dramatic coherence and characterisation which is physically nuanced without being ‘untrue’ or showy? See Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, translated by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood, Eyre Methuen, London, 1980 (originally published by Theatre Arts New York, 1936, and by Geoffrey Bles, London, 1937); and Constantin Stanislavski, *Creating A Role*, translated by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood, edited by Hermine I. Popper, forward by Robert Lewis, Eyre Methuen, London, 1981 (originally published by Theatre Arts, New York, 1961, and Geoffrey Bles, London, 1963); and Constantin Stanislavski, *Building a Character*, translated by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood, Reinhart & Evans, London, 1950. For an approach to creating character that begins with the body, see Vsevolod Emilievich Meyerhold, *Meyerhold on Theatre*, translated and with a critical commentary by Edward Braun, Methuen Drama, London, 1991 (first published 1969). Meyerhold’s “biomechanics...the core and culmination point of his theatrical concept...disfigured, smeared, and distorted by history and politics...its traces...searched and researched by Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook and The Living Theatre” is demonstrated by a surviving Russian actor from its “hidden” school in *Meyerhold’s Theater and Biomechanics*, a video produced by Mime Centrum Berlin, Germany, 1997 (the quote is from the tape slick).

This layering of action and actions echoes with another experience I had in directing *No Surrender*. As the director, it was my job to have ‘the vision’, to communicate this to the key collaborators in the cinematic process, and then to coordinate their contributions to its realisation. As the centre of the spokes of a wheel that involved many talented artists and artisans, I tried to bring a seamless and harmony at the level of detail and broad structure and theme to the collaborations of many different film departments who may never have spoken with each other, but who collaborated through me.

Drawing together different artforms to create a larger whole brings us back to Coppola and *Apocalypse Now* and the layering of contradictory images and ideas in the next section.



This Prodigious Paradox

Thematically as well as formally, Coppola's film had resonances for me in making *No Surrender*. In particular, in Willard's twisting journey of real and surreal moments up the river to reach the heart of darkness, Coppola was able to combine opposites to create complex, exhilarating and unsettling wholes. These climax in the mixture of horror and beauty in the parallel action montage scene at the end of the film: the sacrifice of the bull intercut with Willard's final ironic (since, as he says, "They were going to give me a medal for this and I wasn't even in their fucking army any more") completion of his mission - the execution of Colonel Kurtz. This sense of the beauty in the midst of horror is captured in a more recent and very different but in its own way equally poetic 'art' war film, *The Thin Red Line* by Terence Malick²⁴⁰. I would now like to turn to another, earlier 'art' filmmaker who has articulated a theoretical template which I find helpful in explaining my interest in depicting layered, complicated experiences and moral complexities.

Andrey Tarkovsky wrote about the idea of moral complexity within an art work in *Sculpting in Time*. His words are, for me, reminiscent of Eliot's about the "width of emotional range" in Dante. "Art", Tarkovsky suggested, "is born and takes hold whenever there is a timeless and insatiable longing for the spiritual, for the ideal".

[But] when I speak of the aspiration towards the beautiful, of the ideal as the ultimate aim of art...I am not for a moment suggesting that art should shun the 'dirt' of world. On the contrary...hideousness and beauty are contained within each other. This prodigious paradox, in all its absurdity, leavens life itself, and in art makes that wholeness in which harmony and tension are unified.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Terrence Malick, (director, writer), *The Thin Red Line*, Canada, USA, 1998 (based on James Jones' novel, *The Thin Red Line*, Scribner, New York, 1962).

²⁴¹ Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*, translated from the Russian by Kitty Hunter-Blair, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1989, p. 38.

Before dealing with this in relation to *No Surrender*, I would like to flashback to a film I made in New York in 1990-1991, on which this quote also sheds light. *Mistakes of Heaven*²⁴², a black and white 16mm poetic/expressionistic film, was an experimentally expressed narrative – told in images and movement – about a man tangled in dreams and ambitions which are at once uplifting, mystifying and humbling. Shot in an abandoned, plaster peeling apartment and on the rooftop of a Manhattan tenement, it begins with a man in a white suit. He is bound to a white chair, his eyes covered and his mouth gagged. His dreams of beauty and death, of desire and repression, are tortuously mixed, but at the end of the film he is able to progress upward from one stage of hell to the next. He is still captive, but somehow, through an act of imaginative empathy and assent to the fact that, as Tarkovsky put it, “hideousness and beauty are contained within each other”, more free.

A corollary to this is the poem *A Disappointed Bridge*, a study in mental fragmentation and madness, truth and epiphanic illumination, in which “the fine and wavering line between realistic assessment and wild projection is beginning to break down”²⁴³. Written just before this film, this poem in fact provided a kind of background inspiration for it, although it would be difficult to say there was any form of adaptation. The poem ends, however, with a vision that is similar in its layered complexity and which inspired the critic Dennis Nicholson to comment that:

The minute one starts thinking Richard Allen might be fishing in the sewer
with a typewriter, some magnificent creature rises from the depths to
remind us what a resourceful and skillful poet he is.²⁴⁴

What Nicholson was thinking of was that:

²⁴² Richard James Allen (director, writer, choreographer), *Mistakes of Heaven*, That Was Fast with assistance from the New School for Social Research, New York, 1991.

²⁴³ Richard [James] Allen, “A Disappointed Bridge”, in *Hope for a man named Jimmie & Grand Illusion Joe*, op. cit., section 18, p. 14.

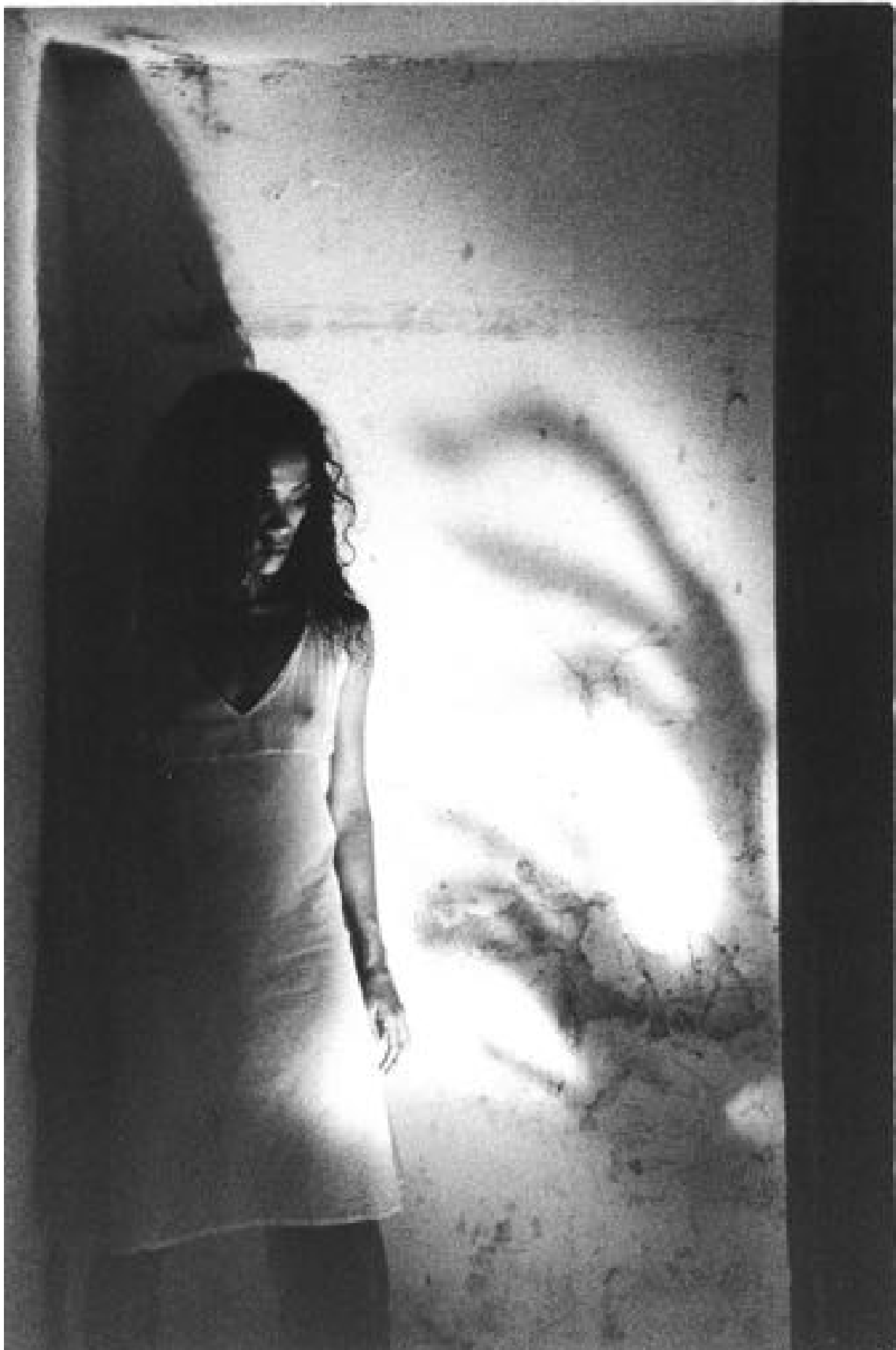
The final verse of this poem succeeds in an unlikely glissando from piss to apotheosis:

Did I write or am I dreaming the story of a beautiful girl
 pissed on by her father to keep her feeling unworthy? And
 from the long, smutty, golden stream coming out of the
 tower in all directions we passed out together into the
 vertical transparent thoughts of rain. And we were naked
 and beautiful and Scheherazade took my palm and led me
 out to the end of the pier and said, walk. And I set my
 bare feet upon the naked water, the firm texture of the
 green sea, and stepped out across the bouncing, undulating
 surface of the waves; my path so direct – the sea becoming
 bluer and bluer, clearer and clearer, I didn't know there
 could be such a flat, straight road, and the water and sky
 rising up to meet each other, blending together like two
 musical styles, and kissing each other on the cheek like two
 apostles – to heaven.²⁴⁵

With these works as part of our story in the past, in the next section let us flash forwards.

²⁴⁴ Dennis Nicholson, "Associative Travels", a review of *Hope for a man named Jimmie & Grand Illusion Joe* in *Mattoid*, 46/47, Numbers 2 and 3, 1993, p. 294 (Brian Edwards, editor).

²⁴⁵ *ibid.* The quote is from Allen, "A Disappointed Bridge", in *Hope for a man named Jimmie & Grand Illusion Joe*, op. cit., section 64, p. 26.



Dialectically Contradictory Phenomena

A little later in his book, Tarkovsky says something which I have only discovered since making *No Surrender*, but which I now believe may be the clearest reference point for my own work: “The artistic image cannot be one-sided: in order justly to be called truthful, it has to unite within itself dialectically contradictory phenomena”.²⁴⁶

No Surrender is a work which attempts to “unite within itself dialectically contradictory phenomena”. This occurs at a number of levels both formally and thematically. At the very level of its medium it deals with the conflict between the contingent and the timeless and thereby goes some way towards ‘answering’ the questions raised by the contradictory nature of works like *Performing the Unnameable*. By creating a hybrid of the transitory medium of dance with the more permanent medium of film it aims towards an artistic symbiosis of the two in a medium which, when viewed, will always be ‘present’.

Thematically, the film also raises this conflict in relation to the idea of identity. Which is the attacked Indigenous woman’s true identity – the transient self that is abused and possibly killed, or the timeless spirit which can teach her to fight back? Indeed, are the protagonist and the antagonist, the sleeping woman and the peeping tom²⁴⁷, the more

²⁴⁶ Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time*, op. cit., p. 54.

²⁴⁷ See Powell, Michael (director), Marks, Leo (writer) *Peeping Tom*, UK, 1960, a film I have heard about since making *No Surrender* but never actually seen. The following are two plot outlines downloaded from The Internet Movie Database (Website: www.imdb.com):

As a boy, Mark Lewis was subjected to bizarre experiments by his scientist-father, who wanted to study and record the effects of fear on the nervous system. Now grown up, both of his parents dead, Mark works by day as a focus-puller for a London movie studio. He moonlights by taking girly pictures above a news agent's shop. But Mark has also taken up a horrifying hobby: He murders women while using a movie camera to film their dying expressions of terror. One evening, Mark meets and befriends Helen Stephens, a young woman who rents one of the rooms in his house. Does Helen represent some kind of possible redemption for Mark - or is she unknowingly running the risk of becoming one of his victims? Summary written by [Eugene Kim {genekim@concentric.net}](mailto:genekim@concentric.net)

This is a deeply disturbing, shocking but very interesting & serious study of scopophilia and terror. This film could not be regarded as an attempt at titillation (as was wrongly assumed by some critics when it was released) but is a study of a deeply disturbed person.

Summary written by [Steve Crook {steve@brainstorm.co.uk}](mailto:steve@brainstorm.co.uk)

mundane and human ‘characters’ they appear to be at the beginning of the film or have they by the end transcended this and transformed into something almost archetypal - an angel and a devil? By examining a struggle between what might be termed as that between ‘the self’ and ‘the soul’,²⁴⁸ between ‘animus’ and ‘anima’,²⁴⁹ between notions of and beyond evil and good²⁵⁰, between the world views revelling in the temporal moment and those investing in the eternal, *No Surrender* attempts to create a space for a range of aspects of our humanity to co-exist dynamically in the one artistic experience.

This is even expressed at the level of the digital technology used to create the film and depicted in it and the contemporary fascination with ‘interactivity’. As Hunter Cordaiy writes in his review in *RealTime/New Media Scan 2002: film*:

Exploring the plasticity of the image through digital effects is part of the drive behind the best experimental short films, where the compression of time and image makes the wondrous especially effective. Physical TV’s ATOM award-winning short dance film, *No Surrender* is a good example...Director Richard Allen calls it “a digital age story” where the camera (cinematographer Andrew Commis, editor Karen Pearlman) is a malevolent presence on screen, forcing the audience to question the intention of the technology used to construct the narrative. This too is a form of interactivity, but more subtle and ultimately intelligent. *No*

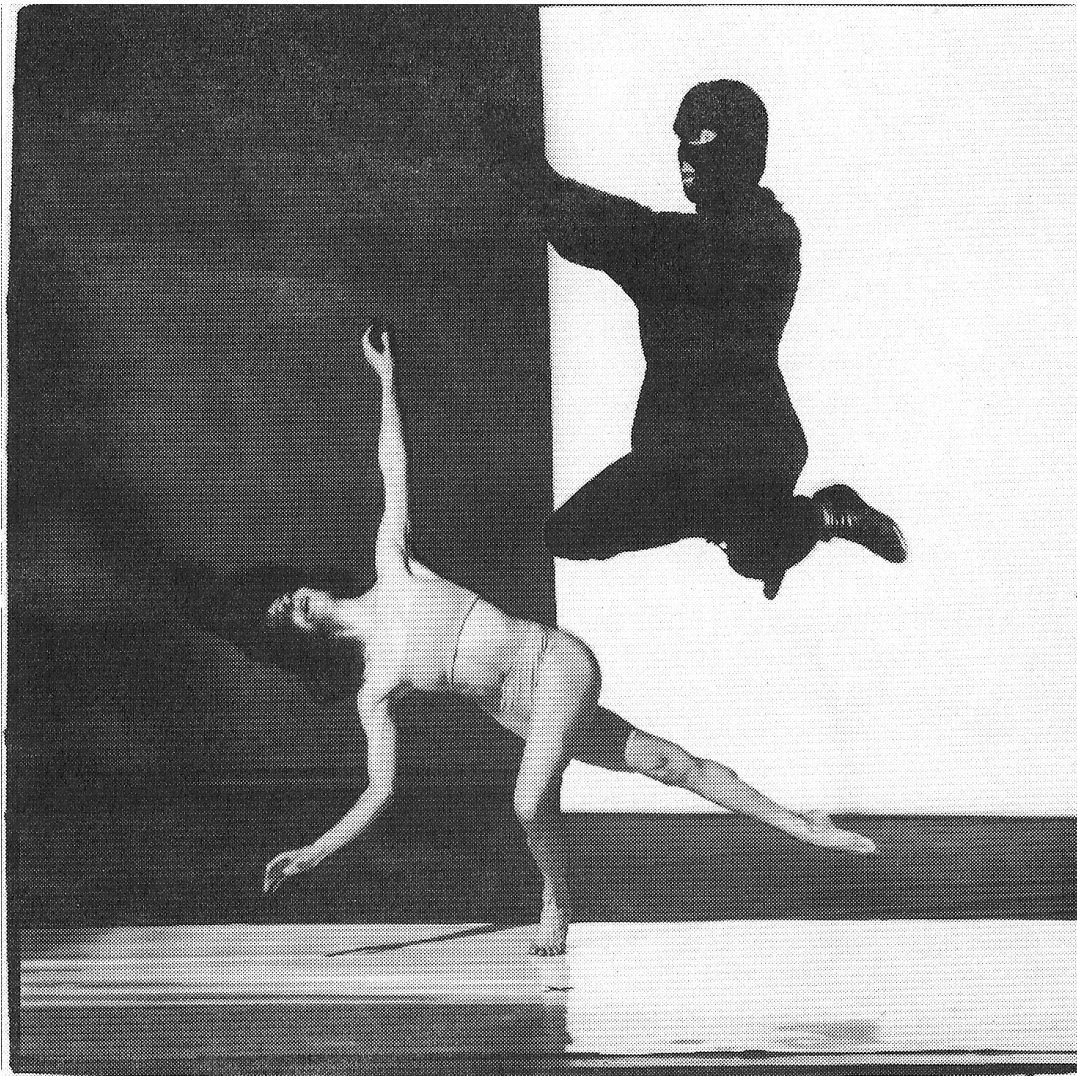
²⁴⁸ See Yeats, “A Dialogue of Self and Soul”, *Selected Poetry*, op. cit., pp. 142-145. Interestingly, Helen Vendler writes, “The interaction of the “soul” and the “self” within a single person is one of the great themes of lyric when it decides to face outward rather than inward: this is the undertaking of poets like Yeats and Ginsberg...To me, what soul says seems convincing, and self seems a contingent adventitiousness always in tension with it. Yeats reversed the terms, and made “self” mean the abstraction of carnal voice, while “soul” was the abstraction of discarnate voice. These terms can be defined at will; the Yeatsian “self” is what Jorie Graham calls “soul”.” Helen Vendler, *Soul Says: On Recent Poetry*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 1995, pp. 6, 8. See Allen Ginsberg, *Kaddish and Other Poems, 1958-1960*, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 1961; and Jorie Graham, “Soul Says” in *Region of Unlikeness*, The Ecco Press, Hopewell, N.J., 1991.

²⁴⁹ See M.-L. von Franz, “The process of individuation”, in Carl G. Jung and M.-L. von Franz (editors), *Man and his Symbols*, Doubleday & Company Inc., Garden City, New York, 1964, in particular the sections “The anima: the woman within”, pp. 177-188, and “The animus: the man within”, pp. 189-195.

²⁵⁰ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, translated, with an introduction and commentary, by R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin, 1973. Beyond good and evil: after all, the protagonist, the originally preyed upon sleeping woman, becomes like the Goddess of destruction, Kali.

Surrender points the way to the possibilities that abound when collaboration occurs across forms and new technologies are integrated into the totality of the vision.²⁵¹

In the next section we will look at how the opposite of this totality, or lack of unity of dialectically contradictory phenomena, i.e. the repression of contradiction and paradox, can lead to neurosis and unnecessary conflict.



²⁵¹ Hunter Corday, "Sometimes it goes like this...", *RealTime/On Screen - New Media Scan 2002: film*, Number 51, October/November 2002, p. 28 [Keith Gallasch and Virginia Baxter (editors)].

Inexorable Opposites

Earlier in this essay I asked: “Is it possible to reconcile contradictory impulses in an art work?” I would now suggest that it is not only possible but *necessary* - *that the actual aim of an artwork is to reconcile contradictory impulses*. Growing up in a divided world before the fall of the Berlin Wall²⁵², I felt keenly Carl Gustav Jung’s words in “Approaching the unconscious”, in *Man and His Symbols*, which I read about the same time as *Siddhartha*:

What we call civilized consciousness has steadily separated itself from the basic instincts. But these instincts have not disappeared. They have merely lost their contact with our consciousness and thus are forced to assert themselves in an indirect fashion. This may be by means of physical symptoms in the case of a neurosis, or by means of incidents of various kinds, like unaccountable moods, unexpected forgetfulness, or mistakes of speech.²⁵³

“Modern man”, argued Jung, was deluded if he considered himself “the master of his soul”:

He is unable to control his moods and emotions, or to be conscious of the myriad secret ways in which unconscious factors insinuate themselves into his arrangements and decisions...Modern man protects himself against seeing his own split state by a system of compartments. Certain areas of

²⁵² Quaint as such a reference may seem now, a review of Karen Pearlman and my first performance together included the following lines: “The work of Karen Pearlman and Richard Allen represents an early taste of a new generation of serious and talented young artists. It is a generation that was born under the shadow of a possible nuclear war into a world of violence and unprecedented change. Artists like Karen Pearlman and Richard Allen, rather than opt for escapism, have faced this mixed birthright with courage and ingenuity. It speaks well for the human spirit. Nancy Jack Todd, “Dance Performance Evinces Both Courage and Ingenuity”, *The Enterprise*, Falmouth, Massachusetts, August 30, 1985, p. Two-A.

²⁵³ Carl G. Jung, “Approaching the unconscious”, in Carl and von Franz (editors), *Man and his Symbols*, op. cit., p. 83.

outer life and of his own behavior are kept, as it were, in separate drawers and are never confronted with one another.²⁵⁴

While this essay, the last that Jung wrote before he died²⁵⁵, was written in 1960-61, around the time I was born, its depiction of dualistic structures of mind still seems to describe the world we currently inhabit in 2003-2004, with only the names changed.

If, for a moment, we regard mankind as one individual, we see that the human race is like a person carried away by unconscious powers; and the human race also likes to keep certain problems tucked away in separate drawers...Our world is, so to speak, dissociated like a neurotic, with the Iron Curtain marking the symbolic line of division. Western man, becoming aware of the aggressive will of the East, sees himself forced to take extraordinary measures of defense, at the same time as he prides himself on his virtue and good intentions. What he fails to see is that it is his own vices, which he has covered up by good international manners, that are thrown back in his face by the communist world...It is the face of his own evil shadow that grins at Western man from the other side of the Iron Curtain.²⁵⁶

This is not the essay to deal with the recurring patterns of international relations through history nor how conflicting cultural stereotypes may echo back into individual psychic needs.²⁵⁷ Suffice to say, that apart from a period of euphoria, followed by disorientation

²⁵⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵⁵ See John Freeman, "Introduction", *ibid.*, which discusses this "remarkable - perhaps unique - publication", pp. 9-15.

²⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 85.

²⁵⁷ Interestingly, Kapila Vatsyayan expresses something similar about the thoughts of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in her "Forward" to publication of the Coomaraswamy Centenary Seminar papers. She paraphrases and quotes "this extraordinary genius": "It is we...with our genius for fission and division who are lost and "at war with ourselves". Written in 1946, these sentences still hold meaning for us in 1984 when the crisis of the modern world has deepened and when man stands not only on the brink of war, but the real possibility of the annihilation of the world." Kapila Vatsyayan, "Forward", to Gulam Mohammed Sheikh, K.G. Subramanyan, and Kapila Vatsyayan (editorial board), *Paroksa: Coomaraswamy Centenary Seminar Papers*, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1984, p. viii.

and confusion, at the fall of the Berlin Wall (shortly thereafter replaced by the delusions of “the end of history”²⁵⁸ and numerous other millennial speculations and superstitions, some consciously entertaining and the more worthwhile for that like the TV series *The X-Files*²⁵⁹), I have lived my life in what I consider an unnecessarily divided world. Whether at the level of international relations or political vendettas in the arts world, dualism prevails, and continually reinvents itself for new circumstances.



²⁵⁸ See Francis Fukuyama, “End of History?”, *National Interest* 16 (Summer), 1989, pp. 3-18; and Francis Fukuyama, “Are we at the end of history?”, *Fortune*, January 15, 1990, p 75; and Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, New York; Maxwell Macmillan Canada, Toronto; Maxwell Macmillan International, New York, 1992.

²⁵⁹ Chris Carter (creator and executive producer), *The X-Files*, TV Series, 202 episodes, USA, Canada, 1993-2002; and Rob Bowman (director), Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz (story), Chris Carter (screenplay), *The X-Files*, feature film, USA, Canada, 1998. This reference is slightly facetious, however, putting “The End of History” and *The X-Files* next to each other does highlight the millennial parallelisms between these unconscious (unacknowledged) and conscious (acknowledged) delusions.

Much of my work has been, in its own way, an attempt at a kind of healing of the split mind that Carl Gustav Jung spoke about.²⁶⁰ It has been a dramatic playing out of contradictions (not ignoring them), in order to reach some point of balance and equilibrium, or to get to the deeper levels of peace that underlie the contradictions. This can be seen within individual works. It is there most obviously in the coming together to a point of understanding and harmony of the Border Angel and the Murderer/Party Girl in *Blue Cities*.²⁶¹ But it is expressed perhaps more complexly and shiftingly in the multitudinous layers of often contradictory moods, emotions, thoughts and impulses that constitute the floating psyche of *The Kamikaze Mind*.

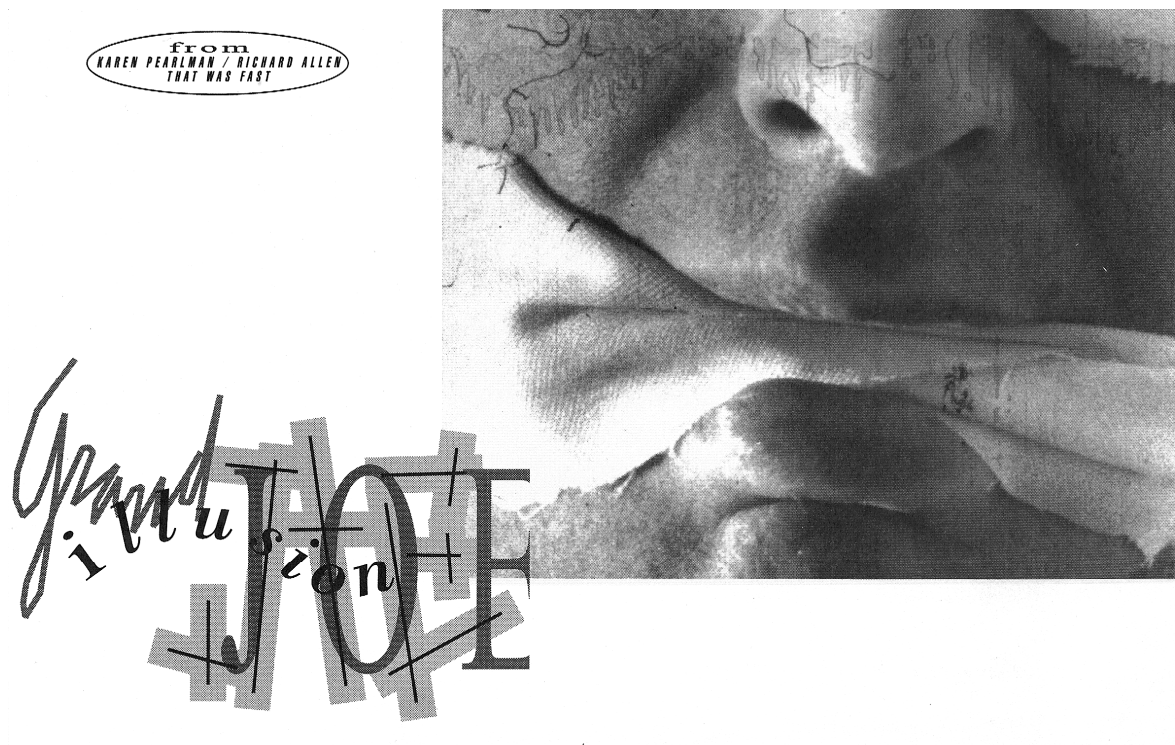
Since I am *not* a transcendent or enlightened being, but I *am* someone who is attempting to follow ‘the spiritual’, as well as artistic, ‘path’, I find myself increasingly living a double awareness of finding myself dialectically both drawn into and caught up in dualism and also (from time to time) able to see this and stand back, creating a little space around the event.²⁶² In saying this, I acknowledge, of course, that any use of language is in fact dualistic and this discussion can only be in terms of relative levels of attachment and detachment. However this very struggle, within the psyche and within language, I believe, has informed in different ways the struggles of the central characters in my recent art works, such as *No Surrender*, *Rubberman* and *Thursday’s Fictions*.

²⁶⁰ I am finding, in the course of my research, perhaps another ideational context for this project. To quote Vatsyayan again, following on with Coomaraswamy’s idea that we are “at war with ourselves”: “The integrative energy of art was Coomaraswamy’s message and it is to that spirit of rediscovery of truth that this volume is dedicated.” Vatsyayan, “Forward”, to Sheikh, Subramanya and Vatsyayan (eds.), *Paroksa: Coomaraswamy Centenary Seminar Papers*, op. cit., p. viii.

²⁶¹ See Allen, “Blue Cities”, in *Baby*, op. cit., pp. 28-30; see also the end of the ABC TV video dance version, Burstow (director), *Blue Cities*, op. cit.

²⁶² Recently, I found that Anne Waldman has expressed something of a similar experience in her interview with Edward Foster: “It’s very interesting because you’re looking at things basically as they are, but you’re always aware of absolute and relative reality. So you are existing in a state of “Negative Capability.” Seeing things from these two vantage points. It’s like being alive but seeing your own death, your own corpse at the same time, *all the time*.” She identifies this with Madhyamika strand of Buddhist philosophy. Foster (ed.), *Poetry and Poetics in a New Millennium*, op. cit., p. 139. This double seeing, which I prefigure here, will be explored in much greater depth in the section of this essay entitled “Jivamukti”, pp. 184-191. See also footnote 389 for a discussion of some similarities between Mahayana Buddhism (of which, as eluded to earlier, in footnote 128, Madhyamika is a leading school) and certain aspects of Yogic philosophy.

It has also helped me to see that playing out of contradictions is the stuff of good drama, and thus has ironically feed a growing interest in dramatic conflict, character development and storytelling, evident from the earlier discussion of ‘stories told by the body’ in Physical TV films. Ironic because, along with my interest in spirituality, this re-evaluation and to some extent return to narrative has largely been an anathema to the postmodern artistic milieu in which I have mostly found myself. My own internal struggles on this subject were reflected as early as the poetic play *Grand Illusion Joe*, staged in New York in 1991, as we shall see in the next section.



Strange Cousins ²⁶³

In the Jungian terms described above, *Grand Illusion Joe* is a play about an author who creates a character who plays out various impulses he cannot acknowledge in himself. At the beginning of the play the author is dead, and his character happens back to his home

and revives him. In the following exchange between the thoughtful, sensitive, cultured and sophisticated author, Sebastian Heaven, and his loud-mouthed, serial-killing B-grade lout of a character Grand Illusion Joe, a number of the dualistic conflicts which develop further in my later works are suggested, including rationality versus emotion:

JOE: Why don't you shut up and put my mind back on the hook, it's ringing like a telephone.

SEBASTIAN: I've told you before, the problem with getting in touch with your feelings is that you don't always feel good.²⁶⁴

Art versus life:

JOE: Yes, I've read it, I've read it, I've read it!

(He grabs a piece of paper out of one of the boxes and reads.)

“We were all born beautiful and wrong. There is nothing but wonderment and danger. We are all the horses of the human condition.”

Thanks a lot!²⁶⁵

Knowledge versus wisdom:

SEBASTIAN: Two schools of the human mind, always and again, two schools of the human mind. If this play ever comes together it will be like some kind of great thunderclap.

²⁶³ Richard James Allen, “Grand Illusion Joe”, Act II, *Hope for a man named Jimmie & Grant Illusion Joe*, op. cit., pp. 80.

²⁶⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 76, 77.

²⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 77.

JOE: Philosophise as you will, but don't tamper with hope. You're the historian who understands history but not himself. Your problem is that you don't think in stories.²⁶⁶

Storytelling versus formalism or abstraction:

SEBASTIAN: Stories are one-track dreams. The brain is a wonderful but not a perfect instrument, when it goes wrong, it starts chasing itself, digging at itself, devouring itself, hollowing itself out.

JOE: Have you ever been honest with words?

SEBASTIAN: Why is it you always think I hide behind the incomprehensibility of text?²⁶⁷

Morality versus amorality:

JOE: Oh that corruption has such eyes! One day your conscience is going to come back and eat you up alive.

SEBASTIAN: Art is the best of people. I am the best of people.²⁶⁸

Subsequently Sebastian says, in statement that prefigures both his own final return to wholeness at the end of the play - when he is able to reabsorb the character he has created and his energies back into his psyche - and this thesis' idea of encompassing contraction: "Every book, every life has to be open to the full range of doubts and hopes, Joe."²⁶⁹

This search for strategies of inclusion, for ways of embracing of differences and contradictions, marks my editorial and curatorial works, in addition to my 'authorial' and 'directorial' works. It can be see in the 'big church' approach of

²⁶⁶ *ibid.*

²⁶⁷ *ibid.*

²⁶⁸ *ibid.*

Performing the Unnameable, at the book launch of which an arts administrator²⁷⁰ commented that if we had done nothing more than to bring this remarkably heterogeneous group, many of whom hadn't talked to each other for years, together under one roof, that would have been achievement enough. In the next section we will see how the idea of inclusion underpinned the idea for a large scale Australian Poetry Festival, which I conceived while Artistic Director of the Poets Union Inc, and for the first of which I was the Festival Director in 1999²⁷¹.

A Human Space

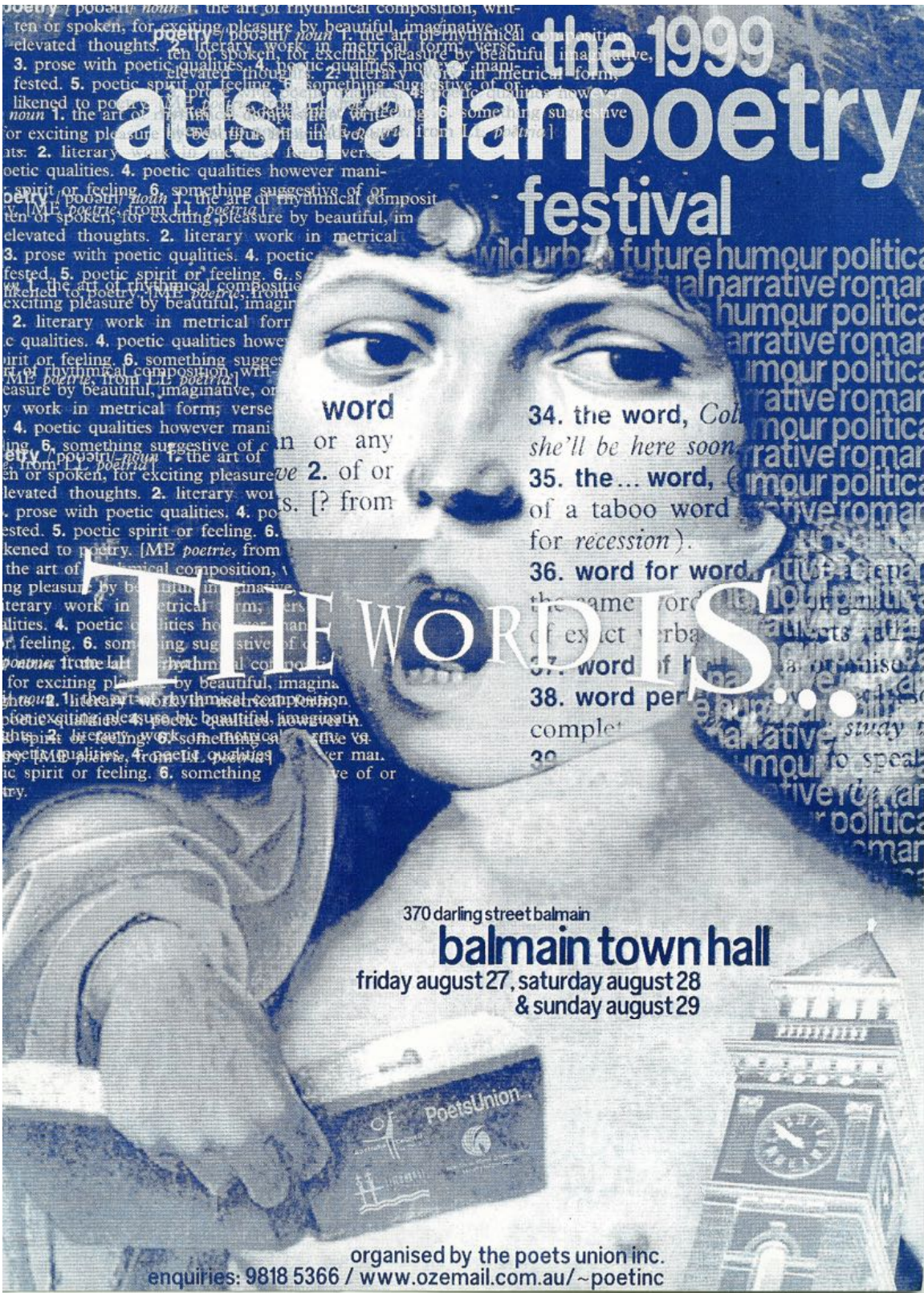
The inspiration for my approach to what an Australia-wide celebration of poetic practices might achieve lay in the bitter divisions I had experienced in the poetry community in the past and which lingered uncomfortably up to that time. As I wrote in an article in *RealTime* describing my vision for the event, "Growing up as a poet in Australia in the 70s was a bit like growing up in a war zone. Poetic shells flying overhead, everywhere one stepped on a minefield." But from my point of view, at the time, "It was fine for people to have different points of view. All the better, more interesting, more colourful"²⁷². Based on this highly unorthodox non-alignment, I made a fateful decision back in the late seventies and early eighties, which has certainly effected my 'career', such as it is/isn't, ever since:

²⁶⁹ *ibid.* p. 78.

²⁷⁰ Ben Strout of the Australia Council for the Arts, the Australian Federal Government's Arts Funding and Advisory Body, at the book launch/performance of *Performing the Unnameable*, held at the Third National Performance Conference, in the Bangarra Studio Theatre, The Wharf, Sydney, Australia, on Saturday 16th January, 1999.

²⁷¹ The 1999 Australian Poetry Festival, *The Word Is...*, was held at the Balmain Town Hall, Sydney, Australia, on Friday 27th August, 1999 to Sunday 29 August, 1999. The concept for *The Word Is...* was developed by Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman. The Festival Director was Richard James Allen, and the Festival Committee included Lucy Alexander, Dianna Horvath, David Kelly, Martin Langford and A.J. Rochester.

²⁷² Richard James Allen, "Providing viable illusions: *the word is...?*", *RealTime*, Number 32, August-September, 1999, p. 16.



the 1999 australian poetry festival

poetry / pō-ē-ree / noun 1. the art of rhythmical composition, written or spoken, for exciting pleasure by beautiful, imaginative, or elevated thoughts. 2. literary work in metrical form; verse. 3. prose with poetic qualities. 4. poetic qualities however manifested. 5. poetic spirit or feeling. 6. something suggestive of or likened to poetry. [ME *poetrie*, from LL *poetria*, from *poetes*, from *poiesis*, from *poiein*, to make, to do] **poetry** / pō-ē-ree / noun 1. the art of rhythmical composition, written or spoken, for exciting pleasure by beautiful, imaginative, or elevated thoughts. 2. literary work in metrical form; verse. 3. prose with poetic qualities. 4. poetic qualities however manifested. 5. poetic spirit or feeling. 6. something suggestive of or likened to poetry. [ME *poetrie*, from LL *poetria*, from *poetes*, from *poiesis*, from *poiein*, to make, to do] **poetic** / pō-ē-ik / adjective 1. of or pertaining to poetry. 2. literary. 3. of or pertaining to poetic qualities. 4. poetic qualities however manifested. 5. poetic spirit or feeling. 6. something suggestive of or likened to poetry. [ME *poetic*, from LL *poeticus*, from *poetes*, from *poiesis*, from *poiein*, to make, to do] **poet** / pō-ē / noun 1. a person who writes poetry. 2. a person who speaks or writes in a poetic style. 3. a person who is skilled in the art of rhythmical composition. 4. a person who is skilled in the art of rhythmical composition, written or spoken, for exciting pleasure by beautiful, imaginative, or elevated thoughts. 5. a person who is skilled in the art of rhythmical composition, written or spoken, for exciting pleasure by beautiful, imaginative, or elevated thoughts. 6. a person who is skilled in the art of rhythmical composition, written or spoken, for exciting pleasure by beautiful, imaginative, or elevated thoughts. [ME *poete*, from LL *poeta*, from *poiesis*, from *poiein*, to make, to do] **poetess** / pō-ē-tes / noun 1. a female poet. 2. a female poet. 3. a female poet. 4. a female poet. 5. a female poet. 6. a female poet. [ME *poetesse*, from LL *poetissa*, from *poetes*, from *poiesis*, from *poiein*, to make, to do] **poetize** / pō-ē-zē / verb 1. to write or speak in a poetic style. 2. to write or speak in a poetic style. 3. to write or speak in a poetic style. 4. to write or speak in a poetic style. 5. to write or speak in a poetic style. 6. to write or speak in a poetic style. [ME *poetizen*, from LL *poetizare*, from *poetes*, from *poiesis*, from *poiein*, to make, to do]

word
2. of or
s. [? from

- 34. the word, Col... she'll be here soon
- 35. the ... word, (of a taboo word for recession).
- 36. word for word, the same word of exact verbal
- 37. word of
- 38. word per complete
- 39.

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Perhaps, in terms of the big split between the so-called “generation of 68” and the “conservatives”, the way forward was not to join any school, whatever the detriment “politically”. Rather, to recognise that while the changes in our perceptions of language and meaning brought about by postmodernism could not be ignored, we nevertheless had to build from those fragments and ironies some kind of meaning that would make our experiences worthwhile. A human space, however transitory and contingent, however linguistically fabricated or compromised, nevertheless had to be constructed, and indeed this was the function of the imagination and art – to provide viable illusions.²⁷³

This idea, in which echoes can be heard both of Nietzsche’s “Tragic balance” and the understanding of a work of art as a construct which the artist and audience build together, became the philosophy behind the Festival:

The 1999 Festival of Australian Poetry is about bringing these principles into a wider context. It’s a place where poets of many different methods, beliefs and persuasions can come together and listen to each other. And where audiences can not only listen but participate in a dialogue about who we are as expressed with *the word*.²⁷⁴

I am glad to say that the Australian Poetry Festival, in its manifestations since that time under the directorships of Martin Langford and Rob Reil, has continued to take a ‘big church’ approach in embracing a diversity of practices.

²⁷³ *ibid.*

²⁷⁴ *ibid.*

The subject of the next section will be how my welcoming of contradiction and paradox, while often uncomfortable or even vaguely ‘out of focus’ within a Western perspective, which tends to separate and compartmentalise, finds affinity within the perspective, or shall we say the ‘peripheral vision’, of Eastern thought, which tends to include and embrace.

Incorrigible Plurality

From an Eastern point of view - in particular, for the purposes of this essay and my creative work, as seen in the practice of Yoga and in the Indian Art, which, as we shall see, contextualises it - contradictions and opposites are embraced not separated as they generally are in the West. This holistic approach takes us beyond the endless and highly prized, defended, and for some people ‘self’-sustaining dualisms of modernism versus postmodern, the immanentist position versus the avant-garde, and so on, and so on...an unceasing parade of “opposing poeties”.

Alistair Shearer takes up this point in *The Hindu Vision: Forms of the Formless*:

Most Westerners are baffled by the myriad apparent contradictions of Hinduism, which ranges with maddening ease from primitive cults of blood sacrifice to the most sophisticated systems of metaphysical speculation and mystical experience...The resultant variety of belief and practice, though confusing to the Western mind, is not self-contradictory; rather, it is like the many facets of one scintillating diamond...Despite its incorrigible plurality, Hinduism is not as rampantly polytheistic as it appears. At its heart lies a vision of the universe as a seamless unity, the manifestation of a Supreme Consciousness.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ Alistair Shearer, *The Hindu Vision: Forms of the Formless*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1993, pp. 5, 6.

This “non-dualistic vision” was systematised in the eighth century spiritual teaching known as *Advaita Vedanta* by Shankara:

According to *Vedanta*, the entire universe is alive, structured as an ever-changing field of vibrating energy that is the manifestation of the Supreme Consciousness known as *brahman* – ‘the Unbounded’. All the myriad aspects of creation, the ‘world of name and form’ (*nama-rupa*), are nothing but the temporary and unbinding modifications of this Consciousness, from which they are generated, in which they inhere, by which they are all maintained as they pass through their changes, and into which they eventually disappear. As the source and essence of all phenomena, the Unbounded remains unaffected by its creations.²⁷⁶

As we saw earlier, Yoga has a special role in reconnecting us with this “highest state”²⁷⁷. In Campbell’s words:

The idea of yoga is already given in the name, *yoga*. It comes from the root *yuj*, which means “to yoke,” to connect or join something to something else. What is being yoked is our ego consciousness, the *aham* consciousness, to the source of consciousness.²⁷⁸

As Yoga reintegrates us, so can, in this vision, art. Shearer again:

As human beings we usually inhabit the grossest levels, only dimly aware of the possibilities that lie beyond the range of our senses as they normally operate. But our capacity to experience can be enormously expanded by various contemplative, physiological and affective disciplines – yoga, meditation, dietary regimes – for mind, like matter, is merely a point of

²⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁷⁸ Campbell, *Transformations of Myth Through Time*, op. cit., p. 129.

particular density in the continuum of energy. The primary purpose of both religious and artistic endeavour is to refine and develop the mind's ability to perceive the subtle depths of life and ultimately the one Consciousness – *brahman* – in which all life inheres. Thus Hindu art is grounded in what the Indians call knowledge of reality (*vidya*) and the West would call mystical experience.²⁷⁹

“The purpose of the artist was to reproduce those Divine forms which in turn lead the spectator to union with the Divine:”²⁸⁰

The role of the artist was to contact archetypal and transpersonal levels of reality, and to depict those levels in objective form. For both the artist and the viewer, contemplation of the divine form becomes a means of transcending the limited ego-personality into which we are habitually contracted and from which our suffering stems. The creative artist is thus an agent of liberation: he mimics the original creative act – the descent of Consciousness into matter – and the forms he creates facilitate the return ascent of matter into Consciousness.²⁸¹

A major twentieth century reinterpreter of the metaphysics of the Advaita Vedanta tradition, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan²⁸², who acknowledged his debt to Sankara, also commented on aesthetics. Interestingly, in words that echo the earlier ones quoted by Lawrence, Radhakrishnan saw creativity as “a form of intuition...characterized by oneness of artist and subject-matter”²⁸³:

In poetic experience we have knowledge by being as distinct from knowledge by knowing. The mind grasps the object in its wholeness,

²⁷⁹ Shearer, *The Hindu Vision*, op. cit., p. 6.

²⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁸² For a discussion of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's “wide...range of achievement”, see Collinson, Plant, Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, op. cit., pp. 167-177.

clasps it to its bosom, suffuses it with its own spirit, and becomes one with it.²⁸⁴

Works of art, the results of the creative process, are therefore not merely pleasure vehicles but receptacles of the profoundest truths.²⁸⁵

Art as the disclosure of the deeper reality of things is a form of knowledge...[the artist] discerns within the visible world something more real than its outward appearance, some idea or form of the true, the good and the beautiful, which is more akin to the spirit itself than to the visible things...²⁸⁶

²⁸³ Ibid., p. 173.

²⁸⁴ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The Idealist View of Life*, 1932, p. 145, quoted *ibid.*, p. 173.

²⁸⁵ See Collinson, Plant, Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, *ibid.* Coomaraswamy spoke in similar ways in his article, "The Part of Art in Indian Life": "The vision of beauty is thus an act of pure contemplation, not in the absence of any object of contemplation, but in conscious identification with the object of contemplation. Just as the concept of the artist is most perfectly and only perfectly realised in the person of the Divine Architect, so the concept of the spectator is most perfectly and only perfectly realised in the Self, one Person, single Self, who at one and the same time and for ever sees all things, seeing without duality, verily seen though he does not look, and whose intrinsic aspect is the single image of all things." Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "The Part of Art in Indian Life", in Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *1. Selected Papers*, edited by R. Lipsey, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1977, p. 93. Quoted in Bettina Baumer, "Yoga and Art: An Indian Approach" in D. P. Chattopadhyay (editor), *Indian Art: Forms Concern and Development in Historical Perspective*, Volume VI of *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilisation*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers: Project of History of Indian Science, Philosophy and Culture, New Delhi: 2000, p. 89.

²⁸⁶ Radhakrishnan, *The Idealist View of Life*, *op. cit.*, p. 152, quoted *ibid.*, p. 173. Again, Coomaraswamy's integral approach to art followed along similar lines. As Devangani Desai points out, "Coomaraswamy attempted to understand and interpret the art of India in the context of the Indian pattern of culture. He differentiated the approach to art as manifest in Indian culture from that of the West on the basis of different principles involved in their relationship to nature. In Indian art, according to him, there is no mimesis or copying of nature or model but the artist obtains the image by a process of mental visualization or *Dhyana*. Devangana Desai, "Reflections on Coomaraswamy's Approach to Indian Art", in Sheikh, Subramanya and Vatsyayan (eds.), *Paroksa: Coomaraswamy Centenary Seminar Papers*, *op. cit.*, p. 60. Coomaraswamy wrote: "Those who wish to study the development of Indian art must emancipate themselves entirely from the innate European tendency to use a supposedly greater or lesser degree of observation of Nature as a measuring rod by which to trace stylistic sequences or recognize aesthetic merit." Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, Dover editions, New York, 1956, p. 117 (quoted in Desai, *ibid.*).

There can be no doubt that, as Vatsyayan suggests, Dr Coomaraswamy's "penetrating insight into the cohesive vision which permeated all the Indian arts was a pioneering effort". Kapila Vatsyayan, "The Indian Arts, their Ideational Background and Principles of Form", in Sheikh, Subramanya and Vatsyayan (eds.), *Paroksa: Coomaraswamy Centenary Seminar Papers*, *op. cit.*, p. 59. His multi-dimensional body of work appears to have opened a pathway for her own work and that of numerous other scholars, including some quoted frequently in this essay such as Baumer. In broad strokes one would also have to agree his

No and Yes

Radhakrishnan's "interpretation of the artist as penetrative to the truth of things", as Collinson, Plant and Wilkinson point out, echoes the English Romantic poetic tradition²⁸⁷. This is the tradition of poetry to which, as I mentioned earlier, I was first exposed, and through which, in particular with Keats but also other poets such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge²⁸⁸, I was first inspired to begin writing myself. Radhakrishnan's idea

distinction between Western art's adherence to nature (what 'the outer eye' sees) in contrast to what some might term Indian art's connection to a deeper level of reality and others might call mysticism (what 'the inner eye' sees). Nonetheless, this does appear to ignore several strains of alternative thinking and art practice in the West. These might include Gnosticism, Alchemy, Cabalism, occult, mystical and hermetic philosophy, the kind of sacred magical philosophy described in Dame Frances Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, Ark Paperbacks, London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley, 1983 (first published 1979). It might include artistic movements like Romanticism and Symbolism and Expressionism, and of course the development of Abstract Art (and later Abstract Expressionism), which was articulated as a "search for a spiritual reality in art" (Richard Stratton, "Preface to the Dover Edition"), "the expression of the *soul* of nature and humanity" (Michael T.H Sadler, "Translator's Introduction"), by Wassily Kandinsky, who said, "I value only those artists...who...embody the expression of their inner life", their "*innerer Klang*". Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, translated and with an introduction by M.T.H. Sadler, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1977 (originally published as *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* in 1911, this volume reproduces the first 1914 English-language edition, originally entitled *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*), pp. vii, xiii.

However, these are only very preliminary observations and questions, not based on a comprehensive reading of Coomaraswamy's oeuvre, but perhaps a starting point for future research into what is, for me, an important area or at least hoped for possibility – the idea of articulating a viable alternative tradition of artistic, philosophical and spiritual inquiry within the history of the dominant Western paradigm. This might follow on from Campbell's observations: "what happened in the West, following the period of Aristotle...was a gradual attack on the mythological ideas, so that criticism in the West tended to separate itself from the elementary ideas. However, there is an undercurrent throughout Western thinking" that carries on an "interest in what might be called the perennial philosophy." Interestingly, in terms of my comments above, he continues, describing what was perhaps at the heart of his project: "I'm thinking of Perennial Philosophy as expounded by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and picked up by Aldous Huxley in his *The Perennial Philosophy*. I am thinking of this as the translation into verbal discourse of the implications of the mythic images. And that's why there can be found in the mystical philosophies throughout the world the same ideas recurring. The continuities that we can recognize in myth come over into philosophy. This is what is known as the perennial philosophy." Campbell, *Transformations of Myth Through Time*, op. cit., p. 94. See Aldous Huxley, *Perennial Philosophy*, Harper: New York, 1945; Chatto & Windus, London, 1946.

²⁸⁷ For discussion of the connection of Radhakrishnan's view to the English Romantic Poetic tradition, see *ibid.*, p. 175, and the work referenced there, C.M. Bowra, *The Romantic Imagination*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1950.

²⁸⁸ As well as reading these poems in books, I was particularly inspired by listening to 33 1/3 rpm records and cassette tapes of Sir Ralph Richardson reading Keats's Odes and Sir Richard Burton reading Coleridge. See John Keats, *Poetry of Keats*, read by Sir Ralph Richardson, Caedmon Records, probably recorded in the 1960s, now distributed by Harper Collins as a tape; and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, In Xanadu did Kubla Khan; and Frost at midnight*, read by Richard Burton, Argo Records, London, 196-?. A very early poem, written when I was about fourteen, reflected this natural

that the artist is like a seer or a mystic, that “poetic truth is a discovery, not a creation”²⁸⁹, in my opinion, whether directly or indirectly, also echoes with the work of a poet whose work I found particularly inspiring during the creation of the first books in *The Way Out At Last Cycle* and whose body of work continues to be an inspiration to me, Octavio Paz. Long form texts of tremendous spiritual bravery, formal experimentation, lyric beauty and abundant sensuality like “Sun stone”²⁹⁰ and “A Draft of Shadows”²⁹¹, in particular, created a precedent that made me feel I had some kind of permission or license to undertake my own long floating experiments in illuminated mind-body thinking like “White”²⁹², and “Scheherazade”²⁹³. Looking back from the perspective of this essay I can also see that fulsome texts like “Blanco”²⁹⁴, written in Delhi, containing counter readings and multiple reading pathways, as well as a richly imaginative typography and format, and an embrace of contradiction, as in the repeated patterns of “No” and “Yes”, laid the groundwork for the layers of visual, formal and textual experimentation and attempts to transcend dualism found in works that I have written like “To The Ocean”²⁹⁵, “Tuesday on the Rack”²⁹⁶, and *The Kamikaze Mind*²⁹⁷. Paz’s life was also a source of inspiration to me, in my quest to live a life that is energised by an embrace of both the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*. While deeply involved in a spiritual journey

affinity with poetry as an aural and performative as well as a page form, and also illustrated an early interest in twining poetry and physicality. As I recall, its last lines read: “Flowery Keats and French tapes / sustain the bicycling poet.”

²⁸⁹ Radhakrishnan, *The Idealist View of Life*, op. cit., p. 152, quoted in Collinson, Plant, Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, op. cit., p. 173.

²⁹⁰ Octavio Paz, “Sun Stone”, 1957, in *Selected Poems*, edited by Eliot Weinberger, A New Directions Book, New York, 1984, pp. 29-45.

²⁹¹ *ibid.*, “A Draft of Shadows”, 1974, pp. 122-138.

²⁹² Allen, “White”, in *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1989, pp. 49-73.

²⁹³ *ibid.*, “Scheherazade”, pp. 131-160.

²⁹⁴ Paz, “Blanco”, 1966, in *Selected Poems*, op. cit., pp. 82-91.

²⁹⁵ Allen, “To The Ocean”, in *To The Ocean*, op. cit., pp. 107-128.

²⁹⁶ Allen, “Tuesday on the Rack”, in *Thursday’s Fictions.*, op. cit., pp. 75-90.

²⁹⁷ Eliot Weinberger’s comments about “Blanco” are helpful in illuminating some of the connections that echo through my work: “Paz’s great Tantric poem “Blanco” owes much to Mallarmé and to Pound’s ideogrammic method – each image self-contained and discrete, understood (like the Chinese ideogram itself) only in relation to the other lines, written and unwritten; each a centripetal force drawing the other images and meanings toward it, an implosion that leads to the explosion of the poem. Yet “Blanco” was also designed as an Aztec book, a folded screen. Those screens of painted songs, images rather than what we would call writing, were “read” as mnemonic devices: the reader created the text, the text created itself, as “Blanco” with its variant readings intends.” Eliot Weinberger, “Introduction” to Paz, *Selected Poems*, op. cit., p. xi. See also his editorial note describing the various characteristics of the original edition of the poem, not all of which could reproduced in the New Directions book format, *ibid.*, p. 82.

himself, Paz coincidentally like Radhakrishnan held high political office during a lifetime that also encompassed deep thought and introspection.²⁹⁸

Discussing Paz brings to mind three other important books that I had with me in my houseboat during the period in Holland when I first began *The Way Out At Last*. These were: *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*²⁹⁹, *Speaking of Siva*³⁰⁰, and *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia, Europe & Oceania*³⁰¹.

I realise that it may appear when I say this that I am continually going backwards in order to move forwards through the labyrinthine pathway of this essay. However, I do not apologise for this because, like *The Kamikaze Mind*, this thesis has an element of being a portrait of a mind. And my mind is at least as lateral as it is linear, if not more so. This may be one of the reasons that the cyclical pattern of Ashtanga Yoga works so well for me. As we saw earlier, Ashtanga divides Yoga asanas into six series or sequences. Each of which can take several years (or lifetimes) to master, during which time each of the earlier series is also practiced in a progressive weekly pattern. Ultimately (and to the best of my knowledge no one is practicing all six series, though a few are practicing up to the fifth), this would see one finally practicing all six sequences on six days of the week, with one day off per week for rest. This careful and considered process allows for slow and evolving linear development through time, with each series providing for the practitioner a comprehensive and safe mental, physical and spiritual preparation for the next. It also, however, has the side benefit, literally, of allowing for the non-linear, atemporal, experience of lateral echoes, confluences and illuminations across the patterned

²⁹⁸ Radhakrishnan had a career in politics that reached its high point when he became President of India (see in Collinson, Plant, Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, op. cit., p. 167), Paz was Mexican Ambassador to India (see Weinberger's "Introduction" to Paz, *Selected Poems*, ibid., pp. ix-xii, in particular, p. x.) It is one of my great regrets that I never met Octavio Paz. I saw him once at St Marks Poetry Project in New York City. I was too shy to go and speak to him, thinking I would gather my courage and try at the next opportunity. Quite soon afterwards, he was dead.

²⁹⁹ Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, M.H. Fisch and T.G. Bergin (translators). Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, revised translation of 3rd edition [1744], 1968.

³⁰⁰ A.K. Ramanujan (Translator), *Speaking of 'Siva*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, New York, Ringwood, Markham, Auckland, 1979 (first published 1973).

³⁰¹ Jerome Rothenberg, *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia, Europe & Oceania*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1968, revised and expanded second edition, 1985.

latticework of the whole. This pattern is not unlike that of *The Way Out At Last Cycle* in both how it was written and how it might be experienced as journey in and out of time.

In the next section will consider the first of the three books mentioned earlier, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*. It feels particularly appropriate to return to this book now in the light of the discussion of cycles because it was this work that actually inspired the very cyclical structure of *The Way Out At Last* poem and the subsequent patterning of my major poetic works thereafter.

The New Science

As we saw earlier, cycling back even earlier, when I wrote my B.A. Honours thesis, I argued that the writing of history, in the sense of the search for truths, "the past as it really was", had been a flawed and compromised endeavour from its inception.

Examining both the first narrative historian, Leonardo Bruni, and the first philosopher of history of the modern era, Giambattista Vico, I suggested that the truths they claimed were mere fictions, fabrications, and that the better path for a writer interested in humanity was to create conscious myths, poetic truths, idiosyncratic points of view that illuminated the human condition, but laid no claim to the finality of the 19th century idea of scientific truth.

True to my word, as we saw, I leapt off the certainties of historiography into the freefall of pure creativity, and have been falling ever since. Interestingly or perhaps ironically, however, having, in Vico's case, illustrated the deconstruction at the heart of his text, *The New Science*, which for me questioned the "truth" of his view of history, I nevertheless found in his work a fascinating metaphor for the human experience and ended up borrowing it as the structural basis for the major literary work that I have been engaged in, on and off, ever since.

Vico noted that things were not static, but changed through time, they *developed*, and he sought to chart this development, to create a map of it. He postulated an “ideal eternal history traversed in time by every nation in its rise, development, maturity, decline, and fall”³⁰². Human beings and their cultures pass through an a four stage cycle, he suggested, of Birth, Life, Death, Rebirth - the Age of the Gods, the Age of the Heroes, The Age of Men, and the Ricorso, or anarchic unravelling as society returns from civilisation to barbarism and dissolution. This cycle applied to the development of consciousness, on both an individual and social level: from an age of mystery, to an age of magnificent larger-than-life heroes, to an age of rationality, and finally to an age of senility and the loss of all reason and order.

One of his particular contributions was to see that this development of consciousness corresponded to a development of literary forms. He particularly spoke of the movement from the poetry of youth to the prose of age, reversing what had some had thought was the natural order of the development of language. In particular, he saw the development of different phases of the human mind and the social world it therefore constructed as corresponding to a journey of linguistic tropes³⁰³. As Hayden V. White elucidates:

Vico argued that there were four principal tropes, from which all figures of speech derived, and the analysis of which provided the basis for a proper understanding of the cycles through which consciousness passed in its efforts to know a world which always surpassed our capacities to know it *fully*...The four tropes and their corresponding ages in the life cycle of a civilization were: metaphor (the age of the gods), metonymy (the age of the heroes), synecdoche (the age of men), and irony (the age of decadence and the *ricorso*).³⁰⁴

³⁰² Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, op., cit., p. 245. See also pp. 294, 344, 393.

³⁰³ *ibid.*, see “Book Four: The Course the Nations Run”, pp. 281-347, “Book Five: The Recourse of Human Institutions Which the Nations Take When They Rise Again”, pp. 349-373, and the “Conclusion to the Work”, pp. 375-384.

³⁰⁴ Hayden V. White, “Foucault Decoded: Notes from Underground”, *History and Theory*, 12, no 1 (1973), p. 48. This essay is reprinted in Hayden V. White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*,

I decided to use Vico's '*corso e ricorso*' as the structural basis for a four part poetic cycle. It would be an outward spiralling cycle, because Vico, unlike Nietzsche, saw history as always moving forward. The cycle was the description of a pattern through which things naturally moved, there were no reruns, unlike the hellish, ever-repeating trap of Nietzsche's "Eternal Return":

I shall return, with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this snake
 – *not* to a new life, or to a better life, or a similar life:...I shall return
 always to this self-same life, in the greatest and the smallest things, that I
 may teach again the recurrence of all things...Alas, the man will ever
 return...- that was my weariness of all existence! Alas, disgust...³⁰⁵

On the contrary, it had more of a sense of freedom and almost optimistic movement, which reminded me of the spiraling flight of W.B. Yeats's 'perning gyre' from the poem *Sailing to Byzantium*:

O sages standing in God's holy fire
 As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
 Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
 And be the singing-masters of my soul.³⁰⁶

A. Norman Jeffares notes:

To 'perne' is to move with a circular spinning motion. Yeats noted that when he was a child in Sligo he could see a column of smoke from 'the perne mill'

John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1978, pp. 230-260, this quote is there on pp. 254-255.

³⁰⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Part Three, 13. Translated and quote by J. P Stern, *Nietzsche*, Fontana Modern Masters, 1978, p. 109. For full translation see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, translated by R.J. Hollingsdale, Penguin, 1974, pp. 236-238. Quoted in Allen, *A Disappointed Bridge: The Architecture of Historical Knowledge*, op. cit., p. 65.

³⁰⁶ W. B. Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium", from *The Tower* (1928), in *Selected Poetry*, edited by A. Norman Jeffares, Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1962, reprinted in Pocket Papermacs, London, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Johannesburg, Melbourne, Toronto, 1969, p. 104.

and was told ‘pern’ was another name for the spool on which thread was wound. To ‘gyre’ is to gyrate. Yeats, in *A Vision*, saw history as a series of opposing gyres of historical change.³⁰⁷

Later I discovered that Joyce had similarly been taken with Vico, or “Mr. John Baptistar Vickar” as he rechristened him³⁰⁸, and used his ideas as a “trellis” on which to hang *Finnegans Wake*³⁰⁹, which famously begins and ends mid the same sentence, though until then I had not known that this was why³¹⁰.

Corso

The Way Out At Last Cycle began small with four poems: “Light”, “Moon”, “Chambers”, “Gods”³¹¹. For a while I thought that perhaps this was it, that this was my ‘long poem’. It was certainly longer in pages if not in words than some of my earlier longer poems such as “The No. 1”³¹², “Hommage a Duchamp etc”³¹³ or “The Will to Power”³¹⁴. But

³⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 215.

³⁰⁸ For the first discussions on the connections between Joyce and Vico, see Samuel Beckett, “Dante...Bruno...Vico...Joyce”, and Stuart Gilbert, “Prolegomena to *Work in Progress*”, in Samuel Beckett et al., *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*, Shakespeare and Company, Paris, 1929 (reprinted by Faber and Faber, London, 1961, pp. 1-22, 47-75, respectively). For comparatively more recent discussion, see A. Walton Litz, “Vico and Joyce”, in Giorgio Tagliacozzo and Hayden V. White (editors), *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium* (The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1969), pp. 245-255; and Stuart Hampshire, “Joyce and Vico: The Middle Way”, in Giorgio Tagliacozzo and Donald Phillip Verne (editors), *Giambattista Vico’s Science of Humanity*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1976, pp. 321-332. (Please note, these works were earlier referenced by me in Allen, *A Disappointed Bridge: The Architecture of Historical Knowledge*, op. cit., footnote 67, p. 43.)

³⁰⁹ James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, The Viking Press, New York, 1958 (originally published in 1939, this is the first edition “with the author’s corrections incorporate in the text”).

³¹⁰ *Finnegans Wake* begins with the end of a sentence: “riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs”, and ends with its beginning: “A way a lone a last a loved a long the”, *ibid.*, pp. 3, 628. However, the fact that *Finnegans Wake* began and ended mid the same sentence suggests, I would argue, that Joyce may have interpreted Vico’s “*corso e ricorso*”, or “commodius vicus of recirculation”, as he called it, in a more Nietzschean ‘Eternal Return-like’ way, rather than my Yeatsian ‘pern in a gyre-like’ way.

³¹¹ Allen, *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, op. cit., pp. 75-83, also reprinted in Allen, *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, op. cit., pp. 15-23.

³¹² Allen, *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, *ibid.*, pp. 16-18.

³¹³ *ibid.*, pp. 19-21.

then, almost of its own accord, it started up again, making my life adapt to it, become a preparation for it, become its homework, its research³¹⁵. It has been evolving and outward spiraling, boxes ‘with-out’ boxes ‘with-out’ boxes (in the sense of the Chinese game of boxes *within* boxes, or tables *within* tables, or toys *within* toys, but going the other way), a journey across forms and themes and subjects and styles and tropes and genres and even media, ever since.

From the first my take on Vico’s cycle was to be as a spiritual journey. Like this essay, *The Way Out At Last* was to be a journey through and out of the living labyrinth of the mind. As a journey of the development of human consciousness through time it was to be an imaginative study of the creation, flourishing, desiccation, and finally dissolution of

³¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 58- 61.

³¹⁵ In 1985, while I was in New York, *The Way Out At Last & Other Work* was screened at The Performance Space in Sydney, Australia [Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman and Vincent Reilly (variously directors, writers, choreographers) *The Way Out At Last & Other Work*, That Was Fast, New York, USA, 1985]. This included the video poem, *The Way Out At Last*. Some feedback sheets were handed out so that audience members could communicate with us back in NYC. As I recall most of these were very positive, except one I remember from the poet and critic Dennis Haskell, who suggested that I was too young to have experienced something I had written in the darker section of that poem. This has stuck with me through the years because it struck me as completely and utterly wrong. I have lived through every moment of my poem as it has evolved over time, sometimes for better and often for worse. Every line has passed through my body. This is not to say that every line is autobiographical, but that one lives, breathes, sweats, aches, experiences as one writes. I included this idea in *The Kamikaze Mind*:

Roadtest I have lived through every line I have written.
 Guarantee He looked in the mirror. Every line roadtested for real pain.
 (Allen, *The Kamikaze Mind*, op. cit., pp. 104, 48.)

Karen Pearlman and I also discuss this idea in “The Relic and Rethinking a Lifetime: A yoga and poetry performance of “The Relic” accompanied by a short paper “Rethinking a Lifetime””, presented at the Rethinking Creative Processes Conference at organised by The University of New South Wales and The University of Sydney and presented at The University of Sydney, 1999, and later published in Françoise Grauby and Michelle Royer (editors), *Repenser les processus créateurs/Rethinking Creative Processes*, with a contribution by Philippe Dijan, Peter Lang, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Oxford, Wien, 2001, pp. 29-38. Since this poetry, dance, yoga, performance and theory project was also undertaken during the period of this Doctorate of Creative Arts, and since it echoes with so many of the themes developed in this essay, I have included the critical component as an adjunct to this text as Appendix F, pp. 268-272. (The poem, “The Relic”, is not included but can be sourced as follows: it was first published in *Southerly*, Volume 54, Number 4, Summer 1994-1995, pp. 37-40, then appeared in Allen, *The Air Dolphin Brigade*, op. cit., pp. 61-66, then appeared in Allen, *The Air Dolphin Brigade*, op. cit., pp. 61-66, and was republished, as noted above, in *Rethinking Creative Processes*, op. cit., pp. 29-33.)

As I final note on this theme I would also like to reference Nicole Brossard’s article, “Corps d’énergie, Rituels d’écriture”, translated by Alice Parker, in *Public Carnal Knowledge*, Public Access Collective, Toronto, 1989, pp. 7-13, in which she speaks vibrantly about the text coming from the energy of the body.

ego consciousness. At the end of a number of cycles, I hoped it might explore the transcendence of the ego. Thus I identified Vico's 'Age of the Gods' as pre-'I', the 'Age of the Heroes' as 'I', the 'Age of Men' as the death of the 'I', and the 'Ricorso' as post-'I'. In this way there are formal and thematic developments across the cycle between sections.³¹⁶ So, for example, the second sections deal with life, sex, love, desire, ambition, art, epic or pathetic struggles against oblivion, and these can be traced across the flowing poetic texts from the first to the fifth cycle: "Moon"³¹⁷, "Trespassers, or the Death of the White Dog"³¹⁸, "White"³¹⁹, "Scheherazade"³²⁰, *Thursday's Fictions* (and *The Air Dolphin Brigade*).

The primary themes of the third sections are death, madness, memory, dreams, epiphanies about the delusory nature and construction of the self, and these can be traced across the fragmented increasingly formally constricted prose poetry texts from the first to the fifth cycle: "Chambers"³²¹, "The Laughing Ceases"³²², "The Laughing Movie" (in three parts)³²³, "Hope for a man named Jimmie" (in three parts: the 64 part *I-Ching* inspired structure of "A Disappointed Bridge"³²⁴, an alphabetic structure creating a "zip code corrected nightmare" in "Interviews for the Freedom of Dreams"³²⁵, and the diminishing and fading away to nothing structure of "Luck"³²⁶), and *The Kamikaze Mind*, a dictionary structure which develops obviously on the alphabetic "Interviews", but also

³¹⁶ I have recently also discovered another reference which provides resonance and inspiration for my idea of a spiritual cycle in Gannon and Life's elucidation of the four states of consciousness (waking, dreaming, deep sleep and the fourth, beyond the other three, beyond time and space) represented in the chant Om. See Gannon and Life, *Jivamukti Yoga*, op. cit., pp. 32-34. These can be paralleled with my take on Vico's four phases of consciousness.

³¹⁷ Allen, *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, op. cit., pp. 77-78, also reprinted in Allen, *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

³¹⁸ Allen, *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, ibid., pp. 87-90, also reprinted in Allen, *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, ibid., pp. 27-30.

³¹⁹ Allen, *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, ibid., pp. 49-73.

³²⁰ ibid., pp. 131-160.

³²¹ Allen, *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, op. cit., pp. 79-81, also reprinted in Allen, *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, ibid., pp. 19-21.

³²² Allen, *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, ibid., pp. 91-101, also reprinted in Allen, *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, ibid., pp. 31-41.

³²³ Allen, *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, ibid., pp. 75-105.

³²⁴ Allen, *Hope for a man named Jimmie & Grand Illusion Joe*, op. cit., pp. 9-34.

³²⁵ ibid., pp. 27-34.

³²⁶ ibid., pp. 35-52.

the self-reflexive “Bridge”, and the ‘I’, ‘he’ and ‘she’ characters of each of the three parts of the previous third section in the cycle, just to name a few examples.

Developments across the cycle are not only linear, of course. As the cycles progress the works progress with them, incorporating elements from other sections, so there is also a sense in which the earlier poems of whatever section are more related, for example, to the Vico’s idea of ‘the poetry of childhood’, while the later poems are all more related to ‘the prose of old age’³²⁷. In addition, within each of the five cycles there are logics and coherences and confluences that bind the four part of each phase to each other as well as their counterparts. This can also be seen particularly in the fact that each cycle, once complete, actually becomes the first part of the next cycle. Looked at this way, and if we consider the first four poems as a kind of seedbed introduction to the first cycle, then whole work thus far consists of four cycles of four parts each, with the last part of the last cycle not yet complete.

Of course, despite these observations and the earlier ones about works like *The Kamikaze Mind* inhabiting a space of Derridean “undecideability” and unravelling “the metaphysics of textual presence”, there is a sense in which each work or section within the *Cycle* section stands alone, as a person stands alone, despite their myriad and multidirectional links to family, society, history and so on. While he is discussing a work that is quite different in structure and content, I like what Italo Calvino has to say about Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* in this regard:

The trouble with any preamble to *Orlando Furioso* is that if one begins by saying, “It is a poem that is continuation of another poem, which in turn continues a cycle of innumerable other poems,” the reader is at once discouraged. If before he starts reading he has to find out all about its precedents, and the precedents of the precedents, when on earth will he be able to start on Ariosto’s poem? But any preamble is immediately seen to

³²⁷ See Allen, *A Disappointed Bridge: The Architecture of Historical Knowledge*, op. cit., pp. 103-105; Vico, *New Science*, op. cit., pp. 204, 363, 377, 402, 409, 460, 498, 779.

be superfluous. The *Furioso* is a book unique in its kind, and can be – or should I say, must be? – read without reference to any other book either before or after it. It is a world of its own that one can travel the length and breadth of, going in, coming out again, and losing oneself if it.³²⁸

In an essay that celebrates paradox I feel I can let both the Derridean reading and the Calvino reference stand. However, it is not within the scope of this essay to discuss in any greater detail the form and structure of *The Way Out At Last Cycle*, to trace any further the lines of ideas and images, structures and tropes, of its multi-layered and yet evolving organic lattice work, or the ways in which these kinds of patterning can be experienced linearly and non-linearly, through and across time, in reading it. But a final note that may be of interest is that it is quite possible that this thesis itself, and my growing understanding and appreciation and spiritual ideas and practices, are be part of my preparation, my research, for what I assume (and in some senses hope but cannot be certain) will be the final fourth section of the work which began with “Gods”³²⁹ and has passed through the following phases in its backwards, upside down flow back to the source: “Unholy Brightness”³³⁰ (and “River Story”)³³¹, “To The Ocean”³³², and “Grand Illusion Joe”³³³. Further discussion of this will take place in the next section.

³²⁸ Italo Calvino, “The Structure of *Orlando Furioso*”, a “radio broadcast, 1974; written on the occasion of the five hundredth anniversary of the birth of Lodovico Ariosto”, republished in Italo Calvino, *The Uses of Literature: Essays*, translated by Patrick Creagh, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, San Diego, New York, London, 1986, p. 166.

³²⁹ Allen, *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, op. cit., pp. 82-83, also reprinted in Allen, *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

³³⁰ Allen, *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, ibid., pp. 105-106, also reprinted in Allen, *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, ibid., pp. 45-46.

³³¹ Allen, *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, ibid., p. 107, also reprinted in Allen, *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, ibid., p. 47.

³³² Allen, *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, ibid., pp. 107-128.

³³³ Allen, *Hope for a man named Jimmie & Grand Illusion Joe*, op. cit., pp. 53-90.

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My current aim would be that the next fourth part would be the final fourth part and the end of cycle - for my 'self' to be freed from its levels, whether in Eastern terms they be regarded as reincarnations or 'thrown karma' or in Western term they be called hell, or purgatory, or heaven, or all three. While 'I' have loved living with this poem over the decades, nonetheless this last comment is an only slightly ironic reference to my film *Mistakes of Heaven*, to my remarks earlier about the poem as it were 'scheduling' my psychological and emotional life, and to the following lines from "Scheherazade":

The poem is a prison
 I scale the pages
 But my hands are chained
 Driven like a clock to chime
 In the middle of the night
 When the rest of the body
 Is asleep
 I send this message
 Down secret hallways
 In the pocket of
 The slaveboy of our dreams³³⁴

But transcending the cycle artistically, like escaping the cycle of reincarnation and transcending the ego personally, presents enormous challenges. Not least of these, along with my own limitations, as Siddhartha points out to Govinda, is the limitation of the form itself, the limitation of language:

Wisdom is not communicable...Knowledge can be communicated, but not wisdom...a truth can only be expressed and enveloped in words if it is

one-sided. Everything that is thought and expressed in words is one-sided, only half the truth; it lacks totality, completeness, unity.³³⁵

If this is the case, then, borrowing Ram Dass' words quoted earlier about spiritual texts and the limits of language as a vehicle to express what is ultimately beyond it, even if my final fourth work was both a truly artistic and a truly spiritual text, it would at its best be "only a finger pointing at the moon, not the moon itself". Which brings to mind one of my greatest inspirations and perhaps the greatest challenge ever thrown to spiritual art and thrown by one, "whom", as Eliot remarked, "one cannot hope/To emulate". At the end of *The Divine Comedy*, having taken us to the depths, middles and heights of human experience, Dante professes he cannot describe but only point us in the direction of final illumination:

Thenceforth my seeing surpassed what we can say
By means of words, which fail at sight so fair;

...in such wise that what
I'm saying gives but a glimmer of how it showed...

Henceforth my tongue, in struggling to repeat
e'en what remembrance holds, will have less power
than hath a babe's which still sucks at the teat...

How scant is language, all too weak to frame
my thoughts! and these are such, that, set beside
my vision, 'faint' is a word to weak for them.³³⁶

³³⁴ Allen, *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, op. cit., pp. 153-154.

³³⁵ Hesse, *Siddhartha*, op. cit., pp.111-112.

³³⁶ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, text with translation by Geoffrey L. Bickersteth, Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford and New York, 1986 (first published by Shakespeare Head Press, 1965), *Paradise*, Canto 33, lines 55-56, 89-90, 106-108, and 121-123, pp. 764-769. The original Italian reads:

The final part of *The Way Out At Last Cycle*, if I am foolish enough ever to attempt it - being impossible, the sound of one hand clapping - will be a gesture in the direction of the ineffable.³³⁷ It's current working title is *Learning to Live in the Fantastic Space*. I expect it will require a lot of research and I don't expect to complete it in a hurry, if at all. It may be that my Cycle will be, of necessity, an 'unfinished symphony'. However, in the next section we shall see a few guides on my way forward.

Be Here Now

The following words from Ram Dass's lecture, "Why Suffering?", and some of the ideas which will be discussed towards the end of this essay, are for me 'fingers pointing at this moon' of a spiritual artwork:

I have found with that the wonderful catch phrase 'be here now', which I have been growing into for the last...twenty years, that here now has within a richness that is enough...And when somebody says to me, "Ram Dass, are you happy?"...And I stop and think about it, look inside..."Yea, I'm happy." Somebody else comes up and says, "Ram Dass, are you

Da quinci innanzi il mio veder fu maggio
che il parlar nostro, che a tal vista cede;

...per tal modo
che ciò ch'io dico è un semplice lume...

Omai sarà più corta mia favella,
pur a quel ch'io ricordo, che d'infante
che bagnì ancor la lingua a la mammella...

Oh quanto è corto il dire e come fioco
al mio concetto! e questo, a quel ch'io vidi,
è tanto che non basta a dicer *poco*.

³³⁷ See the slightly self-deprecating 'definition' for "Merely" in *The Kamikaze Mind*: "I was too polite, I'd never point. My poems were merely gestures towards the infinite." *The Kamikaze Mind*, op. cit., p. 75.

sad?” Think about it, “Yea, I’m sad.” “Ram Dass, are you hopeful?”
 “Yea, I’m hopeful.” “Ram Dass, is it hopeless?” “Yep, it’s hopeless.”³³⁸

He goes on to describe the plenitude of the moment:

It’s extraordinary,...I realised in just honestly answering these questions that all of the stuff was present. Now imagine what thickness there is to a moment in time that has everything present. This moment has in it the people in Rwanda...this moment has the richness and thickness of the broken heart, of the joy of the mother and father holding their new baby, of the rose in bloom, of the heartache of grief of the loss of a long term loved one. It has all of it in it. And it’s thick, it’s thick, it’s thick with just living truth. And to be part of that is to really be like living spirit within the system. There is a line in the Dao that says, “Truth waits for eyes unclouded by longing.” When you wish it were different, you can’t see what is.³³⁹

In building towards this ‘final’ section, it is possible to see that this insight, or glimpses of it, already appear throughout the Cycle thus far. The emotional complexity is there in *White*: “happy and unhappy”³⁴⁰. The personal complexity is there in *Scheherazade*:

Scheherazade’s diary

The estate of Richard Allen

Good and bad

With a couple of memorable features³⁴¹

³³⁸ Ram Dass, “Why Suffering?”, a lecture on a retreat in Devon, England, July 26-31, 1994. #1/1, side B, Hanuman Foundation Tape Library, San Anselmo, California.

³³⁹ *ibid.*

³⁴⁰ Allen, *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

³⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 160.

And Ram Dass' idea of "the expanding of ourselves...to keep embracing"³⁴² finds an echo in "I am dissolving into everything" near the end of that poem.³⁴³ Similarly, the ultimate need to accept was expressed in the last words of *Grand Illusion Joe*: "Everything is perfect and nothing is safe. Everything will have to do."³⁴⁴ And the sense of the fulsome richness of a moment is found in *The Kamikaze Mind*, the only one of these texts written since possibly hearing Ram Dass's lecture:

Ether Suspended on the breath,
 in the air:
 all the thoughts in the world.
 Nothing is ever lost.
 Not a single memory.
 It's all here.³⁴⁵

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the first expression I read of this richness of the timeless moment was Hesse's spiritual art work *Siddhartha*. Siddhartha says:

The world, Govinda, is not imperfect or slowly evolving along a long path to perfection. No, it is perfect in every moment; every sin already carries grace within it...During deep meditation it is possible to dispel time, to see simultaneously all the past, present and future, and then everything is good, everything is perfect, everything is Brahman. Therefore, it seems to me that everything that exists is good – death as well as life, sin as well as holiness, wisdom as well as folly. Everything is necessary, everything needs only my agreement, my assent, my loving understanding...³⁴⁶ 113

³⁴² Ram Dass, "Why Suffering?", op. cit., side B.

³⁴³ Allen, *To The Ocean & Scheherazade*, op. cit., p. 160.

³⁴⁴ Allen, *Hope for a man named Jimmie & Grand Illusion Joe*, op. cit., p. 90.

³⁴⁵ Allen, *The Kamikaze Mind*, op. cit., p. 38.

³⁴⁶ Hesse, *Siddhartha*, op. cit., p. 113.

In the next section we will return from East to West to find another moment in literature that has inspired me with its ‘agreement, assent, loving understanding’.

Surrender

Perhaps my favorite moment in William Shakespeare’s oeuvre is when Hamlet, who Lawrence Olivier described in the voice over to the his film *Hamlet* as “the man who could not make up his mind”³⁴⁷, finally does act, after much indecision, but to some extent against his better judgement, in an amazing mix of rationality and intuition. Interestingly, this is after he returns his life to a balance between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, having “lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises”³⁴⁸ following the death of his father and the remarriage of his mother at the beginning of the play. The following exchange with Horatio, about accepting the duel with Laertes, is to my mind one of the most beautiful and poignant dialogues in all of Western literature:

HORATIO

You will lose this wager, my lord.

HAMLET

I do not think so; since he went into France, I have been in continual practice; I shall win at the odds. But thou wouldst not think how ill all’s here about my heart: but it is no matter.

HORATIO

Nay, good my lord –

³⁴⁷ Lawrence Olivier (director), *Hamlet*, UK, 1948.

HAMLET

It is but foolery: but it is such a kind of gain-giving
as would perhaps trouble a woman.

HORATIO

If your mind dislike any thing, obey it: I will
forestall their repair hither, and say you are fit.

HAMLET

Not a whit, we defy augury: there is a special
providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now,
'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be
now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readi-
ness is all: since no man knows aught of what he
leaves, what is't to leave betimes? Let be.³⁴⁹

What I makes this moment so poignant is that Hamlet lets go. Fully aware of his contradictions he *surrenders* them into action. He surrenders to “providence”. He lets the universe decide.

So it could be argued that even this most Western of plays, which Harold Bloom has suggested is at the apex of Shakespeare’s achievement of the “invention of the human” - of creating the Western experience of “cognition, personality, character”³⁵⁰ - points to ‘a way out at last’, a way out of the labyrinth of the endlessly dualistic, endless self-reflexive, small ‘s’ self, mind. And an echo of this surrender can be seen the letting go of “Tuesday on the Rack” in *Thursday’s Fictions* and of Rubberman in the dance film that bears his name, discussed earlier.

³⁴⁸ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act II, Scene II, *The Complete Works* (The Edition of The Shakespeare Head Press, Oxford), Dorset Press, New York, 1988, p. 684.

³⁴⁹ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act V, Scene II, *ibid.*, p. 710.

³⁵⁰ Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, Riverhead Books, A Member of Penguin Putnam Inc, New York, 1998, pp. 738, 722, xviii.

Interestingly, since drafting these observations I have discovered Georg Feuerstein's latest work, *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga*, in which he also speaks about the idea of surrender. He proposes that the "missing link" which binds the "organic whole" of the "the eight "limbs" (*anga*) of Yoga" that "have come to stand for the Yoga taught by Patañjali in his *Yoga-Sutra*...is the practice of surrender and faith."³⁵¹

Yoga practitioners...surrender their "usualness"...They adopt and follow a path that attempts to reverse such normal human values and attitudes as greed, hatred, envy, jealousy, or fearful avoidance. Through this yogic or spiritual reversal (*paravritti*), they create for themselves a life that is analogous to the transcendental state of being. Their entire life is modeled on the nonordinary, nonhuman Reality. It becomes an imitation (in the best sense of the word) of the milieu of Reality...The more complete and unquestioning this surrender becomes, the nearer they draw to, or rather the more they participate in, the dimension of absolute Reality. Ultimately, they hope to fully and permanently realize their authentic Being, which is the Self (*atman*).³⁵²

But in our search for 'missing links' and inspirations, we must now go back to go forward again (realising of course that time itself is an illusion, perhaps the illusion that sustains our small 's' concept of ourselves) - back to the houseboat in Groningen in the north of Holland, and the books that sat on the shelves overlooking the ducks in summer and the ice in winter.

³⁵¹ See Feuerstein, "Faith and Surrender: A New Look at the Eightfold Path", in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga*, op. cit., pp. 285-296. The quotes are from p. 285. He equally emphasizes faith.

³⁵² *ibid.*, p. 287. Ram Dass talks about "sacrifice" in terms similar to Feuerstein's about "surrender", see Ram Das, "Sacrifice", Lecture # 8, 6-27-74, *The Yogas of the Bhagavad-Gita*, op. cit.

Technicians of the Sacred

Speaking of Siva is “a collection of *vacanas* or free-verse lyrics written by four major saints of the great *bhakti* protest movement which originated in the tenth century A.D.”³⁵³ The poems are passionate, personal, with simple but striking imagery that brings the spiritual beloved into the heart of the reader or listener. As I read them, moving backwards and forwards between the nine hundred and seventy two untitled but numbered translations, it was possible to read the collection as one long extended devotional poem, a series of timeless but fully engaged moments of irony, epiphany and illumination. Such an inspiration obviously fed my book length experiments in floating timeless and timebound moments. I was probably also intrigued by the Appendix I which describes “a rather esoteric intellectual system [which] underlies the native arrangement of *vacanas*”³⁵⁴, given that my *Cycle* had its own complex architecture. And inspired, in terms of the spiritual-artistic nexus of the project (though this is not something I have felt comfortable talking about until now, perhaps given the lack of interest in spirituality discussed earlier), by the following quotation from the “Translator’s Note” by A.K. Ramanujan:

Vacanas are literature, but not merely literary. They are literature in spite of itself...Vacanas are our wisdom literature. They have been called the Kannada Upanisads. Some hear the tone and voice of Old Testament prophets or the Chuang-Tzu here. Vacanas are also our psalms and hymns...another version of the Perennial Philosophy.³⁵⁵

Equally, or perhaps even more important as a creative inspiration at the beginning of the *Cycle*, was Jerome Rothenberg’s groundbreaking anthology, *Technicians of the Sacred: A*

³⁵³ Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva*, op. cit., a quote from the back cover.

³⁵⁴ Ramanujan, “Appendix I: The Six-Phase System”, *ibid.*, p. 169.

³⁵⁵ Ramanujan, “Translator’s Note”, *ibid.*, p. 12.

*Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia, Europe & Oceania*³⁵⁶. This work had a profound influence on the reorienting of my creative imagination towards alternative traditions and an art of the spirit. Without going into detail, I'd like to acknowledge its influence through a series of references which I believe will echo clearly back and forwards across discussions of my work in this essay.

Art as sacred knowledge:

These people...are precisely “technicians” where it most concerns them...in their relation to the “sacred” as something they can actively create or capture.³⁵⁷

The permeable boundaries of an art work in terms of:

a) duration:

It's very hard...to decide what precisely are the boundaries of “primitive” poetry or of a “primitive” poem, since...words and vocables are part of a larger total “work” that may go on for hours, even days...³⁵⁸

b) medium:

What we would separate as music & dance & myth & painting is also part of that work, & the need for separation is a question of “our” interest & preconceptions, not of “theirs”.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁶ Jerome Rothenberg, *Technicians of the Sacred*, op. cit. I was introduced to the first edition, 1968, in Australia in the early eighties by poet and fellow *Neos: Young Writers* editor and later academic John Hawke. I later acquired the revised and expanded second edition, 1985, from which subsequent quotes will be drawn.

³⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. xxv.

³⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. xxvi.

³⁵⁹ *ibid.*

c) form (if lines may be sung or chanted or repeated or spoken in specific situations, where does the poem begin and end?):

Are all of these “lines”...separate poems, or are they the component parts of a single, larger poem moving toward some specific (ceremonial) end?...Can many poems be a single poem as well?³⁶⁰

How is “unity” achieved?

In general by the imposition of some constant or “key” against which all disparate materials can be measured. A sound, a rhythm, a name, an image, a dream, a gesture, a picture, an action, a silence: any or all of these can function as “keys.”³⁶¹

Paradoxes beyond our analytical minds and ‘permission’ for an artist to work across media are invoked by Rothenberg. The following was music to the ears of a young poet, dancer and would-be filmmaker whose natural, if not fully articulated, impulse was to find the appropriate medium or combination of media to express a particular idea rather than to start from the proposition that different visual, aural and physical modes of expression were utterly distinct from each other:

The poet (who may also be dancer, singer, magician, whatever the event demands of him) masters a series of techniques that can fuse the most seemingly contradictory propositions.³⁶²

In fact it could be argued that a lot of my project as a poet, dancer and filmmaker over the next twenty or so years was unleashed by these words and by the “Primitive & Modern:

³⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. xxvii.

³⁶¹ *ibid.*

³⁶² *ibid.*, p. xxviii.

Intersections and Analogies” that Rothenberg articulated in his introduction to *Technicians of the Sacred*:

- (1) the poems carried by the voice...
- (2) a highly developed process of image-thinking: concrete and non-causal thought in contrast to the simplifications of Aristotelian logic...
- (3) a “minimal” art of maximal involvement...the “spectator” as (ritual) participant who pulls it all together...
- (4) an “intermedia” situation, as further denial of categories: the poet’s techniques aren’t limited to verbal maneuvers but operate also through song, non-verbal sound, visual signs, & the varied activities of the ritual event: here the “poem” = the work of the “poet” in whatever medium...
- (5) ...a “physical” basis for the poem within a man’s body – or as an act of body & mind together, breath &/or spirit...
- (6) the poet as shaman...& seer...³⁶³

Rothenberg certainly opened a door for me, which I gratefully passed through in the early eighties.

A Dynamic Triangle

Interestingly, in something of an inversion, when I discovered the Jivamukti Yoga Centre in New York in the early nineties, I found echoes of some of these ideas in the way that art was used in support of the practice of Yoga. As Gannon and Life, themselves artists as well as yogis, write:

For us, creating Jivamukti Yoga was a natural continuation of our own artistic investigation into the mysteries of life. It was a way for us to share

our findings with others who were also interested. At Jivamukti we use art, music, dance, and poetry, much as they were used during the “happenings” in the 1960s (minus the drugs!) to create an environment that inspires people to break out of their small selves and feel the Divine Self flowing through them. In this way, the world of appearances becomes a playground for deeper learning and a laboratory for the evolution of the immortal soul.³⁶⁴

Like Rothenberg’s third intersection and analogy - ‘the “spectator” as (ritual) participant who pulls [the artwork] together’ - their approach echoes back to my earlier comments about direct address and the conscious engagement of the reader/audience in the creation of the work:

Originally, the shamanic role of the artist was to uplift people with authentic experiences of transcendence, to inspire them to move out of the mundane and toward the Divine. Today, however, we have become a mute audience: voyeurs rather than participants, consumers rather than creators...With the growing popularity of yoga, it, too, could be reduced to a vacuous commodity. This is why we emphasize to our students that their practice must be grounded in humility and selflessness and a striving toward divinity.³⁶⁵

And art, they argue, can help in this. It can “fill the gap between the yogi in the Himalayan cave and the modern urban practitioner. There is no audience for this performance; there are only participants.”³⁶⁶

³⁶³ *ibid.*, pp. xxviii, xxix.

³⁶⁴ Gannon and Life, *Jivamukti Yoga*, op. cit., p. 16. See Chapter 1, “Jivamukti Yoga: Putting Yoga Together in the West”, pp. 7-19, for a description of how Sharon and David started their yoga centre after a performing career in New York’s East Village and how their mixture of the spiritual and the physical and the artistic was a groundbreaking return to the whole experience and full meaning of Yoga practice.

³⁶⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶⁶ *ibid.*

So art and yoga and spirituality can have a dynamic relationship in the contemporary West: yoga nourishes art and art nourishes yoga. As we saw earlier, this has always been the case in the Indian subcontinent. Bettina Baumer examines this in detail in her “Yoga and Art: An Indian Approach”:

Almost all Indian art, especially what we call sacred art, has to be seen in the context of a dynamic triangle of which one apex point is a given cosmology and metaphysics, another one is ritual and *yoga*, and the third is the external manifestation in art-forms. These three dimensions stand in a dynamic two-way relationship, so that cosmology is re-enacted in ritual and *yoga*, and these in turn depend on cosmology; ritual and *yoga* require a visual expression or lead to it...; and art itself requires ritual for its creation, maintenance and dissolution or transformation, and it requires *yoga* to give it an inner life.³⁶⁷

In Kashmir Saivism, which Baumer explores in particular, she finds “the most fitting metaphysics of Indian art in all its forms – drama, poetry, music, and the visual arts”, precisely because it features (in a way that one might compare with the ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’ idea discussed earlier) “an inclusion of all the multiplicity of sense-experience into an all-embracing realization of the divine”. “The work of art or ritual object”, writes Baumer, “...is to be seen as a particular condensation of the vibration of consciousness.”³⁶⁸ Yoga and art circle around the divine in a dynamic and deeply holistic vision:

We may summarize the relationship of *yoga* and art in this way: *Yoga* is an instrument in the creation as well as the enjoyment of art, but here the movement goes from within to the sensible world outside. On the other hand, art...is an instrument for *yoga*, because it leads the *yogi* or *sadhaka*

³⁶⁷ Bettina Baumer, “Yoga and Art: An Indian Approach” in Chattopadhyay (ed.), *Indian Art: Forms Concern and Development in Historical Perspective*, op. cit., p. 77.

³⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 84.

from the sense-experience within to a state of absorption into inner consciousness, the source of all beauty. This is the difference.³⁶⁹

Like Vico's 'moving picture of eternity'³⁷⁰, like Nietzsche's 'Tragic balance', like Derrida's *différance*³⁷¹, even like the seesaw between Barthes' 'Work' and 'Text' (since no piece of writing is ever completely one or the other³⁷²), certainly like the relationship between 'words' and 'definitions' in *The Kamikaze Mind*, and between different evolving patterned parts of *The Way Out At Last Cycle*, this is a model of human knowledge, experience and consciousness that is characterised by movement between things rather than by static stand-aloneness. And this movement is often lateral or circular and not linear or direct. In White's terms quoted above, it is 'dialectical'. In the next section we will see how Wendy Doniger's recent translations and interpretations of Indian mythology and philosophy help create an intellectual context for my thinking and creative practice by providing a model for such dynamic thinking, with its multi-layered, all-embracing, apparently paradoxical and contradictory qualities.

Paradox Anonymous

Lynn Ginsburg and Mary Taylor recently profiled Wendy Doniger's approach:

She delights in using the engaging stories of Indian mythology to lead readers into the seeming contradictions at the core of much Indian philosophy. In her book *Siva, the Erotic Ascetic*, for example, she pursues this idea of paradox in depth. Throughout Indian mythology Shiva is depicted as both erotic, at times making love with no bounds, *and* ascetic, at other times unwilling to spill his seed. Doniger explores how it is

³⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 85.

³⁷⁰ A phrase I coined to describe Vico's "ideal eternal history", Allen, *A Disappointed Bridge: The Architecture of Historical Knowledge*, *op.cit.*, p. 112.

³⁷¹ See Culler, "Jacques Derrida", in Sturrock, *Structuralism and Since*, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-172, 178-179.

possible for this one god to simultaneously personify the contradictory attributes of reveling in sexual gratification for worldly pleasure and restraining from sexual gratification to lead a yogic life aimed at *moksha*, or liberation from worldly pursuits. Doniger uses this kind of contradiction to help readers understand that in fact life itself is one never-ending paradox, which she says creates the necessary underlying tension that gives life depth and also helps us see that from the Indian point of view the pendulum swinging from extreme to extreme is indeed the *basis* of worldly existence.³⁷³

As Doniger writes in *Siva, the Erotic Ascetic*:

By refusing to modify its component elements in order to force them into a synthesis, Indian mythology celebrates the idea that the universe is boundlessly various, that everything occurs simultaneously, that all possibilities may exist without excluding each other...The conflict is resolved not into a static icon but rather into the constant motion of the pendulum, whose animating force is the eternal paradox of myths.³⁷⁴

To read these words in the context of a Western Classical education that focused on repressing paradox in hierarchical ordering of ideas, in compartmentalising and separating rather than joining and connecting, and in the context of an avant-garde and postmodern art practice that is seemingly open but in fact is obsessed with naming and counternaming and creating marketable distinctions, is extremely refreshing.³⁷⁵ The idea

³⁷² Barthes, *Image – Music – Text*, op. cit., p. 164.

³⁷³ Lynn Ginsburg and Mary Taylor, “Open to interpretation”, Profile in *Yoga Journal*, May June 2002, pp. 84 –85.

³⁷⁴ Wendy Doniger, *Siva, the Erotic Ascetic*, Oxford University Press, 1981, quoted *ibid.*, p 85. See also Feuerstein, “Sex, Asceticism, and Mythology”, in *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga: Theory and Practice*, op. cit., pp. 332-338.

³⁷⁵ As it is to read from Baumer that: “The Indian arts, both in theory (*sastra*) and practice (*prayoga*), are branches of a single living tree of Indian culture. They cannot be understood in isolation from other dimensions of thought and science, myth and ritual, spiritual and secular traditions.” Bettina Baumer, “Introduction” to Baumer (ed.), *Eight Selected Terms*, in Vatsyayan (gen. ed.), *Kalatattvakosa*, op. cit., p. xi. Vatsyayan speaks in similar terms: “the interconnectedness and the interdependence of levels, and

that artworks might follow myths in showing “life in all its contradictory fullness, swinging back and forth between the paradoxical powers of passion and dispassion, love and violence, life and death”³⁷⁶ is a very liberating one for me, and echoes back to earlier comments quoted from Eliot and Tarkovsky about art works expressing “a width of emotional range” and “[uniting] within [themselves] dialectically contradictory phenomena”. And, as I found their words useful in describing my understanding and approach to making art, so I believe Doniger’s phrases could equally be borrowed and adapted to describe my artistic pathway and its resulting overall shapeshifting oeuvre: “boundlessly various,...everything [occurring] simultaneously,...all possibilities exist[ing] without excluding each other...The conflict...resolved not in a static [manner]...but rather...[in] constant motion of the pendulum, whose animating force is...paradox”.

Synchronistically, I have found in my recent reading another contemporary Western poet who has seems also to be ‘at home’ in paradoxes, or at least not denying them. Not surprisingly he also draws inspiration and guidance from ancient Eastern practices and perennial wisdoms. In a recent interview in *Poetry and Poetics in a New Millennium*, poet Armand Schwerner is in conversation with interviewer Edward Foster:

genres of abstract and concretization is fundamental and basic” to “the nature of Indian art”. Vatsyayan, “The Indian Arts, their Ideational Background and Principles of Form” in Sheikh, Subramanya and Vatsyayan (eds.), *Paroksa: Coomaraswamy Centenary Seminar Papers*, op. cit., p. 59.

In a slightly different metaphor than the one I will be pursuing with Doniger through the rest of this essay, but one that nonetheless is very illuminating in informing its whole philosophical and aesthetic framework, Vatsyayan notes that:

we have in the [*Prasna*] *Upanishad* the recurring metaphor of the chariot and the wheel, the sun and its rays, the senses and the body and their correlation with the macrocosm...The one guiding pivot is the concept of the formless and the multiple form, of the one and the many, and the relationship of the parts to the whole, (*Svetasvatara [Upanishad]*, IV. I, etc.). The body is the vehicle of experiencing the formless, and it is only the controlled internalization of the senses, which results in the key concept of *Yoga*. (ibid., p. 54).

(See Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli, *The Principal Upanisads*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1953. Or *The Upanishads*, translations from the Sanskrit and with an introduction by Juan Mascaró, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Baltimore, Ringwood, Markham, Auckland, 1965.)

³⁷⁶ Ginsburg and Taylor, “Open to interpretation”, *Yoga Journal*, op. cit., p. 86.

AS: “There are no issues,” Cid Corman says in “The idea of a Mandarin Orange.” That’s true isn’t it? That issues resolve into *gnothē seauton*, “know yourself.”? And then comes the buzzing trouble, endless, about the solidity of that self. I’m not happy that there are no issues...But hell, it’s never a matter of being able to avoid position is it?

EF: Yes. And you’re in the middle of a paradox. You can’t take a position; on the other hand any position is an issue, and “there are no issues.”

AS: Only through that paradox is life possible. And if I do have a poetic “issue,” I suppose it relates to the importance of incarnating that paradox in the poem. I remember in my early days as a Zen student there would be other beginners...who had made this joyous discovery, that nothing had its own essence. They translated that into a dance of Nothing is Real, and celebrated the discovery. Of course the accomplished students appreciated soon enough that their discovery had to be paradoxically supplemented by the understanding that everything perceived by the sense is in fact real. And that only in this tenuous balance lay sanity. Great poetry does that dance.³⁷⁷

Schwerner’s dance echoes for me back to Eliot and his famous phrase “the dance within the dance”, which we will explore in the next section.

The Dance Within The Dance

In *The “Still Point”: Theme and Variations in the Writings of T. S. Eliot, Coleridge, Yeats, Henry James, Virginia Woolf, and D. H. Lawrence*, American literary critic Ethel F. Cornwell described a fundamental human problem:

Ever since the dawn of consciousness, when man first became aware of the distinction between the *self* and the *non-self*, he has been subject to the concomitant desires for individuation and for union; the desire to preserve and develop his individual identity, and the desire to merge himself with something greater than and outside himself, to escape the burden of selfhood by identifying himself with some power that would duplicate or return him to the undifferentiated state from which his awakened consciousness wrenched him. The question of choice, balance, or alternation between these conflicting needs has been the basic problem in man's relationship with his fellow men, his universe, his god. And ultimately, he has but three choices: to preserve his individuality by withholding himself, being careful, as James put it, not to "melt too much into the universe," but to be "as solid and dense and fixed as you can"; or to merge himself completely, seeking the absolute release from self in a kind of Nirvana; or to attempt some combination of the two that will satisfy one need without denying the other, as for example, Eliot's dance within the dance.³⁷⁸

Writing in the early sixties, Cornwell saw this perennial problem as particularly acute in the 20th century:

However one phrases it, the problem...is one that has troubled many ages, none more so than the present one...in Western civilization until the advent of Darwin, Christian dogma supplied both an explanation for the Fall, the "separation from God," and a generally accepted formula for the recovery of the lost Eden and the reconciliation of man's two opposing desires.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁷ Foster (ed.), *Poetry and Poetics in a New Millennium*, op. cit., pp. 116-119.

³⁷⁸ Ethel F. Cornwell, *The "Still Point"*, op. cit., p. 3.

³⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 4.

Stephen Spender expressed the situation in *The Destructive Element*: “the modern writer is faced “by the experience of an all-pervading Present, which is a world without belief.”³⁸⁰ Eliot’s *The Waste Land* became the 20th century poetic integer of this spiritual devastation, and his later “attempts to find an answer to and an escape from the modern Waste Land resulted in his “still point” concept as it is presented in *Four Quartets*.”³⁸¹

But *The Waste Land* was published in 1922, Spender’s observation in 1938, *Four Quartets* in 1943, and Cornwell’s thesis in 1962. How are these texts relevant at the beginning of the 21st century? My answer would be that what interests me about the problem they each in their own way address is its perennial nature. It is not a problem that goes away. In fact, it could be said that it must be addressed by each artist, indeed each generation, and the approach they take defines who they are. Cornwell again:

The ideas that Mr. Eliot has incorporated in his still point concept are not new – the concept of union with an outside spiritual center has been a commonplace among Christian and Buddhist writers for centuries, and the reconciliation of opposites was a pet theme of Heraclitus; what is important is his persistent effort to rephrase them in twentieth-century terms to meet twentieth-century needs.³⁸²

Both the problem and Eliot’s answer to it – a balancing of poetry, dance and the spirit in the image of the “still point” - remain potent for me. The “still point”, “The point of intersection of the timeless/With time”³⁸³, is, as Cornwell argued, “the point at which the whole vision appears and all opposites are reconciled. And as the source of all movement, pattern, and meaning, it is, like Dante’s “unmoved mover,” definable only by paradox.” This can be seen in the “Burnt Norton” section of Eliot’s *Four Quartets*³⁸⁴:

³⁸⁰ Stephen Spender, *The Destructive Element: A Study of Modern Writers and Beliefs*, London, 1938, p. 14, quoted in Cornwell, *The “Still Point”*, *ibid.*

³⁸¹ Cornwell, *The “Still Point”*, *ibid.*

³⁸² *ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁸³ Eliot, “The Dry Salvages”, *Four Quartets*, in Eliot, *The Complete*, *op. cit.*, pp. 189, 190.

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
 Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
 But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
 Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
 Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
 There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
 I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where.
 And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.³⁸⁵

Jivanmukti

Yoga is that dance. To borrow Cornwell's words, it is a form of the alternating between "the *self* and the *non-self*" that balances "the concomitant desires for individuation and for union" to achieve, as with Eliot's "still point", "wholeness of being, the complete integration of personality that allows one to perceive the whole vision and to develop one's spiritual self to the utmost"³⁸⁶. My first conscious glimmer that this might be so came when I encountered Yoga as practiced and philosophised at the Jivanmukti Centre in New York. As Gannon and Life have said:

Jivanmukti Yoga was founded upon principles of re-spiritualizing the practice of Yoga in the West. The word Jivanmukti means the liberation from identification with the body, while in the body. This liberation is predicated upon a spiritual practice which recognizes the final goal as Superconsciousness. Asana, like Sanskrit is a language – a sacred language, which, when used properly will invoke the Divine presence³⁸⁷

³⁸⁴ Cornwell, *The "Still Point"*, op. cit., p. 44.

³⁸⁵ Quoted in Cornwell, *ibid.* See Eliot, "Burnt Norton", *Four Quartets, The Complete*, op. cit., p. 173.

³⁸⁶ Cornwell, *The "Still Point"*, *ibid.*, pp. 3, 44.

In Yogic spiritual practice the individual self is a construct, and this “little self” only experiences completeness and happiness when it is “yoked” to the “greater Self”, the universal “I-AM”. The trick, as masters have pointed out over centuries, is to live a double life, a double consciousness in which both perspectives are always available. To live, in fact, a paradox. This is called “Jivanmukti”, or living liberation: where the ‘little self’ inhabits the world of forms, obeying its laws, enjoying its pleasures and experiencing its pains, but always with an awareness of its participation in the timeless, boundless reality, where the boundaries of the self and the universe have dissolved.³⁸⁸

This “joyful participation in the sorrows of the world”³⁸⁹ as Joseph Campbell calls it, brings the universal into “the field of time and space”:

³⁸⁷ Sharon Gannon and David Life, *Jivamukti Yoga Calendar 1999*, published by the Jivamukti Yoga Centre, New York, 1999.

³⁸⁸ As Georg Feuerstein points out: “When we examine the Hindu concept of liberation, or enlightenment, we find that it comes in two fundamental forms: bodiless liberation (*videhamukti*) and living liberation (*jivan-mukti*). The former type implies perfect transcendence not only of the human condition but of embodiment as such. It is a state of being that is utterly formless and wholly apart from the universe in all its many levels. This is the great spiritual ideal promulgated in the philosophical traditions of Mimamsa, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Ishvara Krishna’s school of Samkya, some Vedanta teachers (like Bhaskara, Yadava, and Nimbarka), and apparently also Patañjali’s school of Yoga. The second type of liberation, *jivan-mukti*, is the ideal favored by most teachers of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina Yoga. It can be said to be India’s most important contribution to world spirituality. Living liberation, or liberation while still in a body, is the idea that it is possible to be inwardly absolutely free while yet simultaneously appearing as an embodied individual. Closely related to this notion is the so-called witnessing Consciousness (*sakshin*), which is the essential “quality” of the ultimate Reality, be it called “Self,” “Spirit,” “Truth,” or “the Divine.”” He notes that “both forms of liberation have in common that they terminate our suffering (*duhkha*) along with our sense of individuation (*ahamkara* or *asmita*)”. They are both thus “essentially the same”. Or it can be seen that living liberation is a “precursor” to disembodied liberation. Feuerstein, “Liberation”, *The Deeper Dimensions of Yoga*, op. cit., pp. 372-376. These quotes are from pp. 374-375. See also “What is Yoga?”, pp. 3-9, and in particular pp. 4-5 for his discussion of Patañjali’s dualist “disembodied liberation” as opposed to the ideal of ‘embodied liberation’ taught by most nondualist schools of Yoga.

³⁸⁹ Joseph Campbell, “The Way To Enlightenment: Buddhism,” *The World of Joseph Campbell, Volume II: Transformations of Myth Through Time*, Program 1, Side A, HighBridge Productions, 1990. Between this and the next Campbell quote, I am bringing together statements by him about Buddhism and Yoga, which I don’t think he would have disapproved of, having spent a large part of his career drawing out linkages between traditions. In fact the Hindu idea of *Jivanmukti* has some similarities with the 1st century Buddhist idea of the *Bodhisattva*. As Radhakrishnan says of the former: “Release is not a state after death but the supreme status of being in which spirit knows itself to be superior to birth and death, unconditioned by its manifestations, able to assume forms at its pleasure. (Badarayana, *The Brahma Sutra*, edited and translated by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Allen and Unwin, London, p. 215, quoted in Collinson, Plant and Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, op. cit., p. 174.) While Campbell says about the latter, while discussing the different approaches of Theravada (Hinayana or ‘Lesser Vehicle’) and Mahayana (‘Greater Vehicle’) Buddhism:

So the function of yoga is to release us from the time-space commitment, introduce us to the transcendent. Then comes the problem of bringing us back so that we can operate in both knowledges...Consciousness first, then you. You represent the specification of the consciousness in time and place. Through the specifications of your personal life you are to abstract the immortal. To experience your eternity through the vicissitudes of your mortality, that's the total goal.³⁹⁰

As it says in the full Sanskrit text of the *Shankaracharya* chant quoted earlier:

Nissangatve Nirmohatvam
Nirmohatve Niscala-Tattvam,
Niscala-Tattve Jimanmuktih

From non-attachment comes freedom from delusion.

With freedom from delusion, one feels the changeless reality.

Experiencing that changeless reality, one attains liberation in this life.

Not to be moved...That's the first step. The second step is, having found the still point, to come back into the field of time. So we have two Buddhisms, one, the small vehicle Buddhism that is going away from the field of time. And then another Buddhism that comes in the first century A.D...that we are manifestations and we *can* move in this field of time but without being moved. This is known as joyful participation in the sorrows of the world...That's what it's known as the *Bodhisattva*...*Sattva* – one whose being...*bodi* – is illumination. And with that still point having been found, you can move into the field of movement and not move." (Campbell, *ibid.*)

Both the orthodox Hindu ideal of the *jivanmukta* and the Mahayana Buddhist ideal of the *bodhisattva* place an emphasis on service. The former: "those who have achieved this peak of spiritual development...*jivanmukti* (free while living)...work for the goal of the ultimate release of all (*sarvamukti*)"; the latter: "The *bodhisattva*...has achieved enlightenment but forgoes transition to *nirvana* for the sake of guiding others towards the same goal." Collinson, Plant and Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, op. cit., pp. 174, 100. For a dynamic appraisal of the parallels and linkages between Buddhism and Yoga, listen to the audio tape of Robert Thurman, *Vacationers' Life: Yoga and Buddhism*, a talk given at the Jivamukti Yoga Centre, New York, on January 29, 1999. For a classic Mahayana Buddhist text on the Bodhisattva, see Shantideva, *The Way of The Bodhisattva*, translated from the Tibetan by the Padmakara Translation Group, with a foreword by the Dalai Lama, Shambhala Publications, Inc., Boston and London, 1997.

³⁹⁰ Campbell, *Transformations of Myth Through Time*, op. cit., pp. 134, 142.

I-AM is the ocean of awareness. Realizing this, one feels,
 “I am not the body and mind, although I have a body and mind.”³⁹¹

As Pattabhi Jois writes:

If the mind establishes itself in the Self or attains the Self, it will not exist as different from the Self. Thus, the way of establishing the mind in the Self should be known as yoga. An aphorism of Patañjali, the great sage and founder of the science of yoga, makes this clear: “*Yoga chitta vritti nirodhaha* [Yoga is the process of ending the definitions of the field of consciousness]”...By...detachment and the practice of yoga, our minds will become focussed on finding the path to the Supreme Self, whose nature is bliss. When the mind is not attached to things, such as the objects of the senses, it will be able to dissolve itself into the Self. This is what is known as the state of *jivanmukti* [liberation while in the present life].³⁹²

³⁹¹ Translated by Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati, quoted in Gannon and Life, *Jivanmukti Yoga*, op. cit., p. 186.

³⁹² Pattabhi Jois, *Yoga Mala*, op. cit., pp. 16-17, 33. The Patañjali Yoga Sutra quoted is: i: 2. This famous sutra often forms the basis for a discussion of the purpose and philosophy of Yoga. It has been defined and thus subsequently discussed in slightly different ways by different commentators. Swami Vivekananda translated it as “Yoga is restraining the mind-stuff (Chitta) from taking various forms”. His subsequent discussion is particularly interesting in relation to *The Kamikaze Mind*'s epigraph (op. cit., p. 1), a quote from Stephen Hawking:

If an astronaut falls into a black hole he will be returned to the rest of the universe in the form of radiation. Thus, in a sense, the astronaut will be recycled. However, it would be a poor sort of immortality because any personal concept of time would come to an end...All that would survive would be his mass or energy.
 (Stephen Hawking in Errol Morris (director), *A Brief History of Time: based on the book by Stephen Hawking*, Anglia Television/Gordon Freeman, England, 1991. This quote is an adaptation from his original text, Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From The Big Bang To Black Holes*, with an introduction by Carl Sagan, Bantam Books, Toronto, New York, London, Sydney, Auckland, 1988, p. 112.)

Vivekananda wrote:

The organs (*Indriyas*), together with the mind (*Manas*), the determinative faculty (*Buddhi*), and egoism (*Ahamkara*), form the group called the *Antahkarana* (the internal instrument). They are but various processes in the mind-stuff, called *Chitta*. The waves of thought in the *Chitta* are called *Vritti* (“the whirlpool”...). What is thought? Thought is a force, as in gravitation or repulsion. It is absorbed from the infinite storehouse of force in nature; the

Or, to return to Gannon and Life:

No one can do Yoga. Yoga means union with God. Yoga means Eternal Happiness, Samadhi, Bliss, Joy, Unconditional Love. Yoga is who you are. What we can do are practices that, by revealing to us our resistances to eternal happiness, may lead us to a state of Yoga. These practices include asana, vegetarianism, chanting, pranayama, satsang, study of scriptures and meditation. The intention underlying any of these practices must be refined in order to allow for the practice to lead to that state known as Yoga. In other words, for any practice to be a Yoga practice it must be motivated by the desire for God realization, Samadhi.³⁹³

Shri Brahmananda Saravasti (a.k.a. Dr Ramamurti S. Mishra) was one of Gannon and Life's gurus³⁹⁴ and the author of *Fundamentals of Yoga: A Handbook of Theory, Practice and Application*. John White summarises his thought in the "Foreword":

Through the methods of Yoga, the individual, to use Dr Mishra's term, dehypnotizes himself, clears his mind of illusions and unconscious conditioning, so that total mastery of the mind's powers and potentialities

instrument called *Chitta* takes hold of that force, and, when it passes out the other end it is called thought.

(Swami Vivekananda, *Vedanta Philosophy: Raja Yoga*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, Ltd, London, pp. 104, 105.)

Patañjali's second aphorism opens a doorway to a much more in depth discussion of the methods and workings of Yoga than this essay can allow. It must suffice to suggest some of the subtleties of the differing interpretations possible by noting some of the other translations.

Iyengar: "Yoga is the cessation of movement in the consciousness." Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, op. cit., p. 46. See also pp. 45-48, and pp. 8-13.

Desikachar: "Yoga is the ability to direct the mind exclusively toward an object and sustain that direction without any distractions". Desikachar, *The Heart of Yoga*, op., cit., p. 149.

Gannon and Life: "Yoga is realized when identification with the fluctuations of the mind ceases". Gannon and Life, *Jivamukti Yoga*, op. cit., p. 26.

Feuerstein: "Yoga is the restriction of the fluctuations of the consciousness". Feuerstein, *The Yoga-Sutra of Patañjali*, op. cit., p. 26. For further discussion, see pp. 26-28, and his discussion of the issues of translating the "notoriously concise" and "extreme[ly] terse" Sanskrit aphorisms, p xii.

³⁹³ Gannon and Life, *Jivamukti Yoga Calendar, 1999*, op. cit., from page for "October".

³⁹⁴ See Gannon and Life, *Jivamukti Yoga*, op. cit., pp. 84-91.

is attained. Ultimately, the power and potentiality of our Self is none other than that of the entire cosmos. It is only our ego, the illusion of separate Self, that keeps us from realizing we are truly divine – truly one with the universe, truly God in human form.³⁹⁵

White continues, noting that “Yoga has developed many branches or lines...but theoretically, all of them lead to the same condition, which is known as *moksha*, meaning “liberation,” or “enlightenment.”³⁹⁶ To quote Dr Mishra directly:

Moksha, or *nirvanam*, is the permanent abode of eternal consciousness. Knowledge, existence, blessings, happiness, and peace – Yoga is the infallible instrument to attain *nirvanam*. Thus, the main goal of Yoga is freedom of the spirit from the fetters of material desires and permanent victory of consciousness over ignorance.³⁹⁷

Since the time that when I first visited the Jivamukti Yoga Center, I have increasingly tried to understand, test out and use these ideas as a model both for my life and my creative work. And gradually through this process both have taken on a different tenor. It has been an incremental process and one, as we have seen in the course of this essay, that has built and drawn in previous and other inspirations, practices, teaching and models as well. It would be unfortunate if, because of the need to focus on a single primary theme for this essay - that of spirituality - in taking this labyrinthine, cyclical, and circuitous path through my creative mind, practice and work over the last twenty-five years, that it appeared that I was saying that this was the only way one might approach this mind, this practice, this body of work. Numerous other approaches might have been fruitfully taken, including: a focus on cross-artform hybridity; on the influence of one medium or art form upon another; on artistic collaboration; on theories of modernism, postmodernism and post-post modernism; on the distinctions between performance

³⁹⁵ John White, “Foreword”, in Ramamurti S. Mishra, M.D. (Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati), *Fundamentals of Yoga: A Handbook of Theory, Practice and Application*, Harmony Books, New York, 1987, p. xii.

³⁹⁶ *ibid.*

poetry and poetry in performance or poetry for the page, stage and screen; on ideas of the experimental versus the mainstream; on my tendency towards long forms works and processes; on the pathway of a life and career that has been as much international as national; on humour; on sexuality; and so on, and so on. (Some of these points could also be woven back into discussions of spirituality.) Numerous other artists whose work I have cherished could have been mentioned, in relation to the main focus of this essay or other concerns - from poets Tadeusz Rozewicz³⁹⁸ and Zbigniew Herbert to fiction writer Jorge Luis Borges and essayist George Steiner, from painters Sandro Botticelli, Piero della Francesca, Edvard Munch, Franz Marc to physical film pioneers Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, from choreographers Twyla Tharp, Juri Kylian, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane to composers Ludwig van Beethoven and Henry Purcell to songwriters David Byrne, David Bowie and Paul Simon, from filmmakers David Lean, David Lynch, Ingmar Bergman and Elia Kazan to dance film pioneers Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, and Maya Deren to poet/filmmaker/artist Jean Cocteau³⁹⁹ to artist/filmmaker Tracey Moffatt. The list goes on.

Equally, it would be inaccurate if it appeared that I was making for myself any special claims as a spiritual or enlightened or 'holier-than-thou' being. Quite simply, in this essay I have tried to chart a major stream of thinking which can be identified as having been a fundamental inspiration on my past work and which is an area I am keenly interested to pursue further into the future. Beyond that I claim nothing more. What is

³⁹⁷ Quoted *ibid.*

³⁹⁸ Since he may be the least well known on this list, I must at least acknowledge the liberating and invigorating influence of the pared down, witty, and direct, yet luminously profound and honest poetry of Tadeusz Rozewicz. See his *Selected Poems*, translated by Adam Czerniawski, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Baltimore, Ringwood, Markham, Auckland, 1976.

³⁹⁹ While there would be thoughts to offer about my experiences with the work of all of these artists, in the particular context of this essay, it should be noted that Jean Cocteau provided a key inspiration in the multi- and cross-artform aspect of my artistic 'pathway'. As Louis D. Giannetti notes in his *Understanding Movies*: "Perhaps the greatest of all surrealist filmmakers was Jean Cocteau...an extraordinarily gifted man, Cocteau also distinguished himself as a painter, poet, critic, dramatist, and novelist. He didn't neatly compartmentalize his various activities: to him, all artists were "poets", whether they wrote with words, sounds, or images. Never one to disparage one art form in favor of another, Cocteau felt that each form of poetic expression had its specialty, the film poet, for example, simply wrote with the ink of light." Louis D. Giannetti, *Understanding Movies*, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 2nd edition, 1976, p 394-395. (This was what I originally read. Interestingly, in the fourth edition, in 1987, Giannetti replaces

noteworthy and can be observed about the creative works that are submitted as part of this DCA in particular is that, while they may all show signs of some or all those other ideas and approaches mentioned above (and probably others still), they are all, each in their own way, progressively more concerned with the spirit, with the themes and aims of achieving a state of *jivanmukti*.

In the next and then the final section of this essay, to borrow Eliot's famous phrase from *Four Quartets*, we will "end...where we start from" and perhaps even "know the place for the first time"⁴⁰⁰.

Brahman

At the beginning of this discussion, I wrote that I would examine how spiritual philosophy, in particular ideas drawn from my practice and reading of Yoga, has informed my recent body of creative artistic works. To paraphrase my poem quoted earlier, *Epitaph for the Western Intelligentsia*, 'what I come round to in the end is that': 'I-AM' formless 'Self', beyond time, space or individual identity. That this 'I' manifests in my small 's' everyday 'self', but (in terms of this particular manifestation) it is especially in my artworks that this universal consciousness can 'play in the fields of form'.

It may even be that in this way it can experience consciousness of itself. Or as it says in *The Kamikaze Mind*:

Life We do not breath the air, the air breathes us, taking time in this
body and then that, endlessly, like a breeze wafting over a field of
candles.⁴⁰¹

"Perhaps the greatest" with "One of the greatest", and "an extraordinarily gifted man", with "a gifted man", pp. 344-345.)

This would correspond to traditional Hindu concepts including the answer to the fundamental question of why the universe exists. As Collinson, Plant and Wilkinson put it: “Why did the one manifest itself as the many? Why did the eternal become temporal, the infinite become finite, the immutable become mutable?”⁴⁰² To find the classic Hindu answer they go back to the second century BCE to Badarayana, who systematised “one of the world’s greatest and most seminal philosophical works”, the *Upanisads*, which had begun to be composed in the eighth or seventh century BCE⁴⁰³ In his *Brahma Sutra*, Badarayana began with “the most important insight of the Vedic tradition”⁴⁰⁴:

that reality is not the ordinary world of everyday experience, the world of individuals causally related in space and time, the world of relentless mutability that is *samsara*, but instead a perfect, changeless, eternal oneness or absolute, Brahman, from which everything...arises.⁴⁰⁵

This then raised the question of “a motive for Brahman’s bringing forth the universe”:

Brahman has no unsatisfied longings, is perfect and therefore lacks nothing. Why does the universe come about at all? The answer begins from the assertion that...the nature of Brahman...is bliss (*ananda*)...The

⁴⁰⁰ Eliot, “Little Gidding”, *Four Quartets*, in *The Complete*, op. cit., p. 197.

⁴⁰¹ Allen, *The Kamikaze Mind*, op. cit., p. 68.

⁴⁰² Collinson, Plant and Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, op. cit., p. 143.

⁴⁰³ *ibid.*, pp. 64, 67.

⁴⁰⁴ The Vedic tradition: The collection of hymns known as the *Vedas* are the first written evidence of an oral tradition with its roots in second millennium *richis* or seers (see *ibid.*, p. 63). “There are four Vedas: *Rig*; *Yajur*; *Sama*, and *Atharva*. The composition of the 1,017 hymns of the *Rig Veda* probably began around 1200 BC and went on for some time, perhaps centuries. The word ‘Veda’ comes from the S[anskrit]: *vid* = knowledge: the Vedas are ‘sacred knowledge’” (*ibid.*, p. 67). The *Upanisads*, “the hidden, or secret, teachings, were added to the hymns and rituals of the Veda, and the Vedanta doctrine is an exegesis of the *Upanisads*” (*ibid.*, p. 125). Badarayana drew together the insights of the *Upanisads* into a philosophical system in his *Brahma Sutra* (see *ibid.*, p. 87). There followed three main schools of interpretation of the Vedic tradition (see p. 125) – Advaita (nondualistic), represented by Sankara (see *ibid.*, pp. 120-125), Visistadvaita (qualified nondualism), represented by Ramanuja (see *ibid.*, pp. 126-132), and Dvaita (dualism), represented by Madhva (see *ibid.*, pp. 132-140). See Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *The Vedas : essays in translation and exegesis*, Prologos Books, Beckenham, 1976; Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, (selector, translator, annotator), *The Rig Veda: an anthology: one hundred and eight hymns*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, New York, 1981; and Badarayana, *The Brahma Sutra*, edited and translated by Sarvepalli Radharkrishnan, Allen and Unwin, London, 1960; Allen and Unwin, New York, 1968.

⁴⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 89.

coming into being of the universe is the spontaneous outpouring of this bliss. The closest approximation to this in human terms is play or sport (*lila*).⁴⁰⁶

Twenty-two centuries later, the 20th century yogi and spiritual philosopher Sri Aurobindo⁴⁰⁷ concurred with this traditional Indian answer:

If, then, being free to move or remain eternally still, to throw itself into forms or retain the potentiality of form in itself, it indulges its power of movement and formation, it can only be for one reason, delight (*ananda*)...Brahman delights in realising the infinity of possibilities inherent in its nature.⁴⁰⁸

A body of creative work that reflected the infinity of possibilities in Brahman's nature would have to be extraordinarily various, multi-layered, multidimensional, extend across the entire spectrum of emotional, psychological and spiritual experience, and be animated by paradox. Or in Eliot's terms: it would have to be broadly spiritual rather than narrowly religious, "[expressing] everything in the way of emotion, between depravity's despair and the beatific vision, that man is capable of experiencing". In Tarkovsky's terms: it would have to "unite within itself dialectically contradictory phenomena". In Doniger's terms: it would be "boundlessly various,...[with] everything [occurring] simultaneously,...all possibilities exist[ing] without excluding each other... The conflict...resolved not in a static [manner]...but rather...[in] constant motion of the pendulum, whose animated force is...paradox".

⁴⁰⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁷ For a brief introduction to Aurobindo Ghose or Sri Aurobindo, as he was known, and his "Integral Yoga", see Feuerstein, *The Shambhala Encyclopedia of Yoga*, op. cit., pp. 43-44. For a more in depth discussion, see Collinson, Plant and Wilkinson, *Fifty Eastern Thinkers*, op. cit., pp. 158-167.

⁴⁰⁸ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Volume 1 of Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 30 Volumes, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1970-1972, pp. 91, 110, quoted and/or paraphrased in *ibid.*, p. 160.

If, as Collinson, Plant and Wilkinson describe Radhakrishnan's metaphysics of art:

The artist is akin to the mystic and the seer: the beauty manifested in art is the beauty of reality revealed, not a confection invented by the artist's imagination...[And] the intuition involved in artistic creativity...is a pale reflection of the ultimate form of this experience, mystical union or direct apprehension of Brahman.⁴⁰⁹

Then I hope that the creative art works that 'i' have made may be a few pale drops in that playful ocean.

The Way Out: a Play and a Dream

In Vedic terms, life itself, in the end, is an entertainment, an art, or as Shakespeare put it in *The Tempest*, a "revel"⁴¹⁰. One might say Brahman's revel. If the universe is Brahman's artwork, then the artist must be both part of the paint and part of the brush. How to manifest this paradox? What I am trying to achieve in my own art and life is for this to be a conscious play, a dialectical play, a 'self-' and 'Self-'conscious play, a play of 'self' and 'Self', a dialectic of 'i' and 'I-AM'. To be conscious that, to adapt slightly the words of Ram Dass, "Who [I am] is both a worldly entity on the physical, astral and

⁴⁰⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 173, 174.

⁴¹⁰ Prospero in Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act IV, Scene I, *The Complete Works*, op. cit., p. 1154:

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

causal plane, and also living spirit.” And in this subtle play to “[start] to give credence to the living spirit...[to start] to give credence to the Brahman in [my] daily life”⁴¹¹ and in my work as a creative artist. Or to slightly adapt Professor D.S. Kathari’s words, as recalled by Vatsyayan: to [live] by the perennial consciousness that [one] is one amongst all the particles of nature, and...also [be] conscious of the probability and the possibility that [one] can be *Brahman*.⁴¹²

⁴¹¹ Ram Das, “Sacrifice”, *The Yogas of the Bhagavad-Gita*, op. cit. His actual words were: “Who you are is both a worldly entity on the physical, astral and causal plane, and also living spirit. It is starting to give credence to the living spirit, it is starting to give credence to the Brahman in your daily life.”

⁴¹² Kapila Vatsyayan, “Preface” to *Prakti: The Integral Vision, Volume 1: Primal Elements – The Oral Tradition*, edited by Baidyanath Saraswati, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi, and D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd., New Delhi, 1995, p. xv. This volume “focuses attention on the cosmological myths prevalent in cohesive societies which are articulated not as theory but are manifested in lifestyle, ritual practice, medical systems, art forms, music, dance and in the craft tradition” (ibid., p. xiii). In the original text Vatsyayan recalls the speech that the “scientist and mystic” gave in inaugurating this series of seminars, a larger excerpt of which I believe is worth quoting in this context:

Professor Kothari continued to remind us that the material component of the universe is always changing from moment to moment, body to body, the macrocosm to the microcosm, and yet there is something which remains constant. What is that something? He continued, is it not logical that “I am more than the assembly of the parts and the moment I am more than the assembly of the parts, the implications are clear?” I am part *ananta* and infinity, and infinity and a continuity despite every moment of flux and change. Consciousness is the eternity and the immutable, he said...Time has now come...when science has to be spiritualized, just as the ritual of the indigenous people has been spiritualized so as to sacralize nature. Science and the perceptions at the level of textual traditions, the metaphysics and the arts and those lived by cohesive communities must converge. Science, he said, has arrived at the dictum that the velocity of light is absolute...modern science is linking physical matter with consciousness...Such questions can only be asked in a spirit of humility, modesty and with an openness of mind where the barriers of disciplines and cultures, ideologies and positions are transcended. The symbiosis of knowledge, vision and values alone can bring about a consciousness of the wholeness. How can this happen? It can happen with a sense of feeling, *bhavana*, of reflection and meditation. All this is possible only if man lives by the perennial consciousness that he is one amongst all particles of nature, and is also conscious of the probability and possibility that he can be *Brahman* (ibid., pp. xiv-xv).

To conclude: This essay, “Out of the Labyrinth of the Mind: Manifesting a Spiritual Art Beyond Dualism”, has been an attempt to identify some of the personal, literary and philosophical sources of my artistic inspiration in spiritual ideas. It has shown how the five artistic works that make up the raft of my Doctorate of Creative Arts each in its own way engage with these perennial and to my way of thinking still sharply present philosophies. Each work represents ‘play’ of universal energies ‘in the fields of form’. Each requires or depicts a ‘letting go’ into paradox beyond dualistic mental structures. Each exists in an ‘undecideable’ kind of double life, and draws its audience into constructing a *Jivanmukti*-like dual awareness, facilitating ‘an experience of eternity through the vicissitudes of mortality’. But, ironically, in this very way, as befitting a labyrinth of paradoxes, as much as each piece is a kind of spiritual work, it is also a kind of anti-spiritual work. As each represents a step on the challenging pathway towards enlightenment - a striving toward the condition of being a form of Yoga, a release of personal identity into identitilessness, each also embodies the struggles of the ego identity – its resistances to being subsumed into the universal consciousness, and the many tricks the mind plays, from charm to delusion to desire to fear to violence, to distract us from this path. As I indicated at the beginning, this paradox may be one of the ways in which it is possible to describe these works as art works, as opposed to textbooks of spiritual philosophy. Or rather, this paradox shows how the works exist between the Western definition of an art work and an Eastern definition. They both explore our humanity and act as pathways to ‘God’.

One of many pathways through *The Kamikaze Mind* might be useful in this context, as well as illustrating how one might try to circumnavigate the labyrinth of that text in order to transcend it. The ‘search’ was for ‘God’:

Everywhere As a child I was told that God was everywhere. I used to look for him at K-mart.⁴¹³

⁴¹³ Allen, *The Kamikaze Mind*, op. cit., p. 38.

Edge “You’ll find God at the edge of your personality, just as the night is at the edge of the day, in the private invisible world of good and evil.”
Is that where you come from? I ask.⁴¹⁴

Faith I don’t believe in God, but maybe God believes in me.⁴¹⁵

Irony You know what I think? I tell you. God created man because he was lonely, man created God because he was lonely.⁴¹⁶

Decibels Nothing is louder than the silence out of which the universe came and into which it will go, the silence underneath time, the silence we call God.⁴¹⁷

Maze You tell me that I am a pathway to God and a distraction from God. But isn’t that a paradox? I ask you. “It is the paradox,” you reply.⁴¹⁸

Misguided I wrote this to help God, then I realised there wasn’t a God and then I realised there wasn’t a me, and then I got really lost.⁴¹⁹

God God is the most beautiful idea we’ve had in quite some time.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 73.

⁴¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 76.

⁴²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 47.

Beauty “You human beings do not always understand,” you start to speak, “that beauty is not something you possess, but something that possesses you. It is an attribute of God you must look after and pass on.”⁴²¹

Hysterical God gave me a dolphin I couldn’t refuse.⁴²²

As this meditation on my spiritual and artistic path began by recalling in *Siddhartha* a plea from one who was lost to one who had found their way, and as my way out of the labyrinth of the mind was initiated not by a theory or a theology but by a work of art, so I hope that my art works may, in some small way, inspire others on a journey to a deeper awareness of the full, complex, and ambiguous nature of their identity as human and spiritual beings.

Om

Shantih Shantih Shantih

⁴²¹ *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴²² *ibid.*, p. 54.

Appendix A:

Richard James Allen:
List of Creative Arts Works,
1979-2004

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BOOKS: POETRY

AND PERFORMANCE TEXTS

1999 THURSDAY'S FICTIONS

Writer

Five Islands Press, Wollongong.

"[Thursday's Fictions'] big moral/metaphysical 'week' is a true achievement...what I admire is the stamina, the clarity of soul, the willingness to ask hard questions. This is the kind of poetry Alec Hope was (or should have been) looking for when he lamented the decline of the 'discursive mode'. It's utterly different, I'm glad to say, from all those little OZ poems about a sensitive bloke walking out one morning and seeing the light shimmer on farmyard dams."

Chris Wallace-Crabbe, University of Melbourne

"What is most immediately remarkable about the book is its stylistic range: Allen employs a variety of formal models, including stream-of-consciousness soliloquy, dramatic dialogue, as well as free verse and prose-poetry, with equal assurance and sophistication."

John Hawke, University of Wollongong

"[*The Way Out At Last Cycle*] could become the greatest symbolist poem in Australian literature."

David Gilbey, Charles Sturt University

Shortlisted for the 2000 NSW Premier's Literary Awards for Poetry, the Kenneth Slessor Prize.

"In *Thursday's Fictions* Allen is both playful and satirical, defiant and seductive, as he experiments with the possibilities of poetry as performance, utterance and text. The book combines highly contemporary inflexions of language with ancient and classical modes of writing, creating an extended dialogue of self and soul."

The Judges for Poetry, NSW Premier's Literary Awards

**1999 PERFORMING THE UNNAMEABLE:
AN ANTHOLOGY OF AUSTRALIAN PERFORMANCE TEXTS**

Co-Editor

Currency Press and RealTime, Sydney.

"This is a remarkable achievement showing how performance can be a platform for new ways of writing and an area of literary invention and achievement. Challenging, rewarding, confronting but essential reading. Make sure you buy and read *Performing the Unnameable*."

Bill Simon, *Metaphor*

"*RealTime 28* celebrates a major event in arts publishing: the first collection of Australian performance texts...*Performing the Unnameable* pays homage to some 2 decades of significant and innovative engagements between performers and the idea of theatre that have yielded an open-ended form often simply called performance. These works radically juxtapose a range of media, they evolve collaboratively, incorporate audiences into performances and...test the limits of the word...a rich repository of the ways that performance texts work"

Keith Gallasch, Editorial, *RealTime*

"A first in Australian publishing history and a priceless resource."

Edward Scheer, *Heat*

1996 NEW LIFE ON THE 2ND FLOOR

Co-Writer

A Tasdance publication, Launceston.

"The poems were powerful...Unlike anything I have read before which pertains to dance...powerful...a treasure."

Lisa Catherine Ehrich, *Social Alternatives*

1995 THE AIR DOLPHIN BRIGADE

Writer

Paper Bark Press, Brooklyn, and Shoestring Press, Nottingham, in association with Tasdance, Launceston.

"Confrontational, concretely philosophical, a blend of the spiritual, the physical and hardnosed contemporaneity, [the poems] push against concepts of mortality and eternity, against life and art bogged down in time and the constrictions of ignorance...Allen's voice demands to be heard through its lucidity, its passion and the concepts which 'spring fully-stripped/from the head like tigers'.

Lynette Kirby, *Australian Book Review*

"Allen's poetry challenges, leaps from one idea to another, plunges from air to earth, air to water in a heady mix of metaphor and image."

Sally Clarke, *Brolga*

1995 WHAT TO NAME YOUR BABY

Writer

Paper Bark Press, Brooklyn, in association with Tasdance, Launceston.

"Allen's poetry leaps from one mountain peak of ideas to another."

Jeremy Eccles, *The Sydney Review*

1993 HOPE FOR A MAN NAMED JIMMIE & GRAND ILLUSION JOE**Writer**

Five Islands Press, Wollongong.

“Richard Allen’s poetry does what I am always hoping John Ashbery’s will do but never does: gives you enough clear meaning to hang on to to prevent you becoming scared or bored. If Ashbery is ‘seamless nonsense’ ...then Allen is seamy sense...a readable mosaic containing beauty, wisdom and humour...an admirable feat.”

Dennis Nicholson, *Mattoid*

“Some books make me want to weep. Others make me want to sing. *Hope for a man named Jimmie and Grand Illusion Joe* made me want to tap dance on the top of trees...not for anyone suffering from vertigo or poets who cling to rails of traditional verse.”

Kathy Kituai, *Muse*

“I recommend this book for its intelligence, adventure and sense of play. It is gratifying to find work that is unafraid to stir the pot.”

Mark Reid, *FAR***1989 TO THE OCEAN & SCHEHERAZADE****Writer**

Hale & Iremonger, Sydney.

“A fecund and fluent metafictional *bricolage*.”

Southerly

“An urban romantic with the ability to mine ‘the runaway horse of memory’ for images.”

Penelope Nelson, *The Weekend Australian*

“Surreal, allusive, dramatic, full of energy...A damn good poet.”

Ron Pretty, *Scarp***1986 THE WAY OUT AT LAST & OTHER POEMS****Writer**

Hale & Iremonger, Sydney.

“Witty...urban poetry, immediate and demanding.”

Rosemary O’Grady, *Adelaide Advertiser*

“Richard Allen is at once both contemporary and accessible. He is darkly honest in his reactions to the conditions of the present world and his feelings about it, yet he remains unwilling to let go of his search to construct meaning from it.”

Nancy Jack Todd, *Annals of Earth*



FILM AND VIDEO WORKS

2004 THURSDAY'S FICTIONS

Writer, Director, Choreographer, Performer

A Physical TV Company Production.

Currently in postproduction. This fantastical feature film, which uses drama and dance to tell the story of a woman who tries to cheat the cycle of reincarnation, is based Richard James Allen's NSW Premier's Literary Award-nominated book of the same title, and features a cast of twenty-seven performers.

2004 REALISTIC (approx. 3 minutes)

Writer, Co-Director, Choreographer

A Physical TV Company Production in collaboration with Abigail Portwin, assisted by Reeldance/One Extra Company.

Currently in postproduction. A short film about faith.

2004 TOGETHER (8.30 minutes)

Co-Writer, Co-Executive Producer

A More Sauce, Danielle Kelly, Physical TV Company, Madeleine Hetherington Production.

A man enters a house and is confronted by a series of memories of events from the past. *Together* is a film about the things we leave behind. Staring Rowan Marchingo and Alexandra Harrison from internationally acclaimed Australian physical theatre company Legs on the Wall.

Shortlisted for the forthcoming 2004 ReelDance Awards for Australian & New Zealand Dance Film & Video.

2003 DOWN TIME JAZZ (11.38 minutes)

Producer, Co-Writer, Co-Choreographer, Performer

A Physical TV Company Production.

A delightful and infectious animated dance film, *Down Time Jazz* is a ferris wheel ride through family life from the point of view of the second child who must save the rest of her family from itself.

Down Time Jazz was a Preselection Finalist for a 2003 ATOM Award in the Best General Experimental Category.

2002 WHAT I DID ON MY NERVOUS BREAKDOWN (1.55 minutes)**Writer, Choreographer, Performer**

A Physical TV Company Production.

An edgy mix of text and dance, and a lateral look at the usual start of term school report on fun activities during the break(down).

Winner, People's Choice Award, 2002 Australian Poetry Festival.

2002 NO SURRENDER (12 minutes)**Writer, Director, Choreographer, Producer**

A Physical TV Production in association with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

No Surrender tells the story of a young Indigenous woman who is invaded, terrorised and physically attacked by an unseen intruder wielding a camera. As she nears the point of surrender, the woman's spirit separates from her body and, through the language of dance and spiritual movement, she finds the strength to fight back and overcome her attacker.

No Surrender won Best Experimental Film at the 2002 Annual ATOM Awards for Film, Television, Radio & Multimedia in Melbourne; Best Music for a Short Film in the 2002 APRA-Australian Guild of Screen Composers Screen Music Awards; and a Gold Medal for Excellence: Audience Favorite at the Awards for Best Impact of Music in Independent Film - Short Films, 2004 Park City Music Festival, Utah. It was Highly Commended by the Australian Cinematographers' Society and Shortlisted for Best Sound Design at the Australian Screen Sound Guild Awards - both in the Short Film category. It was Shortlisted for the 2002 ReelDance Awards and a Finalist for the Short Trips @ The Melbourne Fringe 2002 Best Film Award.

"A powerful partnership of performance and screen techniques...a memorable short film."

Jill Sykes, *The Sydney Morning Herald*

"*No Surrender* points the way to the possibilities that abound when collaboration occurs across forms and new technologies are integrated into the totality of the vision."

Hunter Cordaiy, *RealTime/New Media Scan 2002: film*

2001 RUBBERMAN ACCEPTS THE NOBEL PRIZE (6 minutes)**Co-Writer, Choreographer, Producer, Performer**

A Physical TV Production in association with the Australian Film Television and Radio School.

A superhero who speaks only the language of dance makes an outrageous, graceful and rambunctious physical acceptance speech.

Rubberman was shortlisted for Best Dance Film at the 2001 Australian Dance Awards and shortlisted for Best Short Film at Shepparton Shorts Short Film Festival in Victoria. It won the 2001 AFTRS Critic's Circle Award for Best Production Design for Kate E. Wills. It featured in *Dance, Camera, Action2*, Dennis Alexander's trailer for the 3rd Constellation Change Screen Dance Festival in London, which won the DPA Award in Germany for Best Editing in a promotional trailer.

"Part poetic manifesto, part movement piece, Rubberman also does karate in comic strip colours, KAPOW! style text harking back to the days of cheesy Batman stousses.

Warped screen effects and lightning zooms show that the Physical TV Company is easing with maturity into film, doing much more with it than merely recording performance. They also seem to be the only bunch attempting this sort of thing in

Australia, and doing it well." Christopher Strickland, *Independent Filmmaker*

2001 BREATHE (5 minutes)**Co-Producer, Script Consultant, Yoga Choreographer, Performer**

A Sattvic Production in association with The Physical TV Company.

In a dance film which contrasts yoga and fight choreography, violent thoughts interrupt a search for tranquility.

2000 A DANCER DROPS OUT OF THE SKY (1:40 minutes)**Co-Producer, Co-Choreographer, Performer**

A Physical TV Production.

In *A Dancer Drops Out of the Sky* digitally generated choreography allows our hero to slide from Italy via Sydney to Poland and back to the clouds in one extended phrase.

A Dancer Drops Out of the Sky was a Finalist for Best Original Music for an Animation at the Australian Screen Composer's Guild for composer Amanda Brown, and a Quarter-Finalist for Animation at the Moondance International Festival in Boulder, Colorado. It was included in DISCulture, a compilation DVD celebrating the creativity of Australian independent film makers and audio video creators in 2002.

1997 THE HOPE MACHINE (23:13 minutes)**Co-Director, Producer, Co-Choreographer, Writer,
Supervising Editor, Performer**

A Tasdance/Southern Cross Television Production.

The Hope Machine maps the elision between live work for the screen and screen work for the stage. The dancers glide between the 'black box' of the famous Theatre Royal in Hobart, the empty space of the ruined Church at the Port Arthur Historic Site, the four live screen spaces of 'The Hope Machine' created by Australian visual artist Simeon Nelson, and the multiple screens created by the directors in filming and post production. Backstage, on stage, on set, on camera, in the stream of technology. Hope, pain, fear, exultation. *The Hope Machine* is a very contemporary look at the subject of hope with a techno pop edge and a worldly point of view.

"The understanding and patience at times required...to accept such a new innovative style of production and editing has been extremely beneficial and all involved have broadened their skills from the experience."

Ren Middleton, Operations Manager, Southern Cross Television

1997 13 ACTS OF UNFULFILLED LOVE (19:05 minutes)**Producer, Co-Choreographer, Writer, Co-Editor, Performer**

A Tasdance/Southern Cross Television Production.

One man's journey through the memories, hopes, dreams and projections of what his emotional life has been or might have been. Through these 13 different dance duets with a range of tonalities, details, innuendos and revelations (and of course 13 is a rather unlucky number) we see the high points, the low points, the sublime and the deeply painful, the confronting, and the just plain silly moments from different relationships he has had or might have had, or wished he'd had.

"In recording the poetry...[we were] plagued with technical problems in the studio...I was aware of Karen and Richard's refusal to compromise or accept second-best. Particularly in the second session, Richard demonstrated a meticulousness and precision in directing me in order to obtain the particular nuances he wanted from the words. For an actor, this was a challenging and satisfying experience."

Michael Edgar, Actor, Lecturer in Drama, University of Tasmania
 Winner, Artistic Director's Choice Award, Bathurst Film Festival, 1997. "Their mixture of video and dance arts is perfectly spliced together to form a unique, fresh and exciting visual experience which can only be described as masterful!" Geoff Clifton, Artistic Director
 Winner, Best Choreography, Special Sidebar Award, Sydney New Video and Film Awards, 1997.
 Finalist, Best Cinematography, Sydney New Video and Film Awards, 1997.

1997 THE FRIGHTENING OF ANGELS (41:23 minutes)**Director, Choreographer, Producer, Writer, Supervising Editor**

A Tasdance/Southern Cross Television Production

A video dance about pain and suffering and the ability of the human spirit to overcome despair. The soundtrack which alternates a rain of explosions with music by Beethoven emphasises the beauty, glory and power of the possibilities of human creation.

"Very well produced, with striking cinematography."

Cynthia Mann, Australian Film Institute

"It is very tasteful, watchable and disturbing at the same time."

Geoff Clifton, Director, Bathurst Film Festival, *Central Western Daily*

1997 3 DOCUMENTARIES ON DANCE (approximately 5-6 minutes each)**Producer, Co-Choreographer, Performer**

A Tasdance/Southern Cross Television Production

Interviews and discussions about the work with the directors, choreographers and dancers of the *New Life on the 2nd Floor* trilogy: *The Frightening Of Angels*, *13 Acts Of Unfulfilled Love*, and *The Hope Machine*.

1996 WHAT IS VIDEO DANCE? (11:25 minutes)**Co-Director, Producer, Co-Choreographer, Performer**

A Tasdance/Southern Cross Television Production

Interviews with the directors, choreographers and dancers introducing the art form of dance made for the screen. Discussion of camera angles, editing, locations; the difference between working live and for film and television; with examples from previous video dances by Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman.

1996 SAM IN A PRAM (18:10 minutes)**Co-Director, Producer, Co-Choreographer, Co-Editor, Performer**

A Tasdance/Southern Cross Television Production

Sam remembers wild childhood adventures with his uncles and aunts 'riding roughshod around the corners of the sky'. *Sam in a Pram* is a light-hearted sequel to the much loved *What To Name Your Baby*, featuring six exuberant dancers whipping around the cavernously industrial Inveresk Railyards in Tasmania. The rough and tumble movement vocabulary references Mad Max films and Keystone Cops comedy and then stretches these references into highly articulate and astoundingly fast-paced, fully extended, electrically crackling dancing.

"I know I, with other invited guests, were captivated by your artistic interpretation and movement and I eagerly look forward to future presentations."

David Heath, Manager, Village Launceston

1995 WHAT TO NAME YOUR BABY (12:45 minutes)**Writer, Co-Choreographer, Associate Producer, Performer,
with responsibility for direction of performers,
consultation with director of photography,
and overseeing of editing.**

An SBS-TV Production in association with That Was Fast.

A video dance of exaggeration about the joys and terrors of expectant parents as they contemplate the arrival of their first baby. The locations and speed capture the manic energy of the hyper-expectant father and preserve a glimpse of a magical moment in the delighted dancing of the nine months pregnant Karen Pearlman.

"Ms Pearlman, many months pregnant, dances as if she's carrying a soufflé; Mr. Allen provides the poetic narrative about the angst of having a baby."

Dulcie Leimbach, *The New York Times*

"A sweet-natured and witty look at the pre-parental state."

Danielle Wood, *The Mercury*

1993 BLUE CITIES (8 minutes)**Writer, Co-Choreographer, Associate Producer, Performer**

An ABC-TV Production in association with That Was Fast.

A Party Girl and an Angel meet on the border of heaven. "*Blue Cities* is an encounter between a gently bureaucratic border angel and a woman caught in limbo between death and heaven" (*The Village Voice*, New York City). She has a lot of questions for him and he for her: "What message do you want to leave for eternity? State your name and number clearly at the sound of the beep." *Blue Cities* combines text ("urban poetry, immediate and demanding", *Adelaide Advertiser*), with dance ("exhilarating", *The Sydney Morning Herald*) and chroma key/blue screen technology in a cinematic blend that "touchingly evoked the uncertainties of fallible human beings when confronted with by eternal mysteries" (*The New York Times*).

1992 DO FOR YOU (4:30 minutes)**Co-Choreographer, Co-Acting Coach, Co-Supervisor of Editing**

A World's End Film Production for EMI Records.

A music video for the band Euphoria, featuring a girl dancing on top of a TV, a dinning table, a piano and in a bath.

1991 MISTAKES OF HEAVEN (12:25 minutes)**Director, Writer, Camera, Choreographer, Co-Producer, Co-Editor**

A That Was Fast Production in association with the New School for Social Research.

Mistakes of Heaven is a poetic/expressionistic film, which shows a man's progress upward from one stage of hell to the next. It is an experimentally expressed narrative – told in images and movement – of a man tangled in dreams and ambitions which are at once uplifting, mystifying and humbling. *Mistakes of Heaven* is a humanistic vision of a man who discovers his empathy for others and thus gains some ascent from his own misery.

"All surreal imagery and no words...a poem in visuals."

Deborah Jowitt, *The Village Voice***1987 INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER:****OVER TEN MILLION COPIES SOLD**

(approximately 20 minutes)

Co-Director, Writer, Co-Choreographer, Producer, Co-Editor

A That Was Fast Production.

A video dance about quixotic small town characters.

1986 WHITE (12 minutes)**Director, Writer, Co-Choreographer, Co-Producer**

A That Was Fast Production commissioned by the New England Computer Arts Association

A computer generated dance film projected as the backdrop to a multi-media performance. A collaboration with award-winning New York video artist Irit Bastry, famed Princeton University computer composer pioneer Paul Lansky, and Obie-award winning actor and Artistic Director of The Talking Band Paul Zimet.

"Painterly black and white video of shifting forms."

Deborah Jowitt, *The Village Voice*

1986 THINK TOO MUCH (17 minutes)**Co-Director, Co-Producer, Writer, Co-Choreographer, Co-Editor**

A That Was Fast Production.

Two dancers go through the ringer of twentieth century referentiality.

1985 THE WAY OUT AT LAST & OTHER WORK (approximately 1 hour)**Director, Writer, Co-Producer, Co-Editor, Co-Choreographer, Performer**

A That Was Fast Production.

One of the first in a now popular form: the video poem. Plus documentary material and examples of collaborations in dance and film in Richard James Allen's first year in New York City, including *America*, *Information*, *Vermilyean Rushes* and *The Way Out At Last*.

"A journey into the unconscious. Both verbal and visual images swirl and fade in this experiment with video as an artistic medium. Mr. Allen is a talented, award-winning young poet. His imagery and the cadence of his many phrases are haunting."

Nancy Jack Todd, *The Falmouth Enterprise*

1979 AMOOORE**Co-Divisor, Performer**

A group devised Super 8 Film shot and produced *The Tin Sheds* at University of Sydney, under the supervision of Pam Brown.

A man falls in love, goes mad and shoots himself!



PLAYS AND DANCE PLAYS

Written by Richard James Allen

Directed and Choreographed by
Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman
(except at noted)

2000 MORE LIES

A Sydney Writers Festival presentation.

A shapeshifting monologue performed by Christopher Snow, directed by Richard James Allen.

Shortlisted for the 2001 Griffin Award for New Australian Playwriting.

1995 THURSDAY'S FICTIONS

A Tasdance Production. Co-Director: Don Mamouney.

A hybrid arts production of an epic poetic script which involved collaborations with five other primary artists, direction of six dancers and one actor (Michael Edgar, formerly a member of Laurence Olivier's company), and overseeing of work by approximately 30 other artistic contributors to the project.

"What a fascinating, challenging, thoughtful, exciting and confrontingly entertaining piece of creativity this unusual presentation is...The story is told through a mind-blowing mix of dance, drama, performance poetry, a radio play and music – all exquisitely dressed, simply but powerfully set, and masterfully lit...Underpinning everything is the rich poetry of Richard James Allen's text with its storm of ideas...an unforgettable night."

Wal Eastman, *The Mercury*

1995 SUNDAY AT THE ABORTION STATION

A Tasdance/ABC Radio 7NT Production premiered on City Park Radio, Launceston, and also played at interval during the production of THURSDAY'S FICTIONS in 1995. Co-Director: Don Mamouney.

A radio play for 16 actors about a woman who takes over a radio station in a terrorist style attack.

1993 BLUE CITIES

A That Was Fast Production commissioned by Colloquium Contemporary Dance Company, NYC, and premiered at the Cunningham Studio, 1992. Full production premiered at Sidetrack Theatre, Sydney, in 1993. A Tasdance Production with expanded six performer cast premiered at The Earl Arts Centre, Launceston, Tasmania in 1995.

A murderer meets an angel on the border of heaven in this 'dance play' which combines a full play script with a full collaborative choreographic production.

"Witty, provocative, accessible."

Jeremy Eccles, *The Sydney Review*

"This highly literary, stimulating and energetic blend of dance and theatre...communicates in mixed media with unequivocal clarity."

Larry Ruffell, *The Canberra Times*

1992 IF WAR WERE A DANCE

A Dance North Commission for a Dance North and Tropic Line Theatre Company Production, premiered at Townsville Civic Theatre, Townsville, Queensland, 1992. A play and a dance for six actors (including Anthony Weigh) and seven dancers commissioned to mark the 50th anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea off Northern Queensland.

A woman who returns for the 50th anniversary commemoration of the Battle of the Coral Sea is visited by the spirit of her former lover, a fighter pilot lost at sea.

"Immensely moving."

Colin Campbell, *Dance Australia*

"A North Queensland treasure."

Heather Harvey, *The Cairns Post*

1991 GRAND ILLUSION JOE

A That Was Fast Production presented off off Broadway by Downtown Art Co., New York City. A three act play written and directed by Richard James Allen, starring Obie-Award winning actor Tom Caylor and the star of *The Strange Case of Balthazar Hippolite* George McGrath.

A murderous character happens back to the house of his author. Only one of them is going to get out alive.

"Original and compelling...the exciting sense of newness afoot."

Phyllis Fahrie Edelson, *Antipodes* (USA)

1989 THE CHARLIE STORIES

A That Was Fast Production commissioned by the Whitney Museum of American Art at Equitable Center, New York City.

"*The Charlie Stories* chronicles the life of an individual who searches out sensation through immersion in the lower depths....an existential examination of the fragility of civilization."

Suzanne Carbonneau Levy, *The Washington Post*

"*The Charlie Stories* are odd, idiosyncratic and yet spot-on for our times...superb and beautiful dance allied to a restless intellectual poesy."

Mary Brennan, *The Glasgow Herald*

1984 HIGH TENSION AND PASSION (HOOGSPANNING EN HARTSTOCHT)

A KISS International Theatre Research Group/De Voorziening Co-Production in Groningen, Holland. Richard James Allen the director and choreographer of two major set piece scenes, and co-writer of complete project.

An enormous production set in and around a moving train over 40 km, with a time travel script, seven or eight stops and 200 participating performers and technicians.



TEXT/DANCE/PERFORMANCE WORKS

Written by Richard James Allen

Directed and Choreographed by
Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman

THAT WAS FAST OR T ASDANCE Productions ~ (except at noted)

2002 RUBBERMAN'S DICTIONARY

"Richard James Allen is Australia's most successful performance poet - having achieved high artistic recognition in all three fields of performance poet, performance and poetry. In performance poetry Richard has made a unique contribution through his integration of the live performance of poetry with dance and yoga in a number of significant works."

Nick Sykes, Secretary of the Poets Union Inc., 1995-1998,
and author of "Manifesto for an Australian Oral Poetry".

2001 ARMISTICE

2000 THE RELIC

"The ultimate performance poem."

An Audience Member, Friend in Hand Hotel, Glebe, Sydney.

1996 NEW LIFE ON THE 2ND FLOOR:

THE FRIGHTENING OF ANGELS

13 ACTS OF UNFULFILLED LOVE

THE HOPE MACHINE

"The effect of the three pieces together is of seeing living beings choosing vibrancy and hope, having been exposed to a range of forces both life-giving and destructive."

Angela Rockell, *Real Time*

1994 WHAT TO NAME YOUR BABY, 1995 SAM IN A PRAM

"A multi-media funfest and think tank all rolled into one."

Jeff Hockley, *The Examiner*

"A whirlwind of magnificent dance...superbly choreographed."

The Advocate

1993 BRIDGE

"To craft the myriad jagged fragments of madness into a...mosaic containing beauty, wisdom and humour is an admirable feat."

Dennis Nicholson, *Mattoid*

1992 REHEARSALS FOR HEAVEN

"Pearlman and Allen's work is utterly distinctive in its seamless and effortless intertwining of voice and dance...I was impressed with the ease with which Pearlman and Allen transformed a large group of students into an effective, collaborative team. The work combined everyday movements, dance and a range of vocal forms into an engaging experience for performers and audience. Pearlman and Allen are excellent teachers."

Keith Gallasch, Co-Director, Open City

1992 MORE SEX

"Thanks also for *Excerpts from the World*. It seems to me that you are engaged in a unique project and am looking forward to its further developments."

Don Mamouney, Artistic Director, Sidetrack Performance Group

1992 HOPE AND LUCK

"All concerned were intrigued and delighted at the idea of having on campus a cross-media dance company which brings to play theater, dance and poetry...We consider that your stay here amply fulfilled their high expectations. Your cross-media poetry reading of *Excerpts from the World*, your workshops, and your performance of *Blue Cities* were entertaining and thought-provoking events."

Henry S. Albinski, Director, Australian and New Zealand Studies Centre,
The Pennsylvania State University

1990 PLAN AHEAD

"As a study in madness, it's terrifying."

Deborah Jowitt, *The Village Voice*

1990 LUCK

"Text and movement slide more subtly apart in Luck...shadowy but beguiling."

Deborah Jowitt, *The Village Voice*

1988 HOTELS

"A wild romp."

Jack Anderson, *The New York Times*

1987 ON ARCHAEOLOGY: A DISCOURSE ON THEATRE

An Entr'Acte Theatre Production, premiered at The Performance Space, Sydney, 1987. Director: Nick Tsoutas. Richard James Allen: Contributor to script.

1987 INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER: OVER TEN MILLION COPIES SOLD

"Real harmony of poetry and dance without making either art imitate the other."

Jack Anderson, *The New York Times*

1987 ALPHABET x 2

"Stunning."

Paul Bloch, *Commonwealth Times*

"So ferociously watchable...their developing style...has an exhilaratingly wide reach, a willingness to juxtapose patterns and pace...in clever variety."

Mary Brennan, *Glasgow Herald*

1987 THE LAUGHING MOVIE

"The quirky choreography, as full of delightful non sequiturs as Mr. Allen's tantalizing poems, proposes a dizzying number of ideas and images that click into place for an instant, like a film run fast forward, or a kaleidoscope."

Susan F. Hunter, *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*

1986 WHITE

"Powerful images of love, torment, exhaustion and pain."

Marcia Urban, *The Coastline News*

1985 THINK TOO MUCH

"Exhilarating for its speed, energy and attack."

Jill Sykes, *The Sydney Morning Herald*

1985 AMERICA

"Moving...courageous...never flagged for an instant."

Nancy Jack Todd, *The Falmouth Enterprise*



Appendix B:

Richard James Allen:

List of Places Where Creative Arts Works Have Been Published, Screened, Performed, 1978-2003

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PUBLICATIONS

ANTHOLOGIES:

- *A Puddin' Rich And Rare*
- *An Anthology Of 20th Century Poetry In English (In Chinese Translation)*
- *Australian Poetry: Tradition and Challenge*
- *Billabong: An Anthology of Australian Poetry in English and Polish*
- *Ezra Pound In Memoriam,*
- *Family Ties: Australian Poems of the Family Poetry (Oxford University Press)*
- *From the Anabranch*
- *From Yellow Earth to Eucalypt*
- *Look What I've Written*
- *Made In Australia*
- *Messages in a Bottle*
- *Middle School Poetry*
- *Night in Sydney*
- *Of Human Beings and Chestnut Trees*
- *Performing the Unnameable: An Anthology of Australian Performance Texts*
- *Repenser les processus créateurs/Rethinking Creative Processes*
- *Revolutions*
- *Short Fuse: The Global Anthology of New Fusion Poetry*
- *Sunlines: An anthology of poetry to celebrate Australia's harmony in diversity*
- *Sydney Cafes*
- *The Collins Anthology of Australian Religious Poetry*
- *The Golden Wings: An Anthology of World Poetry*

PUBLICATIONS

ANTHOLOGIES:

(cont'd)

- *The Oxford Book of Modern Australian Verse*
- *The New Oxford Book of Australian Verse*
- *The Thirteenth Floor*
- *The Writing Experiment*
- *Word of Mouth*

PUBLICATIONS

JOURNALS, MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS:

- *Antipodes*
- *Aspect*
- *California State Quarterly*
- *Chelsea*
- *Compass*
- *Espresso Tilt*
- *Five Bells*
- *Fling*
- *Four W*
- *Gleebooks Gleaner*
- *Going Down Swinging*
- *Honi Soit*
- *Island*
- *LiNQ*
- *Luna*
- *Mattoid*
- *Meanjin*
- *Neos: Young Writers*
- *New England Review*
- *Newswrite*
- *Nimrod*
- *925*
- *Odessa Poetry Review*
- *Outrider*
- *Overland*

PUBLICATIONS

JOURNALS, MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS:

(cont'd)

- *P76*
- *Poetry Australia*
- *Poetry Australia: Young Poets Issues*
- *Quadrant*
- *RealTime*
- *The Big Issue*
- *The Courier Mail*
- *The Open Door*
- *Salt*
- *Scarp*
- *Social Alternatives*
- *Southerly*
- *Sud*
- *The Australian*
- *The School Magazine (NSW Dept of Education)*
- *Thylazine*
- *Trespassers W*
- *2 ½ Bells*
- *Ulitarra*
- *Your Friendly Fascist*

PUBLICATIONS

RADIO BROADCASTS:

AUSTRALIA:

- *Richard Glover*, 2BL, Sydney
- *Author's Proof/Writer's Radio*, 5UV:FM, Adelaide
- *Art Attack*, 2SER:FM, Sydney
- *Arts Illustrated*, ABC Radio National
- City Park Radio, Launceston
- *Elaine Harris*, ABC Radio, Canberra
- *Arts Beat*, Eastside Radio, Sydney
- *Gayle Austin*, 2JJJ:FM, Sydney
- *In Tempo*, ABC Radio, Adelaide
- *Performance*, ABC Radio National
- *Sunday Arts*, 2SER:FM, Sydney
- *Surface Tension*, ABC Radio National
- & others including many interviews without readings

BRITAIN: Radio Sheffield

HOLLAND: Radio West

USA: *Frank Abbott*, WRFG, Atlanta, Georgia



FILM AND VIDEO WORKS

SELECTED TELEVISION BROADCASTS,

FILM FESTIVAL AND OTHER SCREENINGS,

AND FILM AWARDS:

- *THE PHYSICAL TV COMPANY* (or *Tasdance* or *That Was Fast*)

***Producers/Directors/Choreographers:*
Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman**

AUSTRALIAN AND INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTS

- Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) – *Blue Cities*
- Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) – *No Surrender*
- Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and Commercial Channels – *Do For You*
- Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) – *What To Name Your Baby*
- Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) – *Tasdance* documentary
- Southern Cross Television, Tasmania – *What is Video Dance?*
- Southern Cross Television, Tasmania – *Sam in a Pram*
- TV Slovenia – *A Dancer Drops Out Of The Sky*
- TV Slovenia – *No Surrender*
- KMTV, China – *Down Time Jaz*

INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVALS AND OTHER SCREENINGS

- Anchorage Film Festival, Alaska
- Artsfest Filmfestival, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
- Captured: A Videodance Series at Dance Theatre Workshop, New York City
- Cinedans Festival, Amsterdam
- Commonwealth Film Festival, Manchester
- Constellation Change Screen Dance Festival, London (twice)
- Dance for the Camera Festival at the University of Utah
- Dance on Camera in New York (twice)
- Dance Moments at the Goethe-Institute in Krakow
- Downtown Art Company, New York City
- Fano International Film Festival, Italy (twice)
- Festival Internacional de Video Danza de Buenos Aires (twice)
- Festival Internacional de Video Danza del Uruguay
- Footage Dance Film Festival in California (twice)
- Gallery Szent-Gyorgyi, Falmouth, Massachusetts
- Grand Theatre, Groningen, Holland
- IMZ *dance screen* in Lyons
- IMZ *dance screen* in Monte Carlo (twice)
- International Festival of New Film in Split, Croatia
- International OFFestival, John Houseman Theater, New York City
- Judson Church, New York City
- MBL Club, Woods Hole
- Media Dance International in Boulogne-Billancourt, Budapest, Stockholm,
Belgrade and Athens
- Mill Valley Film Festival in California
- Modern Times Theater at Washington Square Church, New York City
- Moondance International Film Festival in Colorado (quarter finalist in the Animation)
- Mostra de Video Danza (Canal Danza) in Barcelona (twice)

INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVALS AND OTHER SCREENINGS

(cont'd)

- Moving Pictures Festival of Dance on Film and Video in Toronto, Canada (twice)
- Moving Pictures Festival of Dance on Film and Video touring program *Reel Dance on the Road*, Peterborough, Canada
- Napolidanza, Festival di Videodanza/Il Coreografo Elettronico, in Italy (numerous times including special international screening)
- NEWCOMP, New England Computer Arts Association, Boston
- Park City Film Music Festival, Utah
- TTV Performing Arts on Screen, Riccione, Italy (several times)
- South East Dance's Dance 4 Camera at Brighton Festival, Guildford and Canterbury
- The Kinesthetic Eye, An International Dance for Camera Screening, Minneapolis and Wellington
- The Kitchen, New York City
- The New School For Social Research, New York City
- The Salon Project, Dia Centre for the Arts, New York City
- Ultima Festival – Dans for Camera in Oslo
- Video Dance Festival in Athens and Thessaloniki (three times)
- Video Danse in Paris
- Woods Hole Film Festival, Massachusetts, USA
- Zebra Poetry Film Award, Berlin

FILM FESTIVALS AND OTHER SCREENINGS IN AUSTRALIA

- (The First) Australian Performing Arts Market
- Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) National Screening Tour
- Bathurst Film and Video Festival (twice)
- Bodyworks on Screen, Melbourne
- Contemporary Performance Week at Sidetrack Theatre, Sydney
- Australian Dance Video Showcase, Dance and the Child International Conference, Sydney
- Dance Briefs, Omeo Studio, Sydney (twice)
- Dance Lumiere, Melbourne
- Dance On The Edge, Sydney
- Earl Arts Centre, Launceston
- Flickerfest International Film Festival, Sydney
- Green Mill Dance Project, Melbourne
- IMZ World Congress in Sydney
- Karma Sessions at the Dendy Cinema in Sydney
- Microdance Stage 1, Sydney and Launceston
- Peacock Theatre, Hobart
- Popcorn Taxi, Sydney (twice)
- Reel Dance, Sydney
- ReelDance International Dance on Screen Festival in Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, Melbourne and Lismore (touring thereafter to the University of Melbourne)
- Short Trips, The Melbourne Fringe 2002 Best Film Award
- Shepparton Shorts Short Film Festival in Victoria
- Side On Screenings, Sydney
- Sidetrack Theatre
- Somerset Celebration of Literature, Gold Coast
- Spring Writing Festival, NSW Writers Centre, Sydney
- St Kilda Film Festival, Melbourne (three times)

FILM FESTIVALS AND OTHER SCREENINGS IN AUSTRALIA

(cont'd)

- Sydney New Video and Film Awards
- The Australian Poetry Festival, Sydney (twice)
- The Biennale of Sydney at The Performance Space
- The Edge of the World Film Festival, Hobart
- The First and The Last Experimental International Film Festival, Western Sydney
- The Performance Space, Sydney
- The University of Melbourne
- The Wollombi Short Film Festival
- Theatre Royal, Hobart
- Village Cinemas, Tasmania



LIVE PERFORMANCE WORKS **AND READINGS**

SELECTED THEATRES AND OTHER **PRESENTING ORGANISATIONS AND VENUES**

- THAT WAS FAST, T ASDANCE or THE PHYSICAL TV COMPANY

Producers/Directors/Choreographers:
Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

- Aglaia Dance Productions, Middle College Church, New York City
- American Association of Australian Literary Studies Conference at Vassar College
- BACA Downtown, Brooklyn, New York
- Coda Dance Company presenting Allen/Pearlman repertory, *White*,
at Green Street Cabaret, New York City
- Coda Dance Company presenting Allen/Pearlman repertory, *White*,
at West Hollywood Carlos and Charlie, Los Angeles
- Colloquium Contemporary Dance Exchange at the Merce Cunningham Studio,
New York City
- Diverse Works, Several Dancer's Core, Houston, Texas
- Dixon Place, New York City
- Downtown Art Company, New York City
- International OFFestival, John Houseman Theater, New York City
- Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont
- National Performance Network Residency (NPN), Dance Umbrella, Austin, Texas
- National Performance Network Residency (NPN), The Dancer's Collective, Atlanta,

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (cont'd)

- National Performance Network Residency (NPN), Contemporary Dance Theater, Cincinnati, Ohio
- NEWCOMP, New England Computer Arts Association, Boston, Massachusetts
- New York University, Tisch School of the Arts, New York City
- Ohio State University, Ohio
- P.S. 122, New York City
- Pennsylvania State University
- Princeton University, New Jersey
- Several Dancer's Core, Atlanta, Georgia
- Sushi Performance Space, San Diego, California
- The Dance Center, 92nd St Y, New York City
- The Dance Center, Emanu-El Midtown Y, New York City
- The Dance Place, Washington, D.C.
- The Danspace Project at St Marks Church, New York City
- The Ethnic Folk Arts Centre, New York City
- The Field, New York City
- The Kitchen, New York City
- The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, New York City
- The Maine Festival, Portland, Maine
- The Making Waves Festival, Staten Island Council on the Arts, New York
- The MBL Club, Woods Hole, Massachusetts
- The New England Computer Arts Association, Boston, Massachusetts
- The Newport Harbor Art Museum, Irvine Barclay Theatre, Irvine, California
- The Poetry Project at St Marks Church, New York City
- The Salon Project, Dia Centre for the Arts, New York City
- The Santa Barbara Museum of Art and Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, California
- The Snug Harbor Cultural Centre, Staten Island, New York

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (cont'd)

- The Whitney Museum at Equitable, New York City
- Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia

HOLLAND

- Doornroosje Theater, Nijmegen
- HA Theater/Theater de Boukude, Deventer
- Het Geuren, Den Haag
- Kikker Theater, Utrecht
- The Grand Theater, Groningen
- Theater aan de Haaven, Den Haag
- Toneelschuur, Haarlem

GERMANY

- Die Werkstatt, Dusseldorf
- Brotfabrik, Bonn
- Bochum College of Arts, Bochum

GREAT BRITAIN

- Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff
- Hornpipe Arts Centre, Portsmouth
- McRobert Arts Centre, Stirling
- Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Leeds
- Northhampton Arts Centre, Northhampton
- Chisenhale Dance Centre, London
- Phoenix Arts, Leischester
- Salisbury Arts Centre, Salisbury
- Southport Arts Centre, Southport
- The Chesterfield College of Arts, Chesterfield
- The Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Edinburgh
- The Gardiner Centre for the Arts, Brighton
- The Green Room, Manchester
- The Leadmill, Sheffield
- The Music Hall, Shrewsbury
- The Place Theatre, London
- The Third Eye Centre, Glasgow
- West End Centre, Aldershot
- Worcester Arts Workshop, Worcester
- York Arts Centre, York

AUSTRALIA

- AADE (Australian Association for Dance Education, the precursor to Ausdance)
- 7 Grammar Schools, Canberra
- AADE (precursor to Ausdance) International Dance Day, Canberra
- Armidale Playhouse, Armidale
- Biennale of Sydney at The Performance Space, Sydney
- Cathedral College, Sydney
- Club Foote, Adelaide
- Cornstalk Bookshop, Sydney
- Dance North Studio Theatre, Townsville
- Deakin University Literary Society, Melbourne
- Earl Arts Centre, Launceston
- Entr'Acte *On Archaeology: A Discourse On Theatre* (text contributed)
at The Performance Space, Sydney
- Fellowship of Australian Writers, Canberra
- Five Cities in Queensland – A Dance North and Tropic Line Theatre Company Tour
of *If War Were A Dance* by Allen and Pearlman
- Forest Lodge Hotel, Sydney
- Gleebooks, Sydney
- Gleebooks Poetry Sprint at the Spring Writing Festival,
New South Wales Writers Centre, Sydney
- Griffin Theatre at the Stables Theatre, Sydney
- Korean Writers Association, Sydney
- Illawarra Writers Group, Here's Cheers, Wollongong
- La Mama Poetic, Melbourne
- Maitland Arts Council, Maitland Repertory Theatre
- Meryl Tankard Studio Theatre, Gorman House Canberra
- Metro Arts Centre, Brisbane
- Mt Austin High School, Wagga Wagga

AUSTRALIA (cont'd)

- Mt Erin Catholic High School, Wagga Wagga
- Multicultural Artworks Centre, Adelaide Festival Fringe, Adelaide
- Peacock Theatre, Hobart
- Perseverance Poets, Melbourne
- Poets Union Inc at Gleebooks, Sydney
- Poets Union Inc. at Forest Lodge Hotel, Sydney
- Poets Union Inc. at the Brett Whitely Gallery, Sydney
- Poets Union Inc. at SCEGGS Redlands, Sydney
- Rethinking Creative Processes Conference, the University of Sydney, Sydney
- School of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, Wollongong
- Sidetrack Contemporary Performance Week, Sydney
- Sidetrack Theatre, Sydney
- Student Union, Charles Sturt University
- The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's National Poetry Day at The Basement, Circular Quay, Sydney
- The Australian Poetry Festival at the Balmain Town Hall
- The Friend in Hand Hotel, Glebe, Sydney
- The International Symposium of Korean Literature
- The Melbourne Writers Festival
- The Montsalvat Poetry/Song and Cultural Festival, Montsalvat
- The Patterson Readings, Sydney Grammar School, Sydney
- The Performance Space, Sydney
- The Pier Marketplace, Cairns
- The Somerset Celebration of Literature, Gold Coast
- The Sydney International Performance Poetry Festival, Tap Gallery, Sydney
- The Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics, University of Sydney
- The Sydney Writers Festival
- The Tasmanian Poetry and Dance Festival, Tasdance Studio Theatre, Launceston

AUSTRALIA (cont'd)

- The Walls Have Ears, Sydney
- The World Congress of Poets, Sydney
- Theatre Royal, Hobart
- Tongue Studs at Spring Writing Festival,
New South Wales Writers Centre, Sydney
- Tjapukai Theatre, Kuranda
- University of New South Wales Bookshop, Sydney
- University of New South Wales Writers Group, Sydney
- University of Tasmania, Students presenting *Blue Cities*, Launceston
- University of Western Sydney Nepean, Western Sydney
- University of Western Sydney Nepean, Students presenting *The Frightening of Angels*, Western Sydney
- Varuna Writers Centre, Blue Mountains
- Vis-à-vis Studio Theatre, Gorman House, Canberra
- Wagga Wagga Writers Writers, Wagga Wagga
- Writers in Manly, Sydney
- Writers in the Park, Harold Park Hotel, Sydney
- Young Tongues at Spring Writing Festival,
New South Wales Writers Centre, Sydney

Appendix C:

List of Creative Arts Awards and Grants:

Writing, Film and Dance

1980-2004

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WRITING AWARDS AND GRANTS:

*To: Richard James Allen,
or as noted*

- 2004 *The Happiness Test*, Shortlisted, Rodney Seaborn Playwrights Award, Sydney
- 2001 *More Lies*, Shortlisted, Griffin Award for New Australian Playwriting, Sydney
- 2000 *Thursday's Fictions*, Shortlisted, Kenneth Slessor Prize for Poetry, NSW Premier's Literary Awards
- 1999 *Thursday's Fictions*, Literature Fund of the Australia Council for the Arts, Publishing Subsidy to Five Islands Press
- 1999 Australian Poetry Festival (of which Richard James Allen was Festival Director) funded by the Literature Fund of the Australia Council for the Arts and Broadway Shopping Centre, in addition to ongoing funding for the Poets Union Inc. (of which Richard was Artistic Director) from the NSW Ministry for the Arts, Leichhardt Council, and others
- 1999 *Performing the Unnameable: An Anthology of Australian Performance Texts*, Literature Fund of the Australia Council for the Arts, Publishing Subsidy to Currency Press
- 1998 Australian Postgraduate Award with Stipend, University of Technology, Sydney
- 1995 Booranga Writers Fellowship from Wagga Wagga Writers Writers
- 1993 *Hope for a man named Jimmie & Grand Illusion Joe*, Literature Board of the Australia Council for the Arts, Publishing Subsidy to Five Islands Press
- 1993 Australian War Memorial Research Grant
- 1990 Poets & Writers, New York City
- 1986 *The Way Out At Last & Other Poems*, Literature Board of the Australia Council for the Arts, Publishing Subsidy to Hale & Iremonger Pty Ltd
- 1985 PEN American Center Writer's Assistance Grant, New York City

WRITING AWARDS AND GRANTS (cont'd):

*To: Richard James Allen,
or as noted*

- 1985 New Writer's Assistance Grant, Literature Board, Australia Council for the Arts
- 1984 General Writing Grant, Literature Board, Australia Council for the Arts
- 1982-1983 *Neos: Young Writers Magazine* (of which Richard James Allen was Co-Editor) published with the assistance of Literature Board of the Australia Council for the Arts Publishing Subsidies
- 1982 The Frederick May Memorial Award for Best Italian Essay,
The University of Sydney
- 1981 Isabel M. King Memorial Prize for Top of the Year, History III Honours,
The University of Sydney
- 1981 Helen Bennett Memorial Prize for Best Essay in History III Honours,
The University of Sydney
- 1981 University Union Literary Prize, The University of Sydney
- 1980 Winner (Under 21 Section), English Teachers Association of NSW
National Writing Competition



FILM, VIDEO AND DANCE AWARDS:

*To: Richard James Allen, Karen Pearlman,
The Physical TV Company, Tasdance,
That Was Fast, and/or collaborators.*

- *Together*, Shortlisted for the forthcoming 2004 ReelDance Awards for Australian & New Zealand Dance Film & Video.
- *Down Time Jaz*, Preselection Finalist for a 2003 ATOM Award in the Best General Experimental Category.
- *What I Did On My Nervous Breakdown*, Winner, People's Choice Award at the 2002 Australian Poetry Festival.
- *No Surrender*, Gold Medal for Excellence: Audience Favorite at the Awards for Best Impact of Music in Independent Film - Short Films, 2004 Park City Music Festival, Utah.
- *No Surrender*, Winner, Best Experimental Film at the 2002 Annual ATOM Awards for Film, Television, Radio & Multimedia.
- *No Surrender*, Winner, Best Music for a Short Film in the 2002 APRA-Australian Guild of Screen Composers Screen Music Awards for Michael Yezerki.
- *No Surrender*, Highly Commended by the Australian Cinematographers Society in the 2001 Short Film Category for Andrew Commis.
- *No Surrender*, Finalist, Short Trips, The Melbourne Fringe 2002 Best Film Award
- *No Surrender*, Shortlisted for ReelDance Awards 2002, including the Digital Pictures Award for Best Dance Film/Video.
- *No Surrender*, Finalist for Best Sound in a Short Film at the 2001 Australian Sound Guild Awards for Liam Price.
- *No Surrender* also acquired by the National Film and Video Lending Service (NFVLS), a screen studies collection owned by the National Library of Australia and managed by the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI), Melbourne.
- *No Surrender* 35 mm film print also purchased by ScreenSound Australia, the National Screen and Sound Archive.

FILM, VIDEO AND DANCE AWARDS (cont'd):

*To: Richard James Allen, Karen Pearlman,
The Physical TV Company, Tasdance,
That Was Fast, and/or collaborators.*

- *Rubberman Accepts The Nobel Prize*, featured in *Dance, Camera, Action2*, Dennis Alexander's trailer for the 3rd Constellation Change Screen Dance Festival in London, Winner, DPA Award in Germany for Best Editing in a promotional trailer.
- *Rubberman Accepts The Nobel Prize*, Winner, Best Production Design at the 2001 Critic's Circle Awards at AFTRS for Kate E. Wills.
- *Rubberman Accepts The Nobel Prize*, Shortlisted for Best Dance Film at the 2001 Australian Dance Awards organised by Ausdance.
- *Rubberman Accepts The Nobel Prize*, Shortlisted for Best Short Film and Commended at Shepparton Shorts Short Film Festival in Victoria.

- *A Dancer Drops Out Of The Sky*, Finalist for Best Original Music for an Animation at the 2000 Australian Screen Composer's Guild for Amanda Brown.

- *13 Acts of Unfulfilled Love*, Winner, Artistic Director's Choice Award, 1997 Bathurst Film and Video Festival, for Karen Pearlman, director, Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman, choreographers
- *13 Acts of Unfulfilled Love*, Winner, Best Choreography, Special Sidebar Award at the 1997 Sydney New Video and Film Awards for Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman.
- *13 Acts of Unfulfilled Love*, Finalist for Best Cinematography, 1997 Sydney New Video and Film Awards, for Ian Peterson.



DANCE AND FILM GRANTS:

To: Richard James Allen, Karen Pearlman,
The Physical TV Company, Tasdance,
and/or That Was Fast

THE PHYSICAL TV COMPANY

- 2003 Australia Council for the Arts, Music Board, New Work Grant
- 2003 Swiss Re Life & Health, Sponsorship Funding
- 2002 Australian Film Commission, Travel Grant
- 2002 Australia Council for the Arts, Audience and Market Development Board,
Travel Grant
- 2002 NSW Ministry for the Arts, Dance Program, Project Grant
- 2001 Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Production Funding
- 2001 Swiss Re Life & Health, Sponsorship Funding
- 2001 NSW Ministry for the Arts, Dance Program, Project Grant
- 2000 NSW Film and Television Office, Travel Grant
- 2000 NSW Ministry for the Arts, Dance Program, Special Allocation
- 1999 Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Research and Development Grant
- 1998 Australian Film Commission, Travel Grant

- *Dance Films by Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman, The Physical TV Company, and/or Tasdance are currently in distribution to the non-theatrical and educational markets in Australia and New Zealand through Marcom Projects, and in the U.S.A. through Artworks Video.*

DANCE AND FILM GRANTS (*cont'd*):

TASDANCE

- 1996 Australia Council for the Arts, Dance Board, Project Funding
- 1996 Minister for Education and the Arts through Arts Tasmania, Annual Funding
- 1995 Minister for Education and the Arts through Arts Tasmania, Travel Grant
- 1995 Australia Council for the Arts, Dance Board, Project Funding
- 1995 Minister for Education and the Arts through Arts Tasmania, Annual Funding

THAT WAS FAST

- 1995 Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Arts, Dance Committee, Project Grant
- 1995 NSW Ministry for the Arts, Dance Program, Project Grant
- 1994 The Harkness Foundations for Dance, New York City, Project Grant
- 1993 Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Arts, Special Request Grant through the International Theatre Institute to research and write a report on U.S. markets for Australian Performing Arts Groups
- 1993 The Howard Gilman Foundation, New York City, Project Grant
- 1993 The Harkness Foundations for Dance, New York City, Project Grant
- 1993 Consolidated Edison, New York City, Project Grant
- 1992 The Joyce Mertz Gilmore Foundation, New York City, Project Grant
- 1992 The Harkness Foundations for Dance, New York City, Project Grant
- 1991 Consolidated Edison, New York City, Project Grant
- 1991 JCT Foundation, New York City, Project Grant
- 1990 National Performance Network (USA) Funded Residency, Cincinnati, Ohio
- 1990 New York State Council on the Arts, Dance Program, Project Grant
- 1990 Consolidated Edison, New York City, Project Grant

DANCE AND FILM GRANTS (*cont'd*):

THAT WAS FAST (*cont'd*)

- 1989 Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Arts, Visiting Teacher's Grant to Karen Pearlman for Richard James Allen and Karen Pearlman's teaching and performing tour of eight Australian cities
- 1989 WGBH Public TV, Boston, Research and Development Grant
- 1989 The Howard Gilman Foundation, New York City, Project Grant
- 1989 The Bay Foundation, New York City, Project Grant
- 1989 JCT Foundation, New York City, Project Grant
- 1989 New York State Council on the Arts, Dance Program, Project Grant
- 1988 National Performance Network (USA) Funded Residency in Atlanta, Georgia
- 1988 National Performance Network (USA) Funded Residency in Austin, Texas
- 1988 British Arts Council, Visiting Artists Grant
- 1988 Strub Foundation, New York City, Project Grant
- 1988 New York State Council on the Arts, Dance Program, Project Grant
- 1987 The Bay Foundation, New York City, Project Grant
- 1987 Pentacle Marketing Project, New York City



Appendix D:

Richard James Allen:

Education; Employment;
Conferences Papers, Award Judging,
Festival Direction, Editorial;
and Teaching,
1979-2003

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EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY DEGREES

1998-Present – Candidate for Doctorate of Creative Arts

University of Technology, Sydney
(Transferred from MA in Writing).

Awarded an Australian Postgraduate Award with stipend,
and several travel grants to attend film festivals and conferences to present work:

2003 Vice-Chancellor's Postgraduate Student Conference Fund,
University of Technology, Sydney

2003 Thesis Completion Equity Grant,
University of Technology, Sydney

2002 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Degree
Student Conference Fund (RJA), University of Technology, Sydney

2000 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Special Student Conference Travel
Allocation, University of Technology, Sydney

1999 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Degree
Student Conference Fund, University of Technology, Sydney

1999 Vice-Chancellor's Postgraduate Student Conference Fund,
University of Technology, Sydney

1998 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Research Degree
Student Conference Fund, University of Technology, Sydney

1979-1982 B.A., First Class Honours,

University of Sydney,
majoring in History, Fine Arts/Film and Italian.

Winner of Three Awards from the University of Sydney:

1982 The Frederick May Memorial Award for Best Italian Essay

1981 Isabel M. King Memorial Prize for Top of the Year, History III Honours

1981 Helen Bennett Memorial Prize for Best Essay in History III Honours

EDUCATION (*cont'd*)

FILM STUDIES

- 2003** – ReelDance Advance Workshop with Miranda Pennell,
One Extra Company/UNSW
- 2001** – ReelDance Advanced Workshop, One Extra Company/UNSW
- 2001** - Robert McKee, Thriller Scriptwriting Seminar, AFTRS
- 2000** - Robert McKee, Intensive Scriptwriting Seminar, AFTRS
- 1998** – Scriptwriting Semesters with Marion Ord at UTS
- 1998** – Scriptwriting Semesters with Linda Aronson at UTS

Australian Film, Television and Radio School Short Courses:

- 2001** - Visualising the Story
- 2001** - Creative Coverage
- 1998** - Story Analysis for Producers
- 1998** - The Producer, The Market, The Audience
- 1997** - Subtext and Screen Language
- 1997** - Film Language
- 1997** - Actorphobia - The Five Day Cure
- 1997** - Continuity
- 1997** - Film Development
- 1997** - The Producer, The Law & Business Essentials II
- 1997** - Non-Linear Protocol for Producers and Directors
- 1997** - The Creative Producer in Television
- 1994** - Focus on Scriptwriting

The New School for Social Research, New York City

- 1991** - Directing Actors for Film (RJA was Teacher's Assistant)
- 1991** - 16mm Filmmaking II
- 1990** - 16mm Filmmaking I and Developing Ideas for Film

- 1984** – Video Dance Workshop with Beba Bissel, New York City

The Tin Sheds, The University of Sydney

- 1979** – Super 8 Filmmaking

EDUCATION (cont'd)

DANCE AND THEATRE STUDIES

Professional theatre and dance studies have included work in techniques and composition methods in **drama, acting, ballet, contemporary dance, postmodern dance, ballroom dance, physical theatre, image theatre and mime** with, among others, the following:

Sydney – current:

Brian Carbee

1984 – 1995 New York City

Maggie Black
 Zvi Gotheiner
 Sara Rudner
 Bebe Miller
 Stephen Petronio
 Nina Wiener
 Bill T. Jones
 Arnie Zane
 Nina Martin
 Deborah Hay
 Christine Wright
 Ernie Pagnano
 Jocelyn Lorenz
 Larry Rhodes
 Pierre Dulaine
 Yvonne Morceau
 Jim Martin
 Kim Abel
 Albert Reed
 The Talking Band among others

International Scholarship student at the Merce Cunningham Studio
 (selected for Scholarship by Merce Cunningham).

1983-1984 Holland

Kim van der Boon Northern Netherlands Dance Company
 Jean-Pierre Voos Laura Lubbers among others

1979-1983 Australia

Gerrard Sibritt	Shona Innes	Elinor Brickhill
Mira Mansell	Graham Jones	Paul Saliba
Lois Travers	Mary Szentel	Margaret Barr
Pierre Thibeadeau	Elizabeth Burke	and others

EDUCATION (cont'd)

YOGA STUDIES

Currently:

- Working through an alternative Ashtanga Fifth Series and other advances Asana sequences in private sessions with Matthew Sweeney.
- Photographs in Yoga Asanas featured in Christina Brown, *The Yoga Bible*, Godsfield Press, Alresford, Hampshire, UK, 2003.

1997-2003

At Yoga Moves, Bondi Yoga Vinyasa Centre, Yoga Mat, North Sydney Yoga, Sydney: was taught Second, Third and Fourth Series Ashtanga Yoga variously by Peter Sanson, Eileen Hall, Mathew Sweeney, Graeme and Leonie Northfield, Tim Burns, Trevor Tangye, and John Scott.

At Yoga Moves, Bondi Yoga Centre, Sydney University, and Ringpa, Sydney: attended workshops in Yoga Philosophy with Rami Sivan and Tibetan Spirituality with Sogyal Rinpoche.

2000 Classes when in New York: at Jivamukti Yoga Centre with Sharon Gannon and David Life, and at the Yoga Shala with Eddie Stern

2000, 1998 Yoga Moves, Sydney,
First and Second Series Ashtanga Yoga in the Mysore style
Workshops with Sri K. Pattabhi Jois and R. Sharat

1997 Sydney Yoga Centre Certificate of Competency in Yoga Teaching
with Eve Grzybowski, Collyn Rivers, Mardi Kendall

1997 Yoga Anatomy and Physiology at Yoga Synergy, Sydney
with Simon Borg-Olivier and Bianca Machliss

1995-6 First and Second Series Ashtanga Yoga
with Gregory Tebb at Tasdance, Tasmania

1992-2003 Avalon Recreation Centre, Iyengar Yoga
with Rick Birell and Carolyn Harris

1992-1996 First Series Ashtanga Yoga and Jivamukti Yoga
at Jivamukti Yoga Centre, New York City,
with Sharon Gannon and David Life and various other teachers

EMPLOYMENT

1997-2004 – Producer and Co-Artistic Director, The Physical TV Company Pty Ltd with responsibility for:

- Directing *Thursday's Fictions*, a long form dance and drama work currently in post production.
- Developing *e.motion*, a futuristic dance film.
- Writing and developing a feature film drama script, *The Happiness Test*.
- Just returned from an international pitching tour funded by the Australian Film Commission and the Australia Council for the Arts.
- Developing stories and production styles for episodes of *The Physical TV Series* (currently in development with ABC TV), *The Physical Family Series*, and various other short form film projects. Securing funding and production deals.
- Executive Producing and co-writing *Together*, a short film starring Rowan Marchingo and Alexandra Harrison, from the internationally acclaimed Australian physical theatre company Legs on the Wall.
- Distributing the first episode of *The Physical TV Series: No Surrender*, featuring acclaimed Indigenous dancer Bernadette Walong, and other previous works to national and international film festivals and broadcasters.
- Supervising archiving of the first period of The Physical TV Company work to various libraries and archives.

1998-2000 Secretary, President and then Artistic Director of The Poets Union Inc, with responsibility for producing, directing, and distributing the work of the national poetry organisation including the 1999 Australian Poetry Festival

1995-96 Co-Artistic Director (with Karen Pearlman), Tasdance, with responsibility for directing, writing and distributing live performance works, schools tours, the Tasmanian Poetry and Dance Festival, books, and video dance and dance film works.

1985-95 Co-Artistic Director (with Karen Pearlman), That Was Fast Productions, with responsibility for co-creating and performing in live performance works and video works toured to or screened at over 100 venues in the USA, Europe and Australia from 1985 to 1995.

1982 Guest Artist (with Karen Pearlman), Dance North and Tropic Line Theatre, commissioned to co-devise, write, co-choreograph, and co-direct *If War Were A Dance*, a dance theatre work (involving both dancers and actors) to commemorate the Battle of the Coral Sea in 1942.

EMPLOYMENT (cont'd)**OTHER LIVE PERFORMING CREDITS****Dancer and Actor**

- 1985-1986** Victoria Marks Performance Group (New York)
- 1986** Zvi Gotheiner & Dancers (New York City)
- 1985** Kenneth Rinker & Dancers (understudy) (New York City)
- 1983- 1984** KISS International Theatre Research Group (Groningen, Holland)
- 1984** Kim van der Boon (Groningen, Holland)
- 1984** Urban Sax (Groningen, Holland)

CONFERENCE PAPERS, AWARDS JUDGING, FESTIVAL DIRECTION, EDITORIAL, AND OTHER

- 2003** *Action And Actions: Directing In Dancefilm*, a paper presented at the Dance, Corporeality, The Body And Performance Practices Symposium, UNSW.
- 2002** Pitch at the Forum for Audiovisual Co-Productions, IMZ Dance Screen/Monico Dance Forum, in Monte Carlo.
- 2001** Co-Judge of the Poetry Video Award, Australian Poetry Festival.
- 2000** Member of Judging Panel, Poetry Olympics, NSW Writers Centre.
- 2000** Pitch at the International Market Simulation, IMZ Dance Screen/Monaco Dance Forum, in Monte Carlo.
- 1999** MC and member of Judging Panel, Inaugural NSW Writers Centre/ Gleebooks Poetry Sprint at Spring Writing Festival.
- 1999** MC and performer at Spring Writing Festival, NSW Writers Centre, *Tongue Studs* session.
- 1999** Festival Director of the 1999 Australian Poetry Festival for the Poets Union Inc - The first major national festival of Australian Poetry: an overview of contemporary Australian poetic practice, included readings, performances, screenings, book launches, competitions, coaching booths, held at the Balmain Town Hall, with the assistance of the Australia Council for the Arts and the NSW Ministry for the Arts.
- 1999** *the word is...the future*
- A forum/panel discussion designed and chaired by RJA, with Martin Harrison, Komninos Zervos and Amanda Stewart, discussing future directions of the artform of poetry, for the Australian Poetry Festival.
- 1999** The ABC's National Poetry Day at The Basement, Circular Quay, Sydney MC with A.J. Rochester and Tug Dumbly.
- 1999** Interviewed on *O'Loughlin on Saturday Night*, ABC TV, Saturday September 4, 1999, about the Australian Poetry Festival and the ABC's National Poetry Day. Also numerous radio interviews.
- 1999** *Performing the Unnameable*
- A forum/panel discussion designed by RJA, which he chaired, to discuss issues arising from *Performing the Unnameable: An Anthology of Australian Performance Texts* (edited by Allen and K. Pearlman, published by Currency Press in association with *RealTime*) at the Melbourne Writers Festival.
- 1999** Voted President of the Poets Union, Inc. Later appointed first Artistic Director.

**CONFERENCE PAPERS, AWARDS JUDGING,
FESTIVAL DIRECTION, EDITORIAL, AND OTHER**
(cont'd)

- 1999** *The Relic and Rethinking a Lifetime* - a performance and paper (co-written with Karen Pearlman) concerning the cycle of creativity from the body to the word and back to the body, presented at the Rethinking Creative Processes Conference organised by the University of New South Wales and the University of Sydney and presented at the University of Sydney.
- 1999** *Performance Creates Platforms For New Kinds Of Writing*
- A forum/panel discussion designed by RJA, which he participated, to proceed the launch of *Performing the Unnameable: An Anthology of Australian Performance Texts* (edited by Allen and Karen Pearlman, published by Currency Press in association with *RealTime*) at the 3rd National Performance Conference in Sydney.
- 1995-9** Co-Editor (with Karen Pearlman) of *Performing the Unnamable: An Anthology of Australian Performance Texts*, published in **1999** by Currency Press, the national performing arts publisher in association with *RealTime*, Australia's innovative arts bi-monthly. The first anthology of performance scripts and texts from new form Australian theatre, performance, dance and hybrid work, from the early '80s to the late '90s.
- 1998** *The 21st Century Poet* - a paper concerning the relationship of poetry and other media, delivered with video examples, at a forum during the Poets Union Inc.'s first draft concept of an Australian Poetry Festival at Gleebooks in Sydney.
- 1998** MC and performer, Spring Writing Festival, NSW Writers Centre, *Young Tongues* session.
- 1998** Voted Secretary of the Poets Union, Inc.
- 1998** Chair of Judging Panel, Sydney Poetry Olympics, Cup Winners Playoffs, and many other Sydney performance poetry events.
- 1998** Chair of Judging Panel, Writers' Sprint, A Sydney Readers' Feast at the State Library of New South Wales.
- 1997** Guest MC and performer at The Walls Have Ears, poetry performing venue.
- 1996** Chair of Judging Panel, Sydney International Performance Poetry Festival, Sydney International Poetry Cup, and many other performance poetry events.
- 1996** Member of Judging Panel, Spring Writing Festival, NSW Writers Centre, Poetry Sprint.
- 1995-6** Co-Conceiver, and Co-Directors and Curators (with Karen Pearlman and Tim Thorne) of the first and second Tasmanian Poetry and Dance Festivals.

**CONFERENCE PAPERS, AWARDS JUDGING,
FESTIVAL DIRECTION, EDITORIAL, AND OTHER**
(cont'd)

- 1995** *Dance on Screen* - A paper, with video examples, delivered with Karen Pearlman, at Microdance Stage 1 Forum in Tasmania.
- 1995** *The Future Of Tasdance* - A paper, with video examples, delivered with Karen Pearlman, on new ways forward for contemporary dance presented at the University Forum Series, University of Tasmania, Launceston.
- 1994** *Blue Cities* - A work for performance, created and performed with Karen Pearlman, adapted for presentation at the American Association of Australian Literary Studies Conference at Vassar College at the invitation of Professor of Australian Literature, Paul Kane.
- 1994** *Literature And Theatre: Professional Practice In A Community Art Context* - A paper, delivered with Karen Pearlman, for The Sydney Writers' Festival symposium on "Mapping Microcosms: Community as Family".
- 1994** *Movement And Drama: An Outline For Playwrights On Writing Movement Into New Plays* - A paper, delivered with Karen Pearlman, for The Australian National Playwrights Centre workshop: "You Want to be a Playwright?".
- 1987-94** *Excerpts From The World* - A lecture, created and performed with Karen Pearlman, analysing and demonstrating the distinctions between performance poetry, poetry in performance, plays, verse plays and dance plays. This paper has been adapted and presented at numerous universities
- in Australia* including:
Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics, Sydney University,
University of Adelaide
University of Wollongong, Department of Creative Arts
University of Western Sydney, Penrith
University of Western Sydney, Nepean
University of Western Sydney, Kingswood
- And *in America* at:
Middlebury College
Pennsylvania State University
Virginia Commonwealth University
Ohio State University
Princeton University
- 1994** *Waking Up In The American Dream: A Report On The Association Of Performing Arts Presenters Annual Conference In New York City, 1993, And A Guide To U.S. Markets For Australian Performing Arts Groups*
- Co-Author and researcher with Karen Pearlman of a special report for the Australian Centre of the International Theatre Institute, undertaken with a grant from the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Arts

**CONFERENCE PAPERS, AWARDS JUDGING,
FESTIVAL DIRECTION, EDITORIAL, AND OTHER**
(cont'd)

- 1994** Co-Curator with Karen Pearlman of Ausdance Video Dance Showcase: Dance and the Child International Conference (DACi).
- 1993** *Dance And Cultural Context* - Comparative paper, delivered with Karen Pearlman, on the cultural context of contemporary dance in the U.S. and Australia for The National Capitol Ballet School HSC course.
- 1993** *Models For Dance Service Organisations: Five New York Organisations And How They Work* - A paper, delivered with Karen Pearlman, for Dance Base, a professional service organisation for choreographers and dancers in Sydney, on the structure and function of dance service organisations in New York City.
- 1992** *Self-Producing: How And Why* – A paper, delivered with Karen Pearlman, for The Australian National Playwrights Centre workshop on playwriting about the mechanics and rationale for co-operative productions of works for the stage.
- 1982-1983** Co-Editor with John Hawke, Neil Whitfield and others of *Neos: Young Writers Magazine*, published with assistance of Gleebooks and the Literature Board of the Australia Council for the Arts.

TEACHING

As a guest artist, Richard James Allen, often in collaboration with Karen Pearlman, has taught workshops and classes in performance, dance, theatre, and writing in tertiary institutions, secondary schools, primary schools, for professional companies and in community workshops across Australia, the United States, Britain, Holland and Germany.

SELECTED LIST:

THE UNITED STATES

- Diverse Works, Several Dancer's Core, Houston, Texas
- International OFFestival, John Houseman Theater, New York City
- MBL Club, Woods Hole, Massachusetts
- Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont
- Ohio State University at Cincinnati, Ohio
- Pennsylvania State University, College Park, Pennsylvania
- Princeton University, New Jersey
- St Catherine's School, Richmond, Virginia
- Sushi Performance Space, San Diego, California
- The Dalton School, New York City
- The Dance Center, 92nd St Y, New York City
- The Dance Place, Washington D.C.
- The Dance Umbrella, Austin, Texas
- The Dancer's Collective, Atlanta, Georgia
- University of California at Irvine, Irvine, California
- University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas
- Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia

GREAT BRITAIN

- Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Leeds
- The Third Eye Centre, Glasgow

HOLLAND

- Maastricht Workshop, Maastricht
- USVA College of Advanced Education, Groningen

GERMANY

- Bochum College of Arts, Bochum
- Die Werkstatt, Dusseldorf

TEACHING (cont'd)

AUSTRALIA

Dance, Theatre, Writing, Film

- AADE (Australian Association for Dance Education, the precursor to Ausdance) Workshop, Madley Dance Studio, Adelaide
- AADE (precursor to Ausdance) 7 Grammar Schools, Canberra
- Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre, National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association, Sydney
- Australian Film Television and Radio School, Sydney
- Boxhill TAFE, Dance Teachers Training Program, Melbourne
- Cathedral College, Sydney
- Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga
- Contemporary Performance Week 3, Sidetrack Theatre, Sydney
- Dance Exchange, Sydney
- Dance North, Townsville
- Danceworks, Melbourne
- Gorman House, International Dance Day, Canberra
- James Cook University, Townsville
- Mt Austin High School, Wagga Wagga
- Mt Erin Catholic High School, Wagga Wagga
- National Capital Ballet School, Canberra
- National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA), Sydney
- New South Wales Youth Arts and Skills Festival, Sydney
- One Extra Company, Sydney
- Queensland Dance School of Excellence, Brisbane
- Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane
- SCEGGS Redlands, Sydney
- School of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, Wollongong
- Sidetrack Contemporary Performance Week, Sydney
- South Australian College of Advanced Education (precursor to Adelaide University)
- Sydney Grammar School, Sydney
- Tasdance, Launceston, Tasmania
- Tasmania: Co-Director/choreographer/producer of two schools shows performed by Tasdance dancers in over 20 schools statewide. These lecture demonstrations included information on how dance and text works are made and included excerpts from the Tasdance repertory and video showings.
- The Performance Space, Sydney
- Tjapukai Theatre, Kuranda
- University of Western Sydney, Kingswood Campus, Western Sydney
- University of Western Sydney, Nepean Campus, Western Sydney
- University of Western Sydney, Penrith Campus, Western Sydney
- University of Wollongong, School of Creative Arts, Wollongong
- Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne
- Vis-a-vis Dance Canberra, Canberra

TEACHING

(cont'd)

AUSTRALIA

Yoga

- Avalon Recreation Centre, Sydney
- City Apothecary Health and Yoga, Sydney
- Life and Balance Centre, Sydney
- Life Source Yoga and Health, Sydney
- North Sydney Yoga and Natural Therapy Corporate Yoga, Sydney
- Playspace Studio, Sydney
- Sydney Yoga Centre, Sydney
- Tasdance, Launceston, Tasmania
- The Fitness Network, Sydney
- Yoga Moves, Sydney
- Yoga Sanga, Sydney

Appendix E:

Ashtanga Yoga in the Tradition of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois

by Annie Grover Pace

Yoga is a philosophy of life, which also has the potential to create a vibrantly healthy body and mind.

Ashtanga Yoga, practiced in its correct sequential order, gradually leads the practitioner to rediscovering his or her fullest potential on all levels of human consciousness—physical, psychological, and spiritual. Through this practice of correct breathing (Ujjayi Pranayama), postures (asanas), and gazing point (drishti), we gain control of the senses and a deep awareness of our selves. By maintaining this discipline with regularity and devotion, one acquires steadiness of body and mind.

"Ashtanga" literally means eight limbs. They are described by Patañjali as: Yama (abstinences), Niyama (observances), Asana (postures), Pranayama (breath control), Pratyahara (sense withdrawal), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation), and Samadhi (contemplation). These branches support each other. Asana practice must be established for proper practice of pranayama and is a key to the development of the yamas and niyamas. Once these four externally oriented limbs are firmly rooted, the last four internally oriented limbs will spontaneously evolve over time.

"Vinyasa" means breath-synchronized movement. The breath is the heart of this discipline and links asana to asana in a precise order. By synchronizing movement with breathing and practicing Mula and Uddiyana Bandhas (locks), an intense internal heat is produced. This heat purifies muscles and organs, expelling unwanted toxins as well as releasing beneficial hormones and minerals, which can nourish the body when the sweat is massaged back into the skin. The breath regulates the vinyasa and ensures efficient circulation of blood. The result is a light, strong body.

There are three groups of sequences in the Ashtanga system. The Primary Series (Yoga Chikitsa) detoxifies and aligns the body. The Intermediate Series (Nadi Shodhana) purifies the nervous system by opening and clearing the energy channels. The Advanced Series A, B, C, and D (Sthira Bhaga) integrate the strength and grace of the practice, requiring higher levels of flexibility and humility.

Each level is to be fully developed before proceeding to the next, and the sequential order of asanas is to be meticulously followed. Each posture is a preparation for the next, developing the strength and balance required to move further.

BREATH: The continuity of deep, even breathing cannot be overemphasized in the Ashtanga Yoga system. When breath feeds action, and action feeds posture, each movement becomes gentle, precise, and perfectly steady. According to the teachings of Sri T. Krishnamacharya and Sri K. Pattabhi Jois, "Breath is Life." Breathing is our most fundamental and vital act and holds a divine essence: exhalation a movement towards God, and inhalation an inspiration from God. Our last action in life is to exhale, which, in essence, is the final and total surrender to God.

PRACTICE: It is said that where there is no effort there is no benefit. Strength, stamina and sweat are unique aspects of this traditional Yoga, seemingly contrary to Western perceptions of Yoga. This demanding practice requires considerable effort and taps into and circulates a vital energy throughout the body, strengthening and purifying the nervous system. The mind then becomes lucid, clear and precise; and according to Sri K. Pattabhi Jois, "Wherever you look you will see God." Only through practice will we realize the truth of what our guru often says: "Everything is God."

Please note the importance of learning the Ashtanga method only from a traditionally trained teacher. Only a qualified teacher can provide the necessary guidance to assure safe, steady progress without injury to body or mind!

Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute
Yogasana Visharada Vedanta Vidwan
Sri K. Pattabhi Jois, Director
R. Sharat, Assistant Director
876/1, 1st Cross, Lakshmipuram
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Karnataka State, South India

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Appendix F:

Rethinking a Lifetime

by Richard James Allen

and Karen Pearlman

from “The Relic and Rethinking a Lifetime:

A yoga and poetry performance of “The Relic” accompanied by a short paper
“Rethinking a Lifetime”, presented at the Rethinking Creative Processes Conference
organised by The University of New South Wales and The University of Sydney

and presented at The University of Sydney, 1999,

and later published in Françoise Grauby and Michelle Royer (editors),

Repenser les processus créateurs/Rethinking Creative Processes,

with a contribution by Philippe Dijan,

Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Oxford, Wien:

Peter Lang, , 2001, PP 35-38.

Memories are rarely linear and neither will be my talk.

Addressing the Conference topic of “Rethinking Creative Processes” is, for me, to some extent, addressing the topic of the last 20 or so years of my life. Leaving out the salacious, the humiliating, the awkward, irascible, glorious and otherwise, and instead distilling some thoughts into a printable form (with the help of my partner and collaborator over most of those years, Karen Pearlman), I would like to address the topic of rethinking the creative process by placing my performance here today into the context of three ideas.

1 - Writing is physical. It comes from the body - the body which is the storehouse of the emotional life, the memories and the sense of self. This poem, *The Relic*, came to me while I was lying in shavasana or corpse pose at the end of a particularly rigorous yoga class. Shavasana is always the last pose or asana in a yoga practice. It is the point where all the mental, physical and spiritual work you have done synthesizes, melds, fuses. It is an alchemical moment, at which one could leave one’s body through temporal or astral travel, if one believed in such things. My muscles had been stretched, purged of the recent sorrows or shames held in the hamstrings, or the resentments caught in my upper back. And lying in shavasana, I connected to the deeper history of bodies and “remembered” John the Baptist.

A background note: I should say that I’d been intrigued at the time by the idea floating around, possibly in the stir up to biblical studies following the release of the Dead Sea Scrolls, that, during the “missing years” before he returned to Jerusalem, Jesus may have gone to India and become a yogi. Indeed, as Joseph Campbell has pointed out, from a certain point of view, there are many similarities between what Jesus said and the teachings of the yogis and the Buddha, particularly before Christianity took the sharp step away from the body and the here and now in its consolidation three hundred or so years after the Messiah’s birth.

Yoga, a spiritual discipline that is said to back at least a thousand years before this, can take one deeply into time and out of time. Indeed that is what yoga means, yoking the individual consciousness to the divine, the time-based to the timeless. In a practice handed from body to body like an aural tradition, one sometimes has the feeling that one is physically connected with a long line practitioners who have moved through the same poses over millennia.

And what they have passed down in yoga is a language of the body, a strange hieroglyphic language of lines and shapes, of breaths and sightlines, of energy flows and energy locks. At first sight it is an indecipherable language, illegible, like some kind of stick figure sign language scratched on the wall of a buried temple. And yet languages like this did mean something, we have just forgotten what it is. In a similar way, yoga practises mean also something. Each has a name, and each works on a different set of aspects of what it is to be human. And practicing them in a particular order and in a particular manner is like speaking a physical mantra, chanting with the body, singing *The Song of Solomon* in a dance that uses every cell of your body.

And so inspired by my experience, I wrote the poem, *The Relic*. Or rather the poem arose in my body and I tried to match its physical echoes in a series of almost hieroglyphic lines scratched down the page.

The poem began its literary life. It was published in a reputable magazine, the journal of this university as a matter of fact, *Southerly*. It subsequently appeared as the last poem in my fifth book, *The Air Dolphin Brigade*, where it could be read on its own and also seen as a piece in a much larger poetic work, the whole of which I hope will be published in this next year - *Thursday's Fictions*, an adult fairy tale, a fantastical parable of spirituality and excess, dealing with themes of crime and art, death and reincarnation.

The Relic was written for the page and stands alone as its own artwork. And yet perhaps the experience captured within the poem craved a return from the page to the body, for its hieroglyphics of ink on paper to be matched with the hieroglyphics of a

living organism in space. Perhaps like a genie in a bottle it craved to be brought off the shelf into the eternal moment of the present, the timeless now.

And so I made the yoga/poem, *The Relic*. And thereby created a circle of forms. Beginning as an experience in the body (by which I mean the mind, body and spirit connected in the moment of shavasana) it returned to the body via the page, the stage and a flowing series of ancient physical symbols. The circle of memory was complete.

2 - My 20 or more years of dancing are what initially give me access to the creativity held in the body. And I have been working throughout these years to integrate spoken word with dance. The project here is not, however, 'performance poetry', rather it is *poetry in performance* which is another kind of effort to return the words from the page to their connection with my body, and with yours. The idea behind poetry in performance is to move away from the formal constraints of performance poetry, but to keep the immediacy and urgency provided to poetry by making it (again) a live and spoken art form. *The Relic* is an example of a poem which includes none of the attributes usually required to make a successful performance poem:

it is neither funny nor topical,

political nor cynical,

whimsical nor ironic;

it has no repetitions, no rhymes, no self-evident metre,

nor any reference to sex, either,

and, unlike this sentence itself, it is not in the form of a list.

So, making *The Relic* performative, was a matter of going back to its source, the body, and putting the two back in dialogue with each other in order to give the words, when spoken, a space to inhabit, a time to unfold in and a visual frame of reference. All of which means devising a physical vocabulary which speaks but does not, in speaking, simply repeat the content of the poem. It is about using the structure, content, or ideas in a written poem as a springboard for a creative process which in turn allows them to function in a live performance.

3. To look at the broader context: With my partner, Karen Pearlman, I have recently finished editing *Performing the Unnameable: An Anthology of Australian Performance Texts*, published by Currency Press and *RealTime*. This collection, the first of its kind in Australia, brings together 17 examples of texts written in the context of contemporary performance. What we came to in the process of editing the book, and what eventually became the premise on which the volume is based, is that contemporary performance creates platforms for new forms of writing. Because the art form ‘contemporary performance’ is wide open in terms of practice and outcomes, each particular set of devisors, be they writers, directors, performers, composers, designers or all or none of the above, can potentially contrive a new creative process. And one of the results of practicing a new creative process is the necessity of writing in new ways, forms and structures, in order to work within the challenges of the creative process and to answer the needs of what is being produced. Unlike the ‘well-made play’, a text in contemporary performance is almost never written before the production process begins, which brings us back to the body. It is the bodies in the space, grappling with the questions, which make the texts in contemporary performance. These texts may not even be written down until the show is done and being played, they stay in their bodies, living, breathing, self-creating and disappearing each time they are performed. It is our hope that this book will help prevent the disappearance of some of these texts, these “relics”, as well as of the distinct creative process which spawned each of them.



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