

# M a e l s t r ö m

by  
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## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.



## ABSTRACT

The Lofoten Maelström in Norway, one of the world's most powerful systems of tidal eddies, has been a locus of terror and imagination for centuries. First depicted in renaissance cartography, the myth of the vortex was propagated through the occult science of Athanasius Kircher and found its most current expression in Edgar Allan Poe's "A Descent into the Maelström".

This thesis is a work of exegesis. That is, a work of interpretation that leads out of a text, or a site, towards another level of meaning. Poe's text refers to the geographic site of the thesis but also becomes a site in itself. It is out of this text/site that the author unfolds a series of exegetical pathways, constructing an ambiguous ground between the real and imaginary dimensions of the Maelström. This thesis is also a work of synthesis. It explores how the speculative architectural proposition can crystallize subtle conceptual material in ways that text and image alone cannot. While the thesis is heavily invested in various modes of representation, architectural and otherwise, it also acts as a critical investigation into the nature of representation itself.

The document is composed as a performance in three parts. Each part broadly engages a fundamental binary that is latent in the work of architecture: 1) history and fiction 2) figure and ground 3) ritual and design. Part I introduces the site through various historical and fictional portrayals of the Maelström which have contributed to the co-authorship of its mythologized identity. Part II consists of a suite of three discursive essays that address the sublime, the death instinct, romanticism, negative theology, the chora, and 20<sup>th</sup> century performance theory. This material is organized under the umbrella of three figure/ground conditions: the figure against the sublime ground of the romantic-era painting, the negative ground of medieval mysticism, and the ritual ground of the Greek chorus and its spatial counterpart, the chora. Finally, Part III includes two movements: the design of a wave energy research facility, and a series of episodic vignettes that subvert the intentions of the designer by re-casting the facility as a place of ritual. With the Maelström as a backdrop, the architectural proposition offers itself as the stage upon which this struggle between design and ritual is enacted.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	vii
Foreword	xi
PROLOGUE	1
PART I: SITE	
Site 1: Lofoten	13
Site 2: Histories	21
PART II: ESSAYS	
Essay 1: Surplus of Presence	33
Essay 2: Surplus of Absence	45
Essay 3: Artaud Betrayed	55
PART III: INTERVENTIONS	
Movement 1: Design Programme	67
Movement 2: Vignettes	82
Afterword	109
Notes	110
Bibliography	115



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

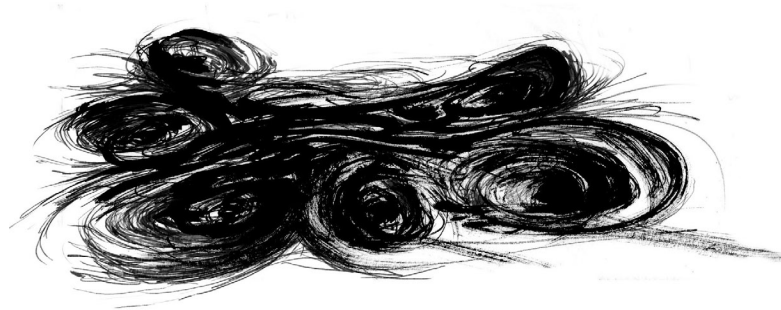
Pg.#	fig.	Description and Source			
x	0.1	Sketchbook fragment 1: “Vortices gathering” Drawing by author	23	1.9	“Carta Marina” (detail) Ibid
			23	1.10	“Carta Marina” (detail) Ibid
			24	1.11	“Subterranean Waters” Kircher, Athanasius, <i>Mundus Subterraneus</i> , 1665, p. 246/247 (Herzog August Bibliothek - <a href="http://diglib.hab.de/drucke/na-2f-3-1/start.htm?image=00246">http://diglib.hab.de/drucke/na-2f-3-1/start.htm?image=00246</a> )
P R O L O G U E					
2	0.2	“Cliff” Drawing by author	25	1.12	“The Circumpolar Currents” Kircher, <i>Mundus Subterraneus</i> , 1666, p. 226 (Source Ibid)
4	0.3	“Maelström Forming” Drawing by author	25	1.13	Norwegian Maelström (plan) Kircher, <i>Mundus Subterraneus</i> , 1666, p. 210 (Source Ibid)
6	0.4	“Maelström” Drawing by author	26	1.14	Norwegian Maelström (section) Kircher, <i>Mundus Subterraneus</i> , 1666, p. 211 (Source Ibid)
8	0.5	“Surrender” Drawing by author	26	1.15	Norwegian Maelström Happel, Eberhard – ( <a href="http://www.ub.uit.no/northernlights/images/malstrom03d.jpg">http://www.ub.uit.no/northernlights/images/malstrom03d.jpg</a> )
P A R T 1      S I T E 1 - L O F O T E N					
12	1.1	Aerial view of Moskenesøy, Lofoten (Postcard) Aune Forlag/Ole P. Rørvik	27	1.16	“Die Ebbe und Fluth auff einer Flachen Landt-Karten fürgestelt” Happel, Eberhard, <i>Relationes Curiosae</i> 1675 (Shirley, Rodney W., <i>The Mapping of the World</i> , p.483)
13	1.2	Map of Norway Drawing by author	28	1.17	“Maelström Forming” Drawing by author
14	1.3	Coastline of Nordland and Lofoten Drawing by author	P A R T 2      E S S A Y S		
15	1.4	Reinefjord, Lofoten Photograph by author	32	2.1	Sketchbook fragment 2: “Figure Ground” Drawing by author
17	1.5	Cod drying racks - Reine Photograph by author	35	2.2	“Wanderer above the Sea of Fog” Friedrich, Caspar David, 1818
18	1.6	Moskstraumen Strait from Å i Lofoten Photograph by author	38	2.3	“The Chalk Cliffs on Rügen” Friedrich, Caspar David, 1818 (Hofman, Werner., <i>Caspar David Friedrich</i> , p.131)
S I T E 2 - H I S T O R I E S					
20	1.7	Moskenstraumen Magnus, Olaus, <i>History of The Northern Peoples Vol. 1</i> , 1555 p. 100	40	2.4	“The Monk by the Sea” Friedrich, C.D., 1809 (Source Ibid, p. 54))
22	1.8	“Carta Marina” Magnus, Olaus – (James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota - <a href="http://bell.lib.umn.edu">http://bell.lib.umn.edu</a> )	41	2.5	“Mobius Strip” Image by author

43	2.6	<b>Section through the Maelström</b> Photomontage by author Background image: Turner, J.M.W., <i>The Burning of the Houses of Parliament, 1835</i>
53	2.7	<b>Plan of the Maelström</b> Photomontage by author Turbulence imagery from Saltstraumen, Norway (photographed by author)
54	2.8	<b>Sketchbook fragment 3: “Apollo Dionysus”</b> Drawing by author
56	2.9	<b>Diagram of Greek Theatre</b> www.academic.reed.edu
56	2.10	<b>Diagram of Roman Theatre</b> Vitruvius Pollio., <i>Ten books on architecture</i> . p. 148
59	2.11	<b>Jerzy Grotowski’s “Constant Prince”</b> Roose-Evans, James. <i>Experimental Theatre from Stanislavsky to Peter Brook</i> , p. 144
PART 3		<b>INTERVENTIONS</b>
66	3.1	<b>Topography and Bathymetry of Lofotodden</b> Drawing by author Topography source: Trykt i Statens kartverk <i>Lofotodden</i> (University of Windsor Libraries) Bathymetry source: MAREANO – Institute of Marine Research, Norway ( <a href="http://www.mareano.no">http://www.mareano.no</a> )
67	3.2	<b>Map of Southern Lofoten</b> Drawing by author Source: Trykt i Statens kartverk <i>Lofotodden</i>
68	3.3	<b>Overall Site Plan</b> Drawing by author (base material Ibid)
69	3.4	<b>Site Plan</b> Drawing by author (base material Ibid)
70	3.5	<b>Main Complex Plan</b> Drawing by author
71	3.6	<b>Section A</b> Drawing by author
71	3.7	<b>Section B</b> Drawing by author

72	3.8	<b>Oscillating Water Column Construction Sequence</b> Drawing by author Based on Heath, Tom, <i>The Construction, Commissioning and Operation of the LIMPET Wave Energy Collector</i> , p. 5
72	3.9	<b>Oscillating Water Column Section</b> Drawing by author Turbine drawing from, <i>Islay Limpet Wave Power Plant: Publishable Report</i> , Queen’s University of Belfast p. 19
73	3.10	<b>AquaBuOY array</b> Drawing by author Based on information gathered from <a href="http://www.finavera.com">www.finavera.com</a>
73	3.11	<b>Pelamis network</b> Drawing by author Based on information gathered from <a href="http://www.pelamiswave.com">www.pelamiswave.com</a>
74-75	3.12	<b>Section C</b> Drawing by author Source image for sky: Friedrich, Caspar David, <i>The Monk by the Sea</i> , 1809 (Hofman, Werner., <i>Caspar David Friedrich</i> , p.54)
76-77	3.13	<b>Section D</b> Drawing by author Source image for sky: Turner, J.M.W., <i>Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps</i> , 1812 (Wikimedia Commons)
78-79	3.14	<b>Section E</b> Drawing by author Source image for sky: Turner, J.M.W., <i>Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway</i> , 1844 (Wikimedia Commons)
80-81	3.15	<b>Section F</b> Drawing by author Source image for sky: Constable, John, <i>Rain, Seascape Study with Rain Cloud</i> , 1824 (Wikimedia Commons)
82	3.16	<b>“Precipice”</b> Photograph by Asbjørn Rasmussen (from Helsegga overlooking Moskstraumen Strait) Some light foreground manipulations by author
84	3.17	<b>“Thespis”</b> Constructed image by author Base photograph: Seljelitunnelen near Moskenes, Lofoten – by author Turbine face image from <a href="http://www.barrettturbineengine.com">www.barrettturbineengine.com</a>

86	3.18	<p><b>“Basilica”</b></p> <p>Constructed image by author</p> <p>Dry-dock floor, walls and crane from Singapore Dry-Dock (Wikimedia Commons)</p> <p>Lock gates - <a href="http://www.panoramio.com/photo/11204881">www.panoramio.com/photo/11204881</a></p>
88	3.19	<p><b>“Perichoresis”</b></p> <p>Constructed image by author</p> <p>Base photograph: Edge of Niagara Falls – by author</p> <p>AquaBuOY images from <a href="http://www.finavera.com">www.finavera.com</a></p> <p>Foreground character from Wilson, Robert <i>The Forest</i> (<a href="http://www.robertwilson.com">www.robertwilson.com</a>)</p>
90	3.20	<p><b>“Charybdis 1”</b></p> <p>Constructed image by author (sea and sky alterations)</p> <p>Base Photograph by Asbjørn Rasmussen</p> <p>Turbulence imagery from Saltstraumen, Norway (photographed by author)</p>
92	3.21	<p><b>Saltstraumen 1</b></p> <p>Photograph by author (no alterations)</p>
93	3.22	<p><b>Saltstraumen 2</b></p> <p>Photograph by author (no alterations)</p>
94	3.23	<p><b>Eight-Foot High Speed Tunnel – Hampton, Virginia</b></p> <p>Photography from <a href="http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/registers/Cities/Hampton/EightFootHighSpeedTunnel_photo.htm">www.dhr.virginia.gov/registers/Cities/Hampton/EightFootHighSpeedTunnel_photo.htm</a> (no alterations)</p>
96	3.24	<p><b>Saltstraumen 3</b></p> <p>Photograph by author (no alterations)</p>
97	3.25	<p><b>Saltstraumen 4</b></p> <p>Photograph by author (no alterations)</p>
98	3.26	<p><b>“Charybdis 2 – Oscillating Water Column”</b></p> <p>Constructed image by author</p> <p>Base Photograph: Shore of Helsegga – by author</p>
98	3.27	<p><b>“Charybdis 3 – Basilica”</b></p> <p>Constructed image by author</p> <p>Dry-dock floor, walls and crane – Singapore Dry-Dock</p>
99	3.28	<p><b>“Charybdis 4 – AquaBuOY”</b></p> <p>Constructed image by author</p> <p>AquaBuOY images: <a href="http://www.finavera.com">www.finavera.com</a></p>

99	3.29	<p><b>“Charybdis 5 – Pelamis”</b></p> <p>Constructed image by author</p> <p>Base Photograph: Moskstraumen by boat looking towards Mosken – by author</p> <p>Pelamis images from EMEC (European Marine Energy Centre) Orkney, Scotland (Wikimedia Commons)</p>
100	3.30	<p><b>Saltstraumen 5</b></p> <p>Photograph by author (no alterations)</p>
101	3.31	<p><b>Saltstraumen 6</b></p> <p>Photograph by author (no alterations)</p>
103	3.32	<p><b>“Charybdis 6”</b></p> <p>Constructed image by author</p> <p>Pelamis images from EMEC (European Marine Energy Centre) Orkney, Scotland (Wikimedia Commons) and <a href="http://www.pelamiswave.com">www.pelamiswave.com</a></p>
104-105	3.33	<p><b>Mist 1</b></p> <p>Photograph by author – Niagara Falls (no alterations)</p>
106-107	3.34	<p><b>Mist 2</b></p> <p>Photograph by author – Niagara Falls (no alterations)</p>



*Every object well contemplated, opens up a new organ of perception within us.*

- Johan Wolfgang Von Goethe



## FOREWORD

Exegesis typically refers to the interpretation of texts, often biblical. Dante refers to the ‘four-fold exegesis’ as the literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical, levels of interpreting his *Commedia*. Italian modern architect Giuseppe Terragni working five hundred years later would argue that the medieval exegesis was also a valid tool for interpreting the architecture of the Danteum. The contemporary philosopher of art, Georges didi Huberman talks about exegesis etymologically as the “leading out of” a text, and presents a beautiful way of understanding it spatially:

The exegesis of a biblical story unfolds as a series of pathways and associations capable of leading us out of the story itself [...] exegesis offered itself as the inexhaustible possibility of creating an infinite world of relations, of networks where every particle of sacred text entered into an always unique and totally new correspondence with another particle, freeing meaning to an ever greater extent...<sup>1</sup>

Edgar Allan Poe’s short story, *A Descent Into the Maelström* contains the geographic site of the thesis but also becomes a site in itself - or more precisely a sacred text-as-ground. Out of the plane of the page a series of exegetical pathways are unfolded that construct an ambiguous ground between the real and imaginary dimensions of the Lofoten Maelström.

This thesis is a performance composed in three parts. Each part engages a fundamental binary that is latent in the work of architecture: 1) history and fiction 2) figure and ground 3) ritual and design. While these broad categories are helpful for understanding the structure of the parts they are not all-encompassing. The thesis engages many binaries - land/sea, self/Other, theology/atheology, life/death – attempting to dwell in the ambiguous zones between them. A summary of the main body of the thesis goes as follows:

The Prologue acts as a way in to Poe's text. Selected passages are shown in their original state and their 'dilated' state, where they are broken apart and infiltrated by the voice of the author as it tries to determine how to construct the accompanying image.

Part I introduces the site through various historical and fictional portrayals of the Maelström which have contributed to the co-authorship of its mythologized identity. Poe's story is presented as the embodiment of these various history-fictions.

Part II consists of a suite of three discursive essays, *Surplus of Presence*, *Surplus of Absence* and *Artaud Betrayed*, that deal with ideas of the sublime, the death drive, romanticism, negative theology, the chora, and 20<sup>th</sup> century performance theory. This material is organized under the umbrella of three figure/ground conditions: the figure against the sublime ground of the romantic-era painting, the negative ground of medieval mysticism, and the ritual ground of the chorus and its spatial counterpart, the chora.

Finally, Part III includes the design of a wave energy research facility at the site of the Maelström. It explores how the speculative architectural proposition can crystallize subtle conceptual material in ways that text and image alone cannot. This section consists of two distinct movements: 1) a design programme with explanatory diagrams and orthographic drawings of the research facility 2) A series of episodic vignettes that subvert the intentions of the designer by re-casting the facility as a place of ritual. With the Maelström as a backdrop, the architectural proposition offers itself as the stage upon which the struggle between the Apollonian element in design and the Dionysian element in ritual is enacted.

This thesis is a critical investigation into the nature of representation. An Afterword, placed after Part III, repositions the work in relation to Marshall McLuhan's interpretation of Poe's story and Jacques Lacan's concept of The Real.

This thesis is a work of cultural archeology. It excavates fragments from many disciplines; re-using and recombining them in various guises alongside the author/designer's own contributions. The Notes, which follow the Afterword, help to outline in detail the inner logic of this cultural archeology.

In order that this new ground of the thesis be built a space must but opened within Poe's text. This is in a sense an act of sacrifice. Georges Bataille talks about poetry as a sacrifice of which words are victims. In the synthesis of disparate words that poetry offers, a sacrifice must be made of their original meanings to create poetic meaning. In some ways this is analogous to the sacrifice that occurs when the building meets the site. Both building and site are sacrificed as autonomies yet what is gained is something beyond both, the interdependence of *figure/ground*. Just as the thesis constructs a new 'ambiguous ground' out of the ground of Poe's text, it does this by way of making delineated figures; a history of the Maelström, a self-contained essay, a design proposal, an episodic vignette. These figures are brought together, along with the ground of Poe's text, into a revolving dance of interdependence, which out of the sacrifice of each offers something beyond.

\* \* \*

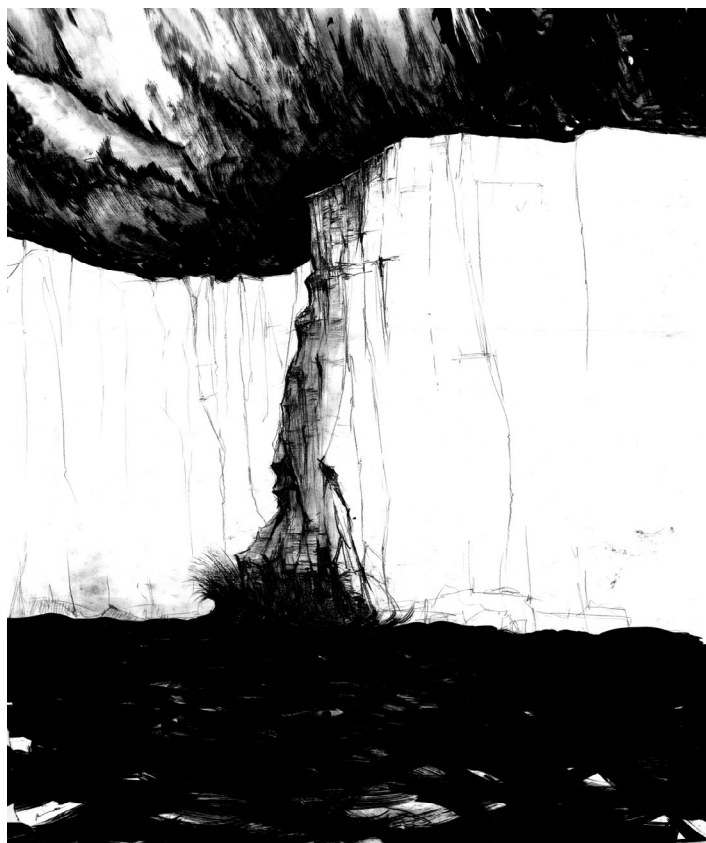
The author dons many masks for the performance of this thesis; historian, critic, architect, engineer, artist. While the mask helps to render different voices legible, it also obscures and betrays the material of which it wishes to speak. As Nietzsche says, "Every profound spirit needs a mask: more, around every profound spirit a mask is continually growing, thanks to the constantly false, that is to say shallow interpretation of every word he speaks, every step he takes, every sign of life he gives."<sup>2</sup> This thesis is also the work of a dilettante. However, the pupil (*eye/student*) dilates not simply to chase the bright and luminous. One dilates such that one may see things that exist in dim light, figures that may have been mistaken for ground.

<sup>1</sup> Didi-Huberman, Georges, and Fra Angelico. 1995. *Fra angelico : Dissemblance & figuration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press., p. 6

<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. 1990. *Beyond good and evil : Prelude to a philosophy of the future*. Penguin classic. London: Penguin Books., p. 70



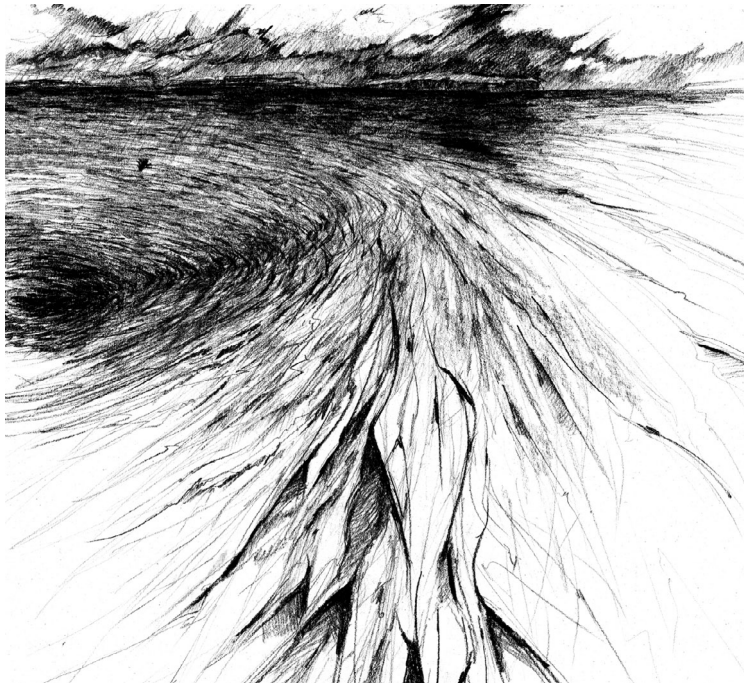
## PROLOGUE: ILLUSTRATING THE MAELSTRÖM



## CLIFF

“To the right and left, as far as the eye could reach, there lay outstretched, like ramparts of the world, lines of horridly black and beetling cliff, whose character of gloom was but the more forcibly illustrated by the surf which reared high up against its white and ghastly crest, howling and shrieking forever.”

“To the right and left *{Band of sea, band of earth, band of sky, stretched to the edges of view}*, as far as the eye *{where will the eye be in this one? Low? Yes low, down at the level of the raging sea. We are drifting into the sea, into sleep}* could reach, there lay outstretched, like ramparts of the world, lines of horridly black and beetling cliff *{The cliff will need to be immense but static. Solid. Indignant. Defiant ramparts. We are leaving the cliff behind. The cliff is where we came from – the sea of sleep is where we’re going. Some little death every time the moon closes our eyes, and some little birth every time the sun opens them}*, whose character of gloom *{gloom? Not sure. It’s more about inevitability for me – what will be, will be. We project the gloom?}* was but the more forcibly illustrated by the surf which reared high up against its white and ghastly crest, howling and shrieking forever *{contrast: Solid cliff – liquid sea – airy sky. 3 different states, 3 tremendous forces}*.”

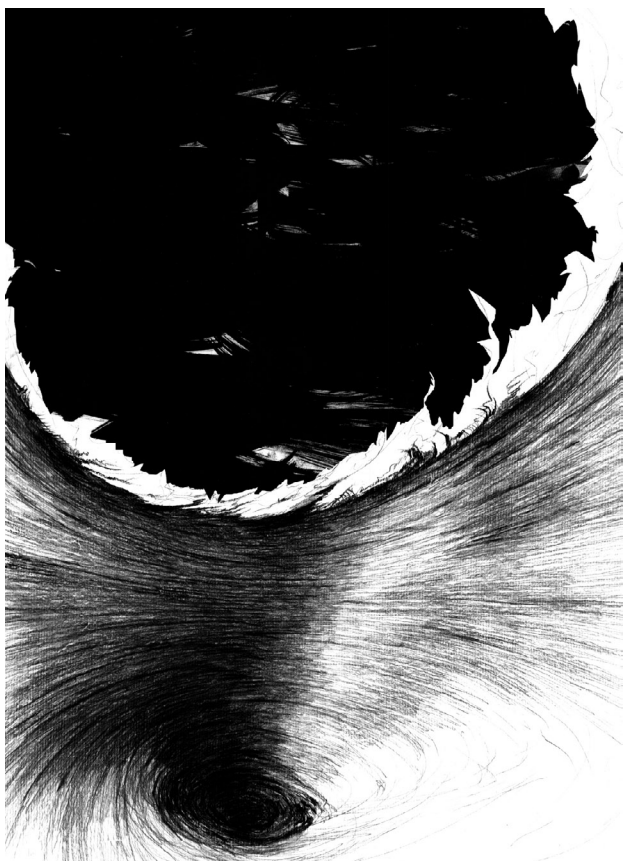




## MAELSTRÖM FORMING

“In a few minutes more, there came over the scene another radical alteration. The general surface grew somewhat more smooth, and the whirlpools, one by one, disappeared, while prodigious streaks of foam became apparent where none had been seen before. These streaks, at length, spreading out to a great distance, and entering into combination, took unto themselves the gyratory motion of the subsided vortices, and seemed to form the germ of another more vast. Suddenly—very suddenly—this assumed a distinct and definite existence, in a circle of more than a mile in diameter.”

*“{the sea must be the focus – the horizon line so far up that it becomes almost insignificant. Almost – save for the raging sky that crushes the cliffs beneath.} The general surface grew somewhat more smooth {smooth only by scale – scale is crucial throughout this. The sea is always raging at some scale – the tooth of the paper, the texture of the charcoal are raging at some scale}, and the whirlpools, one by one, disappeared, while prodigious streaks of foam became apparent where none had been seen before {the water had been churning back and forth like a mass of bodies with no direction who, without warning and without order formed ranks and rushed together as one being with one purpose}. These streaks, at length, spreading out to a great distance, and entering into combination, took unto themselves the gyratory motion of the subsided vortices, and seemed to form the germ of another more vast {I need to show the forming of the Maelstrom. Vortices like this – hurricanes, whirlpools – have stages of extreme weakness when the conditions are such that there isn’t enough balance of hot matter pushing up against cold matter for it to form. I need to show the vortex before it has reached its perfection but after the point of inevitability. This will come up later, yes? – the point of slippage, the point of surrender. I have a preoccupation with this – I know} Suddenly—very suddenly—this assumed a distinct and definite existence, in a circle of more than a mile in diameter. {It seems so terrifying to watch something chaotic transform into something so ordered and so viciously efficient – armies are like that}.*



## MAELSTRÖM

“...a funnel vast in circumference, prodigious in depth, and whose perfectly smooth sides might have been mistaken for ebony, but for the bewildering rapidity with which they spun around, and for the gleaming and ghastly radiance they shot forth, as the rays of the full moon, from that circular rift amid the clouds which I have already described, streamed in a flood of golden glory along the black walls, and far away down into the inmost recesses of the abyss.”

“...a funnel vast in circumference *{position viewer inside to get a sense of the vastness – will almost need a dual vanishing point – eye of the vortex and the moon}*, prodigious in depth, and whose perfectly smooth sides might have been mistaken for ebony *{black, polished – liquid stone}* but for the bewildering rapidity with which they spun around, and for the gleaming and ghastly radiance they shot forth, as the rays of the full moon, from that circular rift amid the clouds *{vortex extending deep into the sea and up into the clouds forming a ring around the moon: axis mundi. the moon becomes a player here – did she start this whole thing? she is the bringer of sleep}* which I have already described, streamed in a flood of golden glory along the black walls, and far away down into the inmost recesses of the abyss.”



## SURRENDER

“I no longer hesitated what to do. I resolved to lash myself securely to the water cask upon which I now held, to cut it loose from the counter, and to throw myself with it into the water.”

“I no longer hesitated what to do. {pause -- } *{this will be the most difficult drawing – this is the ultimate moment of slippage- I have now spent almost 6 hours trying to capture you, Mariner}. I resolved to lash myself securely to the water cask upon which I now held, to cut it loose from the counter {thinking now how useless the vessel had become}, and to throw myself {the Mariner must be vulnerable, he has to be seen falling backwards into the vortex – this is acceptance} it into the water. {Many things slip from one state to another by way of natural process, but this is different. It takes will and strength but also weakness and supreme vulnerability for this kind of acceptance}.*



## PART I: SITE





## SITE I : LOFOTEN

The Northern part of Norway is an edge condition. This region of the country is comprised of a narrow band separated from Sweden by the mountains to the east and held back by the Norwegian sea to the west. Norway at large is a country of coastlines. Most of its perimeter is frayed and folded into deep convolutions expanding the country's edge by orders of magnitude. If one includes islands, fjords and bays the perimeter of the country measures 83 281 km – more than twice the Earth's circumference at the equator.<sup>1</sup> 23.5 percent of the coastline is less than 100 meters from the nearest building.<sup>2</sup> To live in Norway is to live between the land and the sea. The Lofoten peninsula delaminates from this variegated edge like an icy finger into the Norwegian sea. The archipelago is located between 67 and 68 degrees latitude, placing it just inside the Arctic Circle.

The topography of Lofoten is astounding. The shoreline is sharply delineated yet the distinction between topography and bathymetry becomes meaningless; here one understands the continuous nature of the earth's crust. It can be witnessed rising directly out of the sea to become mountain and then plunging back below sea level to line the bottom of an interior lake. Although the mountains reach heights of close to 700 metres one sometimes gets the impression that they are traversing only the peaks of a deep sub-oceanic mountain range. Baedeker's *Handbook*, the famous 19<sup>th</sup> century travel guide has this to say about the mountains of Lofoten:

... the largest vessels, dwarfed to the dimensions of nut-shells, lie in close proximity to enormous walls of rock, several thousand feet in height. [...] Still more picturesque is the scene when witnessed during a gale or a passing thunder-storm, the solemnity of which greatly enhances the wildness of the picture. Having seen the Lofoden Islands in all these various aspects, the writer ventures to affirm that they surpass the finest scenery of Southern Europe in sublimity.<sup>3</sup>



Fig 1.2 - Map of Norway indicating the Lofoten archipelago.

Fig 1.1 (opposite) - Aerial view of Lofoten.



*Fig 1.3 - Map showing the frayed coastline of northern Norway.*



*Fig 1.4 - Reinefjord, Lofoten*

From sea level, Lofoten presents itself more as an implacable mass than a series of islands, giving it the local title “Lofotveggen” or Lofoten wall. Conditions vary greatly on either side of the wall. The outer coast is exposed to the severities of the Norwegian sea, while the inner coast frames the calmer waters of the Vestfjord basin. Because of this extended position off the coast, the archipelago is more directly exposed to wind, rain and storms but is also closer to the gulf stream and the abundance of arctic cod that comes with it. And for close to 1000 years, this has been the sole reason for inhabiting the islands.

Building within such extreme topographical conditions is difficult. Some arable land exists in the middle islands but the presence of useable patches decreases severely towards the southern tip where the Moskenstraumen strait lies. Yet wherever possible, villages carve out space for themselves in the narrow band of terrain at the foot of the mountains and on the small rocky islands that connect them. In order to deal with such conditions Norwegians have had to become expert bridge builders and tunnel makers. The presence of this sub/superterranean network of cave like tunnels and soaring bridges is so ubiquitous that it becomes an oscillating landscape unto itself – an expanded tissue between mountain and sea that is directly integrated into the culture and consciousness of the place. Every bridge and every tunnel has a name.

The geological chronology of the islands is varied. For the most part it consists of relatively young mountains, however on the south-westernmost island of Moskenesøy the mountains belong to a 3 billion year old plateau.<sup>4</sup> These ancient mountains are characterized by a sheer incline that sharply tapers off into a flat plane on top. Hellsegga, which lies at the very tip of Lofoten, is crowned with a plateau the size of 10 football fields that looms 600 metres above the Moskenstraumen strait. It is from this ancient and lofty vantage that Poe’s narrative takes place.

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<sup>1</sup> *Statistics Norway*. 2009 [cited March 17th 2009]. Available from [www.ssb.no](http://www.ssb.no)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>3</sup> Baedeker, Karl *Norway and Sweden : Handbook for travellers 1882*. . Leipsic: K. Baedeker., p. 238-239

<sup>4</sup> Røde, Gro. 1996. *Guide to the history of Lofoten*. Trans. Robert Walker The Lofoten Public Museums and The Lofoten Regional Council., p. 11



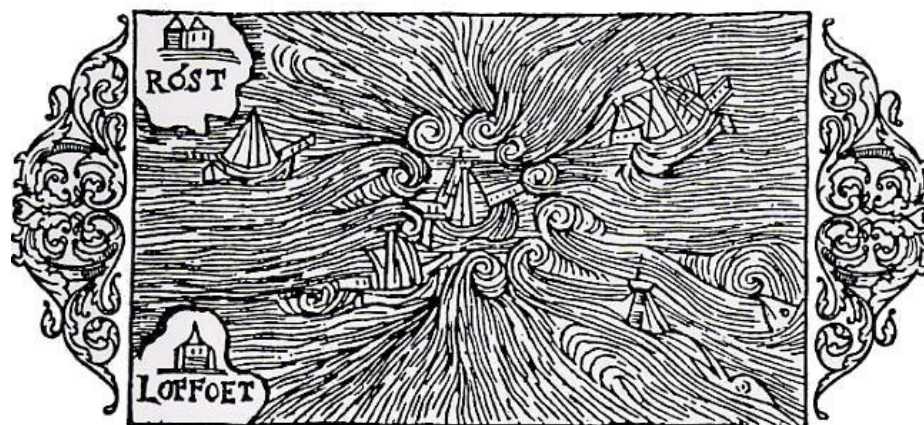
*Fig 1.5 - The town of Reine on the inner coast of the Lofoten wall. In the foreground are drying racks for arctic cod, the region's largest economic generator.*





*Fig 1.6 - Looking south toward the distant islands of Vaerøy and Mosken to the left, the mountain of Helsegga to the right, and the Moskenstraumen strait in between. Photograph taken from the town of Å i Lofoten which lies at the very end of the Lofoten road. Everything further is accessible only by boat.*





Maelstrom | Moskenstraumen | Moskstraumen | Moskenestraumen | Malestrand



## SITE II: HISTORIES

### Norse Myth

One of the earliest accounts of the Lofoten Maelström comes from a Norse myth which explains how the sea became saltwater. In the tale a pair of slave giantesses were grinding salt aboard a Viking ship using two magic millstones. The captain, ever eager to maximize production of the valuable commodity, worked the slaves so hard that the salt yield eventually sunk the ship off the North-western coast of Norway. The stones sank to the bottom of the sea creating a deep hole into which water rushed in a gurgling vortex.<sup>1</sup>

### Charybdis

In Book XII of Homer's *Odyssey* the goddess Circe warns Odysseus about Charybdis, the nymph turned sea-monster who resides in the Strait of Messina. "Three times in the day does she vomit forth her waters, and three times she sucks them down again; see that you be not there when she is sucking, for if you are, Neptune himself could not save you."<sup>2</sup> Odysseus then tells of his encounter with the whirlpool when recalling his tale to the Phaeacians:

Now wailing in fear, we rowed on up those straits, Scylla to starboard, dread Charybdis off to port, her horrible whirlpool gulping the sea-surge down, down but when she spewed it up – like a cauldron over a raging fire – all her churning depths would seethe and heave – exploding spray showering down to splatter the peaks of both crags at once! But when she swallowed the sea-surge down her gaping maw the whole abyss lay bare and the rocks around her roared terrible, deafening...<sup>3</sup>

The crew narrowly escapes Charybdis' maw and sails on to the island of the sun-god. Soon after the ship is destroyed by a vengeful thunderbolt from Jove. All perish save Odysseus who, clinging to a makeshift raft, is carried by a south wind back towards the strait of Scylla and Charybdis. As his raft sinks into the jaws of the whirlpool, Odysseus grabs hold of a fig tree branch that grows above Charybdis' lair. Eventually she vomits up his raft; he drops on to it and paddles away with his bare hands.

*Fig 1.7 (opposite) - Drawing of the Lofoten Maelström from Olaus Magnus' "History of the Northern People", 1555. Below are collected some of the various names by which the Maelström goes.*





Fig 1.8 - Olaus Magnus, "Carta Marina", 1539. The Maelström can be seen off the north west coast of Norway.



### Olaus Magnus

Manuscripts of Ptolemy's atlas, the *Geographia* first began circulating among Italian scholars at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. While the *Geographia* formed the basis of Renaissance cartography it lacked a level of precision in many areas that had fallen beyond Roman borders. Scandinavia in particular had been poorly represented.<sup>4</sup>

It was not until 1539 that a more accurate map, *The Carta Marina* was produced by Swedish archbishop Olaus Magnus while he was living in Venice. Magnus had entered the ecclesiastical service at an early age eventually accompanying his brother Johannes, the Archbishop of Uppsala, to Rome in 1537. Johannes' death in 1544 saw Olaus named as Archbishop of Uppsala though he would remain in exile for the rest of his life due to Lutheran reform in Sweden.

The Carta is composed of 9 separate wood block prints and measures an impressive 1.7 x 1.25 metres making it the largest map of its time.<sup>5</sup> It covers the Scandinavian countries as well as Iceland, the southern tip of Greenland, Northern Scotland and Germany as well as the western parts of Russia.

Despite the relative accuracy of the map however, it is primarily a work of history and culture. The base information shows a detailed attention to geography (coastline information in particular), topography and oceanography.<sup>6</sup> What is most engaging however is the seamless integration of cultural information into this empirical framework. The land is richly illuminated with plant and animal life (both real and imagined), historical events, local tradition and folklore as well as current political conditions - all of which moves across the division of myth and reality with a wonderful fluidity.

The sea is rendered as part nautical chart, historical document, trade route map and medieval bestiary. Far from being a vast blank unknown, the sea is given just as much presence as the land. To be sure, for Magnus, the sea is a place of radical alterity. And yet it is a kind of alterity that humanity is directly involved in and thus is depicted with as much certainty and commitment as the local traditions of his native Sweden:



Fig 1.9 - Detail from The Carta Marina 1539 showing a vessel being devoured by the Maelström. To the left is written 'Horrendia Caribdis' referring to the Homeric legend of the Charybdis sea monster in the Strait of Messina.



Fig 1.10 - Sea Serpent off the coast of Norway.





Fig 1.11 - Athanasius Kircher - from *Mundus Subterraneus*, 1665. The drawing shows the integrated systems of winds, ocean currents, volcanoes and subterranean fires and water courses.



The sea-monsters with which Olaus populates the North Sea were no doubt real to him, and although in their dreadful variety he reveals a vivid imagination typical of his time, many of them must have been inspired by descriptions given him by fishermen at Trondhjem and sailors at Lübeck. But the strangest tales have always come from the sea. Our Moby Dicks and Loch Ness monsters are but the terrors of *primaeval* man in a modern guise.<sup>7</sup>

It is in this spirit that Magnus renders the Maelström – integrating it into his pseudo-scientific study of ocean currents while also aligning it directly to the Homeric tradition with the title ‘*Horrenda Caribdis*’. He shows it unmistakably off the northwest coast of Norway as a fully resolved vortex devouring a fishing vessel (Fig. 1.9).

#### Varen, Kircher, Happel

Bernhard Varen, a young German physician also addressed the Lofoten Maelstrom in his 1650 publication of the *Geographia Generalis*. Varen estimated the circumference of the vortex at around 60 kilometers,<sup>8</sup> which is about 10 times larger than Poe’s estimation. Despite the differences in scale however, we can recognize much of the qualitative description that would eventually make its way in to Poe’s narrative. “This Vorago in the fixed hours sucketh in all that approacheth near it; as Water, Whales, laden Ships, and in so many hours vomiteth them all out again with a great violence, noise, and circumgyration of water. The cause is unknown.”<sup>9</sup> Varen considered whirlpools and subterranean water courses as central components of ocean dynamics. Isaac Newton, skeptical of these particular theories paid very little attention to them in his edited version of Varen’s *Geographia* published in 1672.<sup>10</sup>

Varen’s speculation about the importance of ocean vortices and subterranean channels was however taken up very seriously by one of the most fascinating minds of the counter reformation - the German polymath and Jesuit priest Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680). Kircher lived in a time of seismic upheaval in the sciences as the 17<sup>th</sup> century saw Renaissance encyclopaedism giving way to specialization and the objective sciences distancing themselves from the arts.<sup>11</sup> Yet Kircher’s work straddles the fault lines of the age, resisting specialization and embracing fields such as geology, Egyptology, linguistics, hermeneutics, microbiology, music and acoustics among others. For him the holistic pursuit was not simply a matter of academic disposition. To understand “the All”<sup>12</sup>, was



Fig 1.12 - Athanasius Kircher - from *Mundus Subterraneus*, 1665. “The Circumpolar Currents”. Kircher explains the rhythmic motion of the tides as water being funneled into an opening at the North pole and expunged from the south.



Fig 1.13 - Athanasius Kircher - from *Mundus Subterraneus*, 1665. Map of Norway showing the Lofoten Maelström drawing water into an underground channel that empties into the Gulf of Bothnia to the east.

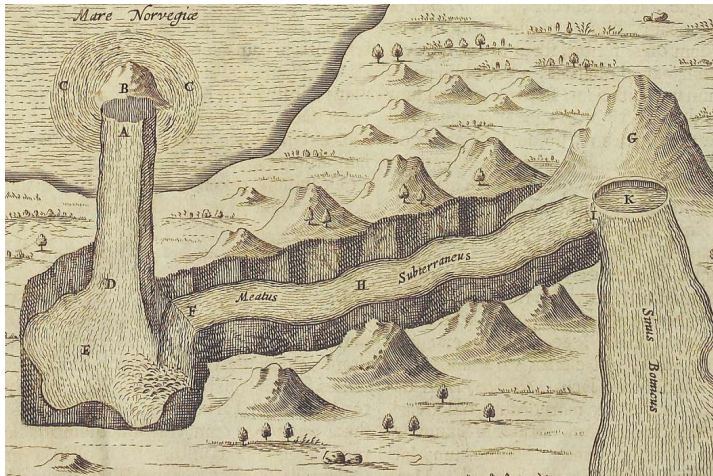


Fig 1.14 - Athanasius Kircher - from *Mundus Subterraneus*, 1665. Cross section showing the underground channel that connects the Maelström to the Gulf of Bothnia. This is the explanation of the Maelström that Poe's primary narrator finds most convincing upon witnessing it for the first time.

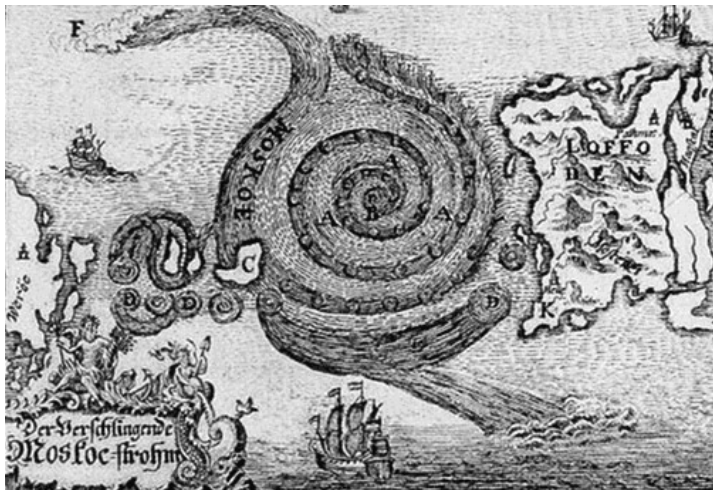


Fig 1.15 - Eberhard Happel's depiction of the Maelström

to encounter the divine force, the unmoved mover. Scientific pursuit of the 17<sup>th</sup> century “still had something half-magical about it”<sup>13</sup> and the distinction between observation and speculation were much less relevant. It would seem that imagination, not skepticism, was the foundation of Kircher's science.<sup>14</sup>

Kircher's *Mundus Subterraneus* is a speculative investigation into the sublime forces of the earth's interior. Written after a visit to Sicily, the work is primarily focused on vulcanism but also deals extensively with ocean mechanics and is credited as containing the earliest global chart of ocean circulation.<sup>15</sup> Like Varen, Kircher believed that the general flow of the ocean was facilitated by a series of underground channels that delved beneath the continents (fig. xx). At the mouth of each channel was a great whirlpool that drew the water below into the network. The tides were also explained in a similar way. While he believed in a general westward flow of the oceans, he also shows an arcing motion directed northward into a massive vortex at the north pole that connected to an outflow on the opposite side of the globe (Fig. 1.12). The ebb and flow of the tides was seen as a result of this rhythmic ingestion and discharging of the oceans.<sup>16</sup> Kircher pays special attention to the Norwegian Maelström showing how it emptied into the Gulf of Bothnia through a subterranean channel beneath the Scandinavian landmass.

Eberhard Happel (1647-1690) followed Kircher's theories on ocean dynamics quite closely, producing a similar global chart (Fig. 1.16) that further propagated interest in whirlpools on the fringes of scientific discourse.<sup>17</sup> In the early 18th century, Kircher and Varen's descriptions of the Maelström were gathered into the encyclopedias through the account of the Norwegian priest/historian, Jonas Ramus. It is Ramus' particular account, arcing all the way back to Varen, which Poe quotes at length in *A Descent Into The Maelström*.

### Edgar Allan Poe

Poe's *A Descent into The Maelström* is a dense work of Victorian sublime romanticism. The narrative unfolds as a story within a story. The primary framing narrative is written from the point of view of a traveler who has been guided to the top of Hellsegga mountain to witness the Maelström. The secondary narrative is from the point of view of the mariner who is relating his tale to the traveler while the Maelström is raging below. This passage, comprising about two thirds of the story, describes the experience of the descent. As the mariner relates, he had been on a routine fishing expedition



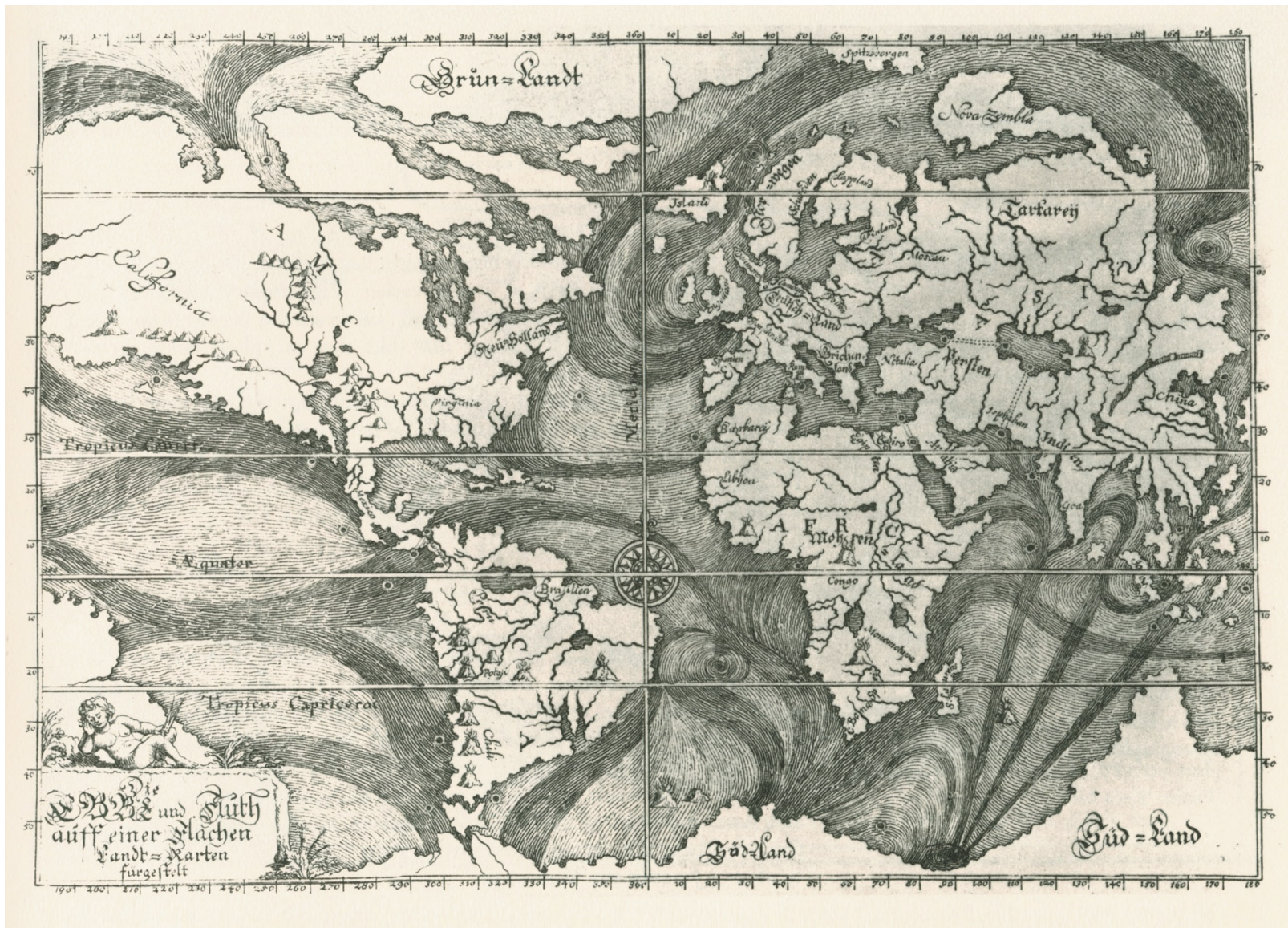


Fig 1.16 - Happel's diagram of global ocean current circulation - influenced heavily by Kircher.



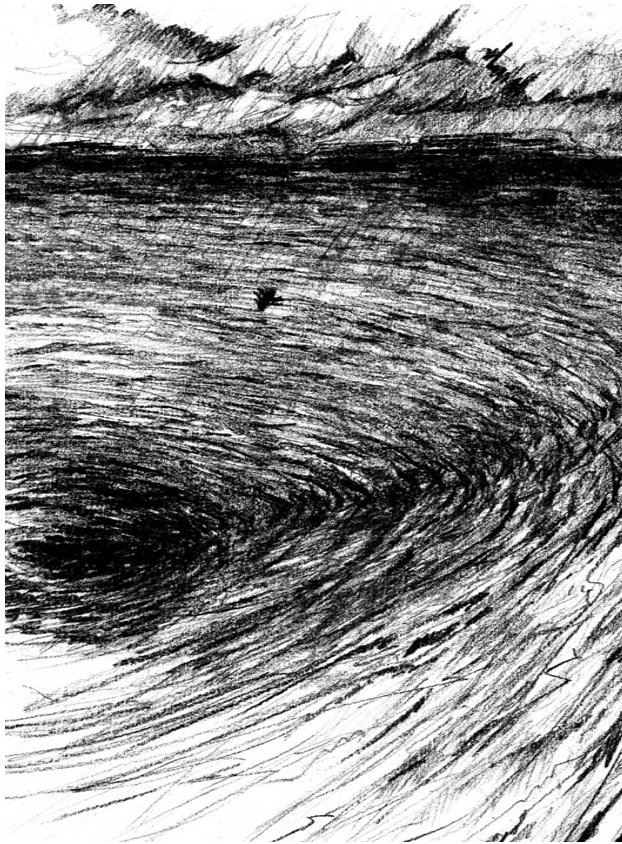


Fig 1.17 - "Maelström Forming" - Drawing by author

with his two brothers that requires them to sail across the Moskenstraumen strait at slack tide. On their return one particular evening they encounter a ferocious storm that drives them back towards the Maelström. Immediately one of his brothers is thrown overboard by the gale and the boat begins its descent. After resigning himself to his fate the mariner begins to survey the behavior of the various detritus within the vortex and notices that cylindrical objects have a tendency to maintain buoyancy without being dragged down towards the bottom. As a last effort he decides to lash himself to a barrel and jump from the boat. He tries to convince his brother to do the same but he remains petrified in fear, clinging to the boat as it sinks. Strapped to the barrel, the mariner plunges into the Maelström and circulates within it for over an hour before it eventually lets up and he is rescued by passing fishermen.

Poe integrates several historical accounts of the Maelström into his text. Yet his characters invoke these accounts with skepticism, challenging their status as history. Within the primary narrative, the traveler, who is clearly well educated on the subject, cites at length the description of Jonas Ramus which "cannot impart the faintest conception either of the magnificence, or of the horror of the scene" that he is now witnessing. Much of Ramus' more empirical data are also refuted in Poe's text which further casts doubt as to which is the fiction and which the history. Kircher's claim that the Maelström is the mouth of a great underwater river that empties in the Gulf of Bothnia is also cited. Interestingly, the Mariner comments that this explanation of the vortex is the most widely accepted by Norwegians, though not by him.

There is also a strong degree of empirical detailing that Poe embeds in the narrative to further surround it with an air of credibility. Owing perhaps to the fact that the narrative traverses the edge between night and day, there is a fairly strict precision with regards to time, both as a reference point, and as a quantity: "in less than a minute the storm was upon us – in less than two the sky was entirely overcast". Despite having never been to Lofoten Poe shows an impressive dexterity with geographical details paying particular attention to the myriad of names (the existence of which confounds even the Mariner himself). He also cites specific distances, latitudes and angles in both the primary and secondary narratives.



The comprehensive empirical information is then fleshed out by a set of visceral descriptions of the land and the sea. The two narratives also give us a fully involved picture of the Maelström itself, from the traveler's Apollonian view at the mountaintop to the Mariner's Dionysian experience of the descent.

Despite all of these elements that bend fiction towards history, Poe casts a dubious shadow across the entire story. The structure of the embedded narrative mirrors very closely Books 8-12 of *The Odyssey* which relate Odysseus' telling of the most fantastical parts of his tale to the Phaeacians. It is at the very end of the tale that his solitary encounter with Charybdis takes place and as with the Mariner, there are no witnesses. In Poe, we do not return to the frame of the primary narrative to be reminded of this, but rather the Mariner sows the seeds of doubt in his own tale: "I told them my story – they did not believe it. I now tell it to you – and I can scarcely expect you to put more faith in it than did the merry fishermen of Lofoden."

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<sup>1</sup> Guerber, H. A. 1992. *Myths of the Norsemen: From the Eddas to the Sagas* Courier Dover Publications., p. 130

<sup>2</sup> Homer., Robert Fagles, and Bernard MacGregor Walker Knox. 1996. *Odyssey*. New York: Viking. p. 274

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 278

<sup>4</sup> Lynam, Edward. 1949. *The Carta Marina of Olaus Magnus, Venice 1539 & Rome 1572*. Tall tree library publication. Vol. 12. Jenkintown Pa.: Tall Tree Library., p. 1

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 3

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 13

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 26

<sup>8</sup> Peterson, R. G., L. Stramma, and G. and Kortum. 1996. "Early concepts and charts of ocean circulation." *Progressive Oceanography* 37, p. 25

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 25

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 23

<sup>11</sup> Godwin, Joscelyn. 1979. *Athanasius Kircher : A Renaissance Man and The Quest for Lost Knowledge*. London: Thames and Hudson., p. 5

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 9

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 5

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 88 – Joscelyn Godwin relates how Kircher, rather than requiring proof, saw no reason *not* to believe in the island of Atlantis as described by Plato.

<sup>15</sup> *Early Concepts*, p. 26

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 29

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 32



## PART II: ESSAYS



## ESSAY I: SURPLUS OF PRESENCE

*This essay examines the first of three figure/ground relationships: one in which the figure is set against a ground that is “wholly other”, yet still a positive fact – a surplus of presence that threatens to subsume the figure into the ground. It begins with Rudolph Otto’s idea of the numinous, tracing its affinity with the romantic sublime. The essay then reads these ideas against Freud’s ‘death instinct’ and ‘oceanic’, concluding with an analysis of two romantic-era paintings viewed through the lens of this material.*

### The Numinous

In his 1923 study, *The Idea of the Holy*, Rudolph Otto argues that the word ‘holy’ has accrued an ethical dimension that has eclipsed the “overplus of meaning” which it initially aimed to describe.<sup>1</sup> It is this “unnamed Something”, this non-rational aspect of holiness that he sees as a fundamental component of all religions and for which he coins the term ‘numinous’.<sup>2</sup> While it “admits of being discussed”, he writes, the idea of the numinous evades a direct definition. Instead he defines the “overplus of meaning”<sup>3</sup> as holiness *minus* its current moral dimension: a surplus defined by an absence.

An important element of the numinous and one that bears particular relevance to this thesis is what Otto calls the ‘mysterium tremendum’, a feeling of a hidden terror and awe that permeates the religious rite and “clings” to sacred monument and architecture.<sup>4</sup> Otto’s description of this ineffable feeling is worth quoting at length:

The feeling of it may at times come sweeping like a gentle tide, pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship. It may pass over into a more set and lasting attitude of the soul, continuing, as it were, thrillingly vibrant and resonant, until at last it dies away and the soul resumes its ‘profane’, non-religious mood of everyday experience. It may burst in a sudden eruption up from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions, or lead to the strangest excitements, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport, and to ecstasy. It has its wild and demonic forms and can sink to an almost grisly horror and shuddering. It has its crude barbaric antecedents and early manifestations, and again it may be developed into something beautiful and pure and glorious. It may become the hushed, trembling, and speechless humility of the creature in the presence of - whom or what? In the presence of that which is a mystery inexpressible and above all creatures.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Otto, Rudolf. 1958. *Idea of the holy : An inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the divine and its relation to the rational*. London: Oxford University Press. p. 5

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 7

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 5 – Otto’s use of ‘overplus’, is adapted into ‘surplus’ for the title of this essay and the next. The word ‘surplus’, which is again invoked in the afterword has an association with French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s term ‘jouissance’ which is in turn associated with Freud’s death instinct (discussed later in the essay).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 12

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 13

<sup>6</sup> In this essay the word 'subject' is used interchangeably with the word 'figure'. The word 'subject', which recalls philosophical and psychoanalytic discourse, is intended to bring greater nuance to the word 'figure'.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 42

<sup>8</sup> Harrison, Charles, Paul Wood, and Jason Gaiger. 2000. *Art in theory 1648-1815 : An anthology of changing ideas*. Oxford ; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers. p. 524

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 525

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 516

Among the various states that he describes the basic imagery is consistent. In most cases the feeling is described as a kind of elemental ground, something alien that comes from without and excites or vibrates as it passes through the subject<sup>6</sup> who experiences it.

Otto points to 5 constituent elements of the *mysterium tremendum*: "awefulness", "overpoweringness (majestas)", "energy or urgency", the "wholly other", and "fascination". The 'mysterium' refers to that which is negative (hidden) encompassing the elements of the "wholly other" and "fascination". On the other hand the 'tremendum', the positive dimension, encompasses the other three elements of "awefulness", "overpoweringness" and "energy", revealing a clear affinity with the romantic notion of the sublime. Otto relates the sublime to the numinous, as an analogy or associated feeling, paying particular attention to the duality of fear and attraction. And while he makes a clear distinction between the numinous as a religious force and the sublime as its vastly inferior aesthetic counterpart, he does acknowledge a certain indwelling of the two, a "passing over" of the sublime into the numinous.<sup>7</sup>

### The Sublime

In Edmund Burke's classic exposition, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), he formulates an opposing relationship between the beautiful and the sublime. The beautiful is "for the greater part, some quality in bodies, acting mechanically upon the human mind by the intervention of the senses".<sup>8</sup> It is apprehended through the rational faculties resulting in the sensation of pleasure; it is the smooth, the polished, the light and the delicate.<sup>9</sup> In contrast is the sublime, the "strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling".<sup>10</sup> This emotional response is associated with the feeling of pain. Terror, obscurity, vastness, power and infinity are all elements of the sublime. These elements are manifested, among other places, in the overwhelming forces of nature - in the implacable presence of the mountain, the silent darkness of the cave or the deafening cataract of the storm. It is perhaps indicative of the difficulty of capturing the sublime in words, that Burke and his contemporaries tended to describe the idea by generating exhaustive lists of examples, as though an all-encompassing definition lay perpetually beyond the reach of the descriptor.

The categorization of the beautiful and sublime find direct correspondence in the primal binary of pleasure and pain. In further reading of Burke, however, we are told that the pain experienced in the sublime is a distanced one: "When danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply

terrible, but at certain distance, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are delightful, as we every day experience”.<sup>11</sup> So, in fact, the sublime relies on the element of distancing to transform the painful intensity of the *phenomenon* into a *representation* of pain - a representation that is masked by pleasure. Emmanuel Kant would later build on this by introducing a two-stage model of the sublime. Initially the mental faculties are defeated and humiliated by the painful and terrible elements of the sublime image;<sup>12</sup> through the intellect however the sublime feeling is rationalized. The terror of the infinite is forged into the concept of infinity and the mind is uplifted through this delightful mastery.

As a direct experience or not, Burke is clear about his position on humanity’s relationship to pain: “pleasure follows the will; and therefore we are generally affected with it by many things of a force greatly inferior to our own. But pain is always inflicted by a power in some way superior, because we never submit to pain willingly.”<sup>13</sup> There is some ambiguity however. Burke cites “astonishment” and “admiration” as components of the sublime feeling. If, as he says, sublimity arises from a superiority or surplus of power over the subject, can we extend to the sense of admiration a sense of *submission* to the overwhelming power of the sublime phenomenon? Does Caspar David Friedrich’s *Wanderer*<sup>14</sup> desire to launch himself into the radical alterity<sup>15</sup> of the mist? Or rather, does the wanderer wish to become mist itself?

Otto addresses this desire in his analysis of the *mysterium tremendum*. He talks about a contradictory feeling of alluring fascination that one registers alongside the ‘awefulness’ of the numinous encounter: “These two qualities, the daunting and the fascinating, now combine in a strange harmony of contrasts [...] (it) is at once the strangest and most noteworthy phenomenon in the whole history of religion”.

<sup>16</sup> He goes on to say:

The ‘mystery’ is for him not merely something to be wondered at but something that entrances him; and beside that in it which bewilders and confounds, he feels something that captivates and transports him with a strange ravishment, rising often enough to the pitch of dizzy intoxication; it is the Dionysiac element in the numen.<sup>17</sup>

This attraction to the *Dionysiac* element of the numinous implies a desire for the breakdown of the figure into the ground.<sup>18</sup> As a way of further fleshing out this desire we now turn to a contemporary of Otto’s, Sigmund Freud. It is worth stating that these two thinkers represent radically different, even antagonistic,

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 517

<sup>12</sup> Iversen, Margaret. 2007. *Beyond pleasure : Freud, lacan, barthes*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press. p. 1

<sup>13</sup> *Art in Theory 1648-1815*, p. 519



<sup>14</sup> Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, 1818

<sup>15</sup> “alterity” denotes the condition of “otherness” and can be understood as the opposite of “identity” – (Taylor, Mark C. 1987. *Alterity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. p. xxix). Though the term “radical alterity” is similar to the “wholly other”, it is invoked in reference to Friedrich in order to address the strong subjective dimension of the *Wanderer* painting that is further developed in the analysis of *The Chalk Cliffs* and *The Monk by the Sea*.

<sup>16</sup> *Idea of The Holy*, p. 31

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 31

<sup>18</sup> Dionysian intoxication is the basis for the ancient Greek festival of the dithyramb which Aristotle cites as the origin of the Greek chorus. The chorus which represents the collective is set in opposition to the actor which represents the individual. According to Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the individuated actor laments this divide and desires to once again become part of the chorus. This is further expanded upon in *Essay III: Artaud Betrayed*.

<sup>19</sup> *Beyond Pleasure*, p. 2

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5

<sup>21</sup> Freud, Sigmund, and James Strachey. 1989. *Beyond the pleasure principle*. New York: Norton. p. 43

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 46

schools of thought. Otto was a scholar of comparative religions while Freud's disdain for religion and mysticism is well known. Still, Otto's "fascinans" and Freud's theory of the 'Death Instinct' share something of a common, if contentious, territory.

### **The Death Instinct and The Oceanic**

The Death Instinct first appeared in Freud's 1920 publication, *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*. In the book, he makes some significant refinements to his thesis that all of life is governed by pleasure. Pleasure is not so much a thing in itself but rather the energy that is released in the elimination of unpleasure. This tendency to release the tension of unpleasure needed to be held in check lest the inertia of the pleasure principle reduce the psyche to a kind of zero-state.<sup>19</sup> In his early work this governing force was called the reality principle, which sought to regulate the 'unbinding' tendency of pleasure. In his treatment of shell-shocked soldiers after World War I, however, he noticed something that challenged this model. These victims of extreme trauma had a tendency to compulsively relive their experiences through nightmares without exhibiting signs of recovery. This contradicted Freud's assumption that the psyche engages in repetition as a therapeutic method of 'binding', and thus mastering, the surplus of stimuli experienced in the trauma. He concluded that since this destructive tendency for painful repetition was an unbinding force, it could not be in opposition to the pleasure principle - rather, it must be *beyond* it. A new model emerged then in which Eros, the life instinct "aimed at binding energy and maintaining vital unities",<sup>20</sup> was set against this new element beyond pleasure, the 'death instinct' or Thanatos, which seeks to unbind the organism and return it to the pre-organic ground:

It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces; that is, it is a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life.<sup>21</sup>

Freud sums up this radical idea with the harrowingly concise statement: "the aim of all life is death".<sup>22</sup> In Section 5 of *Beyond The Pleasure Principle* he argues that this *aim* or trajectory begins in microorganisms as a straight line to death. As organisms grew more sophisticated, this trajectory became more of an arc, circumscribing what we call 'life':



For a long time, perhaps, living substance was thus being constantly created afresh and dying, till decisive external influences altered in such a way as to oblige the still surviving substance to diverge ever more widely from its original course of life and to make ever more complicated *detours* before reaching its aim of death. These circuitous paths to death, faithfully kept to by the conservative instincts, would thus present us to-day with the picture of the phenomena of life.<sup>23</sup>

This sense of de-figuring the organism into a primordial ground can be related symbolically to the well-known passage on the ‘oceanic’ from the opening pages of *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Here Freud writes of a friend who, although in agreement with the illusory nature of religion, feels “sorry that [Freud] had not properly appreciated the ultimate source of religious sentiments.”<sup>24</sup> This sensation, which bears a striking similarity to Otto’s *mysterium tremendum*, he describes as “a sensation of eternity, a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded, something ‘oceanic’.”<sup>25</sup> Freud goes on to theorize that the ‘oceanic’ feeling (which he claims not to have experienced) is the trace of an infantile stage in psyche development when the ego embraced the entirety of the external world and made no differentiation between self and Other<sup>26</sup>, figure and ground. Through painful stimuli the ego then begins to shore itself up against unpleasure, developing a hard edge that differentiates between “a pure pleasure-ego” and a “strange and threatening ‘outside’.”<sup>27</sup> The ‘oceanic’ is accounted for as that initial feeling of “limitless extension and oneness with the universe” still resonating along side the now sharply articulated boundary of the ego.<sup>28</sup>

Though Freud does not directly relate the ‘oceanic’ to the death drive it is not unreasonable to outline certain interesting congruencies between the two. Both ideas deal with the attraction of the self to the Other whether it be the figure of the organism to the pre-organic ground or the articulated ego to the infantile state of expansive ‘oneness’. They differ in that the death drive marks a true desire for the destruction of the ego, whereas the pre-ego state of the ‘oceanic’ only exists along-side the ego as an aftereffect. Freud does however note, in *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*, a very general desire of organic life to “restore an earlier state of things” which it has necessarily been forced to abandon in order to deal with painful stimuli.<sup>29</sup> In this sense it is no difficult stretch to recognize a certain desire of the ego to undo the pain of individuation and restore itself to the original state of oceanic oneness just as the organism desires the pre-organic ground. If one dwells in the metaphor of the ocean a little longer it would seem that the act of drowning is a phenomenological hinge between the oceanic and the

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 46

<sup>24</sup> Freud, Sigmund, and Albert Dickson. 1985. *Civilization, society and religion : Group psychology, civilization and its discontents and other works*. Penguin Freud library. Vol. 12. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin. p. 251

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 251

<sup>26</sup> Lacan (introduced later in this essay) makes a distinction between “other” and “Other”. The lowercase (“little other”) denotes that “other” which is within us; the projected image of the ego. The big Other denotes that which is truly alien to us.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 254

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 255

<sup>29</sup> *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*, p. 43



Fig 2.4 - Caspar David Friedrich, *The Chalk Cliffs on Rügen*, 1818

<sup>30</sup> *Art in Theory 1648-1815*, p. 517

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p. 516

death instinct. At this intersection of the metaphorical and the literal, when water finally breaches the threshold of the body-ego, the oceanic state and the end-game of the death instinct are fully realized.

The protean image of the ocean is also central to Otto and Burke. Otto's description of the various guises of the *mysterium tremendum* for instance recalls quite closely a series of oceanic states washing over the subject, from a gentle tide to an eruption from the deep. Of the examples used by Burke and his contemporaries to illustrate the sublime, the ocean is of the most fecund:

A level plain of a vast extent on land, is certainly no mean idea; the prospect of such a plain may be as extensive as a prospect of the ocean; but can it ever fill the mind with any thing so great as the ocean itself? This is owing to several causes, but it is owing to none more than this, that the ocean is an object of no small terror.<sup>30</sup>

### Caspar David Friedrich

I now turn to a suite of 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings which illuminate a set of figure/ground relationships. Building on analyses by Austrian art critic Werner Hofmann, Caspar David Friedrich's *The Chalk Cliffs on Rügen* and *The Monk by the Sea* are read through the lens of the *mysterium tremendum*, the death instinct and the oceanic.

Figure 2.3 – *The Chalk Cliffs on Rügen*.

Among Friedrich's body of work, *The Chalk Cliffs on Rügen* is both typical and atypical. To the right of the image, Friedrich uses his familiar device of placing a figure in the foreground, back turned to the viewer, contemplating a landscape vastly beyond. This device, most iconic in his *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818), prevents the painting from devolving into the picturesque. Instead a surrogate gaze is embedded directly into the image revealing the subjective aspect of Burke's sublime - that something of the contemplated terror penetrates the body and "causes in us"<sup>31</sup> the sensation of the sublime. The strong presence of the foreground is also representative of the distancing that is required to experience the sublime.

What differentiates *The Chalk Cliffs* from many similar compositions however is the relationship of the figures to the edge of the foreground. Rather than a more gradual shift from the known realm of the foreground to the infinity of

the horizon, there is a lurching plunge as the viewer's eye desires to pass over the thin blades of grass into the abyss.<sup>32</sup> This effect is rendered more visceral by the figure of the old man in the center of the image. He crawls head-first towards the precipice, fingering the grasses, apparently oblivious to the abyss and aware only of the edge.<sup>33</sup> If the figure on the right presents us with the transfixed gaze from the firm ground of the known world, and the figure in the middle the direct engagement with the edge, the woman to the left stands in a posture of ambivalence between the two. Her left arm serves as a tenuous link to the stable world yet she is drawn, eyes closed, guided by her right index finger and left foot, across the threshold of the foreground into the *mysterium tremendum* of the beyond.

Figure 2.4 – *The Monk by the Sea*.

Something quite different happens in *The Monk by the Sea*. Friedrich's classic figure, and the discernible frame from which it contemplates the *mysterium tremendum* are receding away from the viewer. As Werner Hoffman writes, "Without the mediation of perspective, nearness is transformed ultimately into inaccessible distance. There is no empirical path from us to the monk. Consequently an aura of something wholly Other extends across the picture".<sup>34</sup> Rather than standing as the viewer's surrogate, the monk is drifting from the discernible realm of the figure into the indistinguishable alterity of the ground. This is not the image of a man who derives pleasure in the distanced apprehension of sublime terror. This is a figure dissected by land and sea - submitting to an internal desire to unbind himself from the pain of figuration. In his essay on the painting, Hoffman quotes Heinrich von Kleist, the 19<sup>th</sup> century German author, whose words are so haunting that they warrant quotation:

There can be nothing sadder or more desolate in the world than this place: the only spark of life in the broad domain of death, the lonely centre in the lonely circle. The picture, with its two or three mysterious subjects, lies there like an apocalypse, as if it were thinking Young's *Night Thoughts*<sup>35</sup>, and since it has, in its uniformity and boundlessness, no foreground but the frame, it is as if [the viewer's] eyelids had been cut off.<sup>36</sup>

Friedrich's identification with the monk in the painting is well documented.<sup>37</sup> And it is perhaps no surprise that various personal accounts of the man reveal a certain

<sup>32</sup> Hofmann, Werner, and Caspar David Friedrich. 2000. *Caspar David Friedrich*. London: Thames & Hudson. p. 127

<sup>33</sup> on p. 127 Hofmann offers several interpretations of the three figures though his focus is more on the contemplation of nature, not so much the engagement with the edge of alterity. He sees the two men as alternate portraits of Friedrich, the right one as Friedrich the artist gazing into the distance and the other as Friedrich the careful observer of the minutiae of nature.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 57

<sup>35</sup> *Night Thoughts* is the title of a poem by Edward Young written in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. The poem deals with the contemplation of death.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 56

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 57 – In discussing *The Monk by the Sea*, Hofmann references a chalk-drawing in which Friedrich depicted himself as a monk.



*Fig 2.4 Caspar David Friedrich, The Monk by the Sea, 1810*



morbid attraction to the terror of sublime forces that goes far beyond Burke's classical definition:

[he was] like one who voluntarily seeking a watery grave, clambering about, on and among the jagged edges of the cliff face and its precipices which dropped straight into the sea ... When a storm approached over the sea with thunder and lightning, he hurried to meet it at the cliff edge, like someone who had made a pact of friendship with those powers.<sup>38</sup>

Viewed as a self-portrait<sup>39</sup> *The Monk by the Sea* begs another layer of speculative interpretation. The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan<sup>40</sup> built his idea of "extimacy" upon Freud's notion of the "uncanny"; an idea which has its own history of being linked to the death drive.<sup>41</sup> Extimacy challenges the notion that the interior of the subject is the sole domain of the unconscious, that it is "not a purely interior psychic system but an intersubjective structure – the unconscious is outside".<sup>42</sup> It is, as Lacan says, "something strange to me, although it is at the heart of me." Lacan uses the figure of the mobius strip to illustrate this simultaneous interiority and exteriority.<sup>43</sup> If we build upon Kleist's moving description of the painting, we can intuit a very tangible sense of the simultaneous interiority and exteriority that Lacan talks about. Friedrich no longer stands as our confident surrogate figure contemplating the wildness of nature. With the removal of the foreground it is as though Friedrich has stepped out of the frame and now stands behind us. Rather than gazing through lidless eyes as Kleist suggests, we are caught in the zone between the gazing eye of Friedrich the painter and the self-image of Friedrich the monk, walking solemnly into an infinitely alien ground, projected onto on the backs of his closed eyelids. The stable frame of the foreground removed, we have been plunged into Otto and Burke's vast surplus of presence but also, paradoxically, onto the infinite edge of the mobius strip where the ego meets the oceanic.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 60

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 57 – Hofmann positions the painting as a self-portrait by way of Friedrich's association with the monk and points to some biographical evidence that suggests he had a strong emotional connection to death and suicide.

<sup>40</sup> Jacques Lacan was the most influential figure in late 20<sup>th</sup> century psychoanalysis. He based much of his early work on Freud while incorporating elements from the linguistic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure. Lacan's discourse spread into the disciplines of philosophy and literary theory and had a strong influence on structuralism and post-structuralism.

<sup>41</sup> *Beyond Pleasure*, p. 5 – The writing of Freud's *The 'Uncanny'* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* are concurrent. Contemporary English Art theorist Margaret Iversen points out that while Freud was working on *The 'Uncanny'* he was "clearly struck by the relevance of Hoffmann's tale of a young man's infatuation with a life-sized automaton and his compulsive, "mechanistic," self-destructive behavior.

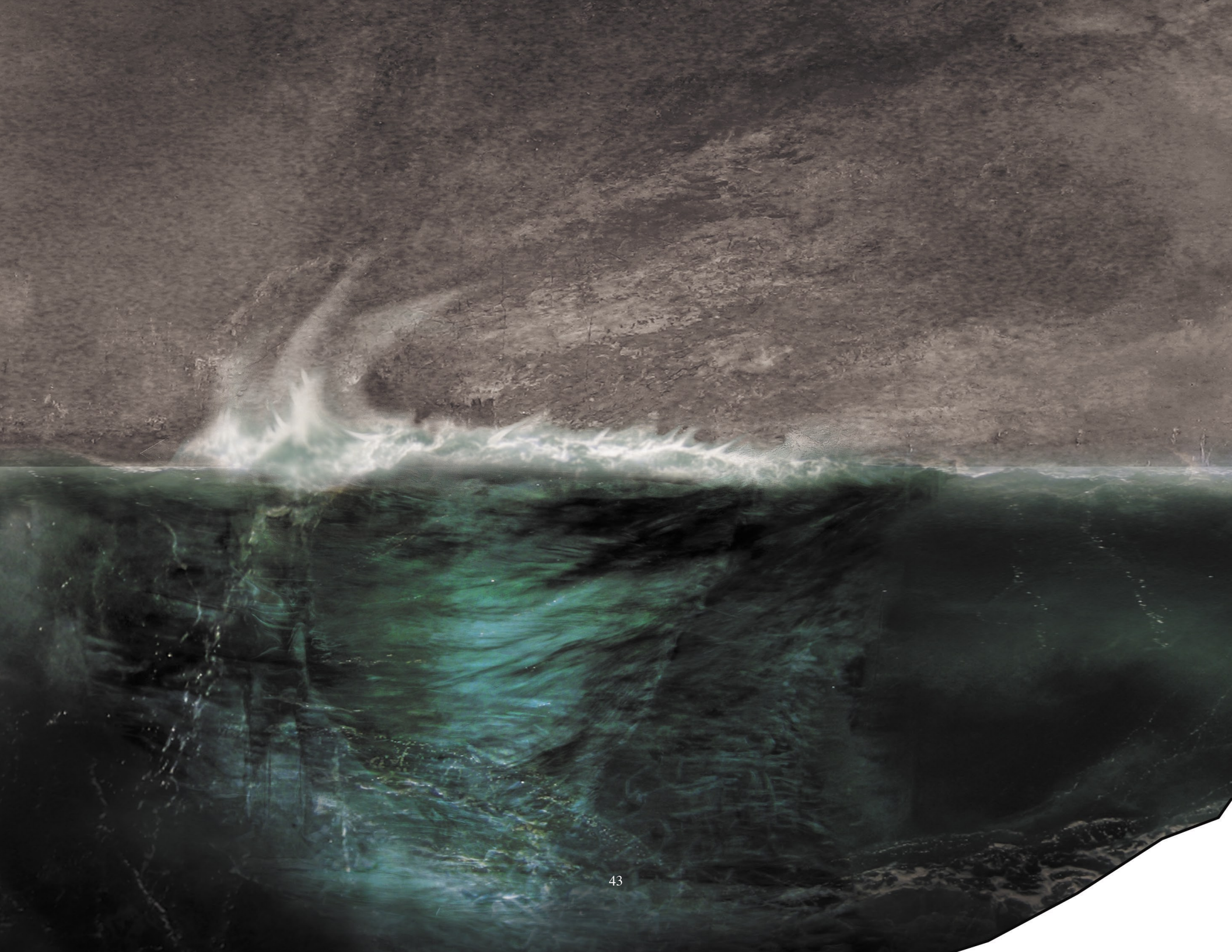
<sup>42</sup> [www.nosubject.com](http://www.nosubject.com).



<sup>43</sup> The mobius strip can be constructed by taking a strip of paper and connecting both ends after rotating one of them (about the long axis) 180 degrees. Both sides of the paper then become inside and outside as one moves along it. Lacan used several topological figures like this as a way of transmitting ideas outside of the constraints of language.

<sup>44</sup> My usage of the mobius strip as an edge owes much to contemporary drama theorist Mark Pizzato, whose book *Edges of Loss* figures prominently in to Essay III.









## ESSAY II: *SURPLUS OF ABSENCE*

*Essay I concluded with an investigation of representation. An analysis of two paintings by Caspar David Friedrich demonstrated ways of depicting the radical alterity of the numinous and sublime experience. Starting with early Christian mysticism, Essay II introduces the discourse of negative theology which also seeks the radically Other (in this case the divine), but takes the position that it is truly beyond representation and experience. The essay then traces the conflicted, yet profound, link that exists between the medieval discourse and the more contemporary work of Jacques Derrida and Georges Bataille.*

### **Pseudo-Dionysius The Areopagite**

For Pseudo-Dionysius the 6<sup>th</sup> century mystic, theology contemplates the divine through a series of affirmations and negations. Affirmative theology, which constitutes most of the western canon, celebrates the divine as the intelligible, definable, cause of all.<sup>1</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius expresses his specific affirmative theology most clearly in *The Divine Names*. This extensive work is a systematic exposition of the various nameable attributes of the divine (good, beauty, eros, power, justice etc.), which posit the degree of *sameness* between beings and the divine.<sup>2</sup> The lesser-known tradition of negative theology is concerned with *difference*. It contemplates the divine by defining what it is not - by systematically denying that which affirmative theology declares. Thus the aim of negative theology is to express the transcendence of the divine over all knowable things.<sup>3</sup> In Pseudo-Dionysius' *Mystical Theology* the dialectic of affirmation and denial takes place through a series of metaphoric tropes which centre around opposing images of illumination/darkness and ascent/descent.<sup>4</sup>

There is also a particular directional movement associated with the affirmative and negative strategies. Since it is easier to identify the degree of sameness between the divine and those beings that are high on the ontological scale (angels for instance), the affirmative strategy generally moves away from the divine. Conversely, it is easier to describe the difference between the divine and that which is furthest from it, meaning that the negative strategy, as Cambridge theologian Denys Turner puts it “constructs a ladder of negations” that moves towards the divine.<sup>5</sup> As such, the ‘via negativa’<sup>6</sup> requires displacement and radical ecstasis (literally “standing outside”) as it moves away from the known world into the unknown.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, the Areopagite, and J. D. (John Daniel) Jones. 1980. *Divine names and mystical theology. Mediaeval philosophical texts in translation* ; 21. Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press., p. 16

<sup>2</sup> *Divine Names (Jones Introduction)*, p. 21

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 22

<sup>4</sup> Turner, Denys. 1995. *Darkness of god : Negativity in christian mysticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 11 – Denys Turner argues that this imagery is inherited from the historical mixing of the Hellenic and Hebraic traditions – from Plato's cave to Moses' revelation on Mount Sinai.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 33

<sup>6</sup> “Via Negativa”, the negative way.

<sup>7</sup> *Divine Names (Jones Introduction)* p. 96

<sup>8</sup> Jacoff, Rachel and Freccero, John. 1988. *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*. Harvard University Press. p. 80

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 81

<sup>10</sup> *Darkness of God*, p. 20

<sup>11</sup> American theologian John Jones whose translation and commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius is used in the essay refers to the apophatic as the “negative (mystical)”. While this terminology helps to keep the idea in line with the negative tradition from which it arises, I have opted for the term “apophatic” which allows it to have a broader reach beyond the realm of theology.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 37 (as quoting Pseudo-Dionysius)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 35

Pseudo-Dionysius also outlines three different motions of the intellect: the first is linear when it trains its focus on external things and the second circular when it enters into itself to “contemplate the Supreme Being”.<sup>8</sup> The third motion, the spiral, is the combination of the first two and occurs when “the knowledge of divine things illuminates [the intellect] not by way of intuition or in unity, but thanks to discursive reasons and, so to speak, by complex and progressive steps.”<sup>9</sup> It is by way of these progressive spiraling steps that a dialectic of affirmations and negations unfold. This progression is captured in the form of the vortex. The body that travels the vortex of negative theology begins in a kind of ‘circumstance’, appearing linear (earthly, human) towards its outer edge but becoming more circular (divine) the closer it gets to the center and the further it gets from the intelligibility of the known world.

### The ‘Apophatic’

While negative theology moves towards the divine, and while it denies the whole of affirmative theology in its wake, it is crucial to note that both the affirmative *and* negative strategies fall under the broader category of ‘cataphatic’ theology. What characterizes cataphatic theology is that it *does* in fact speak, affirmatively and negatively, about the divine.<sup>10</sup> After all, the ‘negative’ component of the denial/affirmation dialectic can also be seen as an affirmation of difference (one can say that the divine is *not* a mountain, or one can equally say that the divine *is* different than a mountain).

In contrast to the cataphatic theology is the ‘apophatic’ theology, “the linguistic strategy of somehow showing by means of language that which lies beyond language”.<sup>11</sup> What constitutes the apophatic in Pseudo-Dionysius is in fact the cessation of all speech both negative and positive. Thus the apophatic is arrived at by way of *exhausting* the cataphatic. For as Pseudo-Dionysius states, “we should not conclude that negations are simply the opposites of affirmations, but rather that the cause of all is considerably prior to this, beyond privations, beyond every denial, beyond every assertion.”<sup>12</sup> As Turner argues, “there is a very great difference between the strategy of negative propositions and the strategy of negating the propositional; between that of the negative image and that of the negation of imagery.”<sup>13</sup>

And so when Pseudo-Dionysius invokes a metaphor such as ‘dark brilliance’, the logic is threefold: on the one hand he *affirms* that god is ‘light’ while on the other he *negates* this with the metaphor of darkness. The final step, the apophatic one,

is to 'negate the negation' between light and dark by acknowledging that 'God *is*' this 'brilliant darkness'.<sup>14</sup>

However the notion of the apophatic is a troubled one. For just as American theologian John Jones refers to it as the ultimate denial of all affirmative and negative theologies and thus all of metaphysics, this particular stance can be critiqued by pointing out that "the act of denial itself is a metaphysical gesture".<sup>15</sup> Denys Turner likens the apophatic to the spaces between piers in a mediaeval church, an illustration that is also somewhat flawed since the engagement with negative space does not lay beyond the work of architecture but is in fact very much within the bounds of its discourse - just as metaphorical affirmations and negations are within the discourse of cataphatic theology.<sup>16</sup>

So how does one escape linguistic representation *by way* of it? Turner is clear in making his case for the apophatic that while it tends towards silence, towards the cessation of speech, it does not simply abandon speech in order to achieve this. Rather the apophatic is not a type of language at all but is in fact "what is achieved, whether by means of affirmative or by means of negative discourse, when language *breaks down*." The apophatic method of achieving the failure of language is by working *within* the bounds of language; stretching it to the point of collapse. If we return to the example of the "brilliant darkness" we can conclude that the apophatic breakdown of language is not simply achieved in the denial of this statement but precisely because the statement itself, as extreme paradox, subverts the medium of language from within.<sup>17</sup> Turner writes:

...we reach the point at which the apophatic begins by means of the comprehensiveness of our affirmations [positive *and* negative], whose combined and mutually canceling forces crack open the surface of language; and it is through the fissures in our discourse that the darkness of the apophatic is glimpsed.<sup>18</sup>

Metaphoric representation, it would seem, is a consciously chosen tool for the mystical discourse. What it allows for is the break down of language without actually violating any of its rules since the metaphors themselves, these 'figures of speech', remain intact. When brought into juxtaposition however paradox is achieved, breaking apart the ground of language to reveal the "darkness of the apophatic".

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 22

<sup>15</sup> Coward, Harold G., and Toby Foshay. 1992. *Derrida and negative theology*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press. p. 11  
– Quoting Australian poet/theologian Kevin Hart who makes this critique of Jones' argument.

<sup>16</sup> *Darkness of God*, p. 150

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 22. Turner calls this the "self-subverting utterance"

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 33. The note in parentheses is the author's. Turner is making the point that the apophatic comes by way of exhausting the cataphatic and thus chooses the term "affirmations" as an over-arching term for negation and affirmation.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 5

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 4

<sup>21</sup> Derrida, Jacques. 1993 "Circumfession" in *Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida*. Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press

<sup>22</sup> Derrida, Jacques. 1995. "Sauf le nom" in *On the Name*. Meridian, Stanford Calif: Stanford University Press., p. 35

<sup>23</sup> Caputo, John D. 1997. *Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without religion*. The Indiana Series in the philosophy of religion. Bloomington: Indiana University Press., p. 8

<sup>24</sup> This is a very conscious usage of the term "messianic". Much of Derrida's philosophical preoccupations grew out of a deeply conflicted relationship with his Jewish heritage. The sense of non-incarnational "messianism", influenced by fellow Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, was central in developing notions of the impossibility of the "wholly other" (*toute autre*).

<sup>25</sup> *Prayers and Tears*, p. 2

According to Turner it is precisely the metaphoric nature of mystical language that has been misunderstood by many of its readers. Despite the rich imagery that Pseudo-Dionysius employs in *The Mystical Theology*, it is still only a mode of symbolic representation. The metaphors he uses are not, as one might begin to think, descriptors of a certain kind of personal experience. What we would commonly understand as 'mystical experience', Turner argues, is in fact antithetical to the method of the medieval mystic. Whereas the post-enlightenment reader has tended to interpret mystical discourse as divine experience, the mystic calls upon the metaphor precisely to deny it.<sup>19</sup> For the mystic any encounter with the divine is utterly hidden from experience.<sup>20</sup> The via negativa is not the life of divine communions, of trances and ecstatic experiences, it is a chaste one, a life that tends towards nothingness.

### Derrida, Eckhart, Bataille

If, as Turner suggests, contemporary culture has eclipsed the original mystical spirit by an undue emphasis on the experience, the apophatic tendency of medieval mysticism most certainly finds a resonance in some threads of post-modern theory. One recent figure who shared a very direct affinity with the deconstructive aspect of negative theology was French philosopher and literary theorist Jacques Derrida. Derrida, who said of himself "quite rightly passes for an atheist",<sup>21</sup> began to engage in a dialogue with negative theology more and more vigorously in his late writings - albeit with all of the chameleonic ambiguity that one might expect from him. The Derrida that passes for an atheist is also the Derrida who writes that negative theology "at times so resembles the profession of atheism as to be mistaken for it."<sup>22</sup> His famous neologism *différance* (which is intentionally misspelled)<sup>23</sup> plays on the double meaning of the French verb "différer" which encapsulates (and liberates as he would suggest) the verbs "to differ" and "to defer". As "differ", it points to the difference between words, the requisite space that is opened up to allow for a word to be defined by what it is not. As "defer", it points to the inadequacy of words to convey their meaning and thus their necessity to continually defer meaning. Words then, are constantly deferring their meaning to other words from which they also acquire meaning, igniting an endless circulation of signifiers which bemoans a meaning that is always yet to come, always messianic.<sup>24</sup> This recalls quite closely the spiral of affirmations and negations employed by Pseudo-Dionysius. It is perhaps not surprising then that during the discussion period that followed Derrida's original 1968 presentation of *différance*, a frustrated respondent exclaimed, "it [différance] is the source of everything and one cannot know it: it is the God of negative theology," to which Derrida simply replied, "it is, and it is not" - affirmation coupled with denial.<sup>25</sup>

Derrida's response encapsulates the knife-edge that deconstruction walks between heresy and orthodoxy, an edge shared by many of the mystics. It also recalls the 14<sup>th</sup> century German mystic, Meister Eckhart who famously says, "I pray to God to rid me of God"<sup>26</sup>. Eckhart was accused of heresy on many occasions, usually on the grounds of minute inflections of language which had wildly controversial implications. In many of his sermons, Eckhart refers to something that he calls the 'ground of the soul', which he describes as a negative state. He writes:

...there is something which is above the created being of the soul and which is untouched by any createdness, which is to say *nothingness* ... It is akin to the divine nature, it is united in itself, it has nothing in common with anything at all ... It is a strange land and a desert, and it is more without a name than nameable, more unknown than knowable.<sup>27</sup>

Recalling Friedrich's vacant landscape in *The Monk by the Sea*, this ground of nothingness, where the soul of the individual meets the divine, also goes under different names: a "silence" a "desert". Yet in all cases the negative tone of the metaphor is consistent and strongly moves in the direction of radical atheism. Also in this statement, Eckhart refers to the idea, shared by Pseudo-Dionysius, that the divine is encountered in a state of non-knowledge. One passes into unknowing through knowing.

The play between the known and the unknown, the presence and absence of knowledge, is also reminiscent of the work of early 20<sup>th</sup> century dissident author and neo-mystic Georges Bataille. Bataille, to whom Derrida owes much, cites several mystics in the opening pages of *Inner Experience*. He finds a sympathetic voice in Eckhart's statement that "God is Nothingness",<sup>28</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius' "ray of darkness", and the Spanish mystic St. John of the Cross "who, falling into the night of non-knowledge, touches upon the extreme limit of the possible"<sup>29</sup>. And in a passage that seems very much in keeping with the notion of the apophatic state beyond all speech he writes: "the word silence is still a sound, to speak is in itself to imagine knowing; and to no longer know, it would be necessary to no longer speak. [...] It is through "intimate cessation of all intellectual operations" that the mind is laid bare."<sup>30</sup> Despite these similarities Bataille himself declares his thought to be atheological, whereas the mystics would no doubt declare themselves theists. *Inner Experience* was the first of a three-part work entitled *La Somme Atheologique*, referring unequivocally to St. Thomas Aquinas' sprawling work of theological affirmation, the *Summa Theologica*<sup>31</sup>. A further distinction is that the *nothing* of the mystics is necessarily *beyond* the realm of experience. For Bataille, it

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 4

<sup>27</sup> *Negativity of God*, p. 141

<sup>28</sup> Bataille, Georges. 1988. *Inner experience. Intersections : Philosophy and critical theory*. Albany: State University of New York Press. p. 4

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 12

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 13

<sup>31</sup> Ibid (Introduction), ix

<sup>32</sup> Ibid (Introduction), xii

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p. 5

<sup>34</sup> Derrida, Jacques. 2002 "Other Testaments: Derrida and Religion" Conference, University of Toronto [audio recording] accessed May 2009 at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r3fScS2cnB0&feature=related>

<sup>35</sup> *Sauf le nom*, p. 35 – In french, "la voix blanche"

is by making a sacrifice of 'the beyond' (which is analogous to God) that immediate existence gains the possibility of fulfillment.<sup>32</sup> Still I would argue that there is a great difference between the "nothing" of the nihilist and the "nothing" of a serious atheist like Bataille. It is true that Bataille wishes to kill the god of the theologian, but only because he is "an obstacle in the movement which carries us to the more obscure apprehension of the *unknown*: of a presence which is no longer in any way distinct from an absence."<sup>33</sup>

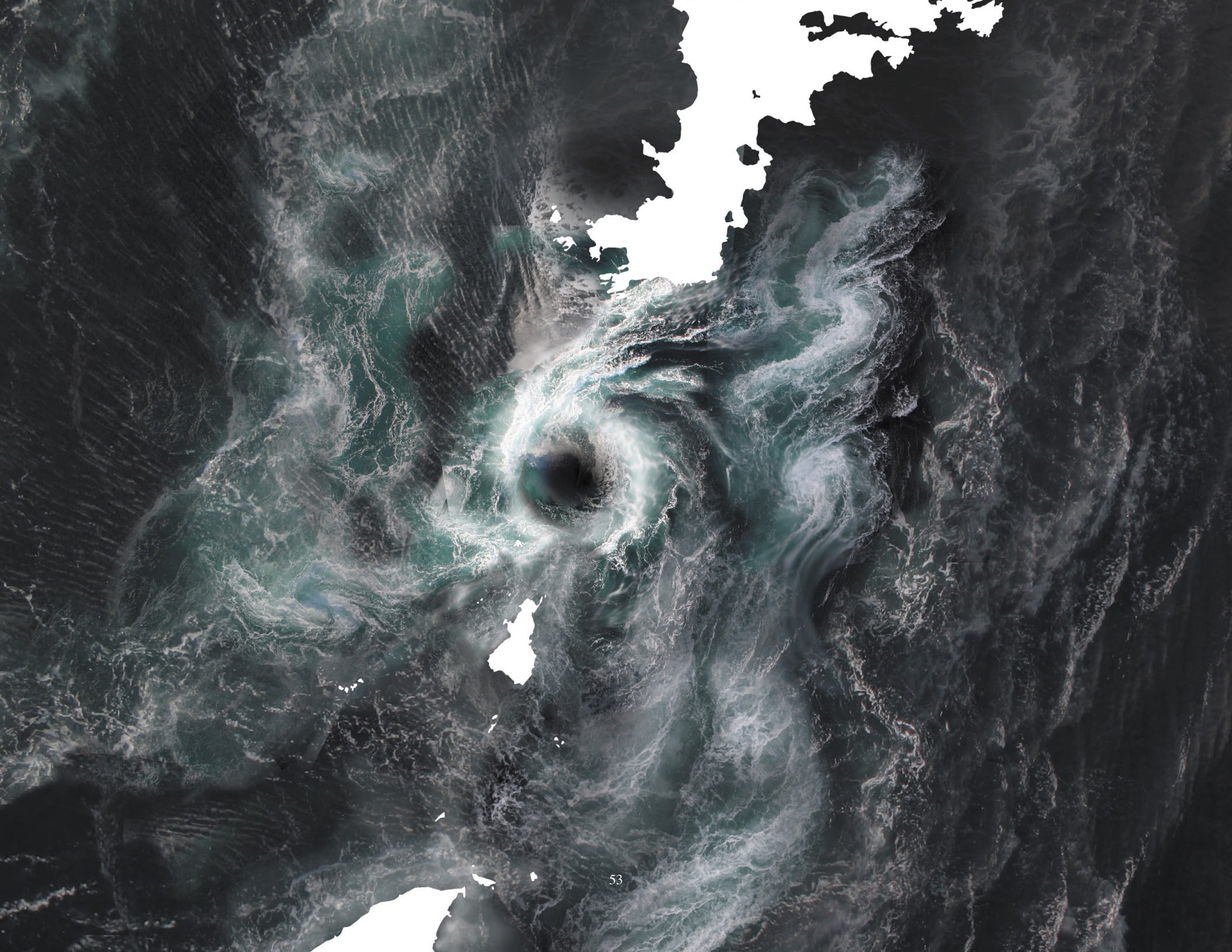
Derrida says that "if one doesn't go as far as possible in the direction of atheism one does not believe in God."<sup>34</sup> Perhaps it is fitting that he had an affinity with the metaphoric dexterity and syntactical play involved in the quasi-atheism of negative theology. His immense body of work has been dismissed by some as a bewildering mesh of dialectics, linguistic manipulations and deliberate obscurantism that ultimately leads to nothing. But if this accusation is legitimate, then the same could easily be made of Pseudo-Dionysius.

Both bodies of work are concerned with the apophatic, what Derrida calls "the voiceless voice".<sup>35</sup> This is their method for escaping Bataille's conundrum that "the word silence is still a sound": an immersion in language, which through extreme paradox, not synthesis, is aimed at the breakdown of linguistic representation itself. In this sense, Derrida's body of work can be seen as an exhaustive cataphatic expression that belies its apophaticism by taking the spiral way, by speaking around it in ever diminishing circles yet never naming it. For it is in the dark mist of the axis that language falls away; that the vortex itself is denied.

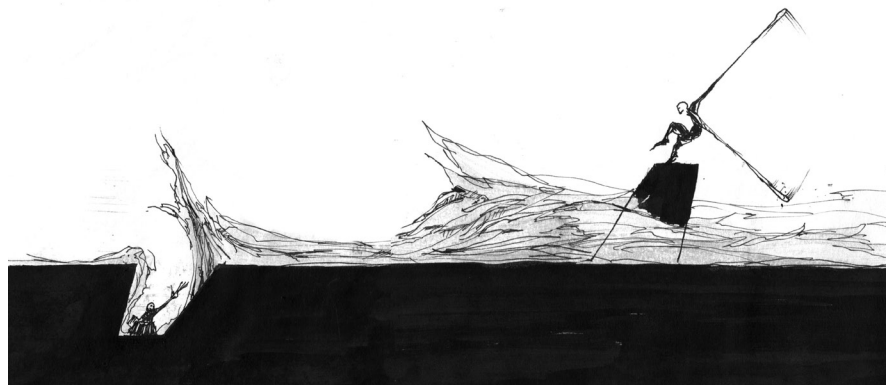












## ESSAY III: ARTAUD BETRAYED

The previous essays presented two different cosmological understandings of the “wholly other”. The first, *Surplus of Presence*, presented us with the ground of the beyond that is, however wild and overpowering, still intelligible to some degree and within the bounds of experience and representation. *Surplus of Absence* showed us a very different picture: one in which the ground of the wholly other is fully beyond the limits of experience and representation. This final essay, *Artaud Betrayed*, presents us with a third ground condition that incorporates elements of presence and absence: the ground of collective ritual as embodied in the chorus of Greek theatre. The essay begins by examining the ritual origins of theatre according to Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy*. Through the lens of Plato’s notion of the “chora”, it traces the elusive role of the “chorus” in the 20<sup>th</sup> century theatre experiments of Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowski and Bertolt Brecht. The essay concludes with a speculative reflection on the intertwining origins of architecture and theatre.

### Nietzsche

Published in 1872, *The Birth of Tragedy* was written between the twilight of romanticism and the dawn of modernism.<sup>1</sup> Though much of the book is taken up with Nietzsche’s writing on Greek theatre, the ultimate goal was to provide a cultural founding myth for the new German empire - a myth that was rooted in the Dionysian spirit. In the book, Nietzsche develops an evolutionary model of art that relies on the monumental tension between the *Apollonian* and the *Dionysian* forces.<sup>2</sup> The Apollonian force is associated with individuation, dreams, and rationality as expressed in the visual and plastic arts. The Dionysian, on the other hand, is associated with communality, intoxication, chaos and formlessness - qualities that are most acutely expressed through the non-representational art of music.<sup>3</sup> It is a momentary “coupling” of these two drives, induced by the Hellenic will, which “gives birth” to Greek Attic Tragedy. Nietzsche saw this art form as the paragon of Apollonian/Dionysian balance.<sup>4</sup> Though his argument is heavily focused on the Dionysian, he is clear that a balance must exist between the two forces. Furthermore the Dionysian *requires* the Apollonian figure of the mask in order to speak:

...the only real Dionysus appears in a multiplicity of forms, in the mask of a hero engaged in struggle and as it were entangled in the net of the individual will. In the form in which the god now appears, speaks and acts, he resembles an erring, striving, suffering individual: and that he *appears* at all with such epic certainty and clarity is the effect of Apollo the interpreter of dreams, who through this allegorical appearance interprets to the chorus its Dionysian state.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Douglas Smith Dr. 2000. *Birth of Tragedy*. Oxford world’s classics (oxford university press. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press. p. xxv – Nietzsche was educated as a classical philologist. He wrote *The Birth of Tragedy* at the age of 28 and while one can certainly detect much of the fervor that characterized his later work, the book contains little of the hyperbolic, aphoristic style that he is best known for.

<sup>2</sup> As the ultimate goal of the work was to excavate the Dionysian spirit as a symbol for the new Germany, the actual research is highly contentious. It was the publishing of this book that would effectively end Nietzsche’s career as a classicist. – *Birth of Tragedy*, p. vii

<sup>3</sup> *Birth of Tragedy*, p. 19. In the introduction, Douglas Smith references Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation* in order to discuss Nietzsche’s preference for music as a Dionysian art form. Schopenhauer claims that the world we perceive is a world of representation one step removed from the will. Most art forms are representational, which results in a second order removal from the will. Music, he argues, being non-representational, gives us a direct connection with the will and it is the will that is most closely linked to Dionysian energy. (p. ix)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 19

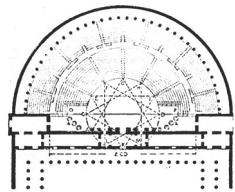
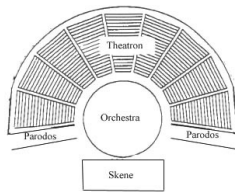
<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 59

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 68. – Here Nietzsche reveals that the struggle now exists between Dionysus and the “newly-born daemon” Socrates.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 42

<sup>8</sup> Alberto Pérez-Gómez in *Chora* p. 12 (ref. below) also references Aristotle’s passage on the origins of theatre. This essay draws on both commentaries.

<sup>9</sup> Pérez-Gómez, 1994. “Chora: The Space of Architectural Representation.” *Chora: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*. eds. Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Stephen Parcell Montréal Que.: McGill University Press – Queen’s University Press., p. 12 – Plan of typical classical theatres: Greek (top), and Roman according to Vitruvius (bottom).



<sup>10</sup> Thespis is credited as being the first actor of Greek tragedy. Though his historical authenticity is doubtful, the legend is a poignant one. In an act of sacrifice, Thespis dismembers the chorus by donning the mask and stepping apart from it. Phenomenologically this can be seen as marking the end of ritual and the birth of theatre. “Thespis - Introduction.” *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism*. Ed. Lynn M. Zott. Vol. 51. Gale Cengage, 2002. eNotes.com. 2006. 1 Jul, 2009 <<http://www.enotes.com/classical-medieval-criticism/thespis>>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 137 note 19

The central thrust of Nietzsche’s argument traces the gradual suppression of the Dionysian element, as embodied in the chorus, and the ascension of the Apollonian, which found its most dominant form in the rational, logo-centric theater of Euripides.<sup>6</sup> This shifting role of the chorus, as an organ in the anatomy of theater, is most relevant to this thesis.

Nietzsche invokes Aristotle in pointing to the ritual origins of the chorus.<sup>7</sup> In the *Poetics*, Aristotle describes how the spring dance of the “dithyramb”, an ecstatic celebration of fertility dedicated to Dionysus, eventually became the primary act of the theater.<sup>8</sup> The “choros”, the circular dance of the dithyramb, became the space of the chorus. Taking its name from “orchesis” meaning dance, the circular platform of the “orchestra” was the original stage - inhabited by the chorus - around which the spectators were seated.<sup>9</sup>

Beginning with the apocryphal dramatist Thespis<sup>10</sup>, who introduced the individuated actor, the importance of the chorus began to decline.<sup>11</sup> By the time of Vitruvius the space of the chorus had lost all of its original potency. The stage (skene), which had previously existed only as a frame beyond the orchestra, now bisected the circular platform to become the focus of the theatrical event. “The platform [the orchestra]”, Vitruvius writes, “has to be made deeper than that of the Greeks, because all our artists perform on the stage, while the orchestra contains the places reserved for the seats of senators.”<sup>12</sup>

Nietzsche saw the great potential for overcoming the “chasm separating man from man”, in the communal ritual ground of the Dionysian chorus.<sup>13</sup> Yet he is neither advocating the elimination of individuated actors nor a return to the dithyramb by dissolving the actor/spectator split.<sup>14</sup> Rather, Nietzsche advocates the idea that the chorus inhabits the expanded threshold that both connects *and* separates watcher from watched: “a living wall which tragedy [builds] around itself in order to shut out the real world and to protect its ideal ground and poetic freedom.”<sup>15</sup>

## Chora

Before addressing various 20<sup>th</sup> century experiments with the actor/spectator divide, it is worth a brief excavation of the word “chora” in order to deepen our understanding of the “chorus”. “Chora” is the Greek word for “space”.<sup>16</sup> It is also derived from the Greek word for “womb”.<sup>17</sup> In the *Timaeus*, Plato defines the chora as the transitory condition between being and becoming, the “receptacle of becoming”.<sup>18</sup> He illustrates this obscure condition as “a kind of neutral plastic material on which changing impressions are stamped by the things which enter

it, making it appear different at different times”.<sup>19</sup> Plato also calls the chora the “nurse of becoming” likening it to the maternal void of the womb. While it can be understood as solid or void, the chora is properly the space *between* being and becoming and thus can also paradoxically be understood as a threshold. A manifestation of the void-as-threshold can be seen in the portal of the medieval cathedral. Though the portal marks the crucial separation between the world of the sacred and the non-sacred, it also stretches into both worlds to become a womb like space in itself - expanded further by the dense layers of symbol and myth adorning its edges.

This sense of chora as both womb and threshold is fundamental to an understanding of theater - ancient and contemporary. The classical chorus - in the form of a group of actors - has all but disappeared in contemporary theater, yet American drama theorist Mark Pizzato argues in *Edges of Loss* that it still haunts the “ghostly site” of the evacuated orchestra pit and persists as the “psycho-spatial separation”<sup>20</sup> between actor and spectator. He argues that theatre gains its efficacy in the mutual desire for one another (actor/spectator) across the stage edge.<sup>21</sup> From here on the divide between actor and spectator – conceived as a conflation of the “chorus” and the “chora”, void and threshold - will be referred to as the “choral edge”. Taking French psychoanalyst André Green’s position that, “we may try to eliminate [the stage] edge [but] it is only reconstituted elsewhere”,<sup>22</sup> we will now attempt to locate this ghostly choral edge, however marginalized or suppressed, in the work of Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowski and Bertolt Brecht.

## Artaud

To encounter the work of Antonin Artaud is to tread a fractured ground that exists somewhere between art and madness. The work he produced in the early part of the last century forms an overwhelming corpus that consists of letters, invented languages, theatre, art and film reviews and criticism, essays, texts on theatre, manifestos, poems, screenplays, a novel, translations, spells, sketches, portraits, audio recordings and performance.<sup>23</sup> Though his writing on theatre makes up a small portion of his work, it has become his most provocative and inspiring legacy. In *The Theater and Its Double* (1944) Artaud calls for a radical purging of the “asphyxiating atmosphere”<sup>24</sup> of western theater with its primacy of text and meaning. He sought to replace text with a “unique language half-way between gesture and thought”,<sup>25</sup> a language of “violent and concentrated action”<sup>26</sup> that would connect to something beyond text invoking “a bleeding spurt of images”.<sup>27</sup> He called this “The Theater of Cruelty”. The word “cruelty” is deliberately ambiguous and multi-dimensional and yet Artaud was not referring

<sup>12</sup> Vitruvius Pollio., Morgan, M. H. (Morris Hicky), 1859-1910, tr, and Dendy, William, 1948-, former owner. 1960. *Ten books on architecture*. Dover books on architecture. New York: Dover., p. 146

<sup>13</sup> *Birth of Tragedy*, p. 45

<sup>14</sup> Ibid (Introduction), p. xvii

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 44. Here Nietzsche is paraphrasing German poet and philosopher Friedrich von Schiller.

<sup>16</sup> *Chora*, (editor's introduction)

<sup>17</sup> Adams, Alice Elaine. 1994. *Reproducing the womb: Images of childbirth in science, feminist theory, and literature* Cornell University Press., p. 22 – My emphasis on the chora as “womb” invokes the work of feminist philosopher/ psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva. She adapts Plato’s term to describe a pre-linguistic state of becoming in the development of an infant. The elusive term can be related loosely to Lacan’s concept of “The Real”.

<sup>18</sup> Plato, Plato./ Critias, and Henry Desmond Pritchard Lee Sir. 1971. *Timaeus and critias*. translated with an introd. and an appendix on atlantis by H.D.P. lee. (Harmondsworth: Eng.) Penguin Books (1971). p. 67

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 69

<sup>20</sup> Pizzato, Mark. 1998. *Edges of loss : From modern drama to postmodern theory*. Theater--theory/text/performance. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. p. 6

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 6 – Pizzato relates the desire across the actor/spectator split to Lacan’s notion of the “split subject” as a “lack of being (*manqué-à-être*)” developed in the “mirror stage”. The mirror stage, briefly summarized, occurs when the child recognizes its own image in the mirror (literal mirror or mirrored in the actions of the mother) which gives rise to an understanding of the self as split between the real and the imaginary.

<sup>22</sup> As quoted in *Edges of Loss*, p. 6

<sup>23</sup> Scheer, Edward. 2004. “Introduction” *Antonin artaud : A critical reader*. ed. Edward Scheer London ; New York: Routledge. p. 3

<sup>24</sup> Artaud, Antonin. 1958. *Theater and its double*. translated from the french by mary caroline richards. New York: Grove Press (C1958). p. 74

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 89

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 82

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 82

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 79

<sup>29</sup> *Theater and its double*, p. 102

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 96

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 97

<sup>32</sup> Brook, Peter. 1968. *The empty space*. Discus books. New York: Avon, 1972. p. 49

<sup>33</sup> Barber, Stephen. 1993. Antonin artaud : Blows and bombs. London: Faber and Faber., p. 44

<sup>34</sup> Grotowski, Jerzy. 1968. *Towards a poor theatre*. New York: Simon and Schuster., p. 17

<sup>35</sup> Roose-Evans, James. 1984. *Experimental theatre from stanislavsky to peter brook*. Rev. Ed ed. London: Routledge & K. Paul., p. 147

to cruelty as harm or bloodshed.<sup>28</sup> Rather he invokes cruelty as an all-pervasive artistic/cosmic force, and primarily as a kind of high-discipline:

Cruelty is above all lucid, a kind of rigid control and submission to necessity. There is no cruelty without consciousness and without the application of consciousness. It is consciousness that gives to the exercise of every act of life its blood-red color, its cruel nuance, since it is understood that life is always someone's death.<sup>29</sup>

Though Artaud's writing in *The Theater and Its Double* is inscrutable at times (yet always evocative), it is still possible to discern some glimpses of his visionary theatre. He describes the abolition of the stage and the auditorium in favor of a "single site, without partition or barrier of any kind, which will become the theater of action." With an inversion of the Greek paradigm he will "engulf" the spectators by placing them "in the middle of the action" in order that a "direct communication will be re-established between the spectator and the spectacle".<sup>30</sup> In this inversion, the audience now occupies the dithyrambic platform and the actors are pushed to the peripheries surrounding them with a thick choral edge. Artaud would also manipulate this relationship in three dimensions by using overhead galleries which "permit actors, whenever the action makes it necessary, to be pursued from one point in the room to another, and the action to be deployed on all levels and in all perspectives of height and depth."<sup>31</sup>

Artaud remains one of the most influential figures in 20<sup>th</sup> century theatre. Yet despite the allure of The Theatre of Cruelty, most experiments to coax it across the divide between theory and practice have failed - including Artaud's own attempts. In an essay devoted to Artaud, Derrida is only able to approach a definition of his theatre through negation, by defining what it is not rather than what it is. Peter Brook, the English avant-garde director claims that The Theatre of Cruelty dies precisely when it attempts to cross from the ideal to the real. "Artaud applied", he says, is "Artaud betrayed."<sup>32</sup>

### Grotowski

Jerzy Grotowski, the Polish born theater director operating primarily in the 1960s, has been widely considered the most immediate heir to Artaud's unfulfilled legacy.<sup>33</sup> But where Artaud would envelope the spectator in a dizzying swarm of lights and objects, Grotowski would strip away as much as possible. His "Poor Theatre" was a self-confessed *via negativa* (negative way)<sup>34</sup> which would negate almost everything but the choral edge between actor and spectator.<sup>35</sup> The Poor

Theatre developed a specific architectonic configuration based on the needs of each production, and Grotowski often experimented with how the choral edge would manifest in space - sometimes dispersing the audience among the actors and at other times sequestering the two into clearly delineated zones.<sup>36</sup> It is this latter arrangement most clearly defined in his production of *The Constant Prince* (1967) that is most effective at furthering the discussion of the choral edge.

Like many Poor Theatre productions, *The Constant Prince* took on an architectural configuration designed specifically for the performance. The stage was a small rectangular area roughly four metres wide by nine metres deep situated within a larger room. The audience, limited to forty people, occupied the entire perimeter of the stage in a trench-like space, separated from the rest of the room by a low partition, and separated from the actors by a stark chest height wall.<sup>37</sup> If one imagines the orchestra pit, the evacuated void of the chorus, stretched out and wrapped around the perimeter of the stage, we can perhaps understand this trench as the conflation of the audience and the chorus. In contrast to Artaud's gesture of placing the audience on stage, surrounded by a choral edge, here the audience in fact *inhabits* the choral edge – casting the surrounding room as the evacuated space of the spectator.

Following on Artaud's notion of cruelty as discipline, the suffering of Grotowski's actor on stage was very real. Far from the maker of illusions, the actor was in a sense a high priest who, through extraordinary control of the body and the emotions was able to guide the audience into the experience – an effect that could only be achieved through a visceral empathetic connection between actor and spectator.<sup>38</sup> The wall around the stage edge, recalling the most aggressive and primal of architectural devices creates an embedded tension between the demarcation of the choral edge and Grotowski's desire for this extreme empathy to bridge it. In this scenario the role of the audience is to *bear witness* to the profound event happening on stage rather than witness an illusion - a shift which bends theatre much closer to the realm of ritual.

In his desire for a fully transformative via negativa, Grotowski would eventually deny even the audience itself. His *Theatre of Sources* which came late in his career, was aimed at “bringing us back to the sources of life, to direct primeval experience”. With no audience required to validate the event, these performative acts all but dissolved the choral edge, becoming virtually unrecognizable as works of theatre.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 148

<sup>37</sup> *Experimental Theatre*, p. 144 - Aerial view of the stage of *The Constant Prince*.



<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 147

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p. 154

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 69

<sup>41</sup> *Edges of Loss*, p. 106

<sup>42</sup> Benjamin, Walter, and Hannah Arendt. 1985. *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books., p. 154

## Brecht

In order to give the choral edge its full spectrum of states we look finally to the work of early 20<sup>th</sup> century German political dramatist Bertolt Brecht. While Brecht did not employ such a strong architectonic divide as in Grotowski's *Prince*, his primary aim was the full separation of audience and actor, or what he called the *Verfremdungseffekt* (the distancing effect, more directly translated as the "alienating effect").<sup>40</sup> His "Epic Theatre" was a direct reaction to the state of non-thinking complacency in 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic theatre. For Brecht, an ardent Marxist, the play was an instructive tool that could be used to awaken individual faculties of critical thought. This would enable the disenfranchised working class to use what they saw on stage to bring about political and social change outside the theater walls. As Mark Pizzato writes The Epic Theater "fights alienation with alienation."<sup>41</sup>

The 'distancing' of the audience was achieved primarily by disrupting empathetic exchange between actor and spectator (and in fact between actor and character). Paradoxically however, the architectural manifestation of this was to bring the audience and performer closer together by eliminating the domain of the chorus. Walter Benjamin, the great Marxist critic-philosopher and close friend of Brecht writes,

Epic theater allows for [...] the filling in of the orchestra pit. The abyss which separates the players from the audience as it does the dead from the living; the abyss whose silence in a play heightens the sublimity, whose resonance in an opera heightens the intoxication – this abyss, of all elements of the theater the one that bears the most indelible traces of its ritual origin, has steadily decreased in significance. The stage is still raised, but no longer rises from an unfathomable depth; it has become a dais. The didactic play and the epic theater are attempts to sit down on a dais.<sup>42</sup>

Grotowski desired an intense connection across the choral edge – yet he heightens this edge by creating a physical barrier and "psycho-spatial" connection between actor and spectator. Brecht on the other hand desired to break down the choral edge in order achieve his alienating effect. He used caricatured sets, captions on placards that interrupted the action on stage, and frequent out-of-character addresses to the audience - allowing the choral edge to build up before breaking it down again. Yet as English director James Roose-Evans points out, Brecht was betrayed by his own gift for the very medium he was trying to subvert:



Brecht's theatre remained to the last a delight for those who were susceptible to his lyricism [...] Every device which he used to destroy the 'magic' of theatre became magic in his hands. The exposed stage lights, far from alienating the audience, communicated all of Brecht's love for the stage. The very rhythm of interruptions became a poetic pattern and destroyed the purpose for which they had been conceived.<sup>43</sup>

It would seem then that as much as Brecht wished to break down the choral edge that makes representational theatre possible, a second chora grew up around him, turning his subversion of aesthetics into an aesthetic itself.

### **Artaud Betrayed**

Although Artaud is very clear about his desire for a "direct communication" between actor and spectator his relationship to this divide is elusive. In an essay on Artaud, Grotowski maintains quite clearly that the placing of the audience in the center of the performance was "no elimination of the stage/audience barrier, but the replacement of the classical doll's theatre by another rigid structure." And indeed this fits with Mark Pizzato's quote of French psychoanalyst Andre Green saying that although "we may try to eliminate [the stage] edge; it is only reconstituted elsewhere."

Artaud saw the boundary-violating force of plague as a principle image for the Theatre of Cruelty, an image that went beyond metaphor into a kind of "instrument of vision around which his multiple ideas for the Theatre of Cruelty could collect".<sup>44</sup> The plague was the ultimate transgressor of civilization, dissolving the institutional orders of society, violating the choral edge of the skin and erupting on the stage of the body.

In 1947, after nearly ten years and 51 electroshock treatments at the asylum in Rodez, Artaud made his final public appearance at the Vieux Colombier theatre in Paris.<sup>45</sup> He began by reading a series of poems that began to slip into unintelligibility. He soon abandoned his manuscript and "broke out into a fierce torrent of improvised screams and convulsions, incandescently attacking the causes of life's suffering and claiming that dark forces were stalking him".<sup>46</sup> He maintained the frenzy for two hours. Perhaps this was the fullest realization of Artaud's theatre: the plague of insanity betraying the body, widening the chora to envelope and dissolve art into life, sanity to insanity, figure in to ground.

<sup>43</sup> *Experimental Theatre*, p. 70

<sup>44</sup> *Antonin Artaud: Blows and Bombs*, p. 62

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8

<sup>46</sup> Jamieson, Lee. 2007. *Antonin artaud : From theory to practice*. Greenwich exchange literary serie. London: Greenwich Exchange. Introduction, p. xiii

<sup>47</sup> *Edges of Loss*, p. 6

<sup>48</sup> *Chora: The Space of Architectural Representation*, p. 2

<sup>49</sup> *Edges of Loss*, p. 6

Through Aristotle we understand the spring ritual of the dithyramb, and the chorus that grew out of it, as the founding act of theatre. Mark Pizzato writes in his introduction to *Edges of Loss* that on a phenomenological level, the fundamental split of theater actually precedes ritual, and that the drive for communality that ritual offers is, in fact, a desire to overcome this wound-like divide.<sup>47</sup> Nietzsche tells us that Dionysus has an alternate form as the dismembered Zagreus. Thus the god simultaneously represents the ground of ritual communion *and* the pain of individuation. In the realm of theatre, this tension can be seen in the figure of Thespis. In an analogy that recalls the dismemberment of Zagreus, Thespis steps apart from the chorus and dons the mask to become the first actor – distinguishing himself as a figure against the ground of the chorus. This reveals the quintessential pathos of theatre: the act of individuation, which requires the Apollonian mask, must sacrifice the communality of the Dionysian chorus in order for representation to occur.

Vitruvius gives us an image of the primary architectural act as a unifying one, as the gathering of individuals around the fire.<sup>48</sup> If we added to this notion of architecture's communal/ritual foundations the pre-condition of theater's "psycho-spatial separation between watcher and watched"<sup>49</sup> we can imagine an incredible oscillation in the primary act of making between the demarcation of boundaries and the overcoming of them; the birth of architecture from the struggle between theatre and ritual.



*Scientific research in Kircher's day still had something half-magical about it, and its purpose was nothing less than to penetrate the workings of the Divine Mind.*

- Joscelyn Godwin, *Athanasius Kircher*

## PART III: INTERVENTIONS



HELLE

HELSEGGÅ

## DESIGN: LOFOTEN WAVE ENERGY RESEARCH CENTER

Current forms of wave energy production date back to the period of experimental research that grew out of the oil crisis of the 1970s. Interest in the technology waned during the 80s in favor of nuclear and coal, but saw a mild resurgence in the 1990s. Since the mid 90s, there have been significant technological advancements that have brought wave energy much closer to the critical efficiency required for commercial viability.<sup>1</sup> In 2000 the first full-scale wave capture device was connected to the national grid in Scotland, and in 2008 the world's first wave farm went live off the northern coast of Portugal. The coastline of western Europe sees approximately 2 Terawatts of wave energy. Conservative estimates calculate that it is possible to harness approximately 10-25% with current wave capture technologies.<sup>2</sup>

Because of its extreme conditions, the Lofoten Maelstrom has been identified as an important full scale testing ground for current and developing wave energy technologies. A joint venture between the NVE (Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate), The University of Oslo Department of Mathematics and various private wave energy developers has been proposed to build a testing facility at the southern tip of the Lofoten Peninsula. This would allow a series of manufacturers to engage in full scale testing before going in to commercial production. Furthermore among the wide range of technologies and basic capturing principles, a clear leader has yet to emerge. By collecting these varying technologies in a similar environment with shared infrastructure an opportunity for neutral evaluation of the devices is created.

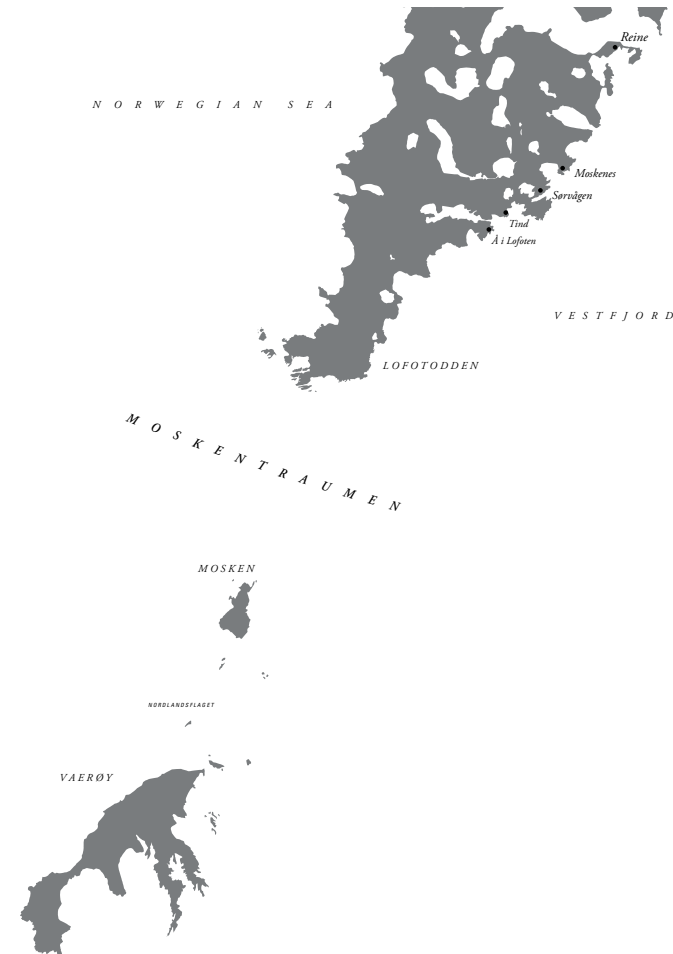
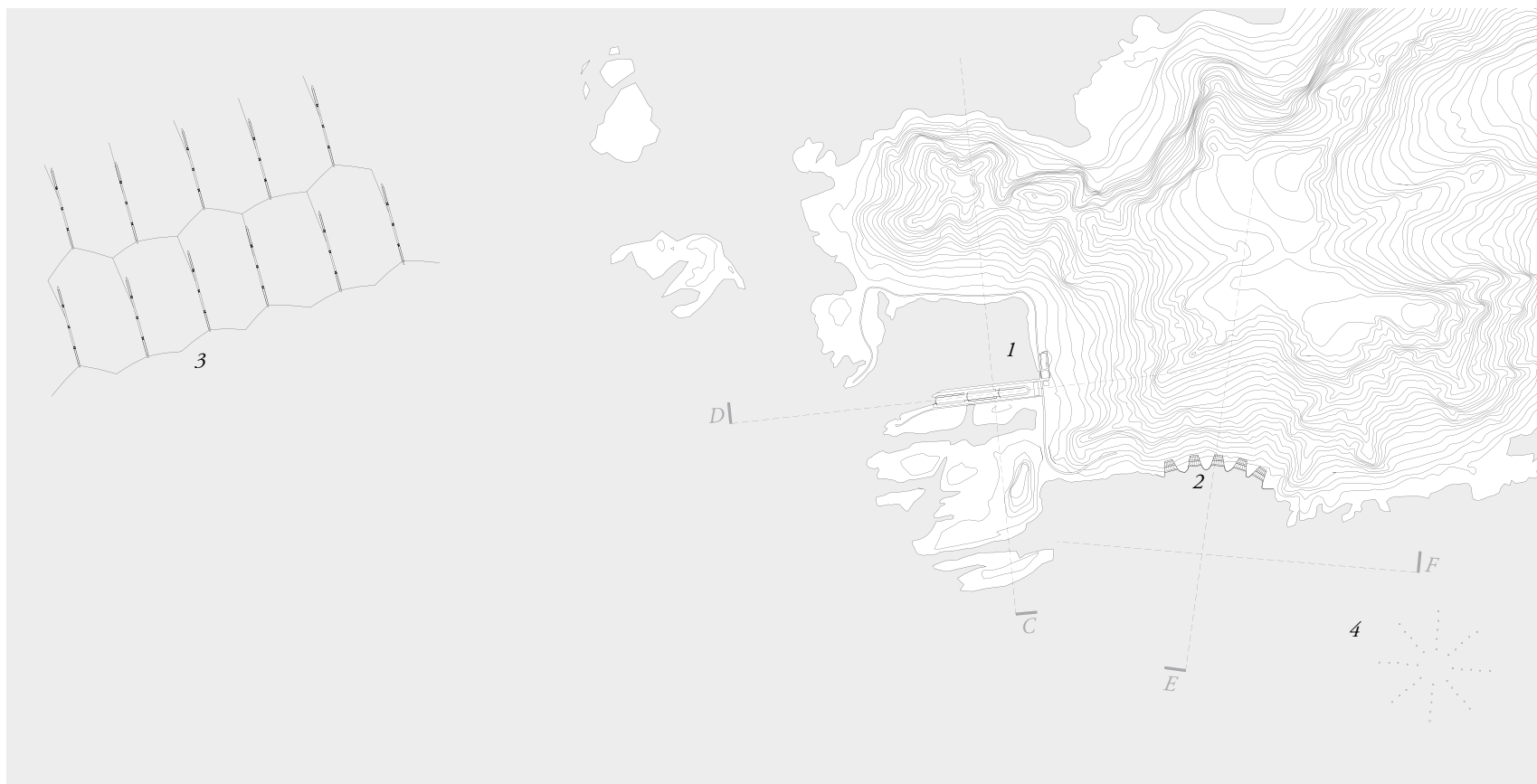


Fig 3.2 - Keymap showing the southern tip of Lofoten.

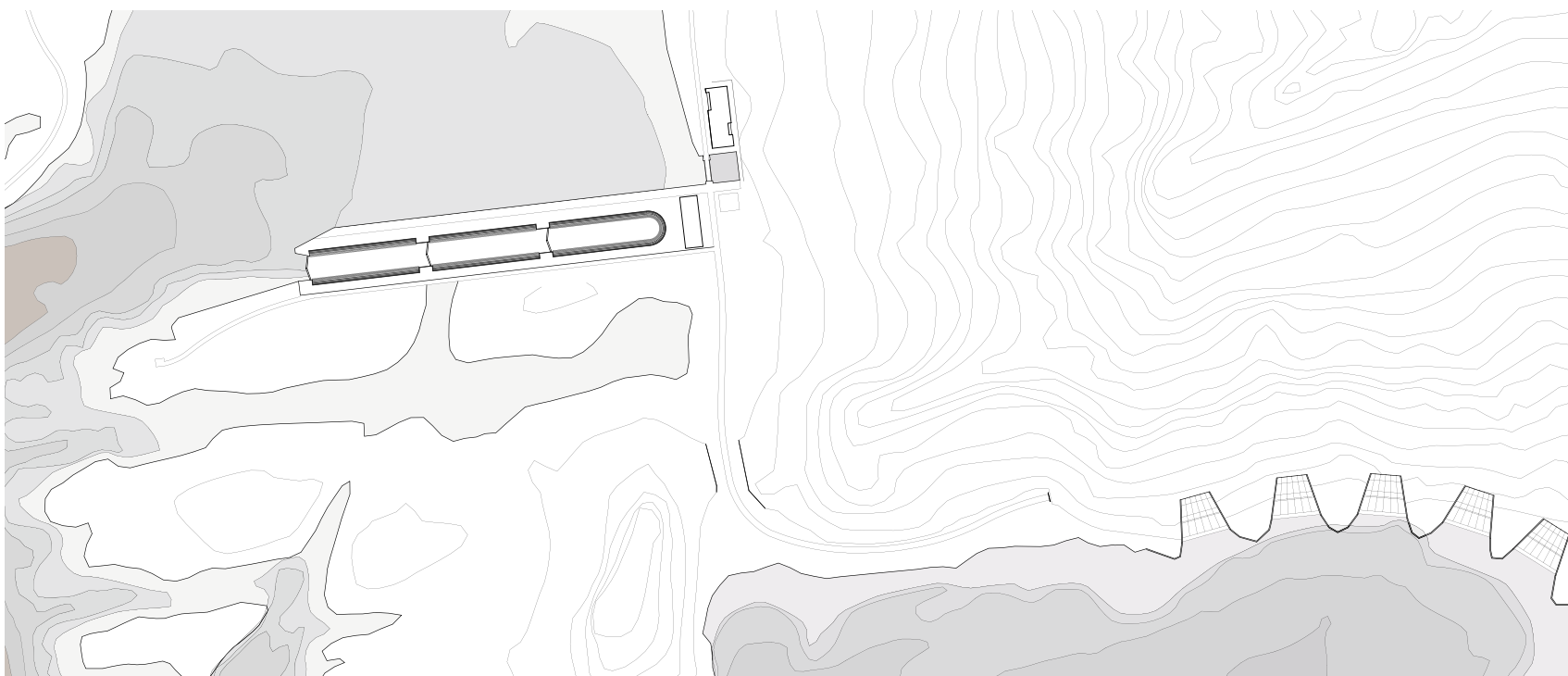
Fig 3.1 (opposite) - Topography and Bathymetry at the Lofoten head (Lofotodden). Scale 1:15 000. Contour interval =10M



## SITE PLAN

1. Main Complex
2. OWC bank
3. Pelamis network
4. AquaBuOY array





### **Siting**

The former fishing hamlet of Helle has been chosen as a strategic site for on-shore facilities. The hamlet was built around a natural harbour that exists at the very edge of the Lofoten peninsula beneath the mountain of Hellsegga and in direct proximity to the Maelström. In the 1950's the residents of Helle were relocated with the help of government agencies mostly because the fishing industry had shifted to heavier metal boats, making it impossible to use the natural pebble beach of the harbour for protection during storms. Today there is virtually no trace of the village.

### **The Facility**

The on-shore area of the facility consists of the main complex, located in the bay, and a secondary area at the southern base of Hellsegga. Offshore wave capture areas are located to the southwest and to the east of the main complex.



The main complex houses wet and dry laboratories, a metering substation, and some light conference and residential facilities. Offshore devices require routine maintenance and tuning which is performed in the dry-dock south of the main building. The dry-dock is a three chamber design which allows for extensive operations on varying scales of equipment. A substantial maintenance and storage area is also required to house repair equipment for both on and offshore devices, sub-sea cabling equipment and an ROV (Remotely Operated Vehicle) workshop and garage. Other support facilities located within the main complex include a heli-pad and a safe docking area for smaller watercraft that is enclosed by a pivoting lock-gate.

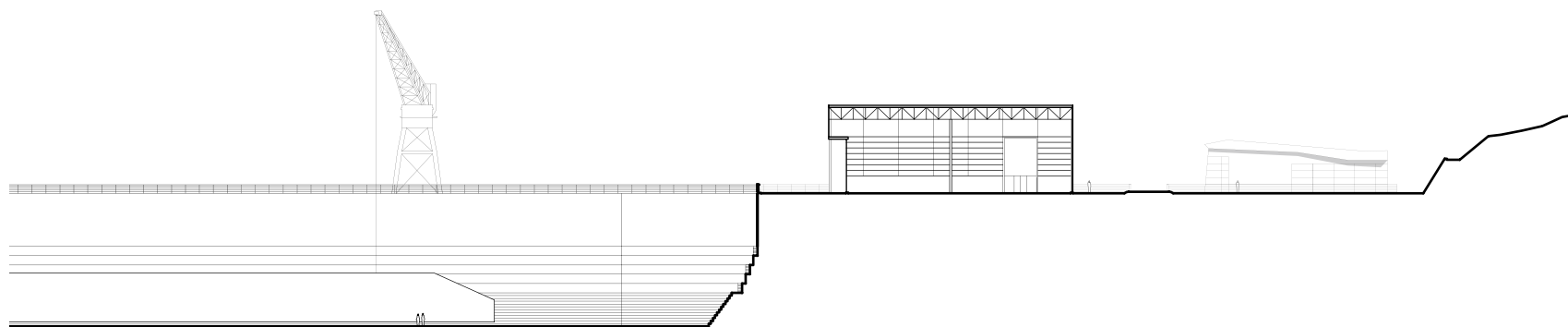
#### MAIN COMPLEX PLAN

1. Residential and recreational facilities
2. Conference, Office and dining facilities
3. Protected docking area
4. Helicopter Landing Pad
5. Wet/Dry Laboratories and Warehouse
6. Dry Dock
7. Service road to secondary on-shore area

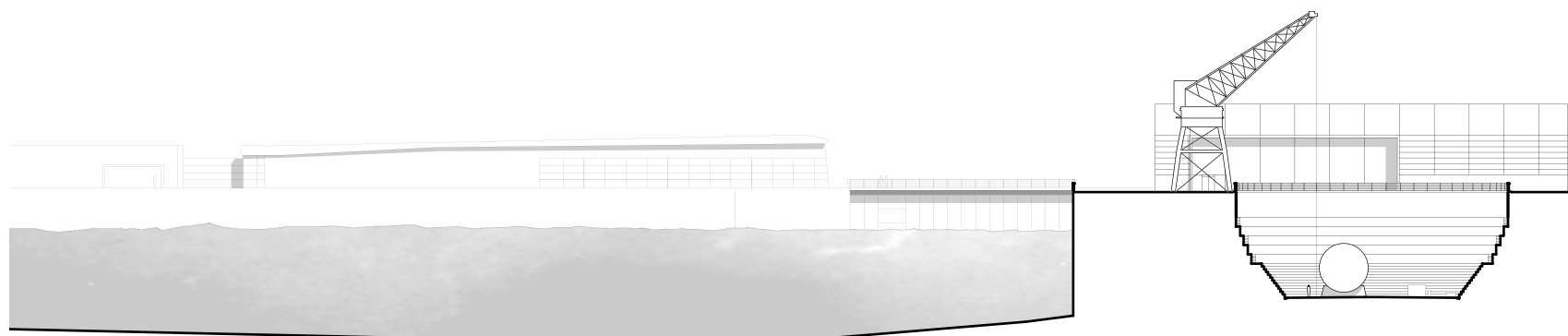
#### Classification of Devices

Wave Energy Converters (WECs) typically fall into three categories: *point absorbers*, *attenuators* and *terminators*.<sup>3</sup> Point absorbers tend to be offshore devices that are often cylindrical in shape with a large vertical dimension and a small horizontal one. They typically contain a buoyant element that converts the vertical component of the wave into electricity. Attenuating devices are buoyant, articulated structures that are oriented parallel to the direction of the oncoming wavefront. They have opposite dimensional characteristics to the point absorbers, tending to be long horizontally and short vertically and typically generate electricity inside hinges about which the articulated segments rotate. Terminating devices can be located on or offshore. They are oriented perpendicular to the direction of the oncoming wavefront and typically generate power by forcing air or water through a turbine.

The facility will use two types of on-shore and off-shore devices: The Finavera AquaBuOY (point absorber), Pelamis (attenuator), the LIMPET (terminator) and Seawave Slot-Cone Generator (terminator). Each of the four devices has been optimized to perform under the unique conditions of the Maelström.



SECTION *A*



SECTION *B*

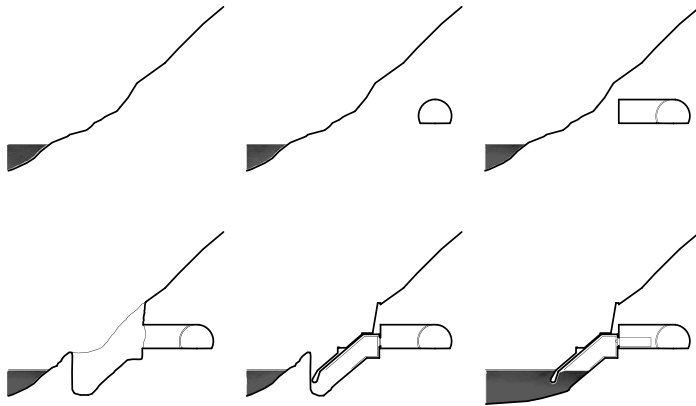


Fig 3.8 - Oscillating Water Column construction sequence.

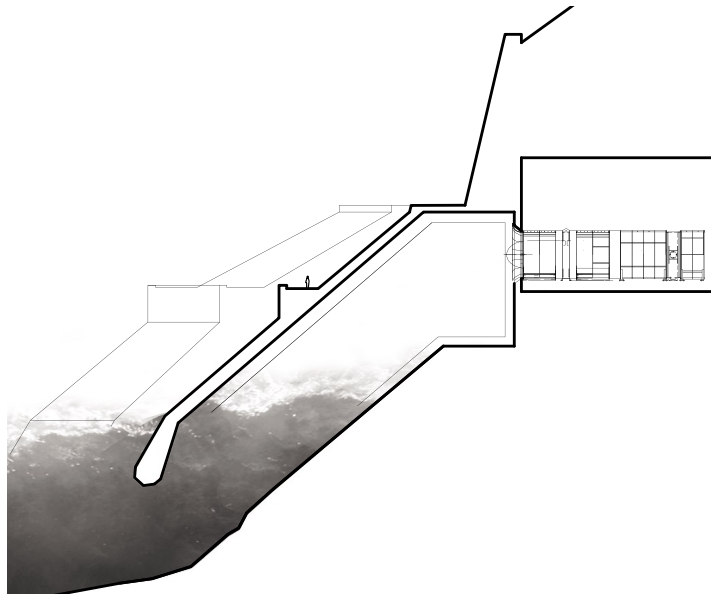


Fig 3.9 - Oscillating Water Column section

## Onshore Devices

1. *The LIMPET Oscillating Water Column (OWC)* was the world's first commercially available wave energy conversion station. An inclined concrete chamber is installed at the water's edge which terminates the wave as it reaches the shore. The wave drives the air in the chamber through a horizontally oriented two-way turbine which allows energy to be harnessed from the positive and negative pressures created by the wave. Wavegen is using the Lofoten facility to test three OWC devices in series with the incorporation of variable pitch turbines, an improvement that has been made to the device since its first implementation in 2000.<sup>4</sup>

2. *WAVE Energy Seawave Slot-Cone Generator (SSG)* is also a terminating wave energy converter which is based on the overtopping principle. Utilizing a total of three reservoirs placed on top of each other, the wave 'overtops' the device and water enters the reservoirs through three inclined, slots. The water is then directed into a vertically oriented turbine which is shared among the three reservoirs.<sup>5</sup>

WAVE Energy is testing two devices which will be installed alongside the LIMPET OWCs in the secondary on-shore area at the southern base of Helsegga. All five devices are linked by a large tunnel with access at the western end. At the opening to the tunnel is a relay station which sends the generated electricity back to the metering station at the main complex. The devices have each been carefully oriented to receive maximum impact from Maelström waves based on extensive hydrodynamic modeling by the University of Oslo Department of Mathematics. The devices have been sized to roughly three times the scale of those which have been developed for production in other areas of the world.

## Offshore Devices

1. *Pelamis* – The Pelamis device belongs to the attenuator family of WECs. Because the device requires a perpendicular relationship to the wave, it must be highly agile and have the ability to continually adjust to subtle variations in the geometry of the wavefront. This is called "achieving reference", and is done by spanning successive wave crests which allows the device to reorient itself to each oncoming wave.

The Pelamis is a long, tubular structure with four segments and three hinges. As the wave passes along its axis it generates energy through the butterfly motion occurring around each hinge. This rotational movement is resisted by hydraulic rams which pump high-pressure oil through motors which in turn drive electrical generators. The device is slack-moored to the sea-bed at two points. Electricity generated at the hinge travels through the center of the device to the nose mooring where it is connected to standard underwater cabling on the sea-bed.

Pelamis intends to trial up to 10, P2 devices which are currently in final stages of development. The P2 is the most recent iteration of the Pelamis and incorporates significant refinements to the original device that was commissioned last year at the Agucadoura Wave Farm in Portugal.

2. *Finavera AquaBuOY* - The Aqua BuOY is a modular wave energy conversion device categorized as a point absorber (having a small dimension in relation to the longer wave length in which it is operating). It functions by converting the vertical component of the wave's kinetic energy by intaking seawater into a two-stroke hose pump. The vertical motion of the pressurized seawater then drives a turbine generator. Units are arranged in a radial array and connected by buoyant moorings. Electricity is transferred along the moorings to a central point in the array where it attaches to cabling at the sea-bed.

Finavera will be testing an 88 unit AquaBuOY array which will be installed off the south east shore of Hellsegga. The array is connected to the relay station at the entrance to the tunnel which connects back to the metering station in the main complex.

<sup>1</sup> Cruz, João, and Inc ebrary. 2008. *Ocean wave energy*. Green energy and technology. Berlin: Springer., p. 2

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 1

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 45

<sup>4</sup> Voith hydro wavegen limited. 2009 [cited 06/04 2009]. Available from [www.wavegen.co.uk](http://www.wavegen.co.uk).

<sup>5</sup> Wave energy. 2009 [cited 06/04 2009]. Available from [www.waveenergy.no](http://www.waveenergy.no).



Fig 3.10 - AquaBuOY array

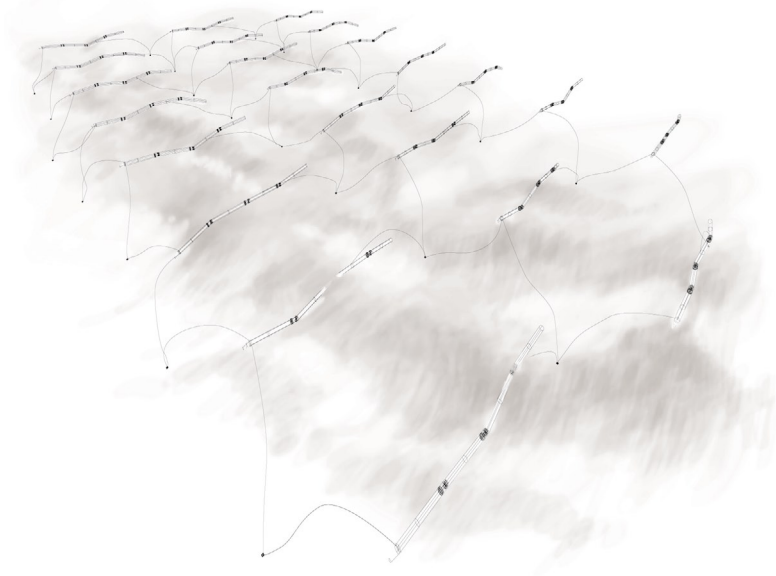
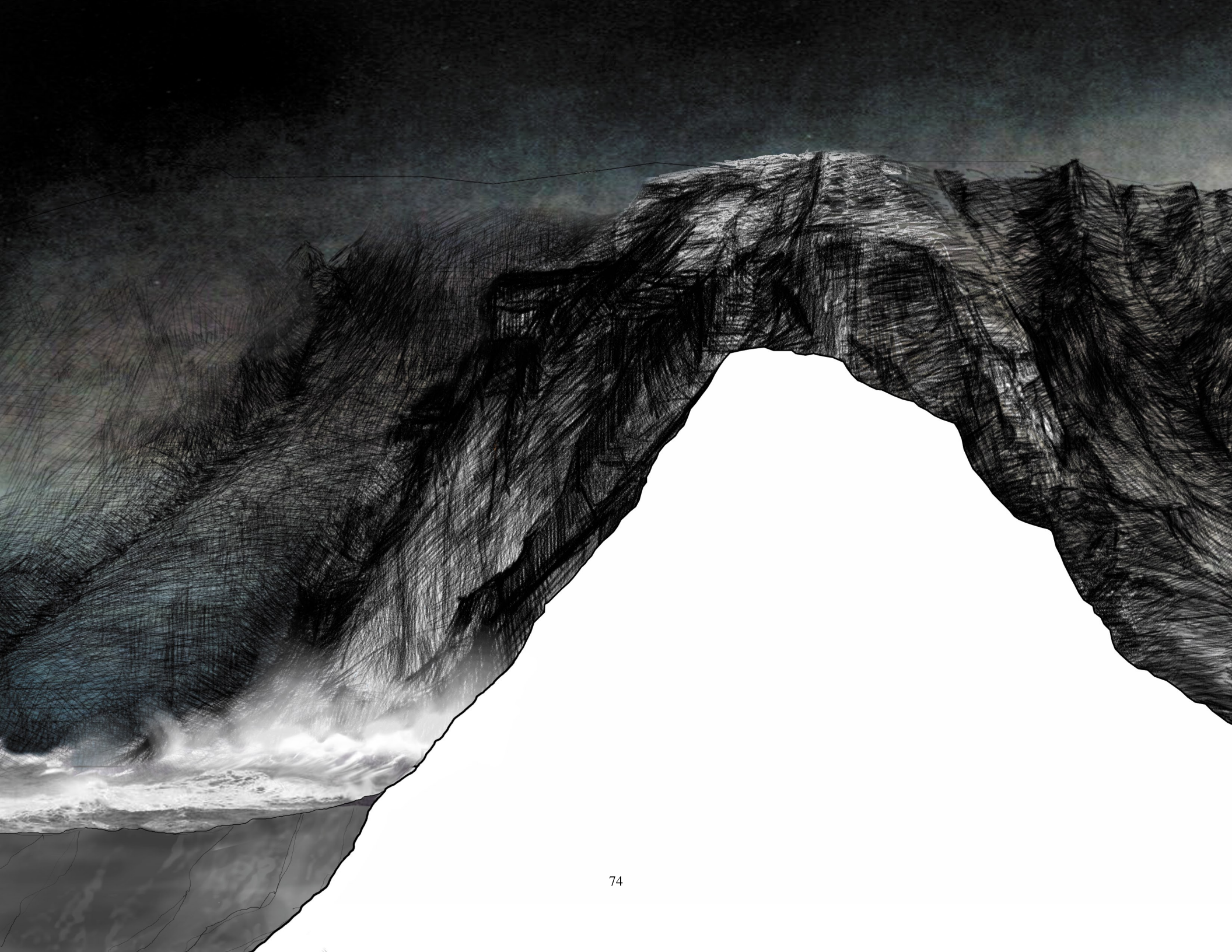


Fig 3.11 - Pelamis network

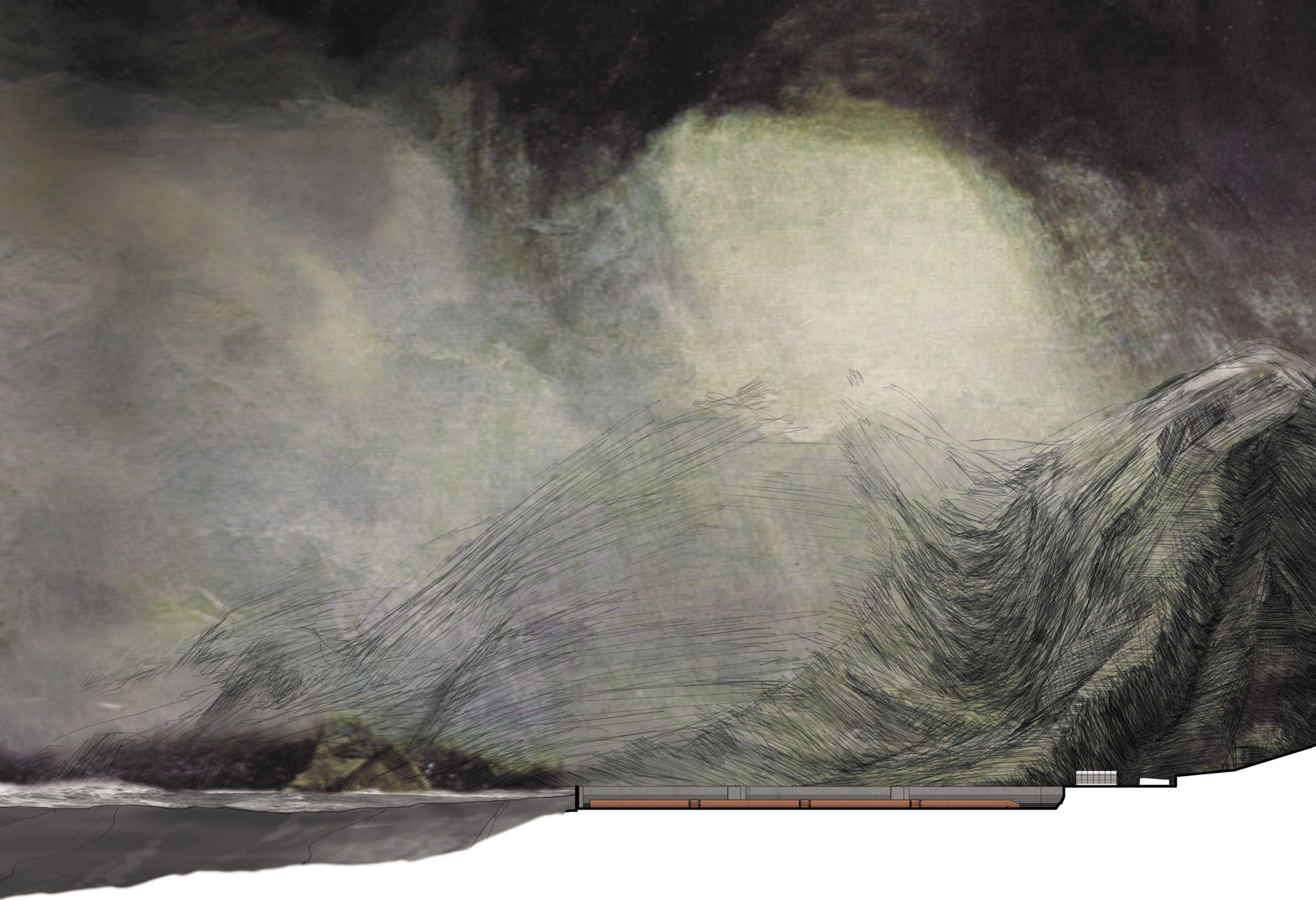




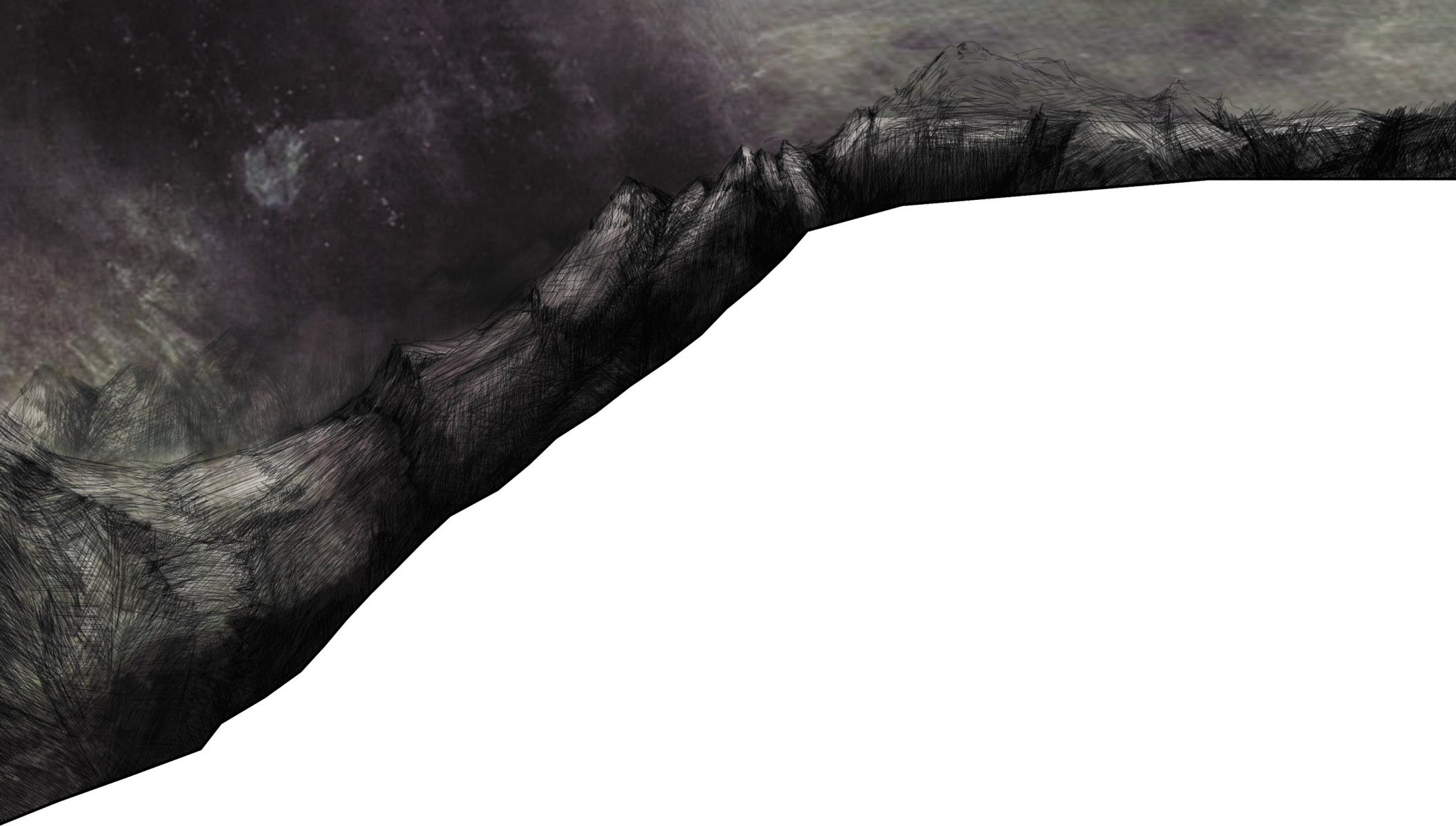




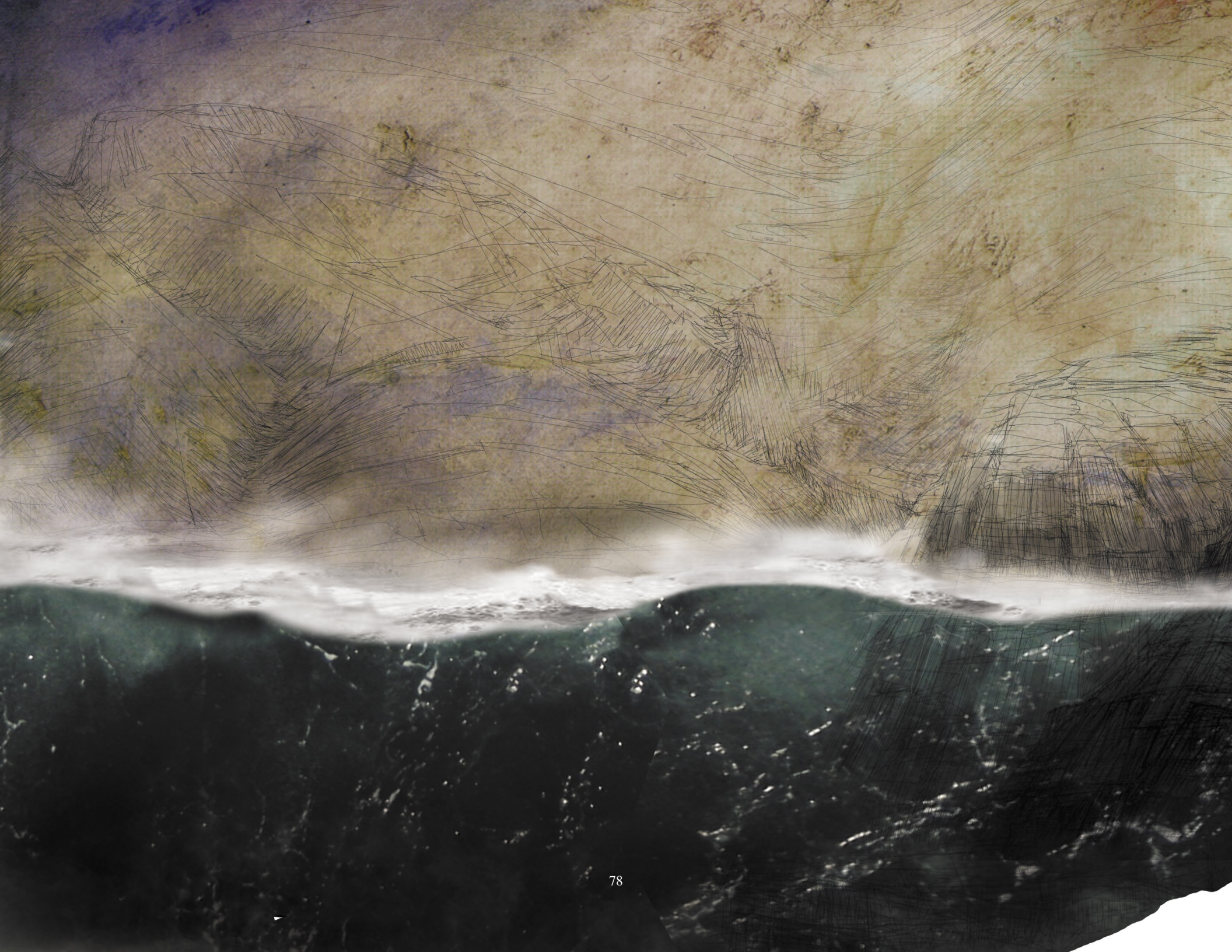




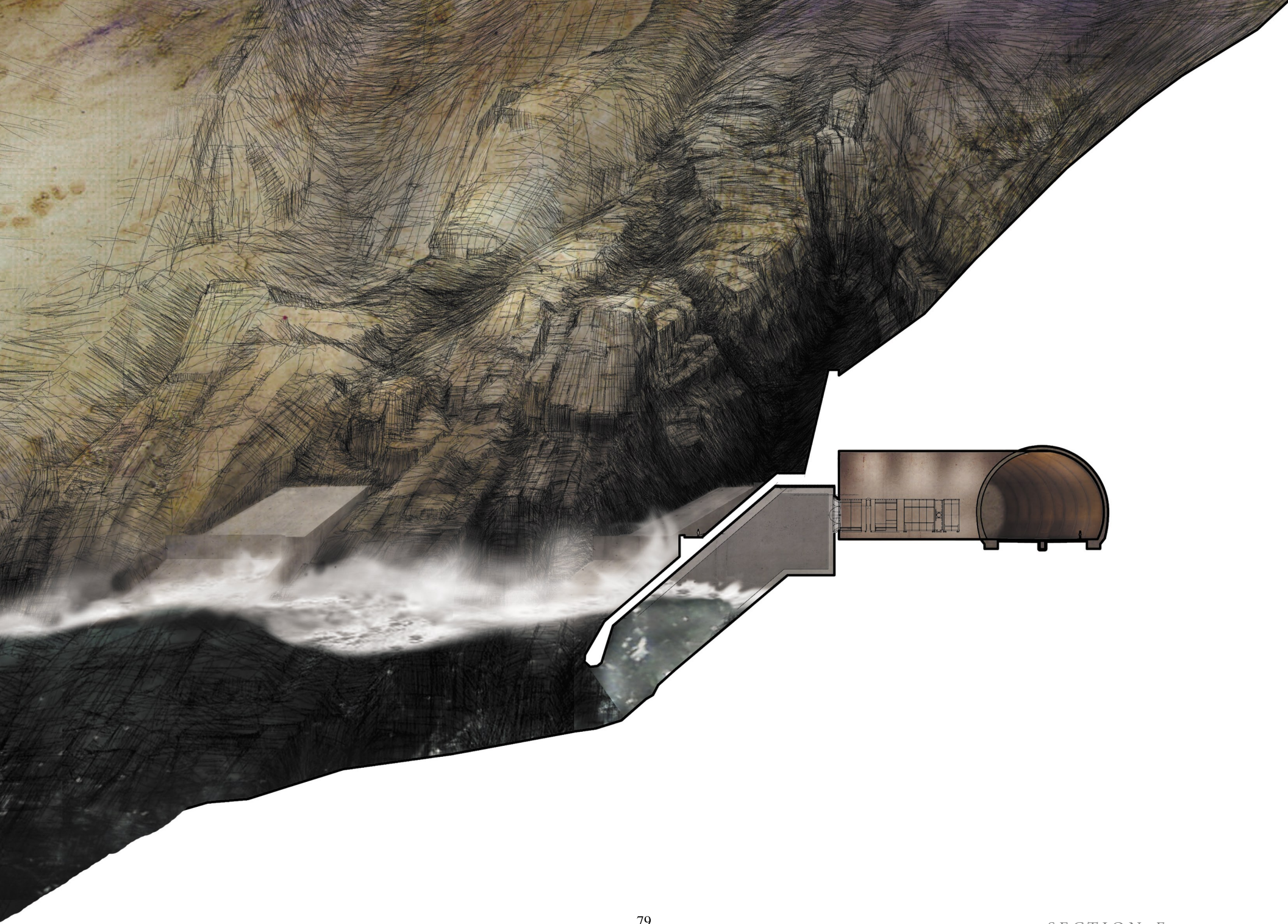




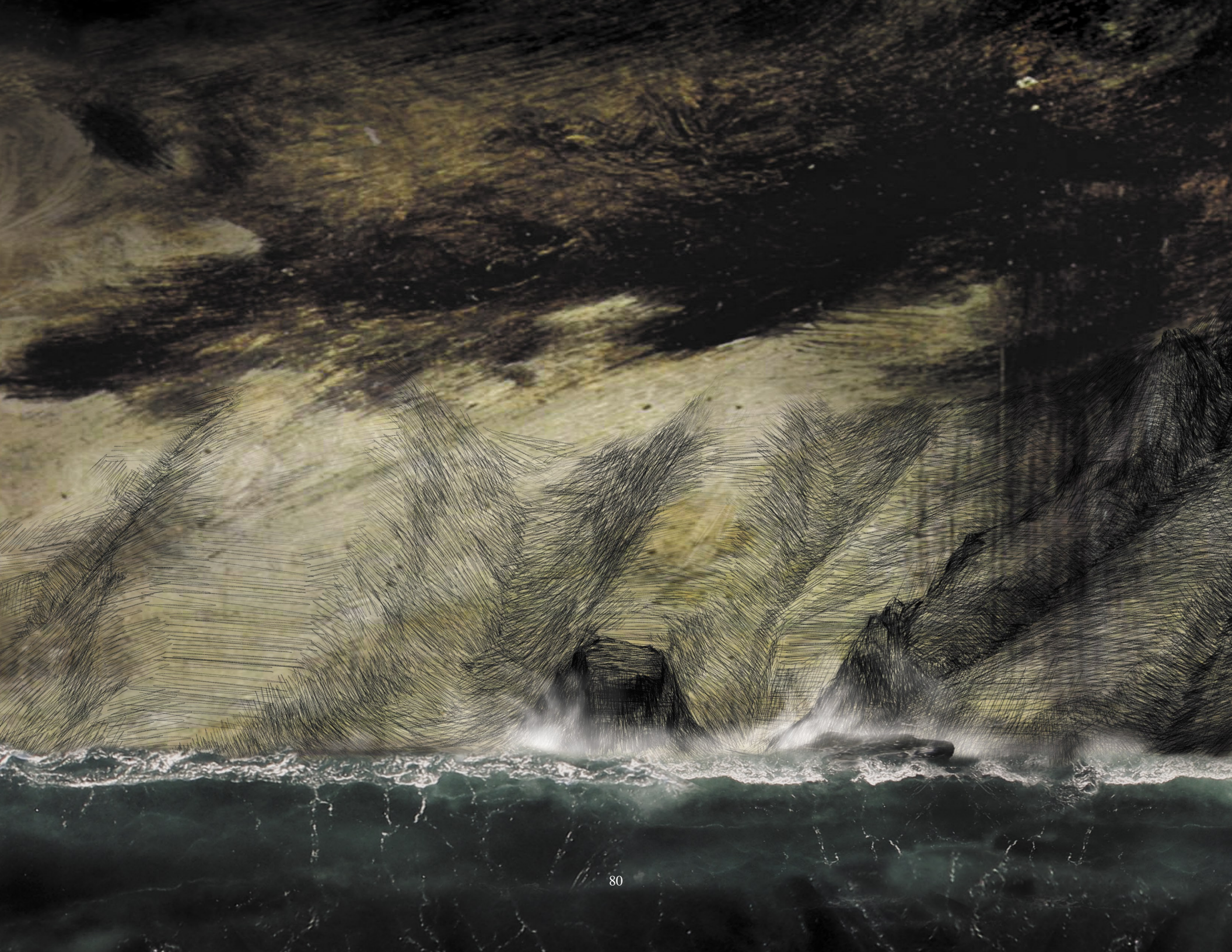






















## PRECIPICE

*It was from the precipice on Hellsegga that everything got its name, and it was only from that point that the names were spoken. There were names for all of the mountains; Stortinden, Turtnbakk, Mannen, Gjerdtindan, Mengelsdalst, and of course Hellsegga. There were names for all of the islands from which the mountains rose; Mosken, Vaerøy, Røst, Moskenes, Flakstad, Vestvågøy, and there were names for every small grouping of rocks, every islet, every outcropping; Buholman, Skitenskarvholman, Iflesa, Svarvan, Rødøya. There were names for the negative things, a depression between peaks, a scar cut across the mountain face, a cleft in the rock caused by the heaving earth; Bjørnskardet, Gongsardet, Heiaklippe. We also saw fit to name the things that came and went but never looked the same; the clouds, the states of the wind, the salinity of the air, a pattern of ocean spray that envelops a rocky outcropping where the incoming tide is cloven.*

*The strangest of all names were the ones that described the Maelström in all of its shifting anatomies. Yet despite the flood of names that we unleashed upon it there was one state of the Maelström for which there was no name: the precise moment in the slack between the incoming and outgoing tides when a dead calm descends across the sea. It is impossible to witness directly for the seeing eye will not believe it to be perfectly still. The only way to apprehend it is by registering the difference before and after, by shutting one's eyelids at the exact moment of the change.*



## THE SPIS

*It wasn't the 27 000 cubic metres of 3 billion year old rock that we returned to the sea bed. No, it wasn't what we took from it, but rather what we gave to it. Hellsegga was a body without organs and we gave it lungs – we gave it a void where it had never known one. We began gathering in the tunnel beneath the mountain shortly after we bore it; we could not leave it unfilled any longer.*

*There is a period while the Maelström is struggling to form that the interval of the waves entering the Oscillating Water Column chamber is erratic. This is when we enter the tunnel. We gather in long lines that stretch deep into the mountain and turn to face the turbines. Their fitful breathing eventually begins to find a uniform interval as we align the movement of our lungs with the lungs that we gave the mountain. The vast waves thrown off by the fully formed Maelström enter the chamber and the pummeled air rushes through the turbine. We inhale in perfect time; each one of us losing ourselves in the great hieroglyph of breath. The wave exhausts itself and begins to recede from the chamber sucking air back through the turbines as it goes. We let forth a long roaring drone of sound to match the thunderous murmur of the air being pulled from the depths of the tunnel. The motion gradually slows, the drone gradually quiets.*

*...there is one who is not able to embrace the mediated scale of the wave in his lungs. He does not have enough air to release and the sharp imprint of his breaking voice is heard against the drone. As the last of the outgoing wave leaves the chamber, he exits the tunnel.*





## BASILICA

*You must hold. You must remain on the other side of the possible. It is important that you do this, even when I name you, even when I call on you, even when I tell you “vien, oui, oui”.*

\* \* \*

*We will make a sacrifice of the proscenium. No longer will dead curtains part to reveal dead objects. Once and for all the proscenium will be breached and The Theatre of Cruelty will burst forth in a bloodstream of images, surging up on all sides to abolish the stage. It will re-enter the body as plague and erupt on the new stage of the skin.*

\* \* \*

*From the moment I touched the ebony walls of the Ström I wished to be unlashd from the barrel. No one will know what my feelings were at that moment. To have had the opportunity to be carried down the whirl towards its axis, to have had the chance to enter the cloud of black mist at the bottom and to have chosen buoyancy; that is my regret, that is what has broken me up body and soul and turned these hairs from a jetty black to white. And so now I come here twice a day to stand in this vessel that I have constructed and to wait for the Moskoe-ström to meet me on its terms.*







## PERICHORESIS

*For hours there is nothing between us but the guided registration of the waves. They pass through us in a mournful rhythm but we feel only the vertical, the particular, the elemental. We stand in a relaxed attitude of collective deference. Then it begins somewhere beyond the fog - a single limb on a single body, a single finger on a single hand, a raised knuckle perhaps. A gesture of excruciating precision and restraint starts the dance. The gesture is met on another buoy with an overturned palm that is open to the hidden sky.*

*But there is a loss, a slippage between the two. There is always a loss in meaning as one gesture builds upon the next and consumes it in the process. The gesturing continues from buoy to buoy and soon the entire array will be writhing with all of the agonizing tension of a rhythm approaching a tone.*

*...in this realm of the particular and the vertical, the continuous and the horizontal are loved.*



## CHARYBDIS

*This year it fell on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February; the annual day that he climbs to the top of Hellsegga to recite the names. He stands at the precipice and orients himself facing Southwest by South across the Moskestraumen strait such that the Nordlands peak on Vaerøy can be seen in the cleft of the Heiaklippe. He moves in a clockwise manor, recanting the names as he progresses around the 32 points of the compass rose: Southwest by South, South West, Southwest by west. At each point he recants the names. As he revolves the storm grows and the Maelström begins its semidiurnal struggle for figuration. The sound of the wind threatens to take the names before he says them and so he must recant them with ever increasing intensity.*







*While the names are being called, Thespis is standing in the intake chamber of an oscillating water column that had been left unfinished. He gazes into the mouth of the 6.8 metre wide portal where the turbine lung was to be installed. On the other side of the opening he can hear the drone of the chorus as they try to match the wave intervals. As sometimes happens the Maelström has let forth a series of huge radial surges as it begins to rotate into the vortex. Usually the oscillating water column deals with a surplus of wave energy by allowing excess water to flow above the concrete hood while the lower lip stays below the water line. But the interval and amplitude of the surges today are so large that the chamber is fully emptied as the wave pulls out, exposing the weak lower lip. The swell arrives and the pressure created at the bottom of the hood is far beyond the limit of what the concrete was designed for. The lower lip bursts and the rest of the hood is pried open like a jaw until it breaks apart. The next massive swell approaches the shore and begins to curl as the seabed shallows. It gathers up the broken concrete like sand and drives it through the turbines, filling the tunnel. The wind swallows the name caller's voice above Hellsegga as the Maelström begins to reach a ferocity not witnessed in his lifetime.*

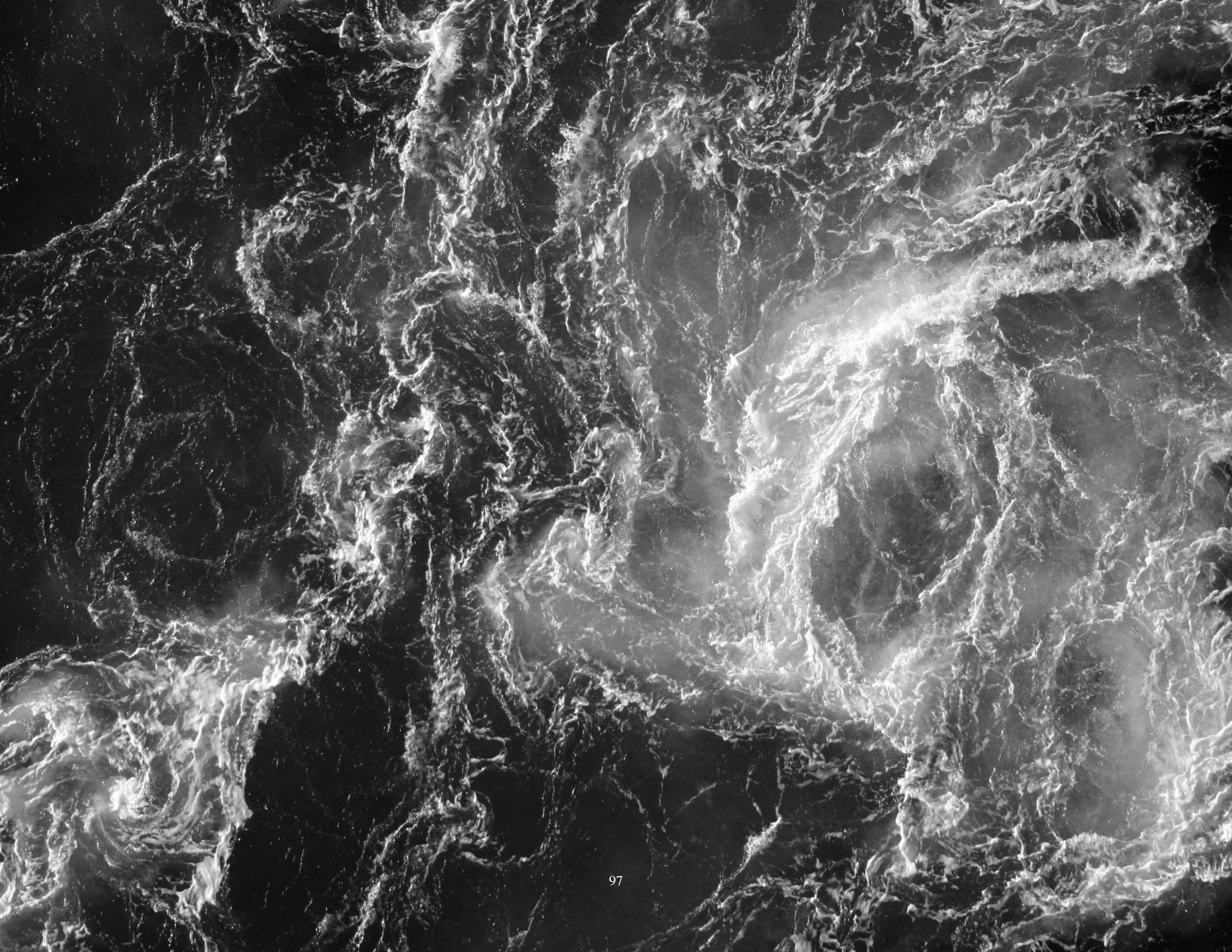




*From the rusted floor of the dry dock the thin belt of spray that can occasionally be seen dancing on top of the metal gates is beginning to grow. Each wave that pounds against the gates does so with ever increasing urgency. The name caller reaches East-southeast for the fourth time. The last two of the pre-vortex surges head towards the dry dock. The natural orientation of the Bay of Helle manages to deflect much of the wavefronts but a significant portion still enters the harbour. The wave reaches the far side of the bay and is reflected back towards the long side of the drydock where it meets the second one. They pass through one another and repeat the process, creating a standing wave the tears one of the welded steel sections of the gate. The sea heaves its way through the breach.*

*The name caller reaches Southwest by South as he looks out across the Moskstraumen strait for the ninth time. The fully formed vortex is now twice as large as it was on this day in 1645 when the naming rite began. It is as though the Maelström wishes not only to swallow the sea but the sky as well. The point absorbers had long been splintered on the base of Hellsegga by one of the pre-vortex surges but the attenuators had been designed to withstand a 100 year extreme wave of 56m. Strength tests for the mooring cables however had not provided for extreme sustained tension. The vortex pulls, the cables go taught. They last for another full revolution of the Name Calling but after the first cable snaps loose from the sea bed, the other attenuators break tether in one swift motion. They rush towards the vortex as though they had been seeking it since they first left the dock.*

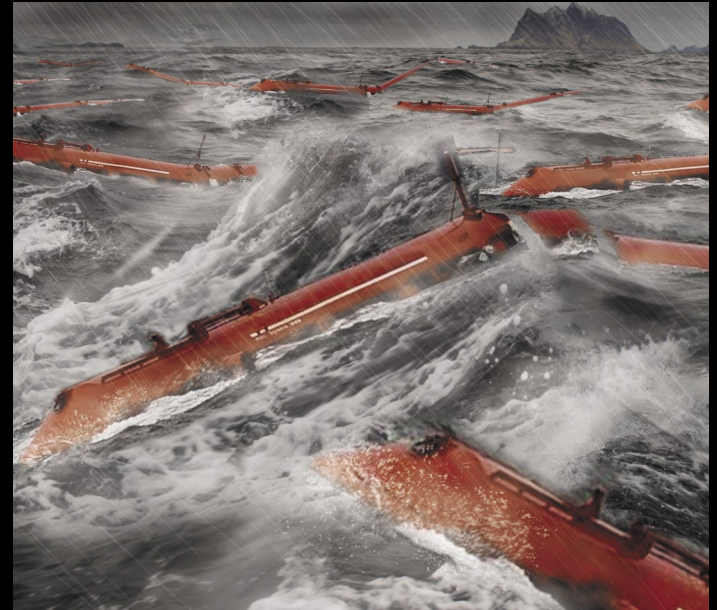
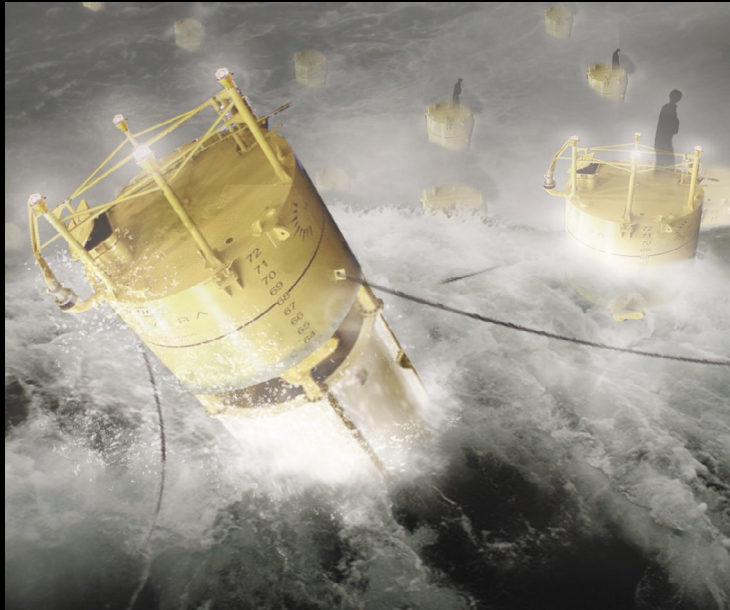






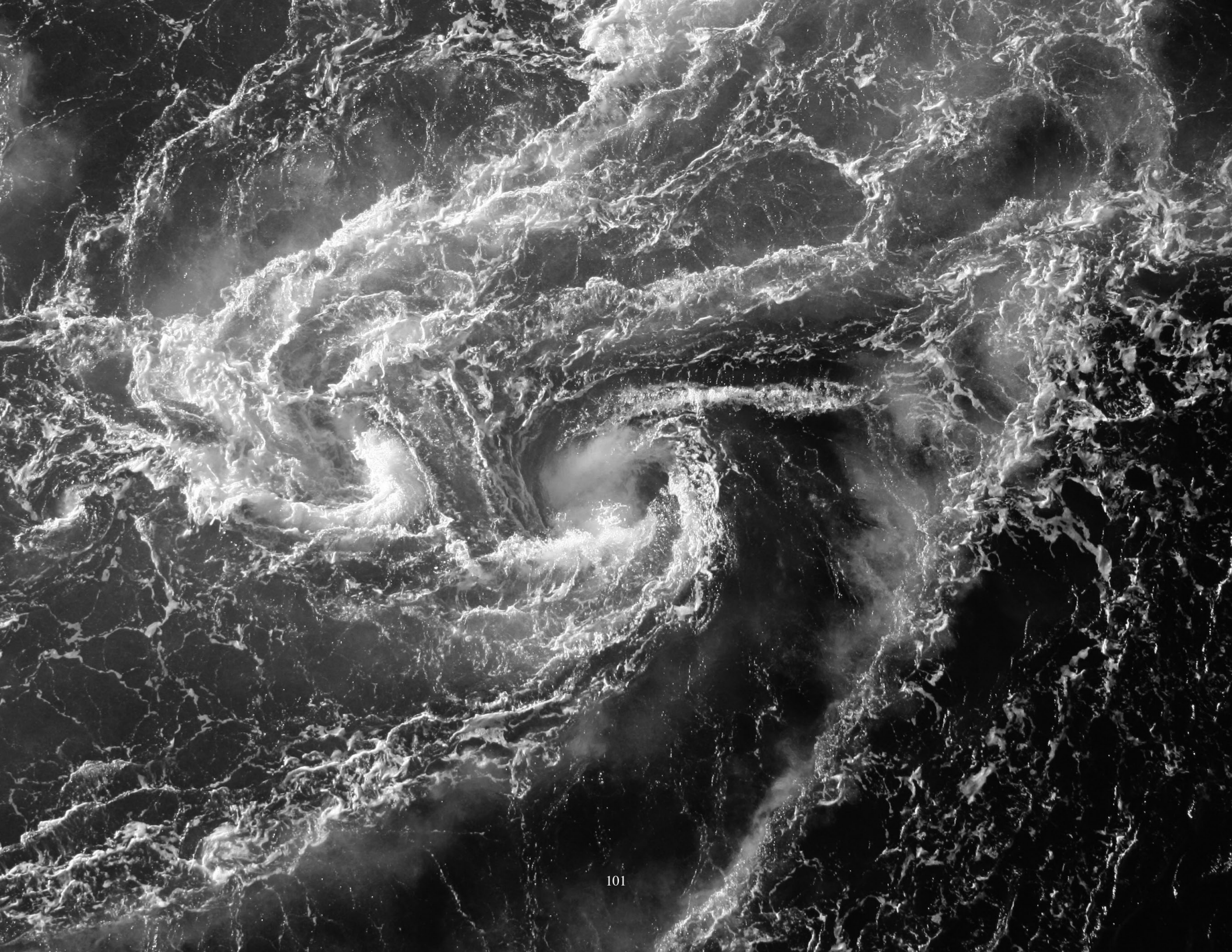






























## AFTERWORD

Marshall McLuhan made several references to *A Descent Into The Maelström* throughout his career. He saw in the sailor's ability to recognize the internal logic of the Maelström an analogy for surviving the vortex of modern media. In the preface to his 1951 book, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore Of Industrial Man*, McLuhan writes:

Poe's sailor saved himself by studying the action of the whirlpool and by cooperating with it. The present book likewise makes few attempts to attack the very considerable currents and pressures set up around us today by the mechanical agencies of the press, radio, movies, and advertising. It does attempt to set the reader at the centre of the revolving picture created by these affairs where he may observe the action that is in progress and in which everybody is involved. From the analysis of that action, it is hoped, many individual strategies may suggest themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Poe story however isn't only an apt parable. *The Mechanical Bride*, which is a close reading of fragments of visual pop-culture, begins to take on the form of the maelstrom from which it hopes to help us escape. Many of McLuhan's works, and indeed his body of work as a whole, have this distinctly "mosaic" quality to it - where form is content, and in fact form is also paradoxically the method *and* subject of criticism. While McLuhan wishes to bring the *reader* to the centre of the maelstrom of media, it is also from this embedded stance that he positioned himself as an *author*. For McLuhan, the crux of achieving the knowledge of how to escape the Maelström is that one must first enter into to it.

Lacan identifies three overlapping orders that make up the psyche: the Symbolic, Imaginary and Real. The Symbolic contains structure and language while the Imaginary is the realm of image. The Real, on the other hand is outside the bounds of language and symbol. It is undifferentiated and unrenderable; pure ground. Lacan says that in our process of individuation we make cuts into the Real in order make sense of it, much like Thespis donning the mask and "cutting" himself out of the chorus in order to speak. The mystic on the other hand desires the opposite. He or she wishes to break down the *Symbolic*, in order to gain access to the *Real*.

McLuhan's interpretation of Poe's story as the triumph of observation in the face of delirium seems to be very much in line with Poe's intentions as an author. This thesis however takes a different approach. While it certainly does attempt to position the reader at the centre of the Maelström it also spends much of its time at the edge. As with McLuhan's *Bride*, its form is also its content, yet its aim is not necessarily to find a way out. Rather, the thesis engages a series of representational voices: the curatorial tone of Part I, the immersive text of Part II and the subversion of the architectural project in Part III, that ultimately finds its conclusion not in the pattern recognition of McLuhan and Poe, but in the conflation of dualities and the celebration of unknowing. Just as the mystic spirals into a state of apophatic speechlessness from within the machinations of speech, the thesis seeks to render the unrenderable through a surplus of graphic and textual voices that ultimately leads to a breakdown of representation itself.

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<sup>1</sup> McLuhan, Marshall, Eric McLuhan, and Frank Zingrone. 1995. *Essential McLuhan*. New York, NY: BasicBooks., p. 21

## NOTES

Much like a cross sectional drawing reveals the inner logic of a building, the Notes reveal the structuring logic of the thesis. Precedents for the Notes include Dante's *Epistle to Can Grande* or Terragni's *Relazione Sul Danteum*, both of which are keys to understanding the intent of those authors. In character and tone, the Notes are loosely related to T.S. Eliot's Notes on *The Wasteland*, which serve to elucidate the complex web of references within the poem while also becoming a new territory unto itself.

### PROLOGUE : Illustrating the Maelström

The PROLOGUE is aimed at launching the reader into a brief but direct encounter with Poe's text. Selected passages are shown in their original state and their 'dilated' state, where they are broken apart and infiltrated by the searching, ponderous and at times stumbling, voice of the author as it tries to determine how to manifest the passage in the accompanying image. These vignettes represent a kind of parti of the exegetical process at work in the thesis as a whole. Formally, the PROLOGUE mimics the vignettes that appear in the later section of PART 3 (3.2).

0.1.1 – *Cliff* – Part of the primary narration (of the traveler) - upon arriving at the top of Hellsegga.

0.1.2 – *Maelström Forming* – Part of the primary narration - upon witnessing the change from a series of turbulent eddies to the fully resolved vortex

0.1.3 – *Maelström* – Part of the secondary narrative - as the mariner enters the Maelström.

0.1.4 – *Surrender* – Part of the secondary narrative - as the mariner resolves to lash himself to the barrel and jump into the Maelström.

### PART 1 : SITE

Part I introduces the site through various historical and fictional portrayals of the Maelström.

#### 1.1 – SITE 1: Lofoten

SITE 1 Introduces the reader to the geographical site of Lofoten as a set of nested edge conditions at varying scales: the geographical edge condition of the country at large, the frayed coastal edge of the country, and the more

focused condition in Southern Lofoten where most of the built form finds refuge in a narrow band between mountain and sea. This tenuous zone that humanity occupies is a kind of *choral edge*, a concept that is introduced discursively in ESSAY III (2.3.2). As an expanded threshold between land and sea the *choral edge* finds its most explicit manifestation in the Oscillating Water Column section shown in (3.1.4).

#### 1.2 – SITE 2: Histories

Many contemporary descriptions of the 'real' Maelström begin by giving a brief, sweeping overview of Poe and his sources as a way of relating and then dismissing the imaginative existence of the place. Rather than dismiss this material, Site 2 aims to celebrate the elaborate co-authorship of the site by giving space to these various voices.

1.2.1 – **Early Accounts** - The treatment of Norse Myth is brief and only to give context. Homer's 'Charybdis' is important for two reasons: 1) Jonas Ramus (whom Poe draws on directly) argued in 1702 that Odysseus' experience with Charybdis actually happened at the Lofoten Maelström, not the strait of Messina. 2) Charybdis also appears as the closing piece of the thesis (3.2.5), becoming a symbol for the conflation of binaries which is talked about in the Afterword.

1.2.2 - **Olaus Magnus** - Magnus' *Carta Marina* which seamlessly blends cultural, political, mythological and geographical information is emblematic of the threshold between history and fiction that is explored in this section. He also names the Maelström, "Horrenda Caribdis", further strengthening the mythical link to The Odyssey.

1.2.3 - **Varen, Kircher, Happel and Ramus** form a cluster that speaks to the tradition of pseudo-scientific, imaginative speculation on ocean mechanics that is quoted directly in Poe's narrative. Kircher is given special attention because for him, ocean vortices were not singular events but fundamental drivers of all ocean mechanics.

1.2.4 – **Poe** – Poe's text represents the fullest expression of the history/fiction ambiguity. He achieves this by invoking many of the historical-fictitious accounts outlined above and by including within his own text a significant amount of empirical data that lends the story a kind of dubious credibility.



## PART 2 : ESSAYS

The essays condense most of the conceptual material at work in the thesis and point to several thinkers and artists from which the material is drawn. On the whole they can each be understood as addressing the second binary condition of the thesis, *figure/ground*. Essay 1 relates the figure to the sublime, positive, ground of Romanticist aesthetics, Essay 2 relates the figure to the ground of negativity as expressed by negative theology, and Essay 3 relates the figure to the ground of humanity as expressed in the relationship between the chorus, spectator and actor in classical Greek theater as well as experimental theatre of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The three essays can also be seen as embodying three fundamental components of the Maelström: mass (Essay 1), void (Essay 2) and edge (Essay 3).

### 2.1 - ESSAY 1: Surplus of Presence

“Surplus of Presence” is called such because it deals with notions of the ‘wholly other’ as an overwhelming positive force - a force which seeks to dissolve the figure into the ground.

2.1.1 – **The Numinous** – Rudolph Otto’s concept of ‘The Numinous’ sets the tone of the essay because one of its components, the *mysterium tremendum*, has much in common with the sublime. It also carries with it the non-rational sense of ‘the holy’, a soft leitmotif of the thesis.

2.1.2 – **The Sublime** – This section discusses the notion of the sublime according to Edmund Burke’s *Philosophical Inquiry*, a theme which is central to Poe’s late romanticist narrative. The site of the Maelström is also a characteristically ‘sublime’ setting (as referred to in 1.1) making a correlation between a central theme of the source narrative and the aesthetic milieu of the site itself. This finds an expression in many of the design drawings (3.1.4) which make use of a kind of neo-romanticist rendering technique which is further emphasized by using sky textures from C.D. Friedrich and J.M.W. Turner.

2.1.3 – **The Death Instinct and The Oceanic** - Freud enters the discussion to take the idea of the ‘overwhelming positive’ force of the ground (the numinous, the ground) a step beyond. A revision of the Death Drive and the ‘oceanic’ highlights the desire of the ego (the figure) to return to a pre-organic state (to defigure, to become ground). This idea surfaces again in

(2.3) as the fundamental ‘pain of individuation’ that theatre highlights. The death instinct and the oceanic find a resonance in Poe’s story at the moment when the mariner surrenders to the vortex as depicted in (0.1.4). On a more general level, the death instinct underlies the motion of Part 3 as the storm described in (3.2.5) seeks to de-figure the architectural project.

2.1.4 - **Caspar David Friedrich** – This section focuses on two paintings: *The Chalk Cliffs at Rügen* and *The Monk By The Sea*. The *Cliffs* represent a detached image of the figure to the ground while *The Monk* is read as a figure proceeding into the ground, resonating with the Freudian ideas outlined above. The painting is also read through Lacan’s notion of *extimacy* which resonates with Freud’s uncanny, a concept which is in turn linked to the death instinct. Friedrich, who “hurried to meet [storms] at the cliff edge” is also related to the Name Caller in PRECIPICE and CHARYBDIS (vignettes 3.2.1 and 3.2.5).

### 2.2 - ESSAY 2: Surplus of Absence

“Surplus of Absence” deals with a ‘wholly other’ that is overwhelmingly negative. The title is a deliberate contradiction which echoes Pseudo-Dionysius’ contradictory metaphors such as “brilliant-darkness”.

2.2.1 - **Pseudo-Dionysius** sets the tone of the essay and introduces the discourse of negativity. His methods are somewhat easier to explain (and understand for the author) than their estranged contemporaries (Derrida, Bataille) so they provide a fairly stable starting point. The mystics walked the precarious edge between orthodoxy and atheism. Derrida, like the mystics also “quite rightly passes for an atheist”.

A spatial correlative of the state of “negative-divine” (*the cloud of unknowing*) can be seen in the void. The void is a recurring spatial motif in the thesis: the void opened up in the water that is the maelström itself (maelström as a negative fact), the void that is subtracted from the earth (THESPIS, vignette 3.2.2) the constructed void of the inverted basilica/dry-dock (BASILICA, 3.2.3). An important dimension to these voids and to the idea of void throughout the thesis is the boundary. The void has a peculiar, conflicted relationship to its boundaries. On the one hand it needs them to define itself but they also threaten its extinction (the lip of foam in the maelström, the storm waves that threaten to breach the walls of the dry dock).

Another spatial correlative which has a clear relationship with Poe is seen in the figure of the spiral which can be read in the work of Pseudo-Dionysius. While Derrida doesn't necessarily name the spiral, he does have a particular preoccupation with the circular language of negative theology (one of his major works in this vein having the title *Circumfession*).

2.2.2 - **Bataille** provides a difficult but important link to the mystics. *Inner Experience* was meant to be the first of three volumes in the *La Somme athéologique*, a reference to Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* but also presenting it as a "treatise which resonates with the absence of God" (IE, ix).

2.2.3 - **Derrida** is also invoked primarily for his conflicted affinity with negative theology. Furthermore Derrida writes an important essay on Artaud and talks about the chora (or *Khôra* as he writes it) which is referenced in ESSAY 3. On the whole the thesis uses many masks (voices) to speak – this is akin to Derrida's claim in *On The Name* that "it is necessary to be more than one in order to speak, several voices are necessary for that [...] especially when it's a matter of God." He is specifically referring here to the oblique method of Negative Theology, the "voiceless voice". It is by speaking of the site of the Maelström with this multitude of voices that I hope to engage the "voiceless voice"; an idea expanded on in the Afterword.

### 2.3 - ESSAY 3: Artaud Betrayed

This essay deals with the relationship of the figure to the ground of humanity as expressed in the Greek chorus. The title of the essay comes from Peter Brook's *The Empty Space* (p. 49), "Artaud applied is Artaud betrayed." This in some ways recalls the fundamental 'betrayal' of theatre that occurs when the Apollonian mask attempts to render Dionysus legible.

2.3.1 – **Nietzsche** – Nietzsche serves two main purposes in the thesis: 1) To introduce the opposition between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. This opposition can be seen in several analogous forms throughout the document: the beautiful vs. the sublime, the mountain vs. the vortex, the figure vs. the ground etc. 2) To relate the "pain of individuation" that theatre highlights and the mask that requires it.

2.3.2 – **Chora** - Fundamental to the essay (and the thesis) are the various dimensions of the word 'chora' – as solid, void, and edge. In this document the chora exists as: 1) Edge condition of two solids: the zone of the breaking wave, where it creeps up and pulls away from the shoreline (3.1.4). 2) Edge of the void – the "wilderness of surge" that flickers around the lip of the maelstrom and the spray of the wave which is seen at the top edge of the dry-dock gates (3.2.3) 3) As the void – the void of the maelström (seen on axis in the image at the end of ESSAY 2) 4) As the womb receptacle – the space of the maelström that opens up for the sailor to re-enter (0.3.4), 5) As the dance – the 'dance around' of the chorus, or the periCHOResis in (3.2.4).

2.3.3 - **Artaud** – inverts the Greek model – audience at the centre, drama surrounds.

2.3.4 - **Brecht** uses the 'distancing' effect – a strong, equitable relationship between audience/performer that is highly distinct and allows for the 'dialectic theater' to take place. Chora remains as a 'ghostly site'.

2.3.5 - **Grotowski** pushes audience to the periphery – act as witnesses to the ritual that is taking place for the actor.

## PART 3 : INTERVENTIONS

Part 3 addresses the third major binary of the thesis, *ritual/design*. The orthographic drawings attempt to show the intervention as the willed idea of the designer. The vignettes on the other hand seek to undermine this by claiming the spaces as extensions and embodiments of a set of ambiguous rituals. There is however some slippage between the two. While the drawings begin very confidently in abstraction, the ground (land *and* sea) in which the design sits begins to take on more presence until the focus on the intervention is all but lost at the end of Section F (3.1.4). The vignette images and the actions described in them also embody, spatialize and manifest much of the conceptual material that is outlined in the Essays.

### 3.1 – INTERVENTIONS 1: Design

3.1.1 – Design Programme and Siting

3.1.2 – Orthographic Drawings

3.1.3 – Review of technology

#### 3.1.4 – Site Sections:

Section C – Sky texture: Caspar David Friedrich, *The Monk by the Sea*, 1810

Section D – Sky texture: J.M.W. Turner, *Snow Storm: Hannibal and His Army Crossing the Alps*, 1812

Section E – Sky texture: J.M.W. Turner, *Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway*, 1844

Section F – Sky texture: John Constable, *Seascape Study with Rain Cloud*, 1824

### 3.2 – INTERVENTIONS 2: Ritual

3.2.1 **Precipice** – Gives us Poe’s ‘Apollonian’ vantage point before moving down into the zone of the intervention. The exhaustive naming that is described also recalls Pseudo-Dionysius’ ‘Divine Names’ and Derrida’s ‘Sauf Le Nom’. A further negative theological dimension exists in that the asymptotic moment of stillness between incoming and outgoing tides is unnamed.

3.2.2 **Thespis** – This vignette shows the chora as edge and void. As edge, it exists at the meeting of the ocean and the land, mediated by the intervention. As void it is the carved out *chora* reminiscent of a ghostly, chthonic orchestra pit described in Essay 3. The vignette describes the birth of Thespis from the chorus. The term “body without organs” comes from Artaud’s final radio play *To Have Done With The Judgement of God* which was then used by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. “Hieroglyph of breath” is taken from p. 141 of Artaud’s *Theatre And Its Double* (TD).

3.2.3 **Basilica** - One figure stands alone in the constructed void of the dry-dock waiting for the gates to be breached (based on an actual breach of a Dubai dry-dock in 2002). The character uses three masks to speak; Derrida desiring the messianic *toute autre* of his negative theology, Artaud waiting at the proscenium for the Theatre of Cruelty to emerge and Poe’s Mariner who laments not perishing in the Maleström. “Vien, oui oui” is a quote from Derrida - the rest of the passage is written by the author. “Bloodstream of images”, “surge up from all sides”, “abolish the stage” are all quoted from *The Theatre And Its Double* - the rest of the passage is constructed by the author in the voice of Artaud. Passage three of the Mariner is similarly constructed by the author in the voice of Poe. Some overlaps with negative theology are embedded: “carried down towards the axis” and the image of the “black mist” in particular.

3.2.4 **Perichoresis** – The title refers to an ancient greek dance (that literally translates as ‘dance around’) which post-modern theologian/philosopher Richard Kearney talks about in *The God Who May Be*. Besides denoting a dance, it has also been adapted as a way of conceiving the indwelling of the Christian trinity – the three are one and three simultaneously. This vignette imagines Derrida’s idea of *différance* (the endless deferral of words and its affinity with negative theology) as a *perichoresis* and translates it into the spatial condition of the AquaBuOY array. The gestures described in the dance take inspiration both from Artaud and American avant-garde director Robert Wilson.

3.2.5 **Charybdis** – In the thesis, the Charybdis becomes a symbol of the conflation of myth and reality. The extended vignette describes the gathering of a great storm in the sea and sky that ‘unbinds’ (Freudian terminology) both the *design* and *ritual* components of Part III as they simultaneously grind towards the death drive. In the final image the attenuating wave generators become like tentacles of a Charybdis-esque sea-monster (there is some poetic license taken here as the tentacles more properly belong to Scylla, the sea-monster whose lair is opposite Charybdis in The Strait of Messina). “February 15<sup>th</sup>” is roughly the date of Sexagesima Sunday. It was on this day in 1647, Poe tells us, that the Maelström raged “with such noise and impetuosity that the very stones of the houses on the coast fell to the ground.” The Name Caller, who embodies elements of Caspar David Friedrich (2.1.4), Pseudo-Dionysius (*The Divine Names*) and Kircher (*The Seventy-Two Names of God*) stands at the centre of a wide circle as he moves around the points of the compass. Calling out the names of the compass rose is called “boxing the compass” a term which also refers to the gyratory movement of a ship that has lost its rudder.





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