



Contemporary Art and the Liminal Space:  
Refuge for the Divine in an Empirical World?

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“Nothing about Hermes is settled, stable, permanent, restricted, or definite. He represents, in space and in the human world, movement and flow, mutation and transition, contact among foreign elements. In the house, his place is at the door, protecting the threshold, repelling thieves because he himself is the thief... for whom no lock, no barricade, no frontier exists. He is the wall piercer... he also stands at the gateways of towns, on state boundaries and at crossroads.”

Jean-Pierre Vernant,  
*Myth and Thought among the Greeks* (1965)

## **Abstract**

This research explores whether a concept of the divine can have alternative expression outside of religious bodies in contemporary art and utilises this notion in the idea of liminality, which is defined as a transitory rite of passage between different states of self. Since the liminal is a fundamentally ambiguous and uncertain experience, this research frames its argument in the idea that a perception of the divine has its refuge in such a state, regardless of whether religious creeds of the sacred have been rejected. It is through a contemporary art venue then, that the liminal concept can be applied for the purposes of testing this theory.

In the search for contemporary art mediums that are dynamic enough to fit this ambitious criteria, it is the discipline of intermedia art which has been selected, involving the bringing together of various elements (be they visual, aural or textual) and applying them, all at once. With the potential of simultaneous artistic effects at work, which become disorientating in their potentially ambiguous effect, such a method subsequently becomes the direct evocation of the liminal experience. A Practice Review examining various examples of intermedia art, from contemporary practitioners, demonstrates how the liminal theme applies to their works, followed by an in-depth exploration of the theme itself through the lens of various disciplines (such as depth psychology). A Methodology will be laid out for the application of my own intermedia framework, which selects visual split screen montage with audio and text incorporated from other sources, thereby reconfiguring the original narratives displayed. This framework of utilising previously unrelated elements is correlated to the metaphorical application of Alchemy, which depth psychologists have perceived as a process of the psyche and through which one element mediates between the others, thereby conducting a liminal operation.

The research then analyses a sequence of seven completed montage works that make up the practical side of this undertaking, all utilising historical subject matter as originally

interpreted in biographical film sources and then aligning them to a counterpart in order to grasp a mythical commonality. From this, we can detect and interpret the archetypal significance of such figures and why they have historically been symbolic to whole cultures, having long lasting effects on the political, social and cultural zeitgeists of their time. From these works, we can therefore detect how an unorthodox notion of the divine is evident in narratives which initially seemed to have no relation to spiritual concepts; however, when re-configured in relation to new elements, historic time is suspended and through the liminal effect, deeper narratives of divine myth become signified.

## **Table of contents**

<b>Abstract.....</b>	iii
<b>Table of contents.....</b>	v
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	vii
<b>1      Introduction.....</b>	1
Background: Defining Liminality.....	1
Research Approach and Intended Contribution.....	4
Overview of the thesis.....	6
<b>2      Literature Review.....</b>	8
Defining the empirical world.....	8
Defining the sacred.....	9
Archetypes as divine evocations.....	13
Liminality and the Mundus Imaginalis.....	19
Postproduction Art.....	23
Intermedia and the liminal effect.....	27
<b>3      Art Review.....</b>	31
Intermedia in art practice.....	31
<i>The Nantes Tryptych</i> by Bill Viola.....	31
<i>H.G.</i> by Robert Wilson and Peter Kuhn.....	34
<i>The Seven Sacraments of Nicolas Poussin</i> by Neil Bartlett.....	36
<i>Between Darkness and Light (After William Blake)</i> by Douglas Gordon.....	40
<i>The Missing Voice: Case Study B</i> by Janet Cardiff.....	43
Liminality in relation to these works.....	46

<b>4</b>	<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>49</b>
	Why intermedia?.....	49
	Liminality, Shamanism and the Biopic genre.....	52
	Liminality and Alchemical Theory.....	56
<b>5</b>	<b>Fallen Goddesses.....</b>	<b>62</b>
	Hail, Holy Queen.....	62
	The Hymn of the Fallen Woman.....	69
<b>6</b>	<b>Sun Gods and Warrior Queens.....</b>	<b>78</b>
	The Hymn to the Sun.....	79
	The Hymn to Pallas Athene.....	87
<b>7</b>	<b>Mystics and Visionaries.....</b>	<b>95</b>
	The Hymn of Dionysus.....	95
	The Rite of Saturn.....	102
<b>8</b>	<b>A Sacred Heritage.....</b>	<b>110</b>
	Wotan's Farewell.....	110
<b>9</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>119</b>
	Summary of Research .....	119
	Conclusion of Key Findings.....	122
	Contribution of Research and Beyond.....	126
	Final Statement.....	128
<b>9</b>	<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>130</b>

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

“A man at home, in his tribe, lives in the secular realm; he moves into the realm of the sacred when he goes on a journey and finds himself a foreigner near a camp of strangers.”<sup>1</sup>

– Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*

### Background: Defining Liminality

At the foundation of this research, the aim is to explore how an enduring perception of the divine sacred may exist in a mindset that has been conditioned to reject it. In the debates of our time, we may be swept up in absolutist mentalities – a prime example being in how the religious and scientific mindsets are historically opposed, with little attention given to any middle ground philosophy which could possibly reconcile them. To that end, the question asks if the divine, when perceived outside of institutional organised religion and its dogmatic creeds, can find its ‘refuge’ in a secular consciousness through the alternative route of contemporary art practices. If so, can this approach serve to lessen the divide between the sacred and secular in our western civilisation? It is my belief that the concept to ‘accommodate’ divine perceptions in a wholly rational worldview lies in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century ethnographer Arnold von Gennep’s idea of liminality, or the liminal.

In *The Rites of Passage*, van Gennep’s study of tribal societies, the author observed that, throughout the world, “the ceremonial patterns which accompany a passage from one situation to another” are “a special category” and, in defining these rituals, coined the term “rites of passage.”<sup>2</sup> Proceeding to subdivide his original term into three categories, van

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<sup>1</sup> van Gennep, A. (1960) *The Rites of Passage*. Translated by M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee.

<sup>2</sup> <sup>nd</sup> ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

Gennep defined these stages as “rites of separation” or “pre-liminal rites”, “rites of transition” or “liminal rites” and finally, “rites of incorporation” or “post-liminal rites.”<sup>3</sup> Stating that the separation rites are “prominent in funeral ceremonies” and the incorporation rites at “marriages”, van Gennep notes that the middle, liminal stage “may play an important part” in “pregnancy, betrothal, and initiation.”<sup>4</sup> The anthropologist Victor Turner, in his mid twentieth century study *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* further defines the liminal stage as being “open to the play of thought, feeling, and will”, popularly experienced in transient events such as “rituals, carnivals, dramas, and latterly films”, which become the breeding ground to generate “new models”<sup>5</sup> of thinking. Furthermore, Turner classifies those who exist in the liminal space as “neither here nor there”, being “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial”, and therefore becoming “ambiguous and indeterminate.”<sup>6</sup> Stating that liminality is a way of ridding oneself of “the clichés associated with status incumbency and role-playing and to enter into vital relations with other men”, Turner concludes that this liminal state catches “glimpses of that unused evolutionary potential in mankind which has not yet been externalized and fixed in structure.”<sup>7</sup> Through this “marginality”, asserts Turner, that which is generated are the “myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art” that reclassify “reality and man’s relationship to society, nature, and culture.”<sup>8</sup> Crucially, Turner observes that those who “habitually occupy low status positions in the social structure” are, through the play of

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<sup>3</sup> van Gennep, A. (1960) *The Rites of Passage*. Translated by M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Turner, V. (1969) *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, p. 7

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 128 - 129.

liminality, able to “exercise ritual authority over their superiors”, who, in turn, “must accept with good will their ritual degradation.”<sup>9</sup>

In analysing the descriptions of the liminal stage as van Gennep and Turner perceived them, we can immediately perceive that, unlike separation and incorporation rites, here is a realm without absolutes, where a future status may be perceived but is not yet attained or determined in ritual confirmation. This ‘future status’ may eventually be conferred by incorporation rites, but in liminality, the certainty of this is not yet guaranteed, leaving one’s sense of self in relation to the world both expectant and yet filled with insecurity in the wave of transition. Therefore, if the rites of separation and incorporation are defined by one’s exact knowledge of status, the liminal stage is one of ambivalence, otherness and vulnerability where, in nothing being assured, our relationship to the world and its paradigms may change profoundly, affiliating us with that vital outlook which resists exact, routine classifications. In his belief that “sacredness as an attribute is not absolute”<sup>10</sup>, van Gennep’s statement suggests an alternative way of perceiving the divine, outside of institutional religious bodies where only official rituals adhering to dogma may hold ‘holy’ distinction. In turn, van Gennep’s statement alludes to the transience of liminality as Turner perceives it, through which a perception of the sacred may be experienced at its most powerful and potent, by virtue of its awe-inspiring and unknowable mystery, as opposed to its stabilised veneration in creed. In that dogmatic representation of the divine being manifested in a single, perfected person, as it has been by the organised Christian church in the figure of Jesus Christ, the notion gives way to a cult of personality. This, through the idealised stressing of Christ’s perfection, has none of the ambivalence and numinous mystery of a divine evocation which, within a liminal experience, is powerful by virtue of its suggestiveness and lack of confirmation.

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<sup>9</sup> Turner, V. (1969) *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, p. 167.

<sup>10</sup> van Gennep, A. (1960) *The Rites of Passage*. Translated by M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 12.

## **Research Approach and Intended Contribution**

If a contemporary art space can seamlessly emulate the serene atmosphere of those ritual sites that are designated as holy by ‘official’ religious bodies, how best can it reflect the ambiguous, disturbing experience of the liminal divine? I believe that a true demonstration of liminality in contemporary art is to be found in the realm of intermedia or interdisciplinary artistic practice; where visual, textual or sound elements that have been traditionally used alone are brought together into one experience of cross-dialogues, done in a way which is often overwhelming and challenging. It is my theory that by taking these various components in isolation, outside of intermedia, we are closer to confirmation than evocation, for in our full concentration on a singular image or singular soundscape, we are participating in an incorporation rite where the mundane, original definition of something is wholly apparent and confirmed. If we are presented with multiple images and sounds at once however, we experience what is correlative to the liminal space. For, if those disparate elements brought into relation are able to suggest or evoke a higher, connective element that was previously unperceivable, it is through the inherent disorientation of the intermedial and liminal effect that these evocations, however powerful, remain unconfirmed and elusive. It is this idea of mixing separate ‘elements’ which, when together, allude to a connective whole that directly mirrors the liminal evocation of the divine, perceived intuitively and outside of institutional confirmation rites. Yet, when comprehended without association to the ‘other’, these parts are merely isolated elements of thought: a single image or statement that can be rendered dogmatic in those rites assigned to pre-liminal and post-liminal ceremonies.

The utilisation of intermedia can therefore become a playground for ambiguity and indeterminable sensations and perceptions, where elements can be extracted from their traditional representation and restyled into play with something that subverts their theme. To that end, it is the desired medium that meets the potentials of this research question, for in realising liminality, the topic calls for a form beyond the singular image to manifest its

concerns. The notion of taking a previously self-contained image and relating it to the ‘other’ not only invites the incorporation of audio and text but also implies that the central focus on a singular image could be abandoned, in favour of a system that conveys multiple representations to make up a single work of intermedia art.

Through intermedia then, we have the means to generate a liminal experience through the tools of scientific advancement, alluding to the idea that liminality (as refuge for ‘the divine’ in an empirical world) can be ‘simulated’ through the very mechanisms that have traditionally been utilised to diminish widespread religious curiosity in the Western imagination. The liminal state, as realised in a work of art, demands a process of movement: undoubtedly fulfilled by intermedia as a contemporary art discipline, as this practical research will seek to demonstrate. By creating works which are not static, singular images but which incorporate multiple moving images, sounds and textual elements, we can allude to a transcendental synthesis that will ultimately remain mysteriously elusive to us, thereby achieving the liminal effect of perceiving and yearning for this ‘higher state’ (positioned, for our purposes, as divine) whilst remaining in fragmentation.

In embarking upon my practice led research (2015–present), my concern has been in identifying and establishing these inter-relations of originally unrelated narratives, in order to create new ones for my practical output. It is my continued belief that a sense of the liminal in artistic practice can make possible a ‘sacred space’ for the reception of numinous perceptions, a state of mind which reason advises us to doubt and set aside. To that end, it is my belief that this research question is timely because of its inclusivity (by which I mean, through its toleration and respect of ambiguities), which has given the practical output a vitality that rewards multiple viewings.

## **Overview of the thesis**

The research will be presented in the following sections: a Literature Review, a Practice Review and a Methodology, followed by several chapters which will analyse the practical output in relation to the theories explored and finally, a conclusion. The Literature Review will seek to define notions of the sacred and the empirical world and how, as a divine concept, liminality can be applied to disciplines outside of anthropology such as depth psychology, as well as the analysis of further literature pertaining to intermedia as an artform. The Practice Review will, first of all, offer up several examples of contemporary artists over the last twenty years who have utilised intermedia. In exploring their works, I will offer analysis regarding how these artists, through their usage of intermedia, are also exploring van Gennep and Turner's concept of liminality. Finally, I will expand upon my specific use of intermedia, in relation to this. My Methodologies chapter will explore the framework of my chosen system of intermedia in relation to the relevant literature, expanding upon its intended application to create my works.

Next, each successive chapter exploring my practical output will assign two works to a chapter at maximum and the intention of the practical output will be as follows: to identify various divine archetypes through the reconfiguration via intermedia of various sources. Having brought these previously unrelated elements into relation, the intermedia system will become a fragmented, liminal rumination on these archetypal, mythical presences, both invoking and demonstrating their power to transform society but ultimately demonstrating how they cannot be sustained in historical time. Finally, the conclusion chapter will assemble my findings in relation to the established literature that makes up my research and offer a final evaluation on whether notions of the divine can have 'refuge' in an empirical world, through a sense of 'sacred presence' in liminality as opposed to any 'sacred confirmation'.

My expected results and findings are that the practical output will reflect the research question's concerns, creating an ambiguous liminal experience not only in the complexities of the intermedia system, but in the content: particularly in its subversion and reinterpretation of concepts in relation to the sacred. To that end, I believe that my findings, by engaging with subject matter in a ritualised demonstration of liminality, will restore sacred perceptions by making associations to a deeper archetypal plane.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### Defining the empirical world

If the term ‘empirical’ is defined as a sense of the actual and material, perceived from practical observation rather than theory and ideas, it finds its analogy in ‘secular’ as opposed to ‘sacred’ readings of the world, with the latter alluding to notions of the transcendental. The philosopher Charles Taylor, in his work *The Secular Age*, describes this ‘secular’ term as that which has been “emptied of God, or of any reference to ultimate reality”, by which, the “various spheres of activity” engage wholly with “rationality.”<sup>11</sup> Asserting that it is humanity’s “relation to a transcendent God which has been displaced at the centre of social life”, Taylor finally envisions a “middle realm” between religious instincts and logical thought where “the language of art” can “relate us to nature”, defining this as a “free and neutral space” between “religious commitment and materialism.”<sup>12</sup> Taylor’s description of this “middle realm” is synonymous with the definitions of liminality as described in the Introduction, being that state which eludes the dogmatic classifications of religious dogma and the restricted ‘empirical’ view where all material things are no more than we perceive them.

In *God Is Not Great*, Christopher Hitchens maintains that “discovery and clarification, which is a pleasure to study in itself” should be enough for humanity, pointing out that “millions of people in all societies still prefer the myths of the cave and the tribe and the blood sacrifice”, which he states can only “impede and retard—or try to turn back—the measurable advances that we have made.”<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Hitchens does not consider the role of the art world in giving a forum to those instinctual perceptions which he dismisses as part of a religious

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<sup>11</sup> Taylor, C. (2007) *A Secular Age*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 360.

<sup>13</sup> Hitchens, C. (2008) *God Is Not Great*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Atlantic Books, p. 96.

mindset. For, if we perceive the function of art as Charles Taylor does, as that which satisfies those impulses for ‘magic’ (the same impulses which draw one to religious faith), we can also understand it as a process of liminal initiation whereby our instinct for divine meaning may give sacred dimensions to worldly things, or that which we deem as secular before framing them within this mediating artistic context.

Sam Harris, in his work *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason*, agrees with Hitchens that the “project of religion” is “backward” and “cannot survive the changes that have come over us”<sup>14</sup> in a cultural, technological and ethical sense. Acknowledging however that a sense of the sacred is one of the key components that is “essential for human happiness”, Harris emphasizes the idea of “spiritual experience” as “a natural propensity of the human mind”, not aligning it with those “religious traditions” which he deems “intellectually defunct and politically ruinous.”<sup>15</sup> It is through the liminal artistic medium then, where these sacred ‘experiences’ may occur in the contemplation of an evocative work and yet not take on that dogmatic permanence of a sacred status, akin to those conferred by organised religion in its own designated spaces.

### **Defining the sacred**

In defining the term ‘sacred’ itself, Emile Durkheim’s study *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* classifies it as one of two domains that is “the distinctive trait of religious thought”, its antithesis being the term which Durkheim defined as “the profane.”<sup>16</sup> It is the sacred which Durkheim asserts is “naturally considered superior in dignity and power”<sup>17</sup> to this profane domain, noting that in religious orders, the faithful are “exhorted to withdraw

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<sup>14</sup> Harris, S. (2006) *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Simon & Schuster, p. 22.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>16</sup> Durkheim, E. (1956) *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Translated by J.W. Swain. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., p. 37.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

themselves completely” from this lower state, “in order to lead an exclusively religious life”<sup>18</sup> and forsake a worldly one. In Durkheim’s analysis, the human mind “refuses to allow the two corresponding things to be confounded”<sup>19</sup>, emphasising religious practice as that which expresses “the nature of sacred things” with religious rites acting as the “rules of conduct which prescribe how a man should comport himself in the presence of these sacred objects.”<sup>20</sup> Durkheim ultimately stresses that these rituals “fulfil the need which the believer feels of strengthening and reaffirming, at regular intervals of time, the bond which unites him to the sacred beings upon which he depends.”<sup>21</sup>

In Rudolf Otto’s *The Idea of the Holy*, the philosopher defines sacred experience as a “moment” which “sets it apart from the Rational”<sup>22</sup>, emphasising that it may not only be “a gentle tide, pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship”<sup>23</sup> but also inspire “daemonic dread” when manifested in “something uncanny.”<sup>24</sup> In Otto’s analysis, “the truly mysterious object” is “inherently wholly other”<sup>25</sup> with “a potent charm” that is both “daunting” and “fascinating”, making it a “strange harmony of contrasts.”<sup>26</sup> Affirming Otto’s perspective, Charles Taylor emphasises a “struggle to articulate” such an “unsettling and enigmatic” experience; which, although leaving us “puzzled and shaken”, can also leave us “deeply moved.”<sup>27</sup> To that end, if Durkheim’s idea of the sacred is a quality of some superior and elevated power, in Otto’s analysis, this does not necessarily make that ‘presence’ gentle

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<sup>18</sup> Durkheim, E. (1956) *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Translated by J.W. Swain. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., p. 40.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>22</sup> Otto, R. (1936) *The Idea of the Holy*. Translated by J.W. Harvey. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Oxford University Press, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>27</sup> Taylor, C. (2007) *A Secular Age*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 6.

or benevolent in its divinity but essentially ambiguous. Therefore, it does not so much ‘affirm’ one’s relation to the divine but instead disorientates us from profane reality into a kind of sacred perception which, ultimately, does not confirm itself.

Mircea Eliade’s *The Sacred and The Profane* proposes the term “hierophany”<sup>28</sup> to describe sacred manifestations, stating that these are “a wholly different order from ‘natural’ realities.”<sup>29</sup> For that which “reveals itself as sacred”, Eliade states that its “immediate reality is transmuted into a supernatural reality” where “all nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality”<sup>30</sup> or “absolute reality.”<sup>31</sup> In a religious space, Eliade identifies that it is “the threshold” between the sacred and the profane which becomes the “passage” where the two worlds “communicate”, signifying “a solution of continuity.”<sup>32</sup>

It is in the case of the religious festival where Eliade asserts that the “reactualisation of a sacred event” takes place, becoming a “reintergration” of “mythical time”<sup>33</sup> which ensures that “the sacred dimension of life is recovered”<sup>34</sup> and is sanctified as “a divine creation.”<sup>35</sup> This practice therefore becomes equivalent to “becoming contemporary with the gods” and “living in their presence” by recovering a “primordial situation”<sup>36</sup> where the actors of the festival become the divine beings themselves and “transfigure”<sup>37</sup> their own existence, thereby “sanctifying”<sup>38</sup> the profane world. In Eliade’s theory, “the supernatural is indissolubly connected with the natural”, with nature “always expressing something that transcends it” and

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<sup>28</sup> Eliade, M. (1959) *The Sacred and the Profane*. Translated by W.R. Trask. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 68 - 69.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 202.

thereby revealing its “true essence.”<sup>39</sup> It is “through symbols”, Eliade concludes, that man finds “metaphysical comprehension of the world”, transmuting his earthly experience into a “spiritual act.”<sup>40</sup> This refusal to reject the earthly, sensuous and ambiguous level of ‘the profane’ can be correlated to the ancient esoteric tradition of Hermeticism, which Glenn Alexander Macgee describes as affirming “God’s transcendence of the world and his involvement in it”, through being “metaphysically distinct from the world” and yet needing the world “to complete himself.”<sup>41</sup> To that end, the theory that I will set out to engage with through this practical research is that liminality is the recovery of this Hermetic idea of the divine, suggesting sacredness through the ambiguous, transient perceptions that allude to something ‘elsewhere’. It is this relational, earthly ‘state’ which we can apply to an intermedial, artistic framework where two corporeal sources are brought into attempted synergy, to create renewed perception of themselves in relation to a divine symbol or invisible archetype, thereby creating Eliade’s idea of a sacred event and hierophany. Therein, we have established a liminal method conducted through an animating ritual (akin to a religious festival), which I will seek to demonstrate brings legitimacy to notions of the divine in an atheistic mindset where reason would be the anchor.

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<sup>39</sup> Eliade, M. (1959) *The Sacred and the Profane*. Translated by W.R. Trask. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, pp. 117-118.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 211-212.

<sup>41</sup> Magee, G. A. (2008) *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Itacha and London: Cornell University Press, p. 9.

## Archetypes as divine evocations

“These archetypes are true and genuine symbols that cannot be exhaustively interpreted, either as signs or as allegories. They are genuine symbols precisely because they are ambiguous, full of half glimpsed meanings, and in the last resort inexhaustible. The ground principles, the *archai*, of the unconscious are indescribable because of their wealth of reference, although in themselves recognisable.

The discriminating intellect naturally keeps on trying to establish their singleness of meaning and thus misses the essential point; for what we can above all establish as the one thing consistent with their nature is their manifold meaning, their almost limitless wealth of reference, which makes any unilateral formulation impossible.”<sup>42</sup>

– *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Carl Gustav Jung

The ‘symbols’ or divine signifiers as described by Mircea Eliade, which lead to this sacred comprehension, can be correlated to Carl Jung’s study of archetypes, defined by Jung as “primordial” or “universal images” with the ability “to attract, to convince, to fascinate, and to overpower”<sup>43</sup>. In “primitive tribal lore”, asserts Jung, these archetypes were no longer “contents of the unconscious” but were transformed into “conscious formulae taught according to tradition”, further emphasising that archetypal expression came about through the traditions of “myth and fairytale.”<sup>44</sup> It was “primitive man”, Jung asserts, that wished to “assimilate all outer sense experiences to inner, psychic events”, so that the sun rising and

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<sup>42</sup> Jung, C. G. (1959) *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 38.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

setting would represent “the fate of a god or hero who, in the last analysis, dwells nowhere except in the soul of man.”<sup>45</sup>

Therefore, the “mythologized processes of nature”, as Jung conveys it, are “symbolic expressions of the inner, unconscious drama of the psyche” which becomes “accessible” to us by way of “projection” and is “mirrored”<sup>46</sup> in natural events. Jung concludes that the archetypes that have “given rise to myths” are “the inner drama which primitive man rediscovers”, doing so by “means of analogy, in the processes of nature both great and small.”<sup>47</sup> Within Jung’s discipline of depth psychology, Jeffrey C. Miller in *The Transcendent Function* describes an idea of a third space ‘function’ as being “a psychic usher guiding us through doorways along the hallways of psychological growth.”<sup>48</sup> In this respect, Miller asserts that the function “falls into an archetypal pattern that implicates liminality and initiation”, or that which ultimately requires us to “slip between seemingly irreconcilable states.”<sup>49</sup> Miller defines this as the “archetypal place of pure possibility that is the potential source of all sorts of original and new ideas”, being a place of liminality where “both death and birth coexist.”<sup>50</sup> If Eliade’s idea of ‘hierophany’ involves a revelation made through the interplay between the unseen sacred and the visible profane, it is therefore within this ambiguous liminal experience of being ‘between worlds’ where the divine archetypal presence as described by Jung occurs to us, seemingly evoking something ‘other’ in its physical manifestation and providing the earthly or historical connection point to its mythical analogy.

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<sup>45</sup> Jung, C. G. (1959) *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 6.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>48</sup> Miller, J. (2004) *The Transcendent Function: Jung’s Model of Psychological Growth Through Dialogue With the Unconscious*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: State University of New York Press., p. 104.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

In *Art and the Creative Unconscious*, Jungian psychologist Erich Neumann identifies “intrinsically formless psychic structures which become visible in art” as “archetypes of the collective unconscious”<sup>51</sup>, an idea of images emblematic with divine concepts that can be aligned with experience of the numinous and which I will seek to demonstrate is most powerfully realised through a ‘third space’ in art. When Neumann offers the archetypal image of the mother as an example, he stresses how the archetype “always retains its identity, but it takes on different styles— different aspects or emotional colour— depending on whether it is manifested in Egypt, Mexico, or Spain, or in ancient, medieval, or modern times”,<sup>52</sup> which implies that the very same ‘energy’ can be identified with equal effect through multiple variations. It is this concept which has its power in multiple embodiments of an archetype (or related archetypes), as opposed to a centralised monolithic idea of them in a single image.

With the theme of the archetype itself, Neumann conveys how the “paradoxical multiplicity of its eternal presence, which makes possible an infinite variety of forms of expression, is crystallized in its realisation by man in time.”<sup>53</sup> In this statement, we may understand how mythical forms can be enacted in the narratives of human figures, who manifest the various archetypes within the state that, as Neumann defines it, is an “archetypal eternity” which “enters into a unique synthesis with a specific historical situation.”<sup>54</sup> That synthetic framework is what this research topic seeks to create in practical work and demonstrate in a specific formula for expressing its concerns. Neumann, emphasising how “festivals and rites are the nodal points of the numinosum, which shapes everything that comes into contact with its sacral sphere”<sup>55</sup>, describes the sensibility of the group ritual; that energy which we seek to demonstrate exists in a liminal environment between a pre-liminal group’s initiation into a

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<sup>51</sup> Neumann, E. (1959) *Art and the Creative Unconscious: Four Essays*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge, p. 82.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

new awareness and their incorporation of the experience into a potential post-liminal belief system. Neumann's belief that the manifestation of archetypes in this ritual, which allows "the collective unconscious" to extend "into the living reality of the group"<sup>56</sup> is a method which, in my opinion, invites an extremely varied and dynamic manifestation of multiple representations that are surprisingly adept in their parallel access of the 'energies' or 'archetypes' in question.

When Neumann shares his personal belief that it is "the function of art to represent the archetypal and to manifest it symbolically as a high point of existence"<sup>57</sup>, we can see how he identifies Art as a divine practice of liminal processes which can unify the world, outside of institutional reach, as the varied, inclusive stage for its spiritual experience. Neumann describes the tyranny of dogma ascribed to these institutions as an "advance of specialisation and differentiation" which "has destroyed the closeness of every individual to the psychic substratum, characteristic of the original situation"<sup>58</sup>: a bleak condition from which nihilistic whims may take effect. It is this "psychic substratum" which, through the liminal experience, recalls the archaic sense of mythical time. To that end, it is the mythical idea which this research seeks to capture through a sequence of works, which will extract their subject matter from a wide range of previously unaffiliated sources, subverting original established narratives to reveal the common archetypes that are perceptible within them.

The archetypal psychologist James Hillman states in his *Anima: An Anatomy of a Personified Notion* how this archetypal realm "presents a polycentric picture, a theatre of personified powers always implicating one another."<sup>59</sup> This notion of 'theatre' again points to the idea of interplay: the forum for different components to take on new manifestations when perceived

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<sup>56</sup> Neumann, E. (1959) *Art and the Creative Unconscious: Four Essays*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge, p. 92.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>59</sup> Hillman, J. (1985) *Anima: An Anatomy of a Personified Notion*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Washington, DC: Spring Publications, p. 138.

in parallel. Hillman identifies “the perspective that would cleanly etch out their distinct lines” as reflecting “the monotheistic consciousness of the scientific and philosophical approach.”<sup>60</sup>

In other words, the notion of the divine manifesting in a singular, unified entity is fixed in definition as much in the same way of a scientific outcome and therefore its ‘location’ is determined and its boundaries sealed off within an institution.

In contrast, Hillman points to the other perception that would interpret these divine effects “ambiguously and in images” as reflecting “the polytheistic, hermetic, or anima consciousness of the psychological approach.”<sup>61</sup> If what we perceive as the various archetypes are being manifested through that ‘polytheism’ of many deities, it is the ‘hermetic’ reference which brings us to Hermes (or Mercury), Messenger of the Gods in the Ancient Greek mythology. This specific divine figure, being perceived as the link between gods and mortals, is not a deity that can be easily ‘fixed’ in a monotheistic hierarchy (as opposed to, say, Zeus), for he is constantly on the move, imparting information, functioning as a mediator between heaven and earth, and guiding souls to the underworld. Hermes is therefore the manifestation of liminality in his earthly dealings and yet only a personification of it in the sense that he is truly elusive and hardly known to us at all, leading us down a path to wisdom through various signifiers of himself - but never guaranteeing our successful enlightenment. This is in stark contrast to monotheism’s solemn creeds of how to avoid sin and attain righteousness, promising ‘salvation’ or ‘damnation’ in lieu of their doctrines being obeyed or discarded. Hermes, comparatively, encourages ambivalence.

Crucially, Hillman perceives that to “imagine in pairs and couples is to think mythologically”<sup>62</sup>, and that this “mythical thinking” is what “connects pairs into tandems rather than separating them into opposites.”<sup>63</sup> This idea of relating components in such a way

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<sup>60</sup> Hillman, J. (1985) *Anima: An Anatomy of a Personified Notion*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Washington, DC: Spring Publications, p. 138.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

that it brings about a deeper way of thinking favours the notion of it being utilised in intermedia as an exercise in liminality. To Hillman, these “tandems” are “like brothers or enemies or traders or lovers”, in that they “show endless varieties of styles” and “innumerable positions.”<sup>64</sup> If we are to identify the deeper mode of representation that comes about through this system, it is in the contrasting of elements where it has its habitat. For it is through the interplay of Hillman’s tandems which “favour intercourse”<sup>65</sup> that the invisible space affiliates them with a common archetype: a signifier to a greater divine unity that can be glimpsed, if not wholly realised. It is through the relation of components in sight, sound and text then, that the original material is ‘reanimated’ into new focus and meaning.

Hillman’s insight into this mythical thought process, which can be applied to our own intermedia system, also offers up a kind of erotic analogy. As Hillman clarifies that “to consider every position in terms of the syzygy reflects a “hermaphroditic” consciousness in which the One and the Other are co-present, a priori, at all times, a hermetic duplicity and Aphroditic coupling going on in every event”<sup>66</sup>, we are again reminded of that messenger god mediating components, as well as the Goddess of Love evoking the erotic energy between parts, in pursuit of union.

When Hermes and Aphrodite are combined into one entity, their names become ‘Hermaphrodite’, the illusion of the two sexes joined into a perfected, self-contained unity. Essentially, a common theme of this Literature Review has been that to recover the divine unity as a singular and identifiable entity is naïve (and a monotheistic notion), and that the ‘evocation’ of it, in liminality, is what sustains its power in ambiguity. The twenty first century’s social trend toward sex reassignment and living the ‘authentic self’ is a powerful allusion to this: for it could be argued that this is an attempt of recovering the divine

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<sup>64</sup> Hillman, J. (1985) *Anima: An Anatomy of a Personified Notion*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Washington, DC: Spring Publications, p. 173.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

androgynous whole and an unwillingness to tolerate a liminal existence in fragmentation, by enduring a permanent state of ‘transitioning’ between gendered identities. This research topic’s practice seeks to generate that mind-set for ‘divine reunification’ but, crucially, its desire for recovery will remain an aspiration: where its total manifestation, although suggested, will remain unfulfilled. For in our denial of ultimate cohesion, Hillman’s sense of mythical thinking is realised in the third space, as the sacred rite that ‘blesses’ us with both a numinous evocation and a sense of rational perspective about the futile illusion of recovering and sustaining total divine unity.

### **Liminality and the Mundus Imaginalis**

Henry Corbin, the philosopher and scholar of Islamic mysticism, also perceived liminality, which he interpreted as ‘mundus imaginalis’. In his work *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran*, Corbin designates this as an “intermediary world” comprising of “archetypal celestial figures which the active Imagination alone is able to apprehend.”<sup>67</sup> Corbin asserts that the essence of this imagination is not to “construct something unreal” but to “unveil the hidden reality” of “the *ta'wil*”<sup>68</sup>, which he defines as “the spiritual exegesis practiced by all the Spirituals of Islam, whose special quality is that of alchemical meditation: to occultate the apparent, to manifest the hidden.”<sup>69</sup> This notion of ‘unveiling’ the hidden reality rather than ‘constructing’ it is a key insight; for if that divine reality exists as an invisible state, its evocation comes from our contemplation of it through an earthly signifier, thereby evoking its power through a liminal meeting of elements. Corbin identifies the practitioners of this mediating process as “the mystical gnostics”<sup>70</sup> and interprets the essential term “gnosis” as “that perception which grasps the object not in its objectivity,

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<sup>67</sup> Corbin, H. (1960) *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 11-12.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

but as a sign, an intimation, an announcement that is finally the soul's annunciation to itself.”<sup>71</sup> To this end, Corbin’s terminology is identifiable with Hillman’s idea of mythical thinking: a subtle form of intelligence that disorientates ordinary perception in liminality.

In Tom Cheetham’s *All the World an Icon: Henry Corbin and the Angelic Function of Beings*, Cheetham interprets Corbin’s philosophy as follows: “The practice of *ta’wil* is how we recover the lost speech. Its mastery is the magnum opus of a lifetime. It is, simply put, a process of “reading” and interpreting a sacred text, the text of the world, and the soul itself as metaphors for the reality from which they derive.”<sup>72</sup> If we examine this in the context of my research, the works that are presented from it will all be ‘interpreting’ their assembled subjects in a liminal framework, alluding to their parallel manifestation of a shared, transcendental archetype and accompanied by a piece of text that identifies or evokes that archetype, be it a ritualistic prayer, a dramatic extract or a confessional statement. Cheetham conveys how in “a highly literate and technological society, the locus of reality of words tends to move from speech toward the text on the page, where they are fixed.”<sup>73</sup> The move away from manifesting the liminal as the group’s communal rite of passage to the isolated liminal experience of individual private reading can be seen as an outcome of technological advancement, as Cheetham further clarifies: “People start looking for literal and stable truth and hope to find reality in the abstractions of thought, solid facts of reason, and the instruments of technology rather than in the living, breathing world.”<sup>74</sup> To that end, the works of this research seek to subvert these ‘literal’ ends and use technology as a means of recovering Hillman’s mythical thinking, through an artistic medium.

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<sup>71</sup> Corbin, H. (1960) *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 12.

<sup>72</sup> Cheetham, T. (2012) *All the World An Icon: Henry Corbin and the Angelic Function of Beings*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, p. 91.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

In Cheetham's view, "all questions of the nature of poetry, music, and art are ultimately theological" and that "the distance between liturgy, strictly speaking, and the arts is not very great at all."<sup>75</sup> His perception of the sacred ritual as a kind of artistic work in itself is established in that, to Cheetham, "both are acts of lived interpretation; both are the *ta'wil* in action. And both bring us to the threshold of the Other, the transcending Presence."<sup>76</sup> When perceiving how the natural evocations of the sacred, liminal ritual could become potentially perverted through their incorporation into a post-liminal dogma, we are therefore able to clearly differentiate between the truly numinous, inclusive and universal effect and that notion of the divine which has come under institutional, exclusive control.

Returning to Hillman's invocation of Hermes as the archetypal presence in liminal rites, Cheetham makes the same reference point: "*Ta'wil*, the archetypal act of hermeneutics, that primary human activity overseen by Hermes who carries messages between the gods and mortals, is life lived at its highest pitch of intensity."<sup>77</sup> This process, which Cheetham refers to as "the archaic and primordial experience of enacting meaning in the world"<sup>78</sup>, is the same proposition in Hillman's scholarship for experiencing and applying mythical thinking. Cheetham, in seeing "the hermeneut as prophet, as artist, as soul-in-prayer"<sup>79</sup> ascribes similarly sacred terms to the artist practitioner's function, with the idea that this role "fuses the divine and human worlds together by standing on the edge of mystery, of chaos, and of creation by serving as a conduit between the source of all life and the world of mortals."<sup>80</sup> This ritual 'clearing' is the liminal space made manifest. Cheetham refers to this as "the therapy", the outcome of which he argues "consists in learning to re-love the world through carrying the sensible forms of the world back to the forms of Imagination", which, he

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<sup>75</sup> Cheetham, T. (2012) *All the World An Icon: Henry Corbin and the Angelic Function of Beings*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, p. 113.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

stresses, is “just what poetry does.”<sup>81</sup> If the “sensible forms” stand for the individual elements in their original state - before their relation to each other - the artist practitioner’s act of taking them back to “forms of Imagination” is surely a signifier of their liminal interplay in order to achieve this ‘divine’ perception.

Finally, Cheetham’s impression of this method as “an immersion of the human person and the human world in the more-than-human” is that which he states “requires recognition of the suprapersonal realities that lie behind all the acts and all the events of human life.”<sup>82</sup> In that sense, the process (which may not set its relations in a superficially ‘logical’ framework) does so in a way which is all the more powerful by virtue of alluding to our deeper yearning for the lost, perfected whole: recognised in that liminal space where the divine presence is evocative, if not confirmed.

Although this Literature Review has primarily dealt with texts in the realm of philosophy and depth psychology, the theme of liminality has compelled practitioners in other disciplines such as sociology and post-colonial theory. As the questions on this theme are being broached in such diverse and often disconnected fields, my research will seek to clarify, through an artistic medium, where the commonalities in these fields are evident and fully demonstrable through my practice. Crucially, this re-positioning is underlined with the proposition of liminality as an impression of the divine.

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<sup>81</sup> Cheetham, T. (2012) *All the World An Icon: Henry Corbin and the Angelic Function of Beings*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, p. 116.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

## **Postproduction art**

“Postproduction artists use these forms to decode and produce different story lines and alternative narratives. Just as through psychoanalysis our unconscious tries, as best it can, to escape the presumed fatality of the familial narrative, art brings collective scenarios to consciousness and offers us other pathways through reality, with the help of forms themselves, which make these imposed narratives material. By manipulating the shattered forms of the collective scenario, that is, by considering them not indisputable facts but precarious structures to be used as tools, these artists produce singular narrative spaces of which their work is the mise-en-scene. It is the use of the world that allows one to create new narratives, while its passive contemplation relegates human productions to the communal spectacle.”<sup>83</sup>

– *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Repograms The World,*

Nicolas Bourriaud

In *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Repograms The World*, French art critic Nicolas Bourriaud identifies the system to which this research question will have its practical demonstration as ‘Postproduction art’. Calling the practice a “culture of use”, he perceives its artworks as challenging “passive culture, composed of merchandise and consumers”, stating that it “makes the forms and cultural objects of our daily lives function.”<sup>84</sup> What Bourriaud identifies here as a culture of passivity can be applied to a western tradition dictating that ‘the divine’ is exclusively beyond this world in monolithic omnipotence, perpetuated as the force of untainted perfection by ‘official’ religious bodies. The “other pathways through reality”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Bourriaud, N. (2005) *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Repograms The World*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Lukas & Sternberg, p. 23.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

to which Bourriaud then refers is an engagement with liminality where, this research will argue, all numinous experience has its effect on the human mind. In this “new form of culture”, the liminal is synonymous with Bourriaud’s idea of the artwork functioning “as the temporary terminal of a network of interconnected elements, like a narrative that extends and reinterprets preceding narratives”<sup>86</sup> - the key word here being ‘temporary’, as is the liminal state which is ephemeral and finds its power in that essential sense of transience.

Bourriaud’s vision of this new type of artist imagining “the links, the likely relations between disparate sites” and inventing “new uses for works, including audio or visual forms of the past, within their own constructions”<sup>87</sup> correlates to the intermedia system utilised by this research. Essentially, it is Bourriaud’s addressing of the interdisciplinary artist redefining “historical or ideological narratives” into “alternative scenarios”<sup>88</sup>, which perceives meaning in the world through sacred, liminal rite and archetypal ritual.

My reading within the context of montage implies that, in terms of practical work, this is the ideal medium to serve my topic. In *Transcultural Montage*, Bruce Kapferer’s essay “Montage and Time” correlates the form as a cinematic tool to the idea of ritual, stating that both cinema and ritual are “often directed to a decentering of human perception”, with the ability to reveal “what underpins the creative and generative capacity” that is “otherwise obscured in thoroughly human-centered, subjectivist perspectives.”<sup>89</sup> In the same book’s introduction chapter, the montage form is referred to by the book’s editors Christian Suhr and Rane Willerslev as having “subversive potential”, which “lies in its capacity for altering the obvious first sense of an object, image, or perspective by combining two or more elements.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Bourriaud, N. (2005) *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Repograms The World*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Lukas & Sternberg, p. 9.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Suhr, C. and Willerslev, R. (eds.) (2005) *Transcultural Montage*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Berghahn Books, p. 24.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

This statement recalls descriptions of the liminal state as a destabilising environment, and so, in the context of contemporary art, the idea of producing work which is concerned with forging associations goes back to that idea of inclusivity as opposed to exclusivity, which underpins this research question.

In *Para/Inquiry: Postmodern Religion and Culture*, Victor E. Taylor affirms our topic by stating that the liminal is “the place of the divine; the place where ultimacy is inscribed, yet veiled”,<sup>91</sup> and that the concept gives us the effect of “thinking theologically, attending to the seemingly inherent lack of completeness present in human existence.”<sup>92</sup> When approaching this idea, the ‘ultimacy’ he describes can be compared to the idea of presenting a singular, still image with a clear narrative that holds the attention and provokes us to a natural resolution and outcome, as opposed to the simultaneous visual display of multiple, seemingly unrelated narratives in motion which would provoke a more ambiguous response and invite less precise interpretations. It is my goal to construct this latter idea as a practical system through the use of video, as a way of ‘mimicking’ the liminal effect: the obvious method being the use of montage, which is in turn rendered into collage, in the sense of running narratives in parallel time.

In stating that “postmodern life finds itself without immediate access to the supreme sacred”, Taylor asserts that this “irresolution is not merely the fragmented effect of modern life; for modern life is understood as the bifurcation of the world, one part sacred and the other part profane, with the two dialectically joined”<sup>93</sup>, suggesting that the institutional placement of ‘the divine’, in dogmatic terms of creeds and texts, positions the world outside its sacred threshold as corrupted or ‘fallen’. Taylor, in stating that “the synthesis of fragments within the

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<sup>91</sup> Taylor, V. E. (1999) *Para/Inquiry: Postmodern Religion and Culture*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Routledge, p. 51.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

dialectic of the sacred and the profane sets the stage for a postmodern religious life”<sup>94</sup>, provides us with two key terms – ‘synthesis of fragments’ and ‘stage’. Taylor’s belief is that it is “this destabilisation of ultimacy, brought on by the absence of either a transcendent sacred or a concrete profane” which “defines our postmodern crisis”<sup>95</sup>, allowing us to think of our constructed video system for practical work as reflecting this ‘crisis’ but not necessarily resolving it in stressing the connections of fragments presented. Rather, it is the idea of these fragments manifesting a third space which, in turn, evokes a numinous sensation of their archetypal significance and the potential of their synthesis into a higher unified wholeness, the movement towards this being where the liminal concept resides. It is through an evocation of the divine in the transitional period of liminality and not through its sustained idolatry in confirmation rites where its numinous, mysterious power is most potent, thereby not being wholly defined, centred or cohesively ordered. In the creation of practical work then, to deal with a single image would most likely inhibit any sense of sustained ambiguity: for the idea of the divine would then be stressed in a didactic, iconic way, as opposed to being evoked through a disorientation of ‘self’ in liminal relation to ‘the other’, as demonstrated through intermedia.

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<sup>94</sup> Taylor, V. E. (1999) *Para/Inquiry: Postmodern Religion and Culture*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Routledge, p. 52.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

## Intermedia and the liminal effect

“Just as festival unites everyone in the central events of a liturgical calendar, marking the passage of the year or the stages of a life, so too does art unite us through its communicative function. In a festival, people gather to re-instantiate the ties that bind them together into a community, and these ties become real through the festival. It is precisely in and through the festival celebration that these binding ties come into their being and show themselves in their truth. Art is a power to enact an experience of community in solidarity. In principle, this community is a universal one that extends to everyone to whom the work of art speaks.”<sup>96</sup>

- “Intermedial Being”, David E. Klemm

In the collection of articles that make up *Intermedia: Enacting the Liminal*, Ken Friedman, in his essay “Intermedia: Four Histories, Three Directions, Two Futures”, positions the concept of Intermedia as “an art which lies on the edge of boundaries between forms and media.”<sup>97</sup> Friedman sees two directions for the process: one which “lies in the direction of conception and philosophy” and is a “direction of contemplation and thought experiments.”<sup>98</sup> The other, he situates in “the rich technical mastery of liminal spaces leading to new artforms.”<sup>99</sup> Interestingly, Friedman does not position both avenues as a simultaneous exploration, which is the exact invitation I extend with my own practical output: addressing the philosophical concepts around liminality through an artistic medium that is dynamic enough to simulate it.

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<sup>96</sup> Breder, H. and Busse, K. (eds.) (2005) *Intermedia: Enacting the Liminal*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Books On Demand, p. 73.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

In his essay, “Intermedial Being”, David E. Klemm argues that the viewer of the intermedial artwork “has no choice but to construct meanings on his or her own out of the interactions of consciousness between different elements; there are no given meanings.”<sup>100</sup> This is supported by the premise of the intermedia work correlating to the liminal effect: for if the essence of liminality is ambiguity and ambivalence, then a ‘given meaning’ implied by the artist is out of the question. It is usually the centralised singular narrative which indulges such a didactic approach but in a scenario where singular narratives are deprived of their original agency, reworked and subverted for other ends in relation to new dynamics, the viewer has the option of participating in the process of reconciling disparate components (or not).

Klemm’s interest in the work of art as correlating to the ritual of festival has a particular resonance to this practice based research, in that the subject matter selected for my montage works - which will have a part to play in ‘achieving’ the liminal state - will always mirror some form of social communion. This will be through an event or personage that has ramifications on the collective consciousness and/or the body politic. In contrast to these narratives will be audio traditionally associated with a religious rite of some sort, even if the visual image presented has no apparent or immediate association with the conservative definition of ‘divinity’.

It is my theory that the selected subjects to be reconfigured through this system have had an effect which is basically uncanny; perpetuating a mystique through their charisma which is beyond the mundane, as if they themselves have embodied the liminal status of being between two worlds, existing in historical time but exuding a mythical quality, thereby serving as the vessel for a particular archetype. When Klemm states that “initiation rites involve the revelation of the grounding sacred powers of a community, as well as the myths that articulate the cosmogonic vision that accompanies these rituals”<sup>101</sup>, his statement mirrors my aim to

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<sup>100</sup> Breder, H. and Busse, K. (eds.) (2005) *Intermedia: Enacting the Liminal*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Books On Demand, p. 70.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

capture how the narrative strands portray their subject matter(s) through an initiation rite of sorts and one which resonates on the social stage, making them representations of a time, and in liminal transition. I seek to demonstrate through my work how these subject matters embody deeper mythical archetypes: an embodiment that may not necessarily be evident in their mundane, original state of representation. In turn, I strive to explore how a pattern becomes visible when separate narratives are drawn together, allowing the viewer to ‘simulate’ the liminal in themselves, by having to negotiate between different spaces which are representational for different times and cultures.

I believe that this system, by seeking to create a liminal state for the viewer, will inhibit their sense of the subject matter’s worldly identity and fully allow them to sense a presence of ‘archetypal otherness’ in that same subject, which is the numinous effect in action. The liminal space then, rendered not only in technical process but also through presented subject matter, is a realm of possibilities by way of renewing perception.

In *Modernity and Ambivalence*, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman conveys a perspective about mankind’s general fear of ‘the other’, stating that the terms “irrationality, chaos, strangerhood” and “ambivalence” are “all names for that nameless ‘beyond’ for which the dominant powers that identified themselves as reason, as forces of order, as natives, as meaning have no use.”<sup>102</sup> This can be directly paralleled to a mindset which rejects notions of the divine in an empirical world, regarding them as backward and primitive, and being ill at ease with any ambiguous allusion to such an experience.

Yet, within a contemporary art framework, these terms make up the elusive ‘states of mind’ - so threatening to some - which are actively sought after by artists in the creation of their works. Being apparent in liminal experiences, those chaotic components of Bauman’s “nameless beyond”<sup>103</sup> will be utilised by this research through the processes of intermedia, as

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<sup>102</sup> Bauman, Z. (1993) *Modernity and Ambivalence*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Cambridge: Polity, p. 100.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

the disorientation of our perception toward previously cohesive materials makes way for a new kind of resonance and relation to something intangible. This activation of liminal ‘otherness’, or the energies which Bauman states “have no other meaning but someone’s refusal to tolerate them”<sup>104</sup> is a genuinely provocative counter to those who attempt to contain or deny them altogether. In the active engagement with subversive or disruptive processes, when Bauman suggests that all of “their manifold meanings turn out to be that difference which someone, somewhere, refused to live with”,<sup>105</sup> it is an invitation for the artist, bold enough to challenge established definitions of the divine, to pursue its sacred evocations in notions of disorder and anti-structure: in essence, in liminality.

On the idea of emancipation, Bauman argues that this “signals the end to the horror of alterity and to the abhorrence of ambivalence. Like truth, emancipation is not a quality of objects, but of the *relation* between them.”<sup>106</sup> The relation which comes from this, he clarifies, “is marked by the end of fear and the beginning of *tolerance*.<sup>107</sup> It is my intention to determine how, by relating un-associated components through a realisation of the liminal state, we can possibly grasp a revelatory significance not ordinarily perceived from these elements before they were related to that ‘other’ which is ‘beyond’ their initial manifestation. The idea of liminal otherness, then, is the desired state to be achieved in the artistic rituals of my own devising, as pursued through an intermedia methodology and demonstrated by way of identifying universal, divine archetypes through the subversion of worldly, varied narratives. Bauman’s idea of ‘relation’ is, for our purposes, a key word to consider when devising a framework for manifesting this research question in practical work. For rather than a particular montage dealing with one narrative in succession of another, this research will demonstrate how narratives which are perceived in simultaneous, ambiguous relation become not only a suggestion of the liminal state, but an active working of it.

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<sup>104</sup> Bauman, Z. (1993) *Modernity and Ambivalence*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Cambridge: Polity, p. 100.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

### Intermedia in Art Practice

The five specific works of art practice that this chapter will be exploring in relation to the research all utilise intermedial methods, be they through installation, performance art, audio or video art. After analysing each piece, this section will demonstrate how reviews of these intermedia works identified a theme that we can interpret as liminality, in view of montage and overlaid text with audio being the chosen intermedial method which my own practical output will utilise.

#### *The Nantes Triptych* by Bill Viola

The first example is the video installation *The Nantes Triptych* by Bill Viola, screened in a darkened space at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1992. Evoking the idea of the three paneled triptych which is historically used for religious works, Viola utilises the medium of video to create what Elizabeth Manchester describes as Viola's "own contemporary form of spiritual iconography."<sup>108</sup> In the left panel, footage of Viola's wife giving birth to their child is portrayed and in the right, the death of Viola's elderly mother is depicted, with a body in water shown in the centre, representing the "metaphorical journey between the two"<sup>109</sup> and being footage re-used from Viola's 1987 piece *The Passing*. Throughout the 1992 work, we hear a thirty-minute audio loop consisting of "crying, water movement and breathing", with the "dreamy suspension" of the middle panel functioning as an image of our "thinking, active human life"<sup>110</sup>, residing in the liminal space between scenes of birth and death.

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<sup>108</sup> Manchester, E. (1995) *Bill Viola: Nantes Triptych* 1992 [online]. Tate. Available from: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/viola-nantes-triptych-t06854> [Accessed 14th May 2018]

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

Richard Cork, in his account of viewing of piece in *Breaking Down the Barriers: Art in the 1990s*, notes the stark contrast between Viola's wife being “surrounded by helpers” as she gives birth and the solitude of Viola's mother in her last moments, seeming “unaware of her surroundings” and with “nobody to clasp her”<sup>111</sup>. In the middle panel meanwhile, Cork muses upon the “shrouded presence” in the water that is “drifting through the submarine murkiness” and “hovering in limbo” as it waits on a “resolution of their indeterminate state.”<sup>112</sup> It is a “mysterious light”<sup>113</sup>, subsequently appearing in this middle panel, which signals the impending arrival of the baby and the elderly mother's imminent death. Therefore, just as we bear witness to these liminal rites of passage, the state of “limbo”<sup>114</sup> portrayed in the centre serves as a kind of simulation which renders us immersed in these overwhelming birth and death processes and subject to a power beyond our control, with the light that appears signifying the sacred quality of this liminal moment which will see one life end and another emerge.

The delivery of the baby and the focus on his “bemused and weary” expression that is shared by his dying grandmother signals, in Cork's reading, that “the newborn and the dead are united”, a synthesis that coincides with “the shrouded figure between them” being “released from limbo” and rising “towards the water's surface before disappearing in a sudden rush of sound and light.”<sup>115</sup> In this final breaking away, the sacred liminal event is at an end and, in the mirroring tableaux of old and young faces, a post-liminal confirmation of birth and death can now be achieved. It is, according to Cork, the work's liminal mediation on “the beginning and the end of all our lives” which is specifically signified by the “unfathomability” of the

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<sup>111</sup> Cork, R. (2003) *Breaking Down the Barriers: Art in the 1990s*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p. 57.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

central figure which is “suspended so eloquently at the heart of the work”<sup>116</sup>, leaving the viewer with a feeling of being subject to an otherworldly power.

In her essay *A Taste for Sham: Some Examples of Perversion and Suffering in Contemporary Art*, Lynn M. Somers-Davis analyses *The Nantes Triptych* as an example of Bill Viola’s work that “functions at the level of the body, infusing the psychological with the physical.”<sup>117</sup> If the psychological can be interpreted as the dream world of sacred perceptions and the physical with the profane, this fusion of the two therefore occurs as the activation of a liminal process. From reading the work, Somers-Davis describes it as a “propulsive set of primal images that resound with a longing for the archaic mother.”<sup>118</sup> In this reading then, as opposed to the emphasis being on Viola’s baby son in correlation to his dying mother and subjected to a force beyond themselves, Viola’s wife becomes the point of liminal connection to his mother instead, with both seeming to manifest aspects of the divine Mother Goddess archetype which was venerated by ancient cultures.

In Somers-Davis’ view, it is the “flaccid, open mouth” of Viola’s mother that corresponds to the “gaping vagina of the labouring woman”<sup>119</sup>, with the central figure in the water evocative of “a fetus in utero”<sup>120</sup> and thereby subject to the physical aspects of woman which are so venerated in Goddess traditions. It is Viola’s “affinity for images of the maternal body and water”, states Somers-Davis, which he “idealises through mystic admiration” and yet “contains a subtext of profound instability connected with the threat of loss of grounding.”<sup>121</sup> This description of instability directly corresponds to ideas of the liminal state as presented in the Literature Review, where one’s sense of control and selfhood in historic time diminishes

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<sup>116</sup> Cork, R. (2003) *Breaking Down the Barriers: Art in the 1990s*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p. 59.

<sup>117</sup> Craven, D. and Winkenweder, B. (eds.) (2012) *Dialectical Conversations: Donald Kuspit’s Art Criticism (Value, Art, Politics)*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, p. 259.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

before an overwhelming force with the power to “profoundly unsettle”<sup>122</sup>, becoming evocative of a divine experience in its ability to imprint mythical “ideas, memories and associations”<sup>123</sup>.

### **H.G. by Robert Wilson and Hans Peter Kuhn**

The first example is the installation *H.G.* by Robert Wilson and Hans Peter Kuhn, of 1995. Describing the project, the scene is set by providing a source material for the participant to relate back to: “A door opens off a forgotten London street. The room was full but now it is empty. A newspaper rests on the side table. The year is 1895...”<sup>124</sup>

The *H.G.* of the title being H.G. Wells, the first tableau offered relates directly to a historical ‘in time’ evocation of the author, taking the participant of 1995 back one hundred years to a memory image of the author’s work, *The Time Machine*. The setting could easily have been a theatrical stage upon which a dramatisation of the author’s work may be performed, but in *H.G.*, there are no players and there is no actual adaptation of *The Time Machine* beyond the first setting. This, I would argue, is the method by which an intermedial dialogue between a cultural artefact (in this case, a work of literature) and the coming installations that *H.G.* presents, is given a third space in which to exist, through participation. The project’s description further illuminates what follows the first ‘place’: “You descend into the darkness below – into a subterranean expanse of deserted spaces. The cavernous interiors of The Clink Street Vaults – once the site of one of London’s medieval prisons – have been transformed in time; indeed different times, from pre-history to the recent past. Above and below, there are intimations of activity, and glimpses into distant places. Darkness and light, object and sound

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<sup>122</sup> Craven, D. and Winkenweder, B. (eds.) (2012) *Dialectical Conversions: Donald Kuspit’s Art Criticism (Value, Art, Politics)*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, p. 261.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Wilson, R. and Kuhn, H. P. (1995) *H.G.* [online]. Artangel. Available from: <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/hg/> [Accessed 14th May 2017]

merge to create other worlds both strange, and strangely familiar; visions both ancient and modern.”<sup>125</sup>

Following on from this are twenty-one tableaux presented to the participant. These visions, produced by Wilson and Kuhn, offer a journey through constructs of deteriorating paraphernalia (including the likeness of a mummified corpse) and beautiful vistas of the archaic, which John O’Mahony described as a “transformation of mouldering space” into “a playground of the imagination” and “imagistic purgatory.”<sup>126</sup>

Josephine Machon, in her *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance*, describes the spaces of *H.G.* as “not prescribed or determined” with “no set route to follow” and “no guides.”<sup>127</sup> Stating that “the trail is marked out by sound and light”, Machon emphasizes that “the spaces in between the principle tableaux” were “barely illuminated.”<sup>128</sup> This realm between the seemingly ordered visual set-pieces and the chaotic framework around them bears all the elements of liminality, as the initiate progresses between status points. This liminal experience is achieved through *H.G.*’s utilisation of intermedia as the audience’s participation with the images, whilst hearing immersive sounds that do not come from one source. With *H.G.*, then, we could ascertain that its liminal processes are sustained by a resistance to stabilise itself beyond the precision of that first 1895 tableau, making it the site-place for mythic timelessness.

The first tableau effectively creates the theatrical illusion of being an Edwardian time capsule and, yet, once the participant has descended beyond the first image of *H.G.* to its surreal and disordered displays, it seems that by this conceptual broadening out through intermedia, the

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<sup>125</sup> Wilson, R. and Kuhn, H. P. (1995) *H.G.* [online]. Artangel. Available from: <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/hg/> [Accessed 14th May 2017]

<sup>126</sup> O’Mahony, J. (1995) *Listen; to the pictures* [online]. The Independent. Available from: <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/listen-to-the-pictures-1600525.html> [Accessed 14th May 2017]

<sup>127</sup> Machon, J. (2013) *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 156.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

participant becomes fully disassociated from the work's initial premise and immersed in a numinous dreamscape.

It is important to clarify that the participant throughout *H.G.* is not so much intellectually enlightened by the experience, as much as he or she is consumed in a cavalcade of mythopoeic images, rendering him or her to perhaps feel aware of a more ancient state of human consciousness. To that end, it is the use of various techniques in sound and sight that allows the *H.G.* participant to not only conceive of the intermedial dialogues occurring, but to actually become utilised in its liminal processes, causing them to sustain or rush through *H.G.* at their own incentive. Jungu Yoon clarifies this sense of immersion in her *Spirituality in Contemporary Art*, stating that "Through multi-media technology, the expression of the numinous is not simply something which a subject looks at; rather they take the viewer more actively into the numinous experience."<sup>129</sup>

As the participant begins their journey through *H.G.*, time itself collapses, as we move from conscious to unconscious, or dream perception. As Lyn Gardner of *The Guardian* concluded, "What Wilson and Kuhn achieve is the personalisation of history, distilling it from something vast and unfathomable into something intensely personal and meaningful."<sup>130</sup> Through the experience of *H.G.*, this sense of the primordial past becomes more immediate to us through the distancing of our own refined, rational processes, keeping them in suspension until after the experience has ended.

### ***The Seven Sacraments of Nicolas Poussin* by Neil Bartlett**

The second work is *The Seven Sacraments of Nicolas Poussin* by Neil Bartlett. This piece, presented over seven nights in a London hospital in 1997 was mindful of being in the vicinity of the maternity wards and a terminal wing. It was first presented as, "A new work using the

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<sup>129</sup> Yoon, J. (2010) *Spirituality in Contemporary Art: The Idea of the Numinous*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Zidane Press, p. 129.

<sup>130</sup> Wilson, R. and Kuhn, H. P. (1995) *H.G.* [online]. Artangel. Available from: <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/hg/> [Accessed 14th May 2017]

spoken word”<sup>131</sup>, resisting usage of the term ‘theatre’. Here, it can be suggested, Bartlett was mindful of a shift being made from a mere theatrical piece presenting a ‘world’ on stage, to it being more of a staging ‘between’ worlds, or between life and death, beyond one single medium. It is by utilising the original paintings of Nicolas Poussin in projection, like a viewing in a gallery, that the narrator/performer Bartlett interprets the original work with a contemporary experience to directly parallel the visual narrative (including selected extracts from the poet John Donne). As well as this, another silent participant draws, in chalk, selected gestures from the paintings on a blackboard, which emphasises the ‘real time’ atmosphere of the hospital, and the place of scientific anatomy.

Through a multimedia facility then, such a ‘staging’ would be regarded as a work of performance art which incorporates the paintings, as opposed to a theatrical re-imagining of the paintings themselves (that would perhaps use actors to replace the canvas prints entirely). The originals paintings, presenting the sacraments of *Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, Penance, Ordination, Eucharist and Extreme Unction* are described as originally being subject, by intention of their original owner, to a certain type of ritual when viewed, with each being “concealed by a curtain that, for a sufficiently distinguished guest, would be drawn aside, one at a time”<sup>132</sup>. Describing the original works in an interview, Bartlett states, "One of the things that these paintings do is make a space in which you can sit down in front of life and death and love and the whole damn thing and look at it - if you like, be in the room with it. And that is something which our culture is really bad at organising these days."<sup>133</sup> This concept of viewing as ritual is re-animated by Bartlett in his piece by virtue of him acting as a kind of mediator between the audience and the paintings of Poussin.

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<sup>131</sup> Bartlett, N. (1997) *The Seven Sacraments of Nicholas Poussin* [online]. Artangel. Available from: <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/the-seven-sacraments-of-nicolas-poussin/> [Accessed 14th May 2017]

<sup>132</sup> Taylor, P. (1997) *Ritual reality* [online]. The Independent. Available from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/ritual-reality-1248494.html> [Accessed 14th May 2017]

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

By relaying a narrative of his own, we are compelled to be intimate with the paintings' personae displayed, dissolving their ordered shapes as Bartlett identifies himself, or personalities relating to himself, through various figures in the seven works. By depriving his audience a silent viewing of each projection, in the style originally intended by the artist Poussin, Bartlett orchestrates another narrative entirely that, for his purposes, enters into relation with the archetypes expressed in the paintings and allows for the numinous presence to become evident. To that extent, the artist practitioner could be perceived as the conductor of the differential, liminal energy.

In one of the paintings described, *Penance*, Bartlett takes on the role of Mary Magdalene humbled before Christ, identifying himself with the outcast and all that is traditionally rejected by civilisation. Through Bartlett's exposure of himself, he seems to be enhancing the position of mediation but at the same time, making his body the object for concentration of his audience. In his description of this vulnerable state and the strange euphoria it gave him, it seemed that he was, at this moment of the work, embodying all the ambiguous, unknowable energies of the numinous: "I remember a passage where I spoke in character as Mary Magdalene, naked except for underpants beneath a backless surgical gown, feeling freer and fiercer and more queer than I ever have (on stage) in my life."<sup>134</sup> It is in Bartlett's acknowledgement of the mystical empowerment of this primal, liminal state, where we can return to the numinous concept described in Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*. For when Bartlett represents himself as the degraded Magdalene, we see him as a "mysterious object" which Otto describes as "beyond our apprehension and comprehension, not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but because in it we come upon something

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<sup>134</sup> Bartlett, N. (1997) *The Seven Sacraments of Nicholas Poussin* [online]. Artangel. Available from: <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/the-seven-sacraments-of-nicolas-poussin/> [Accessed 14th May 2017]

inherently wholly other, whose kind and character are in commensurable with our own, and before which we therefore recoil in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb.”<sup>135</sup>

It is perhaps the humane and yet supernatural effect, manifested through such a tableau as Bartlett’s, that the intermedial aesthetics of liminality comes into play, enhancing even the intent of Poussin’s original premise. The seventh painting, *Extreme Unction*, captures the anointing of the sick at the moment of imminent death and it is here that Bartlett identifies himself as the anointer, the central figure in yellow, looking down over the dying man. By taking this role, Bartlett ends the piece by enacting the function of the shaman priest, the mystic that pre-dates all organised religion.

The final ritual, using the seventh painting as its emblem, is like a surrender to extinction. Our fear of death, in being assimilated into the unknowable at the end of consciousness, demonstrates the same traits Rank explores, in his ideas of the numinous. Bartlett marks this final ritual by asking his audience to follow him into another room, which seemingly dissolves the seven paintings of Poussin and makes them into a memory image. In the knowledge that the originals could only be seen from behind a curtain, Bartlett takes his audience to a hospital room, sits beside an empty bed with a drawn curtain and seems to hold the hand of a presence in that bed, who is not actually there, save for a used pillow. It could be said that Bartlett, by breaking the connection between his performance art and the presence of the paintings, creates a new tableau in another room to allow the audience to make sense of the numinous effect that pervaded through his intermedial journey with the seven sacraments. The last image is akin to a painting, ceasing all multimedia relations because now, these processes of the differential have been activated within the witnesses themselves. The sense of the 'I' and the 'Not-I' is the final concept to be grasped. The numinous is again a mere suggestion, instilling in us the need to uncover a secret it will never yield, leaving a mere trace of its presence behind a curtain. Without the liminal demonstration that occurred before,

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<sup>135</sup> Otto, R. (1936) *The Idea of the Holy*. Translated by J.W. Harvey. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Oxford University Press, p. 28.

through Bartlett's intermedial usage of the paintings with his own stage activity, such a revelation may never have been perceived in this final tableau.

### ***Between Darkness and Light (After William Blake) by Douglas Gordon***

The third example is Douglas Gordon's 1997 video art, *Between Darkness and Light (After William Blake)*. Although Blake is not referenced in this work in anything but the title, Gordon's acknowledgement can be seen as an homage to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century artist who, in his combination of painting and poetry, was a pioneer of and forerunner to intermedia. In *Framing Pictures: Film and the Visual Arts*, Steven Jacobs states that "Contemporary art's 'cinematic turn' not only included the use of film and video technology" but also "invoked the appropriation of canonical or popular images of film history."<sup>136</sup> It is in the relationship between film as a medium and painting as the traditional fine art form where an interplay can be achieved, for in the appropriation of film and its reapplication into a 'fine art' environment, an ambiguous, liminal sense of the imagery being placed between exact definitions of medium can come about. An analogy can therefore be made with what Jacobs refers to as "Digitalisation" which "disconnected film from the specific material of celluloid" and through its "altered position" becomes "closely linked to the post-modern logic of the simulacrum."<sup>137</sup> Therefore, the idea of digital video art being perceived as the imitation (or less established version) of film as a classical medium makes it the ideal format for artist practitioners who appropriate existing materials, in order to reconfigure their exact narratives into new and ambiguous readings (which is the liminal effect).

In *Douglas Gordon's Timeline*, an overview of the artist's oeuvre, the physical venue which contained the first presentation of Gordon's *Between Darkness and Light (After William Blake)* is described to us, in a way that emphasises the piece's intermedia format. With the

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<sup>136</sup> Jacobs, S. (2011) *Framing Pictures: Film and the Visual Arts*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 154.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

original presentation being projected in a Münster underpass, originally built to “provide pedestrians with a safe way to cross busy intersections”, this area is described as having subsequently become a place “to avoid” and an “essentially negative space” which was “ideal for muggings”, misuse as “toilets” and “for other obscure activities”<sup>138</sup>. Similarly, in *Double-Cross: The Hollywood Films of Douglas Gordon*, the space is described by author Philip Monk as “nondescript”, “slightly decrepit” and “a place where no one would want to linger”, making it “an appropriate site to represent the mid-place of purgatory” which Monk defines in liminal terms as “that ambiguous zone between the light and darkness of heaven and hell.”<sup>139</sup> These descriptions of the space correlate with the idea of a wilderness state between the thresholds to defined places, which is the state of liminality. Furthermore, the overview in *Douglas Gordon’s Timeline* informs us that this specific location (or ‘non-location’) made viewers of Gordon’s video art piece “aware of having to pass through the installation, of having to become part of it, of being unable to escape the overwhelming sound and the flickering of the images.”<sup>140</sup> To that end, the sense of the installation being situated in a transitory, destabilising and incoherent location brings the viewer directly into its intermedial, liminal processes, as well as portraying subject matter that reflects the same theme.

In analysing the content of Gordon’s *Between Darkness and Light (After William Blake)*, Adrian Searle of *The Guardian* describes it as two films which “run continuously, on either side of a translucent screen”<sup>141</sup>. One of these films is *Song of Bernadette*, a 1943 biopic on the life of Saint Bernadette and her apparent visions of the Virgin Mary, which led to the founding of Lourdes as a pilgrimage site. The other film, simultaneously featured, is 1973’s

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<sup>138</sup> Biesenbach, K. (2006) *Douglas Gordon: Timeline*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, p. 22.

<sup>139</sup> Monk, P. (2003) *Double-Cross: The Hollywood Films of Douglas Gordon*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Toronto: The Power Plant and Art Gallery of York University, p. 119.

<sup>140</sup> Biesenbach, K. (2006) *Douglas Gordon: Timeline*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, p. 22.

<sup>141</sup> Searle, A. (1997) *Monsters Inc.* [online]. The Guardian. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2002/nov/05/art.artfeatures> [Accessed 14th May 2017]

*The Exorcist*, telling the story of a teenage girl's demonic possession. Philip Monk, in recapping the work, describes Douglas Gordon as letting “the vulgar spectacle of *The Exorcist* contaminate the elevated spiritual tone of *The Song of Bernadette*”, further stating that “the operation” between the two films “makes sure that any outcome – judgment or inspection – is indeterminate and undecidable.”<sup>142</sup> This utilisation of intermedia, where two films are projected into the same space with their original narratives intact (along with the overlapping of original audio tracks), allows for a third film experience to become apparent to us and the liminal space to be made manifest.

Douglas Gordon, in describing his piece to *The Guardian*, states that he wanted the audience to “make sense of even the most chaotic images or pictures which formally and aesthetically are battling with each other.”<sup>143</sup> Stating how the two films represent divine and profane possession, Gordon relays that “they can coexist quite easily - on a physical and conceptual level.”<sup>144</sup> Through the sense of their shared themes of possession then, albeit from their traditionally assigned ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ viewpoints, we can perceive that the true numinous and divine effect comes from an intermixing of this purity and corruption. For, in its liminal, ambivalent processes, the piece exudes a new sense of perspective from the two contrary sensibilities of serenity and horror existing in the same sphere of activity. It can be argued that through the intense suffering of *The Exorcist* footage intermixed with the subject’s ‘positive’ possession in *The Song of Bernadette*, the surreal power of the numinous concept is presented in one cathartic synthesis, achieving an effect which is lacking in the unambiguous presentation of simply good or evil (as portrayed in the original films). It is my opinion that both films, in originally presenting traditional notions of the divine or profane, had a fixed outlook that did not invite ambiguous readings, but straightforward reactions of

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<sup>142</sup> Monk, P. (2003) *Double-Cross: The Hollywood Films of Douglas Gordon*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Toronto: The Power Plant and Art Gallery of York University, pp. 124 - 125.

<sup>143</sup> Gordon, D. (2002) *Douglas Gordon: what have I done* [online]. The Guardian. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/Guardian/arts/gallery/image/0,8543,-10604531576,00.html> [Accessed 14th May 2017]

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

either serenity or dread. It is in the combination of these emotions through Gordon's liminal operation where the ambiguity of the truly numinous effect is finally conveyed with an unnerving, awe-inspiring power. For in its potential to challenge traditional notions of the divine and profane as being opposing forces (by showing them as one), *Between Darkness and Light* becomes a profound, uncanny, indeterminable experience beyond any singular evocation of positive or negative emotion (which is the sensibility of the films in their original, isolated forms).

### ***The Missing Voice: Case Study B* by Janet Cardiff**

The final example is *The Missing Voice: Case Study B* by Canadian artist Janet Cardiff, an audio walk through a London cityscape, conceived in 1999 but still available to participants today. The premise is described as follows: "Part urban guide, part detective story, part film noir, this audio walk transports individual listeners on foot through the streets and alley ways of Spitalfields, a historic part of London next to the City. Intimate, even conspiratorial in tone, it entwines the listener in an elusive narrative that shifts through space and time, confession, conjecture and dream."<sup>145</sup>

In essence, this dreamlike narrative that Cardiff offers up stands in parallel to real time narratives occurring all around the participant. The idea of London itself as 'the stage' where countless stories unfold, make the usage of a recording with its own narrative an additional layer, reframing what is seen into new contexts and allowing for a third space to make itself apparent. It is the recording that engages the participant to look upon their surroundings with revitalised eyes, thereby allowing the sights of the city to seem like a virtual London of Janet Cardiff's art, as we are initiated into her narrator's consciousness. The piece, beginning in a library, calls attention to our immediate surroundings throughout, as

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<sup>145</sup> Cardiff, J. (1999) *Janet Cardiff: The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* [online]. Artangel. Available from: <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/the-missing-voice-case-study-b/> [Accessed 14th May 2017]

Cardiff instructs the participant on where to go, where to stop and what to wait for, regardless of whether it comes or not.

The use of sound effects to mirror the environment of a library, corridor or city street at times seems nothing out of the ordinary to what we would normally hear. However, the additional sounds she uses, such as a man whispering that we are being followed, are able to instil in us the same kind of paranoia that one would feel if it was actually happening. As the narrator informs us on how life seems unreal to her, we find ourselves being claimed by a kind of dream illogic, as what she sees and what she fears to see or know become impossible to differentiate. So, in turn, we find ourselves in that state of suspension of disbelief, truly believing that when Cardiff instructs us not to miss a banana peel on the ground, that it will actually be there.

When Cardiff takes us as her piece's participant out into the streets, the use of historicism with evocations of ghostly Jewish communities and a sense of isolation from approaching groups exudes a sense of imminent danger. The establishment of the intermedial, liminal effect is undeniable as we can't help but project these associations onto the roads, the signs and the people we see, that may or may not even fit descriptions of those whom she is describing. Through Cardiff's sudden entry through parallel urban landscapes, such as war torn realms of chaos, strewn with dead bodies, we find ourselves utterly overwhelmed through the startling correlation of the horror in our ears and the orderly business of urban life before our eyes. It therefore becomes a meeting ground for conscious and unconscious forces. To refer back to Rudolf Otto's idea of the sacred in *The Literature Review*, we can judge Cardiff's piece as an exercise in numinous experience of "the wholly other", through the sheer awe of such profound associations which are "beyond the sphere of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar", thereby filling our minds with "blank wonder and astonishment."<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Otto, R. (1936) *The Idea of the Holy*. Translated by J.W. Harvey. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Oxford University Press, p. 26.

Through the dynamism of the audio, with Cardiff's relentless layering of sounds, cultures and unexpected associations, we are granted multiple manifestations of otherness, upon the material plain before us. This resistance then, for Cardiff to identify everything as we may actually see it, allows us to disassociate ourselves from our surroundings as we walk, and feel almost ghost-like, standing beside or watching ourselves (or ourselves as Cardiff's female narrator), in a dream. To participate in this kind of experience gives our visions of London on this journey a kind of depth and through these strange evocations, we are able to perceive a mysterious wonderment in the mundane, despite the disconnect and isolation of Cardiff's performed persona.

When Cardiff instructs us to enter a church and sit, the reference to childhood memories and the emotive sound of a choir could be perceived as a sudden need to create order from chaos, to find solace within the mystery and to shift the numinous perception from the realm of the uncanny, into a mind-set of stillness and containment. Some could argue that this section of the work is Cardiff's character re-assembling herself within the familiar confines of an Anglican church, longing for loved ones over the sea, allowing the contradictory content of sight and sound that enveloped us outside to suddenly match the ordered, aloof and rational 'holiness' of the church interior. In my own reading, this church locale of divine grandeur is not an angelic intervention or absolution, but a red herring of the catharsis we hope to experience, or may even expect. The moment of heavenly sounds passes and our narrator reverts to emphasising her disconnect, instructing us to be on our way.

Cardiff's resistance to ordering any notion of meaning to contain her narrator's ongoing anxiety prevents, in my opinion, the ending of the liminal experience through attempts to define it. As Yoon emphasises, "All ostensible explanations of the origin of religion in terms of animism, shamanism, magic or folk-psychology are related to this special 'numinous' quality, often denoted as 'daemonic dread' or 'religious dread' and recognised as the first

stage of religious development.”<sup>147</sup> This ‘first stage of religious development’ is a fitting term for Cardiff’s piece, as we find ourselves assigning new meanings to even the most inert, lifeless environments that are encountered throughout the progress. Ending the piece in a train station, the most liminal of realms, we seem to have reached our destination in a non-place – the place that signifies another place, or a potential place. It is this station, as opposed to the church, where the intermedial realm finds its ultimate analogy – being the setting where hundreds of narratives intertwine simultaneously, constantly going out and coming into being again. Here, in the eternal struggle between order and chaos, the liminal stage of the numinous is seemingly consecrated.

### **Liminality in relation to these works**

The examples in contemporary art analysed here utilise the concept of intermedia through different means. The four works establish their acknowledgement of liminality by means of leading the participant through a kind of ritual, playing out a god-fearing rite of passage (if God can be equated to the numinous experience itself). This sense of ritual, discarded in the neurosis of modern living, is orchestrated through the intermedial usage of literature and visual/audio installation by Wilson and Kuhn, performance art and painting by Bartlett, the synthesis of different film footage and audio by Gordon and, perhaps most ambitiously, narrative audio and the real-time world stage itself, by Cardiff. How do these intermedial elements serve to evoke the numinous? Through functioning as a kind of alchemical operation that demonstrates a new sense of reality; the operation being that which Rudolf Otto observes as the “the stimulus” for the “numinous experience to become astir”, after which, it becomes “interfused and interwoven with the present world of sensuous experience.”<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Yoon, J. (2010) *Spirituality in Contemporary Art: The Idea of the Numinous*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Zidane Press, p. 43.

<sup>148</sup> Otto, R. (1936) *The Idea of the Holy*. Translated by J.W. Harvey. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Oxford University Press, p. 117.

If we conclude by examining several reviews of these works, it is compelling to perceive the liminal effect that was commonly felt by those who viewed or participated in them. The art historian Richard Dorment, in his experience of *The Nantes Tryptych*, describes the work as having a “hypnotic hold”, where the “slow regular rhythm of the action, the enveloping scale, and the monotonous soundtrack all militate against our trying to understand it through reason alone”, thereby forcing “our senses to take over” and “letting go of our conscious thought processes.” In this liminal state, Dorment concludes, “our ego or identity has been absorbed into something larger than ourselves”, initiating us into “new realms of consciousness.” Martin Gayford’s review of *H.G.* for *The Spectator* tells us, “The effect is close to fiction of the magic realist school – a series of detached, mesmerisingly exact, images.”<sup>149</sup> Sean O’Connor, for *The Gay Times*, says of Bartlett’s piece, “The performance and the audience will inhabit an institution where the joy of life and pain of death are daily occurrences”, with the piece’s liminal potency being emphasized in it only being performed for seven night, described by O’Connor as the “ephemeral life of a single week.”<sup>150</sup> Discussing Gordon’s combined projection of the two films, Adrian Searle of *The Guardian* states that “The two films seem to haunt one another. Not only that, but the moments that collide so mysteriously are also always different, as the films are of different length and run continuously.”<sup>151</sup> Finally, Steven Poole of *The Guardian* described processes of liminality in his review of Cardiff’s audio walk: “You experience two realities at once. And you can begin to play this game afterwards, imagining that the apparently random street scenes around you are carefully

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<sup>149</sup> Wilson, R. and Kuhn, H. P. (1995) *H.G.* [online]. Artangel. Available from: <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/hg/> [Accessed 14th May 2017]

<sup>150</sup> Bartlett, N. (1997) *The Seven Sacraments of Nicholas Poussin* [online]. Artangel. Available from: <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/the-seven-sacraments-of-nicolas-poussin/> [Accessed 14th May 2017]

<sup>151</sup> Searle, A. (1997) *Monsters Inc.* [online]. The Guardian. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2002/nov/05/art.artsfeatures> [Accessed 14th May 2017]

choreographed and soundtracked to a mysterious design.”<sup>152</sup> Through the use of technology then, these works have sought to utilise it in a way that is contrary to its general usages in modern life, which have arguably deadened humanity’s abilities to truly communicate. It can be argued, in clarifying how technology has been misused and abused to the point of our common exhaustion, that through being utilised to acknowledge more archaic notions or senses of numinous experience, it is alternatively a powerful ally for creative communication. Out of an apparent contradiction then, of something all-consuming and oftentimes alienating having the power to make vital connection points, we can see technology’s potential in contemporary art as a means of honouring the mysteries it alludes towards. As Jungu Yoon concludes, “Multimedia has provided the viewer with the circumstances to access the out of the ordinary, or that which is beyond the natural order of things. Therefore, the numinous is often produced by the quality of multimedia, which functions as a uniquely new attraction or fascination in contemporary culture.”<sup>153</sup> In that sense, by harnessing the concept of intermedia, or the notion of interrelating mediums, our understanding is that the numinous experience finds its true evocation through more than one clearly determined source.

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<sup>152</sup> Cardiff, J. (1999) *Janet Cardiff: The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* [online]. Artangel. Available from: <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/the-missing-voice-case-study-b/> [Accessed 14th May 2017]

<sup>153</sup> Yoon, J. (2010) *Spirituality in Contemporary Art: The Idea of the Numinous*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Zidane Press, p. 128.

“Thus the happening developed as an intermedium, an uncharted land that lies between collage, music and the theatre. It is not governed by rules; each work determines its own medium and form according to its needs. The concept itself is better understood by what it is not, rather than what it is. Approaching it, we are pioneers again, and shall continue to be so as long as there's plenty of elbow room and no neighbours around for a few miles. Of course, a concept like this is very disturbing to those whose mentality is compartmentalised.”<sup>154</sup>

- Dick Higgins

### **Why intermedia?**

When coining the term ‘Intermedia’ in the 1960s, the British writer and artist Dick Higgins perceived it as a synergy of systems and a “huge and inclusive movement.”<sup>155</sup> Higgins’ belief that “Dada, Futurism and Surrealism” were “early phases”, preceding the “huge ground swell that is taking place now”<sup>156</sup>, point to Intermedia as a sustainable medium in contemporary art well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, due to the limitless potentials within its processes. As such, it becomes an exercise in liminality that is an impetus for renewing perceptions on preconceived ideas. With my research situated in the arts, I have sought to find a system that could demonstrate how liminality is synonymous with the ‘third space’ – that which opens up through a continual interplay of previously disparate components, allowing for something which facilitates a liminal effect. Embarking on practice led research, my concern has been in establishing this inter-relation of seemingly unrelated narratives, in order to expose deeper

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<sup>154</sup> Higgins, D. (1965) Intermedia. *Leonardo* [online], vol. 34 (1), pp. 49 – 54. Available from: <http://black2.fri.uni-lj.si/humbug/files/doktorat-vaupotic/zotero/storage/6ZKC5H2M/34.1higgins.html> [Accessed 1st March 2017]

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

archetypal narratives at work.

It is my continued belief that a sense of the liminal in artistic practice can make possible a ‘sacred space’ for the reception of numinous perceptions outside of dogmatic creeds; the sacred being a concept which reason advises us to doubt and set aside. To that end, my belief that this research question is timely because of its inclusivity, by which I mean, through its toleration and respect of ambiguities, is that which will give the practical output a dynamism that can invite multiple interpretations.

In my original aim to convey how dogmatic literalism may be defied through an Intermedial platform in the arts, my objective had been to represent multiple, diverse subjects that have been previously unaffiliated but have thematic associations. Thereby, the Intermedial discipline’s capacity to serve multiple voices as opposed to ‘the one’ may evade the rational need for total coherence but does not deprive us of the ability to perceive a shared archetype within these diverse associations. In my aim to show how multiple voices (or the idea of the polyphonic) can inhibit domination of a singular element, it is the implementation of this Intermedial technique which has achieved the desired effect.

Another original aim was to demonstrate the connection between concepts of the liminal and the numinous. If the system constructed for these works activates the liminal effect, it is for the objective of achieving an experience of the ‘numinous other’ and therefore, the experience cannot be known without the system in place. In questioning whether this experience would be a meaningful one to the wholly rational mind set, I have concluded that to sustain an ambiguous, liminal effect will defy traditional ideas about how the divine is broached and rendered into post-liminal dogma.

Finally, an original aim has been to demonstrate how contemporary art provides a platform for alternative representations of the divine outside of traditional religious art. In my reading of contemporary artists with similar concerns to my own (see Art Review chapter), the conclusion drawn at this stage is that by use of Intermedial processes and an expansion of resources, such an alternative is made possible, simply by the idea that we can bring new

meaning to ‘spiritual’ principles that have fallen by the wayside in the age of scientific and technological progress. Therefore, technology has inadvertently been utilised by artists not to devalue any principles that predate modernity, but to serve them in complex and dynamic ways.

From the beginning, I have envisioned my research to incorporate image, text and audio. My practice led explorations are supported by text work as a counterpart, with desk based research making use of all the resources that the University has made available to me, including library and online archives. With my practical output achieved through editing software, I have ultimately determined that a split screen system utilising video and audio from various sources can simulate the liminal experience for the viewer by placing them ‘between’ the multiple states of narrative which become ambiguous in reference to new elements. By starting with the montage as my medium and then implementing the split screen system and multiple audio tracks to achieve the liminal effect, I have concluded that the practical work generated by this research has found its most accessible form.

In seeking to identify a sensibility for my works, my original intention has been sustained and realised: to use a medium where a social or political subject that is relevant to the times and concerns of today is reinterpreted through a montage system which is additionally layered with text and sound to emulate a sacred rite. Along with the demonstration of Intermedial methods to achieve my objective, my belief is that the works would be best suited by being displayed in a small, confined environment, arranged to resemble a confessional space – which emulates the atmosphere of the traditional religious space.

The subjects selected for my montage works are ‘consecrated’ as the focus of our communal rites. They convey a familiar personage or event that has had ramifications on the collective zeitgeist, the cultural landscape and/or the body politic, provoking or shifting the sensibilities of the era. Layered over the montage works will be audio extracts. One takes the form of a

conversation pertaining to one strand of the narrative and the other is associated with a religious rite, either through a traditional hymn or pagan evocations in opera, classical music and ballet. To explore the choice of imagery being extracted exclusively from the film biopic genre (as opposed to documentary that portrays the actual figures), a context of the general concerns of that genre is necessary in this Methodology. Additionally, the framework of my Intermedial system (which uses split screen imagery in montage) will be contextualised in this chapter as reflecting the alchemical method, or that which depth psychologists use as an analogy for processes of the human psyche, thereby perceiving the divine in Matter. To that end, the liminal effect which we experience in the works will mirror this process of alchemical transformation, with the intent of reaching a new state of understanding. The archetypal (divine) forces which possess our worldly figures of interest are thus given a stage in which the role-play of Godhead is performed, often to the detriment of the subject matter's mundane existence. In realising that these figures cannot become the permanent, immortal incarnation of their associated archetypes and are merely 'actors' who are conduits to their inspiration, the drama is understood here to be a liminal play which does not guarantee salvation through an established divine status.

### **Liminality, Shamanism and the Biopic genre**

In Belen Vidal's article *Introduction: the biopic and its critical contents*, Vidal asserts that "Memory and history have become central questions in the study of the biopic as an international genre."<sup>157</sup> Vidal, in stressing that "the genre's specific national and cultural inflections mean, as shown in the case of the classic American biopic, that life-writing cannot be separated from nation-writing"<sup>158</sup>, pinpoints the assimilation of the subject's persona in life to the general iconography of their own nation's time and place. As such, the subject persona

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<sup>157</sup> Brown, T. (ed.) (2013) *The Biopic in Contemporary Film Culture*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Routledge, p. 22.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

is perceived more as mythical than historical, suggesting that the figure's confluence with an archetype has been unconsciously established, if not consciously identified. In her article *Performing Performers: Embodiment and intertextuality in the contemporary biopic*, Lucy Fife Donaldson establishes the biopic's impact as coming from "overlap of our prior knowledge of the subject, coloured by a range of cultural texts as well as the subject's accomplishments, and a variety of issues around their embodiment."<sup>159</sup> Donaldson's idea of there being these 'overlapping' narratives – the origin story within the biopic and the narratives made in hindsight of the subject's life, points to the biopic being an ideal format to utilise for Intermedial concerns.

In stating that "More so than in other genre, the biopic exists within a space occupied by both fiction and history" thereby "the genre is by its nature intertextual"<sup>160</sup>, Donaldson is identifying the biopic genre itself as a medium of transient liminality, regardless of whether the directors of such films aspire to confer an established 'status' to their figure of interest. The transience of the subject matter 'on their way' to iconic personification is a common liminal trope that has kept the biopic a staple of the film industry. To this end, there is an inherent ambiguity (another liminal term) which an audience senses in the actor playing a real life person, for in aspiring to play the 'real person', they are seeking to both dispel and glorify the mythical persona - to portray them as all-too human and yet to 'homage' their legacy by way of tribute (in most cases). By bringing new associations to these biopic extracts and reframing their original narratives to invoke a deeper archetypal one, the biopic imagery is utilised by this practice as a ceremonial. For it is in this ritualised reframing where an actor puts on a character, as a cardinal puts on a robe - to play out the mythical life as sacred rite and touch upon its universal cadences.

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<sup>159</sup> Brown, T. (ed.) (2013) *The Biopic in Contemporary Film Culture*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Routledge, p. 106.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

In her article, *Gender, Genius and Abjection in Artist Biopics*, Julie F. Codell emphasises that the art biopic subject that is “valued in the marketplace” is bolstered by a “prior knowledge” which “bonds the artist subject and the films’ spectators.”<sup>161</sup> Essentially, the idea of ‘other’ narratives being projected onto the interpreted figure of interest (beyond the one that is cinematically presented), gives the biopic image more of a subversive potential than footage which is rendered of the real life figure, since it is already engaging on a kind of additional wavelength with the image of the subject as it exists in popular memory. Whatever archetype the figure of interest has manifested to make them resonate in the culture is therefore the same ‘energy’ which the actor taking on the subject as a role is striving to manifest in his or her performance. It is this ‘quality’ of the person which the actor seeks to channel, seeking to be possessed by a force akin to the numinous that makes them ‘one’ with the desired presence. Subsequently, it can be said that the most effective and acclaimed biopic performances have been achieved through the actor undergoing a kind of shamanic experience. It is this experience which ancient belief systems would have deemed a divine, liminal rite: with the actor shedding their own identity to take on another, only to resume their original persona at rite’s end. The audience’s immersion into this ‘rite’ becomes, as Codell asserts, a moment “that obscures contradictions between the posthumous idealizations of artists in cultural memory and their seemingly innate marginalised, dirty, immoral, and self-destructive abject selves.”<sup>162</sup> Whatever ‘harsh reality’ that the actor is trying to portray is therefore diminished in effect by the subject’s mythical resonance, which an audience may project onto the performer when watching the film. Therefore, the ‘plight’ of the subject on screen becomes a romanticised exercise or even a pleasurable one on the audience’s part, as they bear witness to the shamanic ceremonial of the actor ‘as’ the film’s subject of interest.

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<sup>161</sup> Brown, T. (ed.) (2013) *The Biopic in Contemporary Film Culture*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Routledge, p. 160.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

Codell, focusing on the biopic trope of the subject's demise and posthumous impact, perceives how death "represents the moment of transformation from abject individual into national myth", which she sees as a "narrative economy that exchanges artist for masterpiece."<sup>163</sup> This liminal 'process' therefore, of the actor playing out a romanticised narrative arc, is the biopic's way of officiating the historical human subject into a mythical figure, to acknowledge them as canonised by popular culture. Codell notes this glorification of the subject as "a cultural mirror presumed to reflect an entire society, while living artists appear as outcasts until their deaths."<sup>164</sup> For, in our mundane reality, archetypes are not necessarily attributed to a figure of interest until they have been properly 'accessed' in contrast to the happenings and social tapestry of their era, most often posthumously - which is the essential biopic methodology.

Finally, Codell's conclusion that "In biopics, artists cross borders between abject mortal and eternal genius"<sup>165</sup> uses the language of liminality in its assessment, touching upon the process of the subject matter's 'divine understanding' of their function within the film and by extension, within the culture, which the biopic as a genre has established as its conventional narrative arc. For our purposes of Intermedial exploration, we are utilising these liminal procedures in biopic not merely to emphasise them in ceremonial displays but to bring them into context with a system that recognises the actor's transformative processes as akin to the numinous experience itself. To this end, that which is synchronised within the parallel strands of narrative brings a shared, divine archetype into focus.

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<sup>163</sup> Brown, T. (ed.) (2013) *The Biopic in Contemporary Film Culture*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Routledge, p. 160.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

## Liminality and Alchemical Theory

“In this compelling yet offhand urge to pick up and carry home, primordial Adam connects again with the material world’s ordinary beauty. He reconnects, is this not religion? Lifted from the ground, transported inside, singled out and raised in inclination, is this not that exaltation of the material body of the world, which religion calls Resurrection?”<sup>166</sup>

- James Hillman, *Alchemical Psychology*

In the implementation of a system for creating works, alchemical theory can be applied as a practical realisation of the Hermetic principles and Henri Corbin’s *ta’wil*, as explored in the Introduction and Literature Review. In *Real Alchemy: A Primer of Practical Alchemy*, author Robert Allen Bartlett explores the ancient art, which Carl Jung had applied as an analogical process in depth psychology. Analysing Sulfur, Mercury and Salt as “The Three Essentials” which “describe subtle philosophical principles active in Nature”<sup>167</sup>, Bartlett describes Salt as “the Body of a thing” or “vehicle” allowing “expression of the other two essentials” providing “the matrix wherein the Sulfur and Mercury can act.”<sup>168</sup> As “a passive medium” it is “influenced by psychic and instinctual forces of the subconscious as well as the conditions affecting the various states of matter.”<sup>169</sup> Bartlett, in defining Salt as “a principle of fixity, consolidation, and focus—The Material Basis”<sup>170</sup> helps us to correlate this component to the foundation of the montage system, before any visual or aural components have begun to utilise it as their platform. Without it, these elements would be deprived a new emphasis and

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<sup>166</sup> Hillman, J. (2010) *Alchemical Psychology*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Connecticut: Spring Publications, p. 142.

<sup>167</sup> Bartlett, R. A. (2009) *Real Alchemy: A Primer of Practical Alchemy*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Lake Worth: Ibis Press, p. 18.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

so, this component of ‘Salt’ is the very space which serves as our ‘opening’ to liminal possibilities.

Describing the Sulfur principle, Bartlett states that “The Alchemical Sulfur, or Soul of a thing, conducts the volatile principles of Fire and Air expressing consciousness, intellect, and the “True Will” or personal fire.”<sup>171</sup> Describing it as “a fiery principle” and “brightness”, Barlett emphasises it as “The character of a thing” which is not only the “Intelligence” but, as essential to our reading, the “Divine Spark.”<sup>172</sup> Essentially, Bartlett clarifies that, as consciousness, the Sulfur “directs the Life Force through the body” and in the refinement of these “bodies or vehicles” mirrors “the course of Nature and Evolution.”<sup>173</sup> In our video system, this principle would be aligned to the incorporation of sound, text and the layered narratives therein. For, in the usage of a hymn, an instant evocation is made with that ‘Divine Spark’ which is re-interpreted through the audio that pertains to a conversation. This cohesive narrative oration is that which provides the essential ‘character’ and logical perception of the piece, along with the placement of text that automatically endows yet another narrative strand.

Finally, the Mercury is the component which Bartlett describes as that which “forms the link or bridge, between the higher forces of Sulfur and the lower body of matter, the Salt.”<sup>174</sup> As established in the Literature Review, Hermes (or Mercury), as the Hermetic God that mediates between the conscious and unconscious, is the abiding archetype of liminality. Therefore, as alchemical Mercury, this god fulfills the bridging function between mind (“the world of the Gods”) and body (“the world of the mortals”<sup>175</sup>), which, in alchemical terms, is that which reconciles “the Volatile and the Fixed.”<sup>176</sup> This volatility, we would define as the

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<sup>171</sup> Bartlett, R. A. (2009) *Real Alchemy: A Primer of Practical Alchemy*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Lake Worth: Ibis Press, p. 19.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

Sulfur principle, with our layering of previously unrelated audio and text extracts to open a ‘psychic space’ of new meaning and the fixed being Salt: the original technological space where the work was activated. The mercurial aspect, then, is the implementation of the images and their subjects’ physical gestures which, in being ‘carried’ as visual glyphs by the physical technology, are able to redefine the selected words and sounds in a liminal ceremonial.

In his essay, *Technology and the spirit of alchemy*, Giuseppe Del Re refers to the “characteristics of the spirit of alchemy” as being “the doctrine of analogies and correspondences”, stating that “If there is a correlation, there must be an analogy”, with “some common reality underlying the relations and the modes of change”<sup>177</sup> of its terms. To that end, the idea of using a split screen montage system, where the visual content is extracted from two different sources, emphasises the idea that such a process of analogy is being attempted. Before the development of my practical research method, I had only focused on extracting one moving image at a time, although layered with text and audio from other sources. Although I endeavored to achieve the same outcome at now, I knew that the ‘one image at a time’ approach would ultimately inhibit the effectiveness of the study. For in visually emphasising the multiplicity, the allusion to a greater unity does not become a visual monolith. A split screen method therefore manifests the theme of our alchemical analogy, with the ‘underlying common reality’ being that shared archetype that pervades the previously unrelated narrative strands.

Del Re, in describing the active and receptive components of an alchemical system, states that “the Sun plays the role of the King” and “the Moon, that of the Queen”, thereby forming “a correspondence”<sup>178</sup>. In stating how “the presence or absence of the Sun in the sky may affect

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<sup>177</sup> Del Re, D. (1997) Technology and the spirit of alchemy. *HYLE--International Journal for Philosophy of Chemistry* [online], vol. 3, pp. 51 - 63. Available from:

<http://www.hyle.org/journal/issues/3/delre.htm> [Accessed 1st March 2017]

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

the success of a chemical operation”<sup>179</sup>, Del Re helps us to envision an operation without the Sulfur component which, for our purposes, is the audio and textual aspects of the video system. Without the layered additions of audio and text, we would be left with only the split screen images, running in silence. Although thematic correlations may vaguely be discerned from this, it may not render access to a liminal space, with the images instead being left to their original definitions, without allusion to any shared archetype or numinous evocation. Therefore, the ‘operation’ to which Del Re refers would not only be incomplete, but barely attempted in the first place, having just the ‘Mercury’ component with ‘Salt’, but no ‘Sulfuric’ life-force for the mercurial to mediate from, back to the source. In clarifying how alchemists foresaw that with “the right procedure and conditions” it would be possible for Sulfur to “fix Mercury to yield gold”, Del Re terms this as “form uniting to matter to give a real object or as the King unites to the Queen to engender the heir to the throne.”<sup>180</sup> To that end, we can establish the video montage system as the aural and textual narrative elements (the active king) ‘fertilising’ the images (the receptive Queen) and our detected archetype, emerging from this, being akin to the ‘gold’ or divine presence: the ‘heir’ from a union of opposites.

When James Hillman states, in his *Alchemical Psychology*, that due to the “interrelated complexities of these substances, alchemical models are polytheistic, that is, one cannot speak truly of any element alone”<sup>181</sup>, he emphasizes the alchemical framework as a system of various dynamic processes. In establishing our own framework of the divine represented in the multiple as opposed to the singular, we can see how it stands opposed to the monotheistic idea of one sanctified image, or one dogmatic creed. This monotheism, Hillman identifies to a literalism that assigns “singleness of meaning, identification of any concrete embodiment

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<sup>179</sup> Del Re, D. (1997) Technology and the spirit of alchemy. *HYLE--International Journal for Philosophy of Chemistry* [online], vol. 3, pp. 51 - 63. Available from: <http://www.hyle.org/journal/issues/3/delre.htm> [Accessed 1st March 2017]

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Hillman, J. (2010) *Alchemical Psychology*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Connecticut: Spring Publications, p. 27.

with its “word”, that identity between word and thing so that words become things.”<sup>182</sup> To that end, a montage system constructed to reflect the alchemical process is not seeking to confirm a dogma of divine principles, as is the case with the ‘holy books’ of organised religion. Rather, it is seeking to suggest these common archetypal principles at work, through its analogy of evocative narratives. Hillman sees this as “Alchemy’s true wisdom”, stating that it will “soften, sweeten, excite, loosen, and make impossible any fixed position, thereby countering the senex propensity to crystallize the goal in doctrinal truths.”<sup>183</sup> The ‘senex’, being that which is synonymous with the monotheistic Father God of religious traditions, is akin to the Sulfuric principle: necessary, but in the alchemical system, never to become dominant or isolated unto itself.

It is “spiritual ascension” which Hillman asserts is not “the intention.” Rather, the alchemical framework is implemented as a means of “elaborating a method for psychology of storytelling”<sup>184</sup>. As Hillman elaborates, “Stories claim neither proof nor truth. Instead of argument, anecdote; individual cases circumambulating a theme. The theme? The caelum of alchemy in actual lives, particularly lives open to fresh perception.”<sup>185</sup> Indeed, in this montage system, no ‘salvation’ is offered from the evocations of liminality but rather, the components which are brought together become the signifier to a higher truth, even if they can’t deliver us to a permanent, transcendental state. Hillman specifies that the alchemical process follows Jung’s method of amplification, which builds “the power of a theme by amplifying its volume with similarities, parallels, analogies.”<sup>186</sup> Analogy then, which Hillman describes as reaching “in all directions” and finding “subtle strands of implications”<sup>187</sup> is the essential function of this methodology’s split screen montage system. For, in opening up the chosen material, the

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<sup>182</sup> Hillman, J. (2010) *Alchemical Psychology*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Connecticut: Spring Publications, p. 46.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

act of “discovering analogies” is, to Hillman, something that “carries further than symbols” and “further than images”, essentially being a “poetic connection”<sup>188</sup>. In that poetical sense, I believe that the alchemical system is invaluable research for artist practitioners in contemporary art as a whole.

In conclusion, Hillman’s description of analogy as that which “disrespects definitions, leaps over defenses” and “listens through walls to overhear reverberations”<sup>189</sup> corresponds to the Sulfuric component (established narratives) in alchemy being ‘subverted’ by the Mercurial (the ambiguous images). It is “the poetic mind” which, for Hillman, “resolves the need for meaning” and became “Carl Jung’s underlying reason for psychotherapy.”<sup>190</sup> Therefore, in implementing this system for artistic practices, a ‘refuge for the divine’ is sought to be established, not as an ‘actuality’ but as a medium for its suggestion via poetic analogue. In Jungian studies, these alchemical systems, although certainly identified as crucial to the depth psychology area, tend not to be utilised by Jungian researchers in practical experiments. For this contemporary art practitioner working in Intermedia, it is by utilising the alchemical method as the framework of this Methodology that I extend a dialogue to those scholars and, like Hermes/Mercury, attempt to bridge the two sensibilities of approach.

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<sup>188</sup> Hillman, J. (2010) *Alchemical Psychology*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Connecticut: Spring Publications, p. 185.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

## 5 FALLEN GODDESSES

### Hail, Holy Queen

The first video work in this series of seven montages is *Hail Holy Queen (Salve Regina)*, incorporating the Catholic hymn of praise of the same name. This hymn, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, is chanted twice throughout the duration of the video and is accompanied by its original Latin text above the split screen images, with an English translation below them. The opening inscription, used during Anne Boleyn's 1533 coronation procession, proclaims that "*the pillar which was of late all squalid*" is that which now "*glitters and shines*"<sup>191</sup>, with the crowning ceremony serving to ritualise the transition of the country's revival from a state of decline. The idea of the glorified Queen hailed as the vessel of social change is the concept then, upon which the viewer is instantly occupied. All that follows in this first work is countered to that initial sense of inspiration and therefore, the inscription's meaning takes on a more varied emphasis.

The images utilised are extracted from two films: 1989's *Scandal* and 1972's *Henry VIII and His Six Wives*. The first film, focusing on the Profumo scandal and the second, a condensed study of King Henry VIII's reign, are utilised specifically here as subject matter which covers a liminal rite of passage in English society itself, between the end of one era and the beginning of another. Concurrent to these parallel images run two audio extracts: the *Salve Regina* hymn and a 1989 interview with Christine Keeler discussing her experience as the aforementioned scandal's primary figure of interest. As emphasized in the Methodology, if the audio of Keeler conveys the actual figure of interest telling her story, then the film

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<sup>191</sup> Hunt, A. (2008) *The Drama of Coronation: Medieval Ceremony in Early Modern England*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 74.

representation of her is the mythologized equivalent to this historical woman, calculated by filmmakers to assume archetypal and numinous proportions in its framing. With this meeting of history and myth in a liminal space, the performed image of Keeler therefore becomes an emblem of her era's mythology.

Incorporating these elements into the alchemical framework as directed by the Methodology, the 'Salt' component is first established as the platform in which these audio and visual combinations will take effect in liminal operation, as 'Sulfur' and 'Mercury' respectively. The 'Sulfur', as the element which expresses consciousness, is both the religious hymn invoking the Virgin Mary and the voice of Christine Keeler, as the actual figure in historical time, providing us with the expressive, intellectual reality of a particular narrative. The visual elements, by performing representations of our figures of interest (Keeler and Boleyn), become the mediating element between the 'lower' component of 'Salt' which stands for the physical manifestation of matter and the higher component of the mind or 'Sulfur', through which the archetypal and divine analogy is made, allowing the entire operation to bring profane history into relation with sacred myth in a liminal exercise. As stated in the Methodology, the split screen method emphasises this idea of making analogies to a common archetype from different elements, alluding to a greater whole and unity, with the 'Sulfur' as word 'fertilising' the 'Mercury' as image and alluding to an heir or new component from this union of opposites.

In engaging with these elements all at once, Boleyn is immediately a signifier for the 'Holy Queen' of the Hymn (prescribed to the Virgin Mary). In turn, the voice of Keeler emphasises an analogical dynamic of her narrative to Boleyn's: the younger woman being 'raised up' by the older man and thereby affecting the very sphere which governs the nation. The liminal drama has therefore begun, with the previously obscured female player being venerated into a new station; a position which makes her a symbolic catalyst for wider political change. In *Masculinity and Marian Efficacy in Shakespeare's England*, Ruben Espinosa states that "For

Roman Catholic believers, the Virgin Mary's understanding and supportive nature made her an important figure of devotion, and a popular icon as a divine intercessor.”<sup>192</sup> As Espinosa goes on to state, by the Roman Catholic Church placing Mary “in a position where she inevitably absorbed a certain amount of reverence reserved for God alone”<sup>193</sup>, she is not just a ‘Holy Queen’ to them, but essentially a Goddess figure in her own right. As our ‘montage ritual’ opens then, Boleyn and Keeler lose their pre-liminal autonomy and are both ‘elevated’ and simultaneously obscured into roles where they will sustain the governing male’s will and adhere to his direction. Their function, then, is to assume a supporting role and benefit the needs of their handlers (be it political or sexual), whose ‘possession’ of them instills a sense of power, by mere association.

Once the hymn text incorporates the figure of Eve into the rite, an ambiguity of archetypal significance is now established, with this figure acting in Christian theology as the profane and fallen precursor to the sacred and elevated Mary. Espinosa, in noting that it is “Mary’s human obedience and chastity—in opposition to Eve’s sinful disobedience” states that Catholics have positioned Mary as “a figure to be emulated” and “the right kind of woman.”<sup>194</sup> The mesmerising allure of the Boleyn and Keeler figures therefore has them assuming both the Eve and Mary roles simultaneously; the distinction between the two becoming unclear in this liminal world of ambivalent status and reconfigured narratives. To that end, the sacred figure of the hymn is made synonymous with the fallen one; thereby, humanity’s absolution from human passion is sought from a goddess who, in this context, is not unblemished by the earthly human condition, but is herself immersed in its processes. With the loss of any distinction between the designated sacred and profane figures then, our liminal ritual emphasizes the notion of the ‘sinful Earth’ being consecrated and briefly

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<sup>192</sup> Ruben, E. (2013) *Masculinity and Marian Efficacy in Shakespeare's England*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, p. 10.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

redeemed from Puritan degradation. In *The Sacred Prostitute: Eternal Aspect of the Feminine*, Nancy Qualls-Corbett asserts that, in the pre-Christian pagan antiquity which venerated the natural world, sex was “experienced as a regenerative power” and “recognised as a gift or a blessing from the divine.”<sup>195</sup> The sexuality of Eve then, which Christian theologians would prescribe as synonymous with sinfulness, is revered in the more ancient system as a kind of “sacred prostitution”, where there is “no separation between sexuality and spirituality.”<sup>196</sup> Therefore, if the Eve archetype of sensual womanhood is unholy through a Christian reading, it is through a pagan consciousness where she would be venerated as “the goddess incarnate” who unites “chthonic and spiritual forces”, touching “basic regenerative powers” and thereby assuring “the continuity of life and love.”<sup>197</sup> In this evocation then, Keeler and Boleyn become the life bringers, whose sacred function is to restore the balance between civilisation and nature.

At this point, we have a sense of the Keeler and Boleyn visual impressions as being an active public staging of their ‘Queenship’, with Boleyn’s masque heralding the collapse in England of the old Roman Catholic order and her own ascent as the living Goddess of the new Protestant era. Comparatively, as we hear Keeler in the audio segment refer to herself as being degraded as the ‘Vice Queen’ by tabloids, we now have a direct inversion of the ‘Holy Queen’ of the hymn’s title; the vice alluding to Eve as causing the fall of man in Christian theology and being severed from God’s favour. The blurring between what is sacred and profane subsequently sustains our liminal rite, as the hysterical press attention towards Keeler, now focused on her every move, becomes synonymous with a kind of veneration. Boleyn leading the anti-Catholic revels in her blackface masque, to the obvious discomfort of Henry, offers a kind of racist allusion in the imperialist mentality of her ‘otherness’, not only

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<sup>195</sup> Qualls-Corbett, N. (1988) *The Sacred Prostitute: Eternal Aspect of the Feminine* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Toronto: Inner City Books, pp. 30–31.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

as a woman who has ‘caused’ the King to destroy the old order but in her influencing this change through a kind of primitive or archaic power. The intrigues of the Tudor court are therefore indistinguishable from the 20<sup>th</sup> century tabloid mentality which would bestow the term ‘Vice Queen’ on a woman deemed a threat to the establishment’s traditional values. The hymn text’s focus on its unblemished Holy Queen delivering mankind’s promised messiah is a plea for her to reverse the sins of humanity and yet, in the context of this new narrative, the Queen is concurrently demonised as the manifestation of those very sins herself. The subversion of this ‘ungodliness’ becoming ‘godly’ lies in the Queen figure’s ritual veneration: her sensuality and excitement, so degraded as a vice in Christian theology is now, the context of this work, imbuing the world and its natural processes with a divine resonance. Qualls-Corbett notes this contradiction, stating that in the pagan consciousness, the goddess figure’s “tie to earth and the procreation of crops and children were gifts from the gods”, from which mankind “made of her an object of worship.”<sup>198</sup> Qualls-Corbett specifies that although a woman had “no power” in Christian societies, “it was beyond the human realm that her powers were affirmed”, stating that “on the one hand she was elevated, while on the other, she was subjugated”<sup>199</sup>, a paradox which is reflected in this montage work. Espinosa, in stating that the “imagining of the Virgin Mary as Second Eve is a continual negotiation of her character” and “a seeming desire to construct her as an acceptable object of religious adoration and feminine purity”<sup>200</sup>, alludes to an unconscious fear in the Reformation era that these two figures, if combined, could restore the pagan goddess of antiquity (named in various cultures as Aphrodite, Venus, Isis and Inanna). Thereby, the Holy/Vice Queen in this montage work becomes evocative of that same pagan goddess, a figure worshipped as the morally neutral manifestation of nature by ancient traditions and violently suppressed by later

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<sup>198</sup> Qualls-Corbett, N. (1988) *The Sacred Prostitute: Eternal Aspect of the Feminine* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Toronto: Inner City Books, p. 41.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ruben, E. (2013) *Masculinity and Marian Efficacy in Shakespeare's England*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, pp. 8-9.

ones for reflecting this natural world. It is the mercurial processes at work in this operation, emphasising the hysteria inspired by this captivating figure, which ultimately makes her Venus archetype evident to us.

In the veneration of the Holy/Vice Queen, Keeler is now framed against new aspects in the parallel Tudor narrative: the first being that of Boleyn under attack by the King as the perceived source of corruption and the second, in Keeler's mirror image now being transformed from that of the assertive Boleyn to her successor, the naïve and childlike Catherine Howard, emphasising a shift in the liminal role play where the ritual Queen's ascent has reached its zenith of veneration and her decline and return to a perpetually degraded status has now begun.

Here then, the Queen figure of our liminal rite has become the impetus for engulfing forces beyond her reckoning, which sweep over the body politic in this time of transition and initiate the great cultural shift. The figure of Catherine Howard kneeling before the Archbishop casts her now as a degraded figure of suspicion, akin to Keeler on the stand. As this portion of the rite marks the beginning of its end, the former veneration of the Queen figure has transformed into a condemnation that is just as intensely felt and so, keeps her sustained as the generative force of the coming era, once the liminal rite that will bring it about has come to an end.

Espinosa, in emphasising how Catholic emphasis on the sacred feminine became “threatening to God’s authority”, concludes that it was only “a matter of time before the cult of the Virgin Mary came under scrutiny, and a call for a curbing of Marian devotion was sounded”, with the Protestant Reformation providing “the platform”<sup>201</sup> for this to play out. Boleyn and Howard, in being venerated as Queens, cannot live up to the unworldly Marian perfection expected of them, and so, like Keeler’s ‘sinful’ Eve, face the judgment of masculine authority, which Qualls-Corbett attributes to Christian theology’s “negative attitudes toward the earth-

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<sup>201</sup> Ruben, E. (2013) *Masculinity and Marian Efficacy in Shakespeare's England*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, p. 10.

bound women”, which marked them “as destructive, in league with the devil, or proclaimed a witch.”<sup>202</sup>

Beyond this halfway point, we see that the Queen of this rite is now an unstable figure, arousing ire and chaos in those possessed within our liminal zone. The destruction of Catholic holy places by King Henry’s decree, where the Virgin Mary was traditionally held up as a goddess figure in her own right, signify that the Holy Queen of the hymn text is now regarded as an idolatrous symbol by the Protestant regime and a threat to the monolithic Christian God. In Espinosa’s view, veneration of Mary gave her “unwarranted power” which became “menacing” to reformers and so, to “fracture her image from England’s landscape and cultural psyche” was a way to “curb desire”<sup>203</sup> for her; Espinosa equating devotion for her with a sexual element in Catholicism. The Protestant mindset at the time of the English Reformation, which banned veneration of Mary, is reflected in the 20<sup>th</sup> century establishment that made Christine Keeler a pariah for threatening puritan values. Upon their advent then, the figures of Keeler, Boleyn and Howard beguiled the leaders of men, and therefore came to personify the violent changes in the psyche of the nation. In the context of our rite, it is the Stephen Ward figure who refuses to denounce Christine Keeler; for, as Qualls-Corbett emphasizes: “When the archetype of the goddess of love is constellated, we are imbued with the vitality of love, beauty, sexual passion and spiritual renewal.” For his refusal, Ward is made to pay the price for failing to suppress this archetype, as the establishment has done.

Ultimately, the Holy Queen which the hymn venerated has, within our rite, become synonymous with that which is exiled and outcast, signaling a decline, instead of a deliverance. The rite (which raised Keeler, Boleyn and Howard as manifestations of its Holy

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<sup>202</sup> Qualls-Corbett, N. (1988) *The Sacred Prostitute: Eternal Aspect of the Feminine* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Toronto: Inner City Books, p. 48.

<sup>203</sup> Ruben, E. (2013) *Masculinity and Marian Efficacy in Shakespeare's England*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, p. 20.

Queen) has now come to a conclusion and ‘divine status’, with all of its goddess evocations, is officially stripped from the Queen and the sacred feminine rejected. Now, our subjects are identified solely with the degraded Eve, whose actions in the Christian belief caused mankind’s banishment from God and corruption into matter (only redeemable through the male god figure of Christ). This final sequence then, emphasizes a loss of divinity and a corruption which, according to the Christian viewpoint, is a state identified with the Earth itself and so reflected in Eve’s accursed status. In the spoken audio, Keeler’s admittance that she has been deprived the kind of relationship which society deems acceptable, ultimately situates her as the establishment’s victim and a scapegoat for their own corruption and hypocrisy. As Qualls-Corbett reminds us: “The Church recognised neither the attributes of the goddess nor the inherent sexual nature of women (or men); consequently, a chasm between body and spirituality was maintained in religious teachings.”<sup>204</sup> This insidious mind-set, having seeped into the governance of the British establishment from so many years of being entwined with the organised Christian church, cannot fail to denigrate Keeler (as it did to Boleyn) for the very characteristics that would venerate her in the pagan goddess tradition, as reflected in this first montage work.

### **The Hymn of the Fallen Woman**

If the first work realised liminality by establishing an ambivalent synthesis of Christian and pagan goddess figures, the second video work identifies that same synthesis as being realised within Sophia, a feminine archetype identified as the Wisdom of God by Hellenistic, Gnostic and early Christian traditions. In *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov*, Sophia is described by Judith Deutsch Kornblatt as affecting “the interpenetration of opposites, transforming them through her own third agency and a new whole.”<sup>205</sup> In other

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<sup>204</sup> Qualls-Corbett, N. (1988) *The Sacred Prostitute: Eternal Aspect of the Feminine* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Toronto: Inner City Books, p. 47.

<sup>205</sup> Deutsch-Kornblatt, J. (2009) *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Cornell University Press, pp. 32-33.

words, if Sophia as divine wisdom is an analogy to the Hermetic alchemical process and its outcomes as described in the Methodology, she is also, as an actual process, analogical for liminality itself.

Solovyov, a Russian philosopher of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, anticipated ideas of intermedia and the liminal with the resources which were available to him at the time, envisioning “the full reconciliation of the divine and human - or spirit and matter, male and female - not through a motley, syncretic accumulation of beliefs or a crude dualism that privileged either the material world or the world of spirits, but through a triadic and ultimately mystical operation of faith.”<sup>206</sup> As Kornblatt underscores about Solovyov, it was the concept of Sophia which “provided him with the third element to effect this interpenetration.”<sup>207</sup>

Ultimately, a movement of Sophianism by Solovyov and other Russian theologians of his era was condemned by the Eastern Orthodox Church as a heresy for attempting to identify Sophia as an essential aspect of the Godhead in their tradition. This diminishment of Sophia’s role in Orthodoxy is therefore the foundation for the second montage work, utilising an Orthodox composition called *The Hymn of the Fallen Woman*, where a woman is prostrated to the supremacy of God through Christ. Composed by the Byzantine hymnographer Saint Cassian, the hymn can be compared to the Orthodox establishment denying Sophia’s inclusion into that Godhead, which would have reflected the original androgynous whole and not the perception of a wholly masculine divine in later monotheistic traditions. Therefore, the montage work’s utilisation of a hymn in the Eastern Orthodox tradition becomes a subversive act in order to invoke the Sophia archetype that the tradition has diminished and suppressed, akin to a Christian perception of the sinful Earth as Eve. Although only alluded to within this rite, the profaned Sophia archetype becomes the focal point of the montage by virtue of her relational overtures to the Godhead in a bid for sacred completion, which fail to be

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<sup>206</sup> Deutsch-Kornblatt, J. (2009) *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Cornell University Press, pp. 33-34.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

reciprocated. This failure therefore renders an idea of the transcendental divine as unknowable to itself, in the instance where it has no apparent relational connection to the world and is lacking an emanation upon which to reflect on its own processes.

The following observation, from curator Anthony d'Offay, opens the work: "Remember, Andy Warhol was brought up as an Eastern Orthodox Catholic in Pittsburgh, where the veneration of icons depicting female saints was regular practice at weekly Mass." The first narrative element is therefore established with an idea of formative years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most prolific American artist, and the genesis of his visual oeuvre being rooted in the Orthodox religious tradition. The images in this montage are taken from two sources: the 1991 miniseries *A Woman Named Jackie*, about the life of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and the 2006 feature film *Factory Girl*, which portrays Andy Warhol's association with Edie Sedgwick, the young socialite who is often perceived as his muse. The ritual which will play out the montage's liminal concerns therefore utilises these two women to the extent that they are wholly defined and validated in status by association to the male figures of power (like Anne Boleyn and Christine Keeler in the first montage). As these visual sequences play out, two audio extracts are overlaid: *The Hymn of the Holy Woman*, chanted by an Orthodox choir in Pittsburgh (where Andy Warhol grew up) and a BBC interview with Warhol himself from 1981, a few years before his death. To differentiate between the audio of the actual Warhol and the biopic representation of him, the latter will be referred to as 'Andy' and the former as 'Warhol'. In relation to the criteria of the Methodology, as Warhol's audio narration as 'Sulfur' conveys the living representation of history, so the 'Mercury' component of the film images (being akin to Warhol's own painted icons) creates a liminal interaction with the audio narrative and hymn, making the performance of these iconic figures take on a ceremonial, mythical quality.

As the sequences begin with paralleled scenes from *A Woman Named Jackie* of Marilyn Monroe's suicide and Jackie Kennedy's arrival in Dallas on the day of her husband's assassination, the association can immediately be made with Warhol's multiple silkscreened prints of Marilyn in 1962, conceived in the days after the star's death and becoming his breakthrough into the American cultural zeitgeist. Similarly, Warhol's 1964 silkscreens of Jackie were produced in the aftermath of the Kennedy assassination, mirrored in the now iconic representation of the First Lady in her blood stained pink Chanel suit, as worn during the event. In biographical recreations of these tragedies, we grasp the notion of Marilyn's death and Jackie's trauma as liminal rites of passage initiating Americans into the Sixties. For, it is these events which offer Warhol the basic alchemical materials for his art, observing them from afar like a transcendental god and from which he exploits to render his acclaimed works and commercial success.

Although by the end of his life, Warhol's practice was defined by commissions from the privileged elites (hence him being 'chosen' by his subjects), it can be said that the seminal silkscreens of Marilyn and Jackie in the early 1960s were Warhol in the 'active' phase of making a name for himself, where he was in fact seeking the subject matter (as opposed to being given it) and, consequently, defining the thematic content of his oeuvre. Therefore, this liminal rite will unfold from the early Warhol's response to American tragedy, be it perceived as meaningful or exploitative, in relation to his cultural formation in Orthodox iconography (with his celebrity silkscreens now assuming the role of religious icons, therefore simulating divine status). From his re-framing and assimilation of posthumous or traumatized narratives into a personal iconography, the montage positions Warhol as essentially dehumanized and, by rite's end, obviously omnipotent in his moneyed and branded world. In the spoken audio strand, Warhol's apparent disconnect from his subject matter in apparent and despite his works in the early 60s being rooted in something powerfully authentic, his affectation of being uninvolved with his work on any emotional level assigns him a transcendental, divine status in this liminal rite. In other words, he is akin to the idea of the divine creator so

perfected in his supremacy that he is completely untainted and unaffected by the suffering of the world, exemplified in Warhol apparently only relating to his subject matter by virtue of its aesthetic, surface value.

Once the text of the Orthodox hymn appears, Edie Sedgwick now succeeds the dying Marilyn's place in the narrative, functioning alongside Jackie as the liminal ritual's Sophia archetype, in a manifestation of the Fallen Woman. Christian theology's degraded position of women in relation to the Fall of mankind and Original Sin is perpetuated in this work and yet, unlike *Hail Holy Queen*, where the female subject was the focus of divine rites, *The Hymn of the Fallen Woman* situates its female subject wholly in relation to the male divinity. For instance, Andy, in detecting Edie Sedgwick as the vessel to 'replace' Marilyn Monroe does not relate to her as a human being in her own right but as the renewed conduit of the specific archetype which Marilyn manifested, that became tainted by her decline and therefore fell "into many sins." Andy, being framed as 'watching' Edie from afar, situates her as a less-than human visual object which will become Marilyn's successor and Andy's possession, to be shaped into his mirror image.

Judith Deutsch Kornblatt's study, in describing Sophia's "truest manifestation" as being "at once incarnated and transfigured into a new whole, both male and female"<sup>208</sup>, reflects in the physical mirroring of Edie with Andy and their twin-ship as being her initiation into divine status, recalling the transcendental wholeness of the primordial, androgynous Adam that first carried Eve within him. To that end, Edie, now situated in Andy's world, has no autonomy of her own and can only be 'venerated' by association with the artist and by cooperation with his plans for her. As the hymn's Fallen Woman is described as a 'myrrh-bearer', Edie enters into this liminal rite by attending to the body of operation that is Warhol's Factory, just as Mary Magdalene attended the body of Christ (which the original hymn alludes to). Simultaneously,

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<sup>208</sup> Deutsch-Kornblatt, J. (2009) *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Cornell University Press, p. 82.

Jackie has now entered liminal transition with the shooting of her husband, whose Presidency elevated her to the position of First Lady and whose death strips her of that status.

From this chaotic loss and left soaked in her husband's blood, Jackie has now been ritualistically marked into a blood rite that reflects the fall of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden and their corruption into matter and 'sin'. Jackie, in accord with the liminal rite, now attempts to be the myrr-bearer but is prevented from crossing the threshold, beyond which, the existence of her 'Godhead', and therefore her selfhood, hangs in the balance. The interview segment meanwhile emphasises Warhol's interest in the technicalities of his practice as opposed to the immersive human drama which provides him with his subject matter, suggesting that whilst the 'Fallen Woman' depends on the Godhead, the Godhead does not depend on her. The correlation of Warhol's disconnect and the visual of the dying Kennedy emphasises the idea of the wounded God who is 'passing over' in liminality to an invisible, unattainable state beyond the world of human affairs, leaving his living 'consort' to founder.

From here, the Fallen Woman officially takes the 'active' role: Jackie coming in to stand vigil in her husband's dying moments and Edie officially 'coming out' on Andy's arm as his designated muse (the myrr-bearer), being correlated to the consumer items which his work is re-contextualising and finally being projected on film as the final Warholian product, which she observes at his side. In the audio, Warhol describing his search for the perfect 'flesh colour' alludes to his objectification of Edie as an aesthetic adornment to the burgeoning Andy Warhol brand, as well as his obsession with creating multiple versions of a product, a notion that could extend to people (and Edie becoming disposable). Therefore, the excess with which Edie embarks on her association with Andy is exposed as a façade, which, despite her now-active state in the ritual, signals her lack of individual agency and, instead, marks her assimilation into his created persona; becoming his mirror image that is ultimately trapped as Andy's reflection or kept 'in the closet', where Warhol maintains he prefers to keep his

works. Comparatively, with the dying President now laid bare and mortally wounded before his startled wife, Jackie can only stand by in shock until, reflecting Edie's transformation into active agent, she rises and, being told that her husband is dead, ritualistically kisses the feet of his body. Both figures, ritualised here as the Fallen Woman, now await the 'bending' of the male god to their supplications, to sustain their own uncertain positions. With the death of her spouse, this is no longer possible for Jackie, as Edie still patiently awaits for 'divine confirmation' from Andy. Kornblatt, in describing the Sophia archetype as "not merely a person but a relationship, the principle or energy or potential that can conjoin"<sup>209</sup>, mirrors the celebrated status of Jackie and Edie when in tandem with the ascended male with whom they were identified. In emphasising how the Sophia archetype does not exist "in either a sacred or a natural world" but as that which "mediates dynamically between the two"<sup>210</sup>, Kornblatt portends the loss of this ritual's mediating function for Jackie and Edie when deprived relation to their heavenly male counterpart. In other words, their loss of status is akin to them being severed from the divine state and 'falling' into the natural world, emphasising a disastrous rupture between heaven (the mind) and earth (the body).

Jackie, by placing her wedding ring on her dead husband's finger, reaffirms their marriage and, in the context of this liminal rite, attempts to reunite her newly fallen condition with the sacred state where her divine counterpart resides. In keeping vigil next to the now sealed body, her connection point has been sealed off and, still dressed in her blood stained pink suit, she manifests the profaned and denigrated Eve, cast adrift in liminal purgatory. Similarly, Andy has now moved 'beyond' Edie and is focusing his interests on other pursuits, despite her futile attempts to reestablish contact with him. Warhol's unattainable divine status can be glimpsed in the ascending balloon that Edie sadly observes from below; the very status which

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<sup>209</sup> Deutsch-Kornblatt, J. (2009) *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Cornell University Press, p. 94.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

she depended upon in order to thrive in his world. Simultaneously to Jackie, the isolation of Edie at Andy's exhibition has her taking on the Eve role, effectively being banished from the Garden (Andy's Factory) and, having been used up like one of his many exhibited consumer objects and recast from sacred to profane, she is simply left to her own devices. The audio of Warhol's interview, in emphasising his desire to keep producing versions of the same image, positions in the context of this rite the desecrated Jackie in her bloody pink suit as her everlasting iconic image, doomed for continual repetition and, subsequently, framing her as eternally degraded. In Edie's case, Andy's compulsion alludes to him finding new versions of her personality, rendering her now as a profaned corruption of his sacred Marilyn ideal and therefore, something that must be immediately replaced and improved upon. As Kornblatt notes, with the manifestation of Sophia, "spirit is incarnated and matter divinized."<sup>211</sup> With Jackie and Edie now prevented from achieving divine union with their departed consorts, the Sophia archetype can no longer manifest. Therefore, spirit cannot incarnate on Earth, instead remaining as a transcendental, invisible god completely removed from earthly processes (the deceased, martyred Kennedy and the aloof, affluent Andy). In the same instance, matter cannot become "divinized" without earthly connection to the heavenly aspect, the process which brings Sophia into being as a mediation between the two. Therefore, Jackie and Edie are now deprived of their incarnating archetype and our liminal ceremonial becomes an exercise of their plight.

As the montage draws to a close, Jackie's newly degraded status has been officially ritualised with the swearing in of her husband's successor, as her liminal transition from First Lady to 'Fallen Woman' comes to its conclusion. Paying one last tribute to her husband's body, Jackie's supplications are wasted, as the God no longer sees her. Similarly, Edie in facing her 'discoverer' one last time, is no longer Andy's mirror image but a blight on the iconography

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<sup>211</sup> Deutsch-Kornblatt, J. (2009) *Divine Sophia: The Wisdom Writings of Vladimir Solovyov* 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Cornell University Press, p. 94.

of his aesthetic, being wrecked in temperament and appearance (she is now brunette and no longer resembles Andy). With this final, failed attempt at exchange, Edie's liminal existence as the avatar of Warhol's world has been officially terminated. Just as Jackie is denied sacred function due to her husband's death, so Edie is faced with an Andy Warhol who manifests his own desire to be devoid of feelings and emotions, disassociated from interpersonal relationships and essentially deadened to the physical realm. As the ritual ends, the Fallen Woman has failed to achieve synergy with the Godhead in order to manifest as Sophia, and yet, this very Godhead is shown as unable to know itself without the Fallen Woman's earthly component, making Him essentially unknowable to us and beyond our human understanding. With the conclusion of this ritual then, the Fallen Woman is resigned to her fate and the liminal third space has officially been sealed.

## 6 SUN GODS AND WARRIOR QUEENS

The third and fourth montages incorporate two Orphic hymns of praise from the Ancient Greek and Hellenistic world: *Hymn to the Sun* and *Hymn to Pallas Athene*, made up of a series invoking various deities that is attributed to the lyric poet Orpheus. The English translation of these two works, published in 1792 by Thomas Taylor, is utilised by the montages and displayed overhead their split screen presentations. In his article, *Serious Singing: The Orphic Hymns as Religious Texts*, Fritz Graf establishes that “these hymns demand from their gods” something that is “rather general”, which is that “the gods be present at the ritual; or that they favour the initiates and help them with their life”<sup>212</sup>. The structure of the Orphic Hymns then is so constructed as to “ask the divinity to personally participate in the ritual.”<sup>213</sup> By incarnating the gods through the archetypal personalities located in historical persons, through the liminal interplay of worldly and mythical narratives, these montage works demonstrate this impulse, invoking in actual human behavior what these ancient hymns would attribute to the divine powers.

In her essay, *Orpheus redivivus: The Musical Magic of Marsilio Ficino*, Angela Voss, in describing the 15<sup>th</sup> century humanist philosopher Ficino’s interest in the Orphic Hymns, states that Ficino found them “perfect vehicles for what he termed natural magic, a process of bringing the human soul into alignment with the harmonies of the heavens, and ultimately, with God Himself.”<sup>214</sup> Due to Ficino’s vocation as a Roman Catholic priest, Voss clarifies that he “could hardly make this explicit”, but regarded the Hymns as praising “the powers in the cosmos”,<sup>215</sup> or that which is synonymous with the concept of archetypes (which Carl Jung would popularise in the 20<sup>th</sup> century). It is in the utilisation of these hymns through our

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<sup>212</sup> Graf, F. (2009) ‘Serious Singing: The Orphic Hymns as Religious Texts’, *Kernos* [online], vol. 22. Available from: <https://kernos.revues.org/1784> (Accessed: 31 July 2017).

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Allen, M. and Rees, V. (eds.) (2012) *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Leiden: BRILL, p. 232.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

intermedia framework that Ficino's theory of their numinous processes is now given new potential.

### The Hymn to the Sun

With the selected divinity for the third montage being a personification of the Sun, it is within the workings of the rite where the subject matter is assigned the archetypal position of that which sustains all living things. An inscription opens the work, quoted from Ferdinand Ries (an associate of the composer Beethoven), recounting how the composer was inspired by the advent of Napoleon Bonaparte when naming his heroic themed *Third Symphony* and his ensuing horror when Bonaparte declared himself Emperor of the French (which Beethoven regarded as a corruption of the ideals which he had initially attributed to Napoleon).

Concurrently heard with this is a portion of the *Chant du Départ (Song of the Departure)*, a French revolutionary song from 1794, along with a portion of Richard Nixon's resignation speech from the American Presidency, after the Watergate scandal. The French chant, which became the official anthem of Bonaparte's First Empire, heralds those who fight for the Republic (although this same 'Republic' ceased to exist with Napoleon fashioning himself Emperor) and extolls the concept of dying for one's motherland. As per the directives of the Methodology, we find that the 'Sulfur' element (representing the active conscious life), makes up the audio component of the French chant, along with Nixon's actual voice recording and the Orphic hymn text, invoking the Sun God as its specific deity. Bringing 'Sulfur' together with the 'Mercury' principle's visual representation of two historical figures, which operates through the foundation of 'Salt', an alchemical process is implemented through the recognition of a mythical identify in Sulfur consciousness, which becomes humanised in liminal interplay with Mercury's worldly figures.

As the work opens, we see footage extracted from two films in parallel: 1971's *Waterloo*, addressing the decisive battle which ended Napoleon Bonaparte's attempted restoration as Emperor of the French and 1995's *Nixon*, following President Richard Nixon's political

downfall and resignation from office due to the Watergate scandal's exposure of his illegal activities. These transitions from power to defeat and the dissolution of the former victor's regime are ritualised by way of this montage piece as our two initiates' liminal rite of passage. With both Bonaparte and Nixon taking on the role of the 'Sun God', that manifestation of the generative force which gives life to the world, the former glory attributed to being conferred a nation's leader and generator of prosperity gives way to a chaotic decline, to which the text of the hymn is presented, thereby emphasising the shifting of roles in liminality from Sun God to a new status (or lack of). The correlation between using an anthem of the French Revolution such as *The Chant du Départ*, and Beethoven's hopes for Napoleon to be the democratic paradigm for the nation's new Republic are immediately apparent. Subsequently then, it is the appropriation of the revolution's anthem to represent Bonaparte's creation of his own imperial power base which Beethoven detected as an insidious perversion of the utopian hopes he had attached to Napoleon's rise: that of a political leader whose quality of leadership conveyed a heroic potential of providing for the interests of the many, instead of the few (akin to all life on earth benefiting from the Sun). To that end, it is the "golden Titan" referred by the *Orphic Hymn to the Sun* who is held up as the continual orb of illumination, or the ideal that Bonaparte and Nixon wish to mirror in their earthly office; a role which, for the ceremonial of our ritual montage, has the subject matter perform the function of its God-King.

In his work, *The Origins and History Of Consciousness*, Erich Neumann delves into the idea of mankind's preoccupation with the heroic archetype: that which Napoleon Bonaparte and Richard Nixon would have strived for in the pursuit of power. Stating that the hero "is a human being like the others, mortal and collective like them" and yet "feels himself a stranger to the community", Neumann regards this as the figure becoming aware of something "within himself" which, "he can only describe as strange, unusual" and "godlike."<sup>216</sup> For Neumann, it

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<sup>216</sup> Neumann, E. (1954) *The Origins and History of Consciousness*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 136.

is in this figure's "process of being exalted above the common level, in his heroic capacity as doer, seer, and creator" that the subject "feels himself like one 'inspired,' altogether extraordinary and the son of a god."<sup>217</sup> As we open the work then, there is a prelude before activation of the liminal ritual, which also serves as an ending for the subject's former status before their journey towards a new one. In this prelude, we perceive the figures as having been denied power and coming to terms with either the initial loss of autocratic function (in Napoleon's case) or the initial denial of Presidential status (in Nixon's). As the two figures recede from these failures, we are opening the montage on the premise of their essential humanity, and the deprivation of the heroic vision which attunes them to the Sun God archetype: or that which generates their heroic self-image. The opening lines of the hymn, positioning this deity as wholly self-contained and on a higher plane than all others is immediately contradicted by the essential yearning of the subject matter for sustenance and validation from a source outside of himself (be it through the spouse, or through the men who followed him). Similarly, the archetypal image of the Sun God which would traditionally present a youthful, vigorous warrior offers us the analogue of Napoleon and Nixon in a period of middle life where their prime years have passed. Yet, it is the sense of time or physical reality denigrating them into the deteriorating processes of mortal humanity which is not at all in accord with their interior life and the self-image therein, as the audio of Nixon claims to affirm in his stated preference to selfless ideals over personal glory or the elevation of his own self.

The regeneration of the subject matter begins with the onset of our liminal ritual proper, where Napoleon and Nixon will pursue divine status and in the context of the rite, attempt to manifest as the archetypal Sun God innate to the heroic impulse (as described by Neumann), in the hope of their full splendour and exaltation. As the Orphic devotions extol the Sun God

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<sup>217</sup> Neumann, E. (1954) *The Origins and History of Consciousness*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 136.

as the omnipotent ideal which the ritual king figure of this montage rite seeks to represent on Earth, so it is the human condition of the ritual subjects which makes them susceptible to the destructive effects of such an inflated identification.

In Neumann's theory, it is "not until the hero identifies himself with what we have called the masculine 'heaven' can he enter upon his fight with the dragon", stating that it is such an "identification" which "culminates in the feeling that he is the son of God, embodying in himself the whole mightiness of heaven."<sup>218</sup> In his "feeling of being rooted up aloft in the father divinity", he represents and upholds this "spiritual world in the face of the dragon" and, as hero, "becomes the liberator and savior, the innovator and bringer of wisdom and culture."<sup>219</sup> With the subject matter (Napoleon and Nixon) now officially stepping out onto the world stage to 'realise' their destiny, the liminal ritual has officially initiated them into its processes. The text of the hymn, when describing the Sun God's physical command of the elements, is mirrored in the physical gestures of Napoleon as he attempts to bring the soldiers of France back to his cause.

In contrast to the serene and impressive approach of Bonaparte - which befits Neumann's description of the heroic archetypal image - we see the clearly overwhelmed Nixon negotiating his own attempt to 'win over' the crowd and clearly already ill-at-ease with the 'showman' side of politics (a word which can also be correlated to that of the ancient shaman, who enacted the ritual of their tribe and therefore, became a conduit for the divine on earth).

In this role-play of the Sun God, Nixon is shown as out of his depth and unable to channel the necessary energies to inspire and lead, in contrast to Napoleon in the parallel narrative. In the audio strand of Nixon's resignation speech meanwhile, it is the convictions of perseverance which he claims to hold in such regard which can be legitimately applied to the Napoleon strand of narrative; for, it is Bonaparte who now assumes his Sun God role with a sense of

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<sup>218</sup> Neumann, E. (1954) *The Origins and History of Consciousness*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 148.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

pre-destined ease. In this liminal realm which ritualises a transition from attainment of power toward either the securing or loss of it, as one leader has seamlessly manifested the desired archetype (Napoleon), so the other (Nixon) continually struggles to experience that same incarnation. Ultimately however, in the archetypal analogy of this montage's alchemical operation, both historical subjects are consumed by their specific archetype's processes, as described by Neumann in the heroic idea.

Seeking to confirm status of the heroic Sun God archetype in this liminal zone, the montage subjects are now in a position of having to reconcile their notions of destiny overcoming adversity, to a working, sustainable and established system of governance. In the Nixon audio extract, it is in quoting Theodore Roosevelt, a presidential predecessor, that Nixon recounts the idea of "the man in the arena" who "strives" and "if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly", a quotation from which Nixon pledges he will 'continue' in the spirit of. Neumann's observation that the "transformation of the hero through the dragon fight is a transfiguration, a glorification, indeed an apotheosis, the central feature of which is the birth of a higher mode of personality"<sup>220</sup> can be correlated to these segments where power has been attained and the privileges afforded being potentially used to serve self-interests, most notably a Cult of Personality (seen in the glory which heralds Napoleon's return to Paris and Nixon pouring over his controversial Watergate cassettes, attending to the preservation of his image). Napoleon's disconnect from the ceremony of adulation which officially reinstates him to power now places him in a symbiosis with the Nixon counterpart narrative, as the pressures which come from manifesting the Sun God archetype become visible in both men through symptoms of both grandiose mania and isolated deflation. In light of this, the text of the Orphic hymn, placing the Sun God as the perfect avatar for orchestrating harmony in the world, is now a burden instead of an inspiration and, as is the nature of liminality, cannot be

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<sup>220</sup> Neumann, E. (1954) *The Origins and History of Consciousness*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 149.

indefinitely sustained. In Nixon's selection of a Roosevelt quotation in his resignation speech, by portraying himself as "the man in the arena", he offers up an exact analogy of himself to the heroic archetype, illuminating us to an epic projection of self-ordained greatness that betrays the humility and sense of service he claims to venerate.

Venerating the Sun God as the ultimate leader and fructifying force, the Orphic Hymn places such a figure beyond the foibles of mankind and obstructions of nature, seemingly sustaining His independence from the profane realm: a concept which the montage rite will subvert through the liminal, ambivalent processes inflicted upon its initiates. In the audio strand, recounting what he terms as a "sacred commitment", Nixon affirms that he has sought to "consecrate" his platform to the cause of world peace, which he hopes will be his enduring legacy. The sense of an impending denouement now pervades our ritual, as Napoleon is impeded by the very elements which the Sun God has been feted to control, by finding himself trapped in a muddy road and in need of physical assistance.

Neumann's idea, in describing the "hero's fight" as "always concerned with the threat to the spiritual, masculine principle from the uroboric dragon, and with the danger of being swallowed by the maternal unconscious"<sup>221</sup> is reflected in the image of Napoleon looking up to the heavens, helpless under the storm. It is here where an analogy can be made to the chaos associated with the fluid or feminine; the threat of unconscious, morally neutral and oblivious forces which threaten to overwhelm the singular, monotheistic, law-making consciousness emblematic of the Sun God. Neumann, in describing "the most widely disseminated archetype of the dragon fight" as "the sun myth", expands upon it as the heroic figure being "swallowed every evening by the nocturnal sea monster dwelling in the west, and who then grapples with its double, so to speak—the dragon whom he encounters in this uterine

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<sup>221</sup> Neumann, E. (1954) *The Origins and History of Consciousness*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 160.

cavern.”<sup>222</sup> When Nixon looks upon the portrait of Abraham Lincoln in his private study, he is in the grips of a liminal ordeal which stages this exact archetypal conflict. For, in having to face the image of the fabled President Lincoln who successfully manifested the heroic archetype in American consciousness, Nixon has aspired to emulate the same process and yet, by lacking all the lucidity, agility and warmth that make up the hailed traits of that Sun God archetype in the Orphic hymn, his ultimate objective has been futile. In the audio of Nixon’s speech, by correlating his office to a sacred vocation, his dream is upheld as something divine – an unblemished idealistic vision - and yet, in his earthly pursuit of it, he is thwarted by Neumann’s dragon. This concept, serving as the shadow of Nixon’s own unconscious life, is the psychological equivalent of those same elements of chaotic nature which, in the parallel narrative, threaten to reverse Napoleon’s fortunes on the battlefield and confirm him as a pawn of the liminal process, thereby subject to losing confirmation of his consecrated status at our ritual’s end.

In Neumann’s text, by stating that the fabled hero is “reborn in the east as the victorious sun”, he specifies that by “hacking his way out of the monster”, the hero effectively “accomplishes his own rebirth.” Then, from out of this “sequence of danger, battle, and victory”, it is “the light” that becomes “the central symbol of the hero’s reality”, who is its “light-bringer and emissary.”<sup>223</sup> In applying Neumann’s track of the heroic narrative to the final sequences of image, text and sound, it is in Napoleon presiding over the decisive battle which will either confirm or deprive him of Sun God status, through which he now attempts to secure his archetypal incarnation and exude the generative qualities of leadership that will inspire his men to victory. Having initially been thwarted by the forces of nature, it is in his sudden collapse that Napoleon is now overwhelmingly thwarted by ‘the dragon’, or shadow within

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<sup>222</sup> Neumann, E. (1954) *The Origins and History of Consciousness*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 160.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

himself, that will devour him as his own prey. In a similarly traumatic epiphany, Nixon must now confront another painted image of someone who successfully manifested the Sun God/heroic archetype in his nation's consciousness: that of President Kennedy, his assassinated and much romanticised contemporary. As in the *Hymn of the Fallen Woman* montage, where Jackie was deprived of her 'Sophia' function within the Godhead (fully attributed to her martyred lord), so here, Nixon now sees that he has ultimately failed to manifest the divine, heroic archetype as his predecessor did: and having won no victories, he has instead hidden in the shadows under paranoia and suspicion, eluded by the light of wisdom.

Following Beethoven's intuition about Napoleon betraying his ideals for the sake of personal glory, it is at the conclusion of this montage that the subjects have ultimately been deprived of securing their divine illumination which, as Neumann alludes, is traditionally conferred after "the nethermost point of the night sea journey, when the sun hero journeys through the underworld" and survives "the fight with the dragon."<sup>224</sup> From out of this ordeal, states Neumann, a "new sun is kindled at midnight" and "the hero conquers the darkness", further symbolised by "the illumination and transfiguration of the head, crowned and decked with an aureole."<sup>225</sup> Ultimately, it is in the success of this "hero's victory" which assures him the divine incarnation, which Neumann describes as "a new spiritual status, a new knowledge, and an alteration of consciousness."<sup>226</sup> In ritualising an attempted confirmation of the Sun God archetype, our liminal ceremonial has instead served to deprive the subjects of this incarnation completely and therein can we perceive a harrowing subversion of the initiate's intended heroic outcome.

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<sup>224</sup> Neumann, E. (1954) *The Origins and History of Consciousness*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 160.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

In the final sequences, Napoleon (framed against the darkness after losing the Battle of Waterloo) has indeed undergone Neumann's transfiguration of consciousness attributed to the climax of the heroic narrative, only his illumination is sudden knowledge of failure and the inability to sustain that Sun God archetype which had formerly held him in such veneration. The last lines of the Orphic hymn, heralding the Sun God in his daylight car of glory now correlate to the defeated Emperor enveloped under cover of night and being taken away from the site of battle in abject humiliation. Similarly, as Nixon's wife comes to bring him away from the golden portrait of Kennedy, so too do we see that the subject's great illumination has come from confirmation of a "new spiritual status", although a status that has been conferred upon his predecessor (Kennedy) in death, instead of himself (Nixon) in life. This sacred confirmation of an archetypal, mythical identity manifests with splendid, glowing brilliance in the notion of the heroic God-King cut down in his prime: the exact narrative to which Kennedy corresponds. In contrast, Nixon has been unable to establish any such status, despite his yearning for that heralded identity, and in his parting from the scene, in not having "conquered the darkness", he fades into it with acceptance: finally relinquishing his claim to the Sun God archetype and that which 'crowns' the painted image of Kennedy (whose unfulfilled potential sustains his posthumous association with it). It is in this state of dejection which the military anthem ends, along with the final notes in this extract of Beethoven's *Heroic Symphony*. The Orphic hymn now concludes its text upon these visual resolutions and yet, instead of the shining grandeur of final elevation and splendour, the "mystic labour" described in the Orphic Hymn becomes the initiate's miscarriage of the operation to secure that sought for shining archetype within his deteriorating and ultimately corrupted self.

### **The Hymn to Pallas Athene**

For the fourth montage, *Hymn to Pallas Athene*, another Orphic prayer (as translated by Thomas Taylor) is utilised. This hymn, devoted to the ancient Greek Goddess of Wisdom and Warfare, follows the same devotional tract as *The Hymn to the Sun*, supplicating the

archetypal figure that makes up the Goddess in question; the content of which will be analysed in accord with its presentation within the montage. As the work opens, we hear *The Magnificat*, the Medieval Roman Catholic hymn dedicated to the Virgin Mary which presents her personal response to the news that she will give birth to the Son of God, along with an additional layer of sound: a distant but distinct voice bellowing over a roaring crowd. The voice, belonging to Eva ‘Evita’ Perón, is captured from the First Lady of Argentina’s final 1951 speech to the nation, before her premature death.

In their split screen presentation, the montage images are extracted from the following films: 1996’s *Evita*, chronicling the rise to power of the aforementioned Eva Perón and 2011’s *The Iron Lady*, a biopic focusing on Margaret Thatcher’s tenure as British Prime Minister. Akin to the *Hymn to the Sun* montage, this ascendancy onto the public stage coincides with a transitional, liminal period of uncertainty in the two nations, through which the subjects cultivate a powerful and formidable persona capable of influencing political events. In knowledge of the framework laid out by the Methodology, the active ‘Sulfur’ element of consciousness incorporates not only the Peron speech but the two hymns simultaneously, allowing us to perceive their Pagan and Christian subjects (Athene and Mary) as an archetypal analogy, which becomes manifested in the ‘Mercury’ element through the images of actual historical women. With the ‘Salt’ element’s assemblage of these various components having activated the work, we can now apply the opening extract of the Virgin Mary’s ‘divine annunciation’ to the specific subject matter, as selected for this rite. For, in Mary extolling a ‘Lord’ above herself who she regards as the saviour to her ‘lowly Handmaiden’, she is situated as the woman traditionally denied autonomy due to her sex, owing any ‘advancement’ she experiences to a cooperation with the established system. To that end, Mary’s faith in this monotheistic Father God and his plans for her to deliver the Messiah render her as a passive agent to a divine force which she must defer to, as Thatcher and Evita defer to the traditional patriarchal systems in place which will afford them an influential political platform. Finally, Mary’s admission that her divine selection will ensure her

blessedness to all future generations signals a human mentality which attributes one's power to a force higher than oneself and therefore is incapable of being questioned; a most dangerous concept when applied to the political arena.

As the first sequences begin, we can detect an instant parallel between the function of the Virgin Mary as the 'handmaiden' or emanation of a Father God divinity and that of Pallas Athene of the ancient Greeks, having sprung, fully formed, from the head of her father Zeus (King of the Gods). Being positioned at a lofty height in the Orphic Hymn, Athene, like Mary in the Christian system, is set apart as pure and untainted by the mundane earthly plane, seeming to relate to humanity on a vast as opposed to personal dimension, at the clear summit of consciousness which place her above with the 'Heavenly Father', rather than in the ambiguous, murky depths. Her role then, which translator Murray Stein describes as part of a "father-daughter mythologem" is what "lies at the base of the Athene religion."<sup>227</sup> As our ritual opens, the subject matter is charged with assuming Athene's elevated role, through which she is tasked to guide her nation through a liminal period of political uncertainty and instability. To do this, the symbolic Athene persona must be generated by a distinct and arresting visual iconography to suggest Evita and Thatcher's 'divine selection' in the context of the montage rite. This is particularly emphasised in Evita's dyed blonde hair which correlates her to an angelic or heavenly figure and conceals her ethnic, earthly identity, as well as Thatcher's 'masculine' power-suit which seemingly strips her of traditionally 'feminine' attributes.

In Evita's case, although she apparently assumes a deferential role in her husband's presidency, she in fact becomes the central focus of his government, around which a Cult of Personality builds that communes with the common people and comparatively sees her husband's role recede, whilst still having her represent his power base. Standing on the

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<sup>227</sup> Kerényi, K. (1952) *Athene: Virgin and Mother in Greek Religion*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Woodstock, Connecticut: Spring Publications, Inc., p. 111.

balcony of the Presidential Palace, Evita is seen to give a rousing speech to the crowd assembled below, who hold up campaign banners for her husband and yet concentrate their focus on her image alone, like a religious idol to be worshipped. Illuminated by searchlights, Evita becomes inspired to hold out her arms in a Messianic tableau. Thatcher, in turn, by taking on the actual authoritative role in government, ‘simulates’ Athene as an emanation of the Father God (or the Judeo-Christian tradition that made up Britain’s ‘value system’) and embarks upon the liminal rite that assigns her the function of sustaining that traditional ‘masculine’ system, as its avatar of strength and willpower. For, as Stein elaborates, due to Athene’s “bond” with her God Father, “she will give herself to no husband, yet because of this bond she must become a mother in order to supply the paternal order with future generations.”<sup>228</sup> Subsequently, it is in Athene’s “role as mother” to the people which “represents a contribution to the interests of the Father and his order.”<sup>229</sup> In her maintenance of the order, this masculine goddess archetype seems opposed to a feminine Love Goddess deity such as Aphrodite, who threatens the establishment through sexual power alone (as demonstrated in the first montage, *Hail Holy Queen*).

In addressing the essentially androgynous nature of Athene, the hymn alludes to her balance of masculine and feminine qualities as a contradiction of character which presents her as both coldly dangerous and profoundly wise. That such characteristics could be thought of as being able to harmoniously co-exist within a single archetype offers an insight into its potentially destructive effect once wholly identified with (specifically, in the certainty of one’s wisdom in lieu of unstable temperament). Murray Stein, in commenting on Athene’s spirit, states that it is “aimed at handling practical affairs in an heroic, intelligent and clever way”, and achieves this by being “embodied in her favorite heroes: men of practical affairs, winners on the

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<sup>228</sup> Kerényi, K. (1952) *Athene: Virgin and Mother in Greek Religion*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Woodstock, Connecticut: Spring Publications, Inc., p. 111.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

battlefield and in the forum, enterprising men of business, and leaders in military enterprises.<sup>230</sup> By positioning the power of Athene to be in this realm of practical activity, Stein alludes to the archetype's deprivation of insight in psychological, ambiguous and relational terms, stating that, although Athene "fosters reflection", it is not the "kind of reflection that leads to insight for its own sake", but that which "supports the spirit of strategic planning for the achievement of heroic" but "not necessarily ideal"<sup>231</sup> ends. The subject matter that has become identified with such a goddess is therefore compromised in securing the affiliation by any prospect of indecisiveness, ambivalence or defeat.

In applying these ideas to our montage ritual, we see how Evita attempts to end liminality and confirm the post-liminal stage by proceeding to a Holy Communion to 'consecrate' her manifestation of the Athene archetype, which presents her as the pious daughter of Argentina's religious and political tradition. This sequence of her narrative, in being countered by violent street scenes portraying the unrest between the Perón government's law enforcement and civilians, highlights the characteristics defined by the goddess' Orphic hymn and Stein's crucial evaluation of Athene's nature. As Evita prepares to receive the sacrament that will confirm her archetypal identity, law enforcement bears down on the protestors and begins to chase them away, causing chaos in the streets as she, receiving the blessing, suddenly collapses at the altar. By falling away after receiving the sacrament, the venerated goddess Evita – or, in the context of the rite, Athene - is suddenly exposed as a mirage and the mortal condition of the stricken woman made evident to us, as someone incapable of sustaining this illusion indefinitely and therefore, sustained the processes of uncertain liminality. Similarly, the pressure put on Thatcher in this segment by the watchful and expectant eyes of her all-male War cabinet places a demand on her to uphold the Athene

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<sup>230</sup> Kerényi, K. (1952) *Athene: Virgin and Mother in Greek Religion*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Woodstock, Connecticut: Spring Publications, Inc., p. 113.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

archetype in order to resolve their international crisis. Unlike Evita in the simultaneous narrative, Thatcher manages to preserve the illusion of the archetype and, within this montage rite, sustains the faith of her war counsel in demonstrating Athene's characteristics in wisdom and warfare, manifesting as their impregnable goddess of the realm. In the uncertainty of international crisis however, liminality is ongoing and Thatcher cannot be ritually confirmed into post-liminal status as the Athene archetype, for she remains fallible as merely the human conduit of its Goddess image.

As the montage rite reaches this midpoint, we now glimpse Evita, having recovered her equilibrium, staring at her reflection "of splendid mien" in a pose of perfect stillness and self-control: in essence, recovering her affiliation to the Athene archetype and 'regenerating' herself for public gaze as, in the next shot, her husband leads her out to greet the awaiting crowds once more. In comparison, Thatcher's state of continual activity even in private moments, intercut with devastating scenes from the Falklands conflict, allude to her complete disassociation from the emotional ramifications of warfare, being sustained by the Athene archetype's singular mindset of objectivity, as the self-identified "purger of evils." Murray Stein emphasises that in psychological terms, Athene "protects our civilised and civilising selves from the consuming fires of the spirit" and therefore, "from the threats of our various primordial passions."<sup>232</sup> Applying this to the contradictory element of Athene as Goddess of War, a frightening concept emerges: that of a goddess who can maintain perfect self-control and seemingly inspire a clarity of mind and sense of righteousness in her people, whilst simultaneously giving the order (with perfect serenity and conviction) to inflict devastation on those she regards as evil and 'other'. In the aspect of our rite then, this divine archetype of Athene is essentially dehumanising its subject matter and relegating her to be a symbolic, impersonal figurehead who, in containing the chaotic passions of her nation's masses with her

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<sup>232</sup> Kerényi, K. (1952) *Athene: Virgin and Mother in Greek Religion*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Woodstock, Connecticut: Spring Publications, Inc., p. 118.

decisiveness in foreign affairs, also alludes to her potential indifference when the interests of those same masses begin to conflict with her own.

Stein, in stating that Athene “tempers” or neutralizes the collective, reminds us that Athens (the city named after her) stands for “one of the glories of the civilised self”<sup>233</sup>, representing the ideals to which Thatcher constantly aligned her belief system, and by extension, her sense of the nation’s own. To be seen as an unchangeable representation of civilisation itself then, or the manifestation of all wisdom, the Athene archetype cannot be realistically sustained or confirmed by its two human, fallible carriers into post-liminal, incorporation rites. To that end, in the penultimate and final sequences of the montage, we once again glimpse the destabilising effects of such an association on its subjects. Whereas Evita had previously collapsed and revealed human frailty at odds with the vigorous Athene archetype, so Thatcher had maintained strength under pressure, in accord with it. As we begin toward the conclusion then, where before Evita had presented herself as the rousing ‘Goddess of War’ aspect of Athene, so now she presents herself to the people as Athene in her ‘Goddess of Wisdom’ facet, thereby maintaining her archetypal effect over the people and beguiling them into an atmosphere of wonderment. In contrast, Thatcher’s presentation before the House of Commons generates a comparatively crude and hysterical response from her ministers, intercut with images showing a decadence and moral decline in the decade since she took power, springing from those same ideals which she reverently attributes to wisdom. With the contradiction of the archetype now evident once again, its confirmation in postliminal status is denied, despite its evocation having been venerated throughout this liminal rite. As the montage concludes then, a change in both parties occurs as identification with Athene dissipates in foresight of its precarious status and the imminent end of the liminal

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<sup>233</sup> Kerényi, K. (1952) *Athene: Virgin and Mother in Greek Religion*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Woodstock, Connecticut: Spring Publications, Inc., p. 118.

period. Evita's gesture, of embracing her husband and retreating from the sight of the crowd conveys her renunciation of the self-generating goddess, resigning herself to become the mortal woman whose premature death is at hand. Similarly, the image of Thatcher sitting alone in the House of Commons becomes her final rumination on the Athene archetype, as she reflects on herself in relation to it, just as Evita did in an earlier sequence. This 'interlude' before the conclusion proper acts as a kind of suspension of reality, giving the subject matter a place of reprieve before the official conclusion of the transitional rite begins.

Subsequently, as Thatcher is applauded on her 'long walk' through 10 Downing Street (heralding the official end of our liminal process), so are we able to fathom a sense of caution and uncertainty in her being. Finally, with the door being opened to Thatcher and the frame dissolving to white, the final Eva Perón quotation reflects on what lies beyond the public self: "Shadows cannot see themselves in the mirror of the sun." Those deeper, undesirable traits, so long repressed by the enlightened Athene archetype and buried as the 'shadow self', now re-emerge as the final threshold is perceived by the initiate(s), disconnecting them from the archetype and preparing them to be crossed over into a new, post-liminal identity. As the liminal rite is terminated, the renunciation of the impenetrable Goddess Athene finally becomes an exchange for a new status which restores lost humanity and the self-acceptance of one's inevitable decline.

### The Hymn of Dionysus

Unlike the previous works in our sequence, the fifth montage does not utilize at its text base any religious hymn but rather incorporates the dramatization of a divine personage from a theatrical medium. The montage opens with a description of the selected play and its central conflict: that of a king's social order being threatened by a cult of the bacchanal god Dionysus, to which the work will be 'entreating' in the manner of a religious ritual. The role of Dionysus, then, as a deity representing revelry, fertility and expression, places his archetype as the evocation upon which our montage rite will generate this presence in its narrative strands. The montage utilizes images from two films: 1964's *Becket*, which focuses on the breakdown in relations between King Henry II of England and his Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, and 1971's *Nicholas and Alexandra*, chronicling the downfall of the Romanov dynasty, in which the royal family's controversial association with the priest and alleged mystic Rasputin played a role. Like the previous montage works, the figures of Becket and Rasputin are featured as key players in a volatile political system where church and state were at odds; a system which could be deemed as destabilized and therefore, seen as within the liminal state. By identifying both Becket and Rasputin with the Dionysus god and archetype, the nature of this deity is recognized in the frequent provocations of these two historical figures and their bewildering effect upon the body politic.

Throughout the montage run two audio sequences in parallel: the first, a music orchestration from 1916 by the composer Gustav Holst named *Hymn to Dionysus* (also inspired by Euripides' *The Bacchae*) and a conversation with the historian Michael Davies detailing the last weeks of Thomas Becket, leading up to his assassination in 1170. As per the Methodology, the 'Sulfur' element which activates consciousness is the expression of the Dionysian hymn and the historian's voice, establishing a specific narrative of time and

place. In associating this with the images of the ‘Mercury’ element, the divine analogy is made, bringing history and myth into liminal interplay through the foundation of ‘Salt’.

In understanding the effect of this deity’s unstable characteristics and the beguiling physical descriptions which Pentheus attributes to him, we find one reading from the scholar R.P. Winnington-Ingram, who asserts that Euripides “recognized Dionysus for the danger that he was, publically in the societies of men, when he works at full strength through the group, and privately in the lives of individuals.”<sup>234</sup> For that scholar, the exercising of Dionysus’ power was not Euripides’ necessary approval of its demonstration, but rather, the dramatist’s pursuit to “understand” and “propagate understanding” of this god became his only “weapon to employ against him.”<sup>235</sup> In this segment which opens the montage then, we are confronted in one strand of the narrative with the King figure, who represents the social order, being subject to this “thyrsus-beating” himself and prostrated under the supremacy of Dionysus, as represented in the effigy of the recently assassinated Becket. If liminality marks a period of after separation rites, the King being initiated into liminal processes through a subjugated function demonstrates to us that the divine archetype now at work (being Dionysus) works against the kingly intent for stability and order, incapacitating the sovereign in the wake of “this turbulent priest”, who maintains posthumous authority over the nation as a divine martyr.

As the liminal rite of the montage begins, the King’s authority has been officially stripped from him and conferred upon the now invisible divine presence, who, although assassinated (as Becket), maintains control over hearts and minds as a symbolic force. In this realm of liminality then, the King’s former power as divine representative on earth is officially transferred over to the Becket figure (as Dionysus), who is the sole conduit of its power. In

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<sup>234</sup> Winnington-Ingram, R.P. (1948) *Euripides and Dionysus: An Interpretation of the Bacchae*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, p. 179.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

the adjacent narrative, it is in the entrance of Rasputin that we first encounter the physical manifestation of the Dionysus archetype and its disarming effect on the ruling autocrats. Just as the King in the parallel scene is depicted in his end state of depletion after Dionysus (as Becket) has spurred him to madness and passed from physical form, so here we see a King (the Tsar) confronted with his first introduction to this archetypal presence (as Rasputin) – the very archetype which will, in the context of this montage rite, take precedence. It is in Rasputin's intense attention towards the Tsarina that the analysis of Dionysus by Charles Segal comes into focus, who positions the god as having “the softness, sensuality, and emotionality that the Greeks generally associate with women”, whilst maintaining “the force and energy of a vigorous young man.”<sup>236</sup> Rasputin, in focusing on the Tsarina as opposed to the ruling Tsar, immediately exudes towards her the personable, empathetic and reflective qualities not associated with traditional maleness but in the classically attributed ‘virtues’ of women. To that end, he begins a seduction of sorts that is purely Dionysian in its ability to cut through male ordered formality and relate to the intuitive female consciousness; thereby securing its affinity and allegiance through a kind of secret, emotional wavelength that the male authority (King/Tsar), in his world of logic and control, is wholly oblivious to.

In the second sequences, King Henry, in affirming his allegiance to the deceased Archbishop Becket before the Canterbury crowd is now consecrating it, in the context of the montage rite, as a sacred space to Dionysus (in Becket's image). In returning to the sarcophagus of his slain adversary and touching it with regard, the King has finally yielded to the spiritual power he formerly attempted and ultimately failed to control. The writer Winnington-Ingram, in stating that “Mere man has doubted” the “godhead” of Dionysus and, as a consequence “suffers for this presumption a terrible fate, which the god himself supervises”<sup>237</sup>, alludes to this divine archetype as a force that can work to its end even without the presence of the person which it

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<sup>236</sup> Segal, C. (1982) *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 10.

<sup>237</sup> Winnington-Ingram, R.P. (1948) *Euripides and Dionysus: An Interpretation of the Bacchae*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, p. 3.

had manifested it, for the chaotic effect that the god has on others can take possession of them and direct their behavior (demonstrated by the historian's description of the knight scattering Becket's brains after killing him). Therefore, it is in the unstable, liminal effect that the archetype has on those who oppose its processes which will ultimately cause them to lose the control which they have so craved, in order to secure power over its "wanton insolence." This is ultimately demonstrated in the King's 'reconciliation' with the ghost of Becket, having maintained his crown through surrendering to its supremacy. In the adjacent narrative meantime, it is Rasputin's actual physical presence in the dark sanctum with the Tsarina which gives this sacred space an intimate and erotic dimension, which is the realm of Dionysus. Just as the god's processes are still at work in the parallel narrative even when his apparent physical presence was absent, so it is here that his physical manifestation and seduction of those in power is actually initiating those processes to take their full effect. Charles Segal captures this uncanny paradox of the Tsarina's (apparent) spiritual deliverance and Rasputin's hypnotic control over her when he states that in Dionysus, "we may meet an as yet untapped creative potential of the self, as of nature, but also a destructive darkness, like the Jungian "shadow", in which we may be engulfed and lost."<sup>238</sup> For, Segal continues, it is "Dionysus' realm" which "blurs the clear line between conscious and unconscious, sanity and madness, exulted purity and wild abandonment, strength and weakness."<sup>239</sup> The hypnotic effect of this scene then, where the distinction between illumination and delusion is not apparent, becomes an ambivalent tableau of the peasant monk seeming to deliver the autocratic queen from a state of anguish to one of serenity, through her complete submission to his more powerful presence. The "untapped creative potential" of the Tsarina, in apparently gaining her sought for spiritual enlightenment from Rasputin, thereby becomes an experience

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<sup>238</sup> Winnington-Ingram, R.P. (1948) *Euripides and Dionysus: An Interpretation of the Bacchae*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, p. 15.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

of sinister connotations when this encounter is perceived as a liminal initiation of the self now subject to a vast, unknowable force with the power to conduct it to overwhelming outcomes.

Once the textual interplay between Pentheus and Dionysus has begun overhead, we observe scenes of Becket privately meeting his King and Rasputin his Tsar, in accord with it. The King figure, in both narratives, having already been stripped of divine status through the processes of this montage rite, can only play out the same futile cycle of attempting to exert control and power function over the Dionysus figure. Despite claims that this rival cannot “elude” him, Pentheus is the one who will be left in an “uninitiated” state by the montage’s end, having encountered an adversary, in the words of Winnington-Ingram, “whose coolness and cunning are a foil to his own excitable simplicity”, which pits him “against a great impersonal force”,<sup>240</sup> and thereby makes him subject to its overwhelming nature (evident in King Henry’s demeanor with Becket). With The Tsarina’s kissing of Rasputin’s crucifix, their dynamic seems to intermix the spiritual and the sexual, which can be correlated to Charles Segal’s assertion of Dionysus as the manifestation of apparent “contradictions”, who “exists in the midst”<sup>241</sup> of them. Segal ultimately pinpoints this god as a chameleonic entity who is able to dominate in human exchanges of both cold mental sparring (Becket and King Henry) and intimate vulnerability (Rasputin and the Tsarina). In Segal’s words, this characteristic blurs “the geographical division between Hellene and barbarian”,<sup>242</sup> with the former signifying ‘sophisticated’ logic to the latter’s ‘primitive’ emotion. To that end, Dionysus’ nature of instilling further disorientation in the liminal realm invokes his archetype as an agent of chaos. This stands in contrast to Hermes, who, as the alchemical Mercury and mediator of liminality, is the agent of reconciliation between the archetypes of order above (such as Apollo) and disorder below (Dionysus). The unspoken intimacy of the Tsarina’s

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<sup>240</sup> Winnington-Ingram, R.P. (1948) *Euripides and Dionysus: An Interpretation of the Bacchae*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, p. 28.

<sup>241</sup> Segal, C. (1982) *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 30.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

‘sacred’ gesture then, away from the Tsar/King figure’s world of “ordinariness and prosaic routine”, therefore correlates to Rasputin that Dionysian energy which Segal further defines as releasing “a denied or untried capacity for ecstasy”, which aspires for “the joy of mystical communion”<sup>243</sup>, all descriptions with undoubted sexual analogies and akin to the devotional Cult of Becket as described by the historian in this extract. On its counter-side, this “ecstasy” becomes “homicidal madness”<sup>244</sup>, the beginnings of which are alluded to in the following scene of this fourth sequence where Rasputin has been ‘selected’ as a figure of honour by the Tsar’s nobles, (marking his veneration within our narrative of Dionysus the God), even as they secretly plot to murder him.

In the penultimate sequences, we find Pentheus no longer represented in a single authority figure, but in an entourage of assassins who seek to kill the Dionysus figure (Becket and Rasputin) in their ruler’s name. This becomes the culmination point where the Pentheus figure, losing all control due to the influence of this rival, becomes consumed by the characteristics of Dionysus himself and, in seeking to apprehend or kill the god, is actually conquered by him. According to Segal’s interpretation of *The Bacchae*, it is “Dionysus’ task to reveal Pentheus’ hidden identity by converting him into his apparent opposite, revealing the concealed sameness of identity beneath apparent polarity.”<sup>245</sup> This dissolution of the ‘ordered’ figure’s boundaries, so it becomes consumed by the unconscious forces it has placed as ‘the other’, is therefore its simultaneous enlightenment and downfall: a contradictory signifier of liminal processes at work. The androgynous characteristics of Dionysus are powerfully evoked through one of the assassins dressing as a woman in order to entice Rasputin’s attentions, signifying that the god’s energy has now permeated through the environment of this narrative and will culminate with either sexual passion or physical violence in order to ensure its catharsis. It is subsequently through Dionysus being revealed in

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<sup>243</sup> Segal, C. (1982) *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 30.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

Pentheus' own violent actions (or the actions of the Tsar's servants) that this mysterious god's divine archetype infiltrates Pentheus' empirical, rational and "godless" world. In the context of the montage rite then, the assassinations of Becket and Rasputin (and the eventual desecration of Becket's tomb in *The Reformation*) act as a culmination of the liminal ritual where this divinity has finally subverted Pentheus' empirical certainties into fear of the Dionysian, mirroring Winnington-Ingram's description of Dionysus as not only "a personal adversary" who is "too clever" for Pentheus, but also "an impersonal power too strong"<sup>246</sup> for him. Segal, in stating that "by his very nature", a god such as Dionysus "must exist in a framework of tension, ambiguity, paradox"<sup>247</sup> conveys to us this archetype as a signifier of the engulfing unconscious which, failing the presence of Hermes as liminal mediator, cannot be held back. This stands in stark contrast to the Sun King and Athene deities of the third and fourth montage works, which required order to thrive and, in the sphere of liminal ambiguities, caused their human conduits to ultimately falter, diminish and isolate themselves, losing affinity with their divine archetype in the process.

Although Becket and Rasputin (as the human conduits of Dionysus) are ultimately dispatched by their assassins, this does not simultaneously induce a dissolution of the archetype. For, in his reading of Dionysus as "the power of blind, instinctive emotion", who, if taken "by force" induces "catastrophic" consequences, Winnington-Ingram signals to us how the archetype dominates and possesses even those who seek to repel it as "the embodiment of a relentless force" which "stands outside the events of which he is the cause, above, and below."<sup>248</sup> This becomes emphasised in Euripides' Stranger referring to Dionysus as being by his side but not actually revealing himself as the god, which conveys the idea of the deity furthering confusion in liminality as opposed to influencing illumination, as Hermes would. However, it

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<sup>246</sup> Winnington-Ingram, R.P. (1948) *Euripides and Dionysus: An Interpretation of the Bacchae*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, p. 73.

<sup>247</sup> Segal, C. (1982) *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 15-16.

<sup>248</sup> Winnington-Ingram, R.P. (1948) *Euripides and Dionysus: An Interpretation of the Bacchae*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, p. 73.

is in Segal's following statement, that *The Bacchae* expressed "the profound truth" of Dionysus "in insisting on his destructive force as the necessary and inevitable partner of his creative energies and life-fostering gifts"<sup>249</sup>, where we find the correlation to a potentially generative after-effect of such violence. For in Becket's case, this is certainly demonstrated in the aftermath of his assassination by the "life-fostering" usage of his name in becoming a sacred exemplar, inspiring the posthumous cult which venerated him as a Catholic martyr around the world. For Rasputin, his comparatively insidious association with The Antichrist (reflected in his apparent immunity to poison and gunfire) gives him a similar numinous potency as the unholy inversion or despised corruption of an adored spiritual figure.

It is subsequently through this liminal rite where our initiates, who preceded it in deference to a king figure, lose their lowly status and begin to attract a divine association with the Dionysian archetype on the earthly plain. By the end of liminality then, if a manifestation of this archetype has been fully achieved, it is only through the physical destruction of the two subjects that this has been made possible. For only through a final dissolution, and not an ordering, do they fully reflect their archetype and become a wholly numinous force, taking on the sacred (Becket) and profane (Rasputin) aspects of Dionysus in post-liminal perpetuity.

### **The Rite of Saturn**

The penultimate montage is distinct from its counterparts in that it does not incorporate as its text component any hymn of praise or dramatic extract that invokes a specific divine archetype. On the contrary, the unnamed archetypal presence that is detected by the artist practitioner is done so by surveying all of the elements (textual, aural and visual) and deducing which archetype these various elements seem the most affiliated with; a theory which will be arrived at by analysis of the first sequences and confirmed by the end of the work. Incorporated as an aural backdrop is an extract from the first part of Igor Stravinsky's

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<sup>249</sup> Segal, C. (1982) *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 15-16.

1913 ballet *The Rite of Spring*, known as ‘The Adoration of the Earth’, which anticipates the coming of spring and initiates the pagan nature rituals, which are performed to mark it. As a prelude to this music comes a quote from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century’s most renowned ballet dancer Vaslev Nijinsky, who choreographed *The Rite of Spring* for Stravinsky: “I danced frightening things. They were frightened of me and therefore thought that I wanted to kill them. I did not want to kill anyone.” The montage which follows this incorporates footage from two films, *Nijinsky* (1980), which chronicles the strenuous relationship of the aforementioned dancer and his mentor Sergei Diaghilev (the ballet impresario), and *A Dangerous Method* (2011), which presents a virtually identical dynamic from the same historical period, between the founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud and his innovative pupil Carl Jung. What follows here as the text based element of the work comes from Jung’s later recollection of his 1913 premonition of the First World War, which coincided with the development of his theories about the human unconscious. Finally, an additional audio component is featured in accord with the ballet extract, containing the voices of British philosopher Bertrand Russell and British diplomat and politician Sir Harold Nicolson, who both recall their experiences around the 1914 declaration of war in London. Following the Methodology’s alchemical framework for this intermedia system, active consciousness is demonstrated through the ‘Sulfur’ element by the text of Jung’s premonition, along with Stravinsky’s orchestration and the audio of Russell, as living witness to the era. In connecting this to the images of the ‘Mercury’ element, which creates physical representations of the work’s historical subjects, the divine image created by human consciousness is given manifestation in the liminal borderland between myth and reality.

The prelude quotation by Nijinsky situates him as a passive force in our montage ritual, subject to a power which he cannot understand and, in its disturbing effect on people, making him misunderstood. Similarly, we can grasp this sense of unconscious forces provoking intuitive men into despair and uncertainty through the two narrative strands of Jung becoming overwhelmed by his premonition of war and Russell being tormented by England’s euphoric

response to the declaration of the Great War itself. In contrast, it is the first sequence's visual tableau of Diaghilev and Freud instructing Nijinsky and Jung (who are both silent) which establishes their pre-liminal statuses as teacher and pupil, where the two older figures have beforehand assumed the dominant role. As in the other works of this practice, the processes of liminality begin with the onset of the montage as a separation rite, meaning that clearly defined, pre-liminal roles are now subject to change. A clearly identified deity was invoked in the textual components of the previous montage works (through either hymn or drama) and yet here, through the text of Jung's premonition, the 'divine presence' is not so much named as it is implied. If Jung's dominant sense in this account is foreboding or fearfulness, we are presumably returned to the unstable, emotional realm of Dionysus as in the previous montage with Becket and Rasputin.

However, if Jung and Nijinsky (as his narrative counterpart) are consumed by a fear which inhibits their active role in the montage, they cannot become Dionysus in all of his potency and charisma. Therefore, the deity at work will find its manifestation in the figures of Diaghilev and Freud and, since the montage begins with a sense of dread, we find the god that instills such anxiety is that of Saturn, which the writer Erin Sullivan describes as "one of the most powerful archetypal images" of "father-authority", who functions as "Father Time; the Grim Reaper; Death; the Wise Old Man; the Senex; the Castrator; the Devourer; the Good King; the Judge of Heroes and the Taskmaster."<sup>250</sup> All of these attributes match the dominating characteristics of our mentor figures in this montage, who, by seeking to confirm their Saturnian dominance, are now subject to isolation in transitional liminality, since their protégés may perceive them as manifesting the archetype's castrating, destructive aspects. The voice of Bertrand Russell meanwhile, by functioning as a sole component with no fearful younger counterpart, functions as the stabilising "Wise Old Man" aspect of Saturn, which

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<sup>250</sup> Sullivan, E. (2000) *Saturn in Transit: Boundaries of Mind, Body and Soul*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc., p. 4.

Diaghilev and Freud both aspire to manifest for their pupils. At the delicate onset of *The Rite of Spring* ballet extract, the harmonious intent is apparent, even as the liminal process begins.

Erin Sullivan, in describing Saturn as “the instrument for the separation of Gaia and Ouranos, Earth and Heaven, body and mind-soul” and therefore “the creator of finiteness”<sup>251</sup>, places the god as an enemy of the irrational (as reflected in physical, ambiguous processes) and the deity of a logical mind standing for order and empiricism. Here then, in the ambiguous world of liminality where stable, ordered roles no longer apply, Diaghilev and Freud now sense that their pupils have overthrown their mentorship and have separated. To this end, they now initiate an attempt to recover their own pre-liminal mentor status, assigning themselves as the “mind-soul” to which the irrational, emotional “body” (as Nijinsky and Jung) must defer to in order to thrive. Stating that Saturn is “known as a malefic planet”, Liz Greene establishes that the “virtues” of the conservative God “are rather dreary” and his vices “particularly unpleasant” since “they operate through the emotion we call fear.”<sup>252</sup> It is in the placement of the text (emphasising Jung’s sense of weakness in the face of his apocalyptic vision) where we find the utilization of this fearful element; a component which the Saturn figure applies in order to weaken his pupil’s confidence in breaking away from him. In contrast to this, the harmonious possibilities of Saturn are again reflected in the audio component of Bertrand Russell, who stresses his opposition to the chaotic impulse whilst simultaneously rejecting the principle of fear. Erin Sullivan, describing this positive aspect of Saturn as the “gentle monarch” and “benign, compassionate and liberal ruler of the Golden Age”, places it in opposition to the “covetous, callous ruler” - that negative face of the archetype who “devoured his own children”<sup>253</sup>, as Diaghilev and Freud threaten to do.

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<sup>251</sup> Sullivan, E. (2000) *Saturn in Transit: Boundaries of Mind, Body and Soul*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc., p. 5.

<sup>252</sup> Greene, L. (1976) *Saturn: A New Look at an Old Devil*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. San Francisco: RedWheel/Weiser LLC, p. 10.

<sup>253</sup> Sullivan, E. (2000) *Saturn in Transit: Boundaries of Mind, Body and Soul*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc., p. 11.

As the visual narrative continues, it is the Nijinsky figure who is thwarted by the creative and destructive potential of the ambiguous unknown, despite his initial defiance of Diaghilev's need (as the Saturn archetype) to lead him and confer all divine understanding.

Comparatively, it is the Jung figure who seeks to consciously explore beyond Saturn's "visual boundary"<sup>254</sup>, regardless of it threatening Freud's self-conferred status as his mentor. At this stage of the montage rite, the Saturn figure's fear of the unconscious is detectable in Freud's unease at sea, the liquid space between ground (in contrast to Jung), which begins to render him as the passive force of the liminal process, stripping him of all previous certainty of self-appointed status as Jung's former 'father'. Simultaneously, after his breakdown on stage, it is in Nijinsky now returning to his pre-liminal status as Saturn/Diaghilev's 'child' that he resists the unconscious life which evokes in his ballet performance art a sense of what Erin Sullivan describes as "non-linear sacred time."<sup>255</sup> Therefore, in Nijinsky's fear of this numinous realm, he is consumed with a chaotic anxiety and clings to the Saturn 'father' to reinstate order (who "binds us to incarnation"<sup>256</sup>), remaining his protégé and participating in his rituals. Finally, with the end of Bertrand Russell's audio segment and the beginning of Sir Harold Nicholson's, the negative Saturn aspect is further emphasised by Nicholson's dry and disassociated description of events, which are intentionally made barely audible to us, in correlation to *The Rite of Spring* music element's sudden shift to an imposing, frightening sound and Jung's sense of being consumed by a "psychosis" in the overhanging text. With the removal of Bertrand Russell from the narrative then, the loss of any 'positive' representation of Saturn to reflect upon itself now establishes the archetype as fully destabilized within our liminal rite and wholly susceptible to its processes.

In the performance of Stravinsky's ballet, then, the presence of the world of 1913 in relation to the Saturn archetype, beyond its personal manifestation in Diaghilev, comes into play.

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<sup>254</sup> Sullivan, E. (2000) *Saturn in Transit: Boundaries of Mind, Body and Soul*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc., p. 5.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

With the audience's outright rejection of Nijinsky's choreography due to its Modernist innovations, we see the rigid, conservative Saturnian outlook ruling *the belle époque* and its cultural values before the First World War. Nijinsky's choreography, in presenting an inexactness of technique, invites an ambiguous reading from its audience and initiates them into the liminal realm. It is those evocations of the formless unconscious life therefore, brought to conscious expression, which become overwhelmingly disturbing to this early 20<sup>th</sup> century high society of aestheticism and manners. In the context of the liminal rite then, it is Diaghilev as Saturn, in trying to pacify the increasingly violent crowd, who is actually the conductor of their reaction to suppress that which threatens their established ideas about art and culture. This collective emotion which, as the ballet goes on, creates a chaotic scene, culminates in Nijinsky's wild distress in the wings as he is, once more, is overwhelmed by the unconscious forces which he himself gave expression to within the choreography.

The next tableau of a troubled Nijinsky facing his mentor as they observe a classical painting positions his renewed adherence to the formed world of Saturn, where smart attire, manners and appreciation for traditional art forms is paramount. It is the complete collapse of Nijinsky's mental state in the final moments of the montage which render him as the victim of those liminal processes which he has been encouraged to reject, in the progression of the montage rite. To that end, he has been made insane by the unconscious forces, as mirrored in the textual element which concludes Jung's premonition of the First World War, where he describes the destruction of all living vegetation by frost. Through his fear of the unconscious and subsequent dependency on Diaghilev, Nijinsky is paralysed and symbolically castrated by the Saturn archetype, being devoured as one of that god's children. In Nijinsky's final deference to the Saturn mentor then, he achieves a new, vanquished status and Diaghilev is finally confirmed in post-liminal status into the negative, detached and oblivious aspect of the god. This confirmation is finally correlated to the voice of Nicholson, who recalls the declaration of war not by the emotions of the day, but through the official, factual correspondences of the foreign office.

In the parallel narrative, as Jung and Freud set sail for the United States and cross the dark Atlantic ocean, it is the sense of Freud now existing on an equal footing to his one time pupil which signifies an imminent reincorporation into new roles. If the Atlantic ocean and its vast, void-like space between continents is our montage's key analogy for liminality, it is in Jung and Freud's glimpse of the Statue of Liberty where their sought for enlightenment and anticipation of a post-liminal status is signified. In Freud's final collapse and Jung's attempt to assist him, we see this new status achieved as a role reversal: Freud now as the vulnerable, emotional 'son' and Jung as the stabilising father who, although inadvertently castrating his mentor in the tradition of the Saturn myth, has successfully integrated the benevolent aspect of that same archetype, thereby assuming an enlightened, elevated post-liminal status. This is confirmed in the conclusion of the textual element where Jung recalls his intention to explore his own psyche in the aftermath of the Great War being declared, the outbreak of which has confirmed his own apocalyptic vision as a premonition of things to come.

If the liminal period just before the First World War signifies the conflict between the traditionalist sensibilities of Saturn (positioned as 'old Europe') and the emotional, dreamlike archetype of Dionysus (as signified by Jung, Nijinsky and the innovative breakthroughs of Modernism), we can perceive the alchemical archetype of Hermes/Mercury as that which bridges the two warring poles and can ultimately reconcile them into a healthy cooperation. Liz Greene, in stating that "The nature of this conflict between conscious and unconscious, dark and light, is neither good nor evil" but can signal "eventual integration and greater consciousness"<sup>257</sup>, alludes to this intermediate, liminal state as the psychic theatre stage to affect a cooperation between these conflicting elements. Within the montage then, it is the Jung figure who achieves this role of mediator and, now as Hermes, bridges the divide between Saturn (order) and Dionysus (chaos) in one psyche. Comparatively, it is Nijinsky,

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<sup>257</sup> Greene, L. (1976) *Saturn: A New Look at an Old Devil*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. San Francisco: RedWheel/Weiser LLC, p. 13.

having been victimised by Saturn's control, who fails in liminality to reconcile the poles, instead succumbing to the Dionysian immersion which ultimately signifies madness.

### Wotan's Farewell

As its text, the final montage work in the sequence incorporates a scene from *The Valkyrie*, a 19<sup>th</sup> century music drama by Richard Wagner, which was the second work of his *Ring Cycle*. In the audio, with accompanying text, the scene presents Wotan, King of the Gods, punishing his defiant daughter Brünnehilde by stripping her of Valkyrie status and condemning her to mortality; after which, she pleads her case and awaits his final judgement. As a patriarchal King God figure in the tradition of Germanic paganism, Wotan seems interchangeable with the father gods of other pantheons such as Zeus (Ancient Greek) and Odin (Norse). Taking into regard the previous male god figures utilised by this research, Wotan seems to be a fusion of the old man Saturn, the heroic Sun God and the turbulent Dionysus archetypes, combining the sternness of the first, the idealism of the second and the passion of the third. As a Valkyrie (those figures being the warrior women deities which Wagner popularized), Brünnehilde displays the same androgynous attributes as the Pallas Athene of the Ancient Greeks, including a primal connection to her father (in the Greek tale, Athene sprung from the head of Zeus and was not born of a woman). In stripping Brünnehilde of her power, Wotan renders his daughter into a passive, powerless state and, through the liminal process of status change, essentially removes any deific characteristic that she may share with him.

The two source films used for this final work are 2003's *Sylvia*, tracing the career of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century American poet Sylvia Plath and 1974's *Hitler: The Last Ten Days*, which, as the title states, dramatizes the Nazi leader's final actions within his Berlin bunker, with the city on the cusp of defeat. Plath, who had European heritage on her German father's side, made his presence a recurring theme in her poetry and so, in identifying her with the Wagner extract, we see Plath take the role of Brünnehilde, in correspondence to the father Wotan. Since representation of Plath's father is absent from the footage (due to him being deceased at the time when she was an active poet), his analogy with the Wotan archetype makes him an

internalised presence within Plath herself. To that end, in invoking him, she also invokes her Germanic cultural heritage, in which Wotan exists as an archetype of European mythology. This is also stressed in the montage's utilisation of audio from a 1962 radio interview with Plath by the BBC, several months before her suicide. By intention, Plath becomes barely audible due to the overpowering sound of the Wagner performance extract, which signifies her identity as an American being her conscious identity to the world but her German heritage as the unconscious, immersive force that floods her interior life, and from which she will draw much of her poetry (laden with references not only to her father but to Nazism). Comparatively, Hitler personifies the Wotan archetype in the sense of being 'father' of the Third Reich but the montage also deliberately draws upon his own personal obsession with Richard Wagner, whose mythical dramas Hitler felt compelled to emulate in the staging of his Nazi rallies, which became evocative of pagan rites. With Hitler as Wotan and Plath as Brünnehilde (and Hitler's paramour Eva Braun taking on the same role in his narrative strand), our liminal montage rite is therefore initiated with the interplay between two archetypes and the conflict between them. Following the format of the Methodology, the conscious, active element as represented by 'Sulfur' are both the audio and text extracts from Wagner's drama and the voice of Plath herself. Once this is given a forum through the foundation of 'Salt' and incorporated with the 'Mercury' element (the visual representation), the mythic presences are given manifestation and the divine becomes evoked through the liminal interplay of earthly and heavenly signifiers.

In the Plath segment, we see her initial subversion of the Wagnerian narrative; for instead of Wotan, it is Plath as Brünnehilde who makes a fire flare up, into which she sheds the paraphernalia of the 'fearless hero' who Wotan, as her father-image, decreed would revive her from the sleeping spell. To that end, the liminal status change which Plath now intends to initiate is not of a Brünnehilde who will comply with her father's judgement (to lose her immortality and fall into a mortal state), but a Brünnehilde who will reject Wotan's authority completely and make her own godhead autonomous from his own. The burning of the fire at

the hand of Plath's Brünnehilde is the initiation rite through which she now seeks to confirm this new found independence. In parallel to this, Eva Braun conforms to the Wagnerian narrative of Brünnehilde, being unable to access Hitler on an intimate level (despite her efforts) and, in the context of our montage rite, complying with Wotan's designated function for Brünnehilde, just as Plath resists it. As the first segment unfolds, we see Plath and Braun standing back to back at the contact point of the two narrative strands, which presents them as a tableau of two types of womanhood. In Braun's case, she is presented in classically feminine and girlish attire which positions her as not only the daughter, but as the child-daughter, who depends upon and obeys her father authority in all things in order to survive. Plath, in contrast, is framed in a comparatively boyish and androgynous image, wearing a plain jumper and trousers, with her hair up. To that end, just as Braun's positioning accurately reflects the notion of Brünnehilde being stripped of individual agency, it is Plath who calls upon the power of Brünnehilde as a defiant Valkyrie and who refuses to yield to Wotan's authority. In theorising how Adolf Hitler was the Wotan archetype made manifest, Carl Jung recalled in a 1936 essay the characteristics of this god as being one of "storm and frenzy", who, as "the unleasher of passions and the lust of battle" is a "superlative magician and artist in illusion" and proficient in "all secrets of an occult nature."<sup>258</sup>

This idea of Hitler as a kind of shamanic force who captivates (and hypnotizes) the German people to his will positions him as a primal variation of the world manipulating Father God figure who, as ritualized by this montage, is shown to have a personally destructive effect on Hitler as the conduit of that volatile archetype. In his text, *Wagner's 'Ring' and its Symbols*, Robert Donington expounds on the function of Wotan in Wagner's saga, stating that he "represents godhead in its simplest essence", being "the head of the gods, both as their ruler and as the head-source from which their divine essence flows."<sup>259</sup> In the viewing of his large

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<sup>258</sup> Jung, C.G. (1989) *Essays on Contemporary Events: The Psychology of Nazism*. Translated by R.F.C. Hull. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Ark Paperbacks (Routledge), p. 12.

<sup>259</sup> Donington, R. (1963) *Wagner's 'Ring' and its Symbols*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Faber & Faber, p. 67.

scale model, we see an image of Hitler fulfilling this specific idea of the Father God, looking down on his creation. If Wagner's narrative had Brünnehilde recognize that her "divine essence" emanated solely from her father, it is in the Plath segment where the Brünnehilde archetype rejects this premise and, in her own liminal transition, seeks a new status where she is now the source of her own power and has severed ties with her father entirely. Once Plath picks up the telephone and listens to the voice on the other side, we also see Hitler speaking through a telephone in his narrative strand, as if his Wotan is communicating with Plath's Brünnehilde from another plain. It is at this point where the authority of Wotan now intervenes to correct Plath's subversion of Brünnehilde's compliance, by striking the fear of God into her. By manifesting as Hitler in the parallel frame, the voice which Plath hears through the telephone becomes evocative of her deceased father, functioning in this montage rite as the voice of Wotan himself. It is this paternal, Germanic evocation which now influences Plath into a crisis of confidence about her pursued autonomy and initiates her instead into a liminal rite whereby Brünnehilde's divinity as a Valkyrie will be stripped and she assimilated into Wotan (as the sole Godhead), causing his daughter's mortal attributes and capacity for suffering to become more and more apparent.

Robert Donington, in analysing how nature and the spirit have traditionally been perceived, alludes to the former as being correlated to the realm of the feminine and the latter, as that which transforms "nature in the direction of consciousness", as a masculine impulse which is "associated not so much with our mother-image as with our father-image."<sup>260</sup> The image of Plath deciding whether or not to drown herself has her in the liminal state between what Donington terms as "the mother-world of unconscious nature", where she may be engulfed either through madness or suicide, and "the father-world of light and bright intelligence"<sup>261</sup>, where she may choose to live, in the continued pursuit of her art. This traditionalist notion of

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<sup>260</sup> Donington, R. (1963) *Wagner's 'Ring' and its Symbols*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Faber & Faber, p. 39.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

consciousness as masculine (knowledge and reason) and unconsciousness as feminine (engulfing, formless, chaotic) forms an analogy with Wagner's positioning of Wotan as active force and Brünnehilde as receptive vessel. It is in Plath's decision not to drown herself which the traditionalist idea would read as her rejecting the feminine, as death, and embracing the masculine, as art. However, if one considers Brünnehilde in her warrior woman individualism before Wotan strips her of divinity, we may read Plath's choice instead to be her rejection of these traditional masculine or feminine definitions, choosing instead to combine them into an androgynous, ambiguous artistry, as expressed in that liminal zone between active and receptive states.

The scenes of Plath producing new work out of her despair conveys this balance, demonstrating how the primal emotions of the suffering 'feminine' is the actual content which the so-called 'masculine' active force calls up and expresses in words, as art. It is in Plath's expression of her inner turmoil and not her surrender to it through death where we see her as a Brünnehilde who refuses to allow Wotan to strip her of Valkyrie status. Instead, through her artistry, Plath's Brünnehilde seeks to affirm her divinity regardless of Wotan's decree, even as her suffering is being accentuated by his threat to remove it. In contrast to the resistance of Plath's Brünnehilde to Wotan, it is in the yielding of Braun's Brünnehilde where she makes herself malleable to Hitler's intent (as Wotan) and thereby guarantees the extinction of her own potential selfhood. In her utter lack of agency then, Braun becomes synonymous with the traditionalist viewpoint of the feminine as passive, helpless and unformed and it is in her anguish, which Hitler is seen railing against, where Donington's idea of Brünnehilde as "representative of Wotan's inner femininity"<sup>262</sup> can be seen. For if Wotan, as Hitler, is now in a state of aggressive volatility and cannot be soothed by any sensitive impulse (as embodied in Braun's Brünnehilde), we can make the correlation to what Donington affirms as Wotan

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<sup>262</sup> Donington, R. (1963) *Wagner's 'Ring' and its Symbols*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Faber & Faber, p. 164.

being “estranged from his inner femininity”, causing “profound schizoid tendencies”<sup>263</sup> that are akin to the idea of consciousness rejecting the unconscious. In the human subject’s positioning of the unconscious as ‘other’ and apart from itself (as opposed to within), they are not emancipated from the unconscious’ emotive, chaotic processes but are instead immersed by them. It is this very “irrational psychic factor” or “cyclone”<sup>264</sup> which Jung regarded as having “infected a whole nation” and set it on a “course towards perdition”<sup>265</sup>, as evidenced in Hitler’s extermination policies of peoples he deemed ‘other’ to the desired Germanic model. Within our montage rite, this becomes apparent in the images of Hitler confined and increasingly insane in the bunker, as a reflection of his own maimed psyche being tormented by the truthful ambiguities of the liminal state. In Donington’s view, Wagner’s idea of Brünnehilde may have “the shape” and “some of the symbolism” of a woman, but is actually “man’s experience of womanhood”<sup>266</sup>, as opposed to being a woman on her own terms. If Eva Braun as Brünnehilde conforms to this idea (which Donington states was Wagner’s intent), it is Plath’s Brünnehilde who subverts it and demonstrates that the Valkyrie’s initial defiance of Wotan is a signifier of her potential for autonomy, apart from him.

It is beyond the central point of the montage where Plath’s Brünnehilde is now tormented in liminality by the two conflicting possibilities of her future status: the first, being that which strives to resist Wotan’s supremacy over her and maintain her divinity (through the poetry she deems as essential to her survival) and the other, where she follows Wagner’s assigned narrative by yielding to Wotan (as Braun’s Brünnehilde does) and suffering his sentence without resistance. If Plath maintains Brünnehilde’s divinity at all, it is in those moments which show her engrossed in the liminal act of writing, accessing the Godhead which

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<sup>263</sup> Donington, R. (1963) *Wagner’s ‘Ring’ and its Symbols*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Faber & Faber, pp. 164-165

<sup>264</sup> Jung, C.G. (1989) *Essays on Contemporary Events: The Psychology of Nazism*. Translated by R.F.C. Hull. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Ark Paperbacks (Routledge), p. 17.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>266</sup> Donington, R. (1963) *Wagner’s ‘Ring’ and its Symbols*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Faber & Faber, p. 272.

generates her artistry and gives her an independent voice. After the mid-way point of the montage however, these moments of illumination are no more and what has been set down in art has not saved her from human suffering. Through Plath being framed in these moments of despair, both solitary and observed, we now see her self-image transformed from the defiant, androgynous Valkyrie to the vulnerable, helpless property of Wotan, who is made to doubt her own vision and becomes tortured, through fear, into a kind of psychic disorder where her conscious access to the Godhead (in the liminal space) is no longer guaranteed. In the text extract, as Wotan initiates his daughter's status change from fellow deity to powerless human, the effect on Plath's Brünnehilde now renders her psychotic through the intrusion or violation into her psyche of the Wotan archetype itself (as manifested in the destructive imagery of the 'Daddy' poem which turns her sky to black and boots her in the face). It is in Plath's return to her reflection and the ritual of hair and makeup which now sees her once androgynous Brünnehilde seemingly conform to a traditionalist female persona: or that which Eva Braun's Brünnehilde has adhered to throughout the montage. In the midst of this identity crisis however, Plath's display to her concerned neighbour of amiable, girlish charm is immediately followed by a vacant gaze as she sets about preparing for suicide: a decision which once more conveys a trace of the defiant Brünnehilde, as being her only recourse to expel Wotan's control over her destiny once and for all. The wedding between Braun and Hitler meanwhile signals the culmination of this montage's liminal ritual, whereby Braun's Brünnehilde is officially initiated into an eternally degraded position. By initially writing her original name and then striking it out in favour of her husband's, Braun sacrifices Brünnehilde's divine Valkyrie status on the altar of Wotan, who, as personified in Hitler, has relegated her to become a compliant daughter to his instructive father-figure, as opposed to that of a wife to a husband. Braun's visible misery in these wedding scenes may not convey the anguished mental disorder of Plath's Brünnehilde in the counterpart narrative, but rather, displays that of a Brünnehilde who has consciously adhered to the control of her father and become numbed, rather than unbalanced.

As the aftermath of the wedding extends the ceremonial to become the death ritual of the newly married couple, we see Hitler framed in a parallel tableau with Plath, which finds both of them sitting on a bed and contemplating a similar method of suicide. When Hitler approaches Braun and presents her with the fatal capsule for consumption, the overhead text emphasises Wotan's farewell to Brünnehilde as an emotionally charged and romantic moment. Although Braun attempts to express this mood, it is Hitler's impersonal and blundering manner towards her that bastardises the intended pathos of Wotan's farewell (despite the historical Hitler's will to manifest Wagner's myth as reality), which we see in his mirroring of the final stage directions where Wotan turns away from his subjugated daughter and then looks back again with emotion. It is Hitler's identification with this Godhead which, although evocative of the divine on Earth does not actually "make man divine", according to Jung's assessment, but "merely fills him with arrogance and arouses everything evil in him", producing "a diabolical caricature of man" and an "inhuman mask" which is "so unendurable, such a torture to wear, that he tortures others", being "split in himself" and "a prey to inexplicable contradictions."<sup>267</sup> These characteristics are apparent in Hitler's inadequacies during his final death ritual, which subverts the Wagner narrative into a kind of farce. It is in Hitler's personal identification with Wotan, or the "psychic God-image", which leads to "catastrophe"<sup>268</sup> in this human subject's intent to exert his authority over humanity, now culminating in his own isolation in liminality and imminent death. The liminal ritual now at an end, this suicide ceremonial confirms Hitler into the post-liminal death status of a Wotan who is now vanished, leaving behind the ruins of a nation which has been "ravished by the berserkers of her god" and "cheated of her soul" for the sake of "world-mastery."<sup>269</sup> The devastation wrought by this Father God, as conveyed in Plath's poem *Daddy*, is finally framed in the representation of the poet's lifeless body, evoking Brünnehilde's post-liminal

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<sup>267</sup> Jung, C.G. (1989) *Essays on Contemporary Events: The Psychology of Nazism*. Translated by R.F.C. Hull. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. London: Ark Paperbacks (Routledge), p. 16.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., pp. 70-71.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

status which is now profaned and dormant. The parallel image to this displays a sweeping shot of Berlin in ruins, mirroring Plath's destruction to that of her fatherland's. Yet, when the dead Plath suddenly opens her eye to look directly at us, her post-liminal status evokes the androgynous Valkyrie, whose former divinity will now endure within her art, even if she will not. This is ultimately demonstrated in the extract of *Daddy*, where Plath finally immortalises her plight as the daughter to a troubled paternal heritage.

## **9 CONCLUSION**

### **Summary of Research**

In summarising my practice led research, it has endeavoured to demonstrate how it is the spontaneous, ambiguous workings of a sacred perception outside of official religious creeds that has the power to captivate even the atheistic mindsets that challenge those institutions. Utilising Arnold van Gennep's concept of the liminal as the transitional state between a human being's confirmed status points in any given society, I have asserted that it is through this liminal environment and outside of 'established' thresholds where the power of the numinous has its true potency, creating an effect that could potentially have 'divine' resonance to an atheistic mindset. To this end, my reading asserts that it is this sacred perception in liminality (before the post-liminal confirmation rites attributed to church bodies), that has the power to captivate even those who challenge the validity of religious institutions. These sacred representations have been chosen to reflect the scholarly definitions of the term in the Literature Review, which include Rudolf Otto perceiving it as a "moment" which is set "apart from the Rational", Emile Durkheim defining it as that which is "naturally considered superior in dignity and power" and Mircea Eliade's idea of "hierophany" which engages with the sacred as "a wholly different order from 'natural' realities."

Being situated in the arts, I have sought to find a system that could demonstrate how the idea of liminality is synonymous with the utilisation of intermedia: that being the artistic interplay of various elements of sight, sound or text which may evoke 'between them' a universal theme at work. This, in the context of the research's theme of the divine, alludes to the realm of archetypes that have historically been attributed to gods and which Carl Jung described as those "primordial" or "universal images" that have the ability "to attract, to convince, to

fascinate, and to overpower.”<sup>270</sup> As stated in my introduction, the intermedia creation of a liminal environment does not follow the traditionally monotheistic notion of the divine as wholly apart from the profane but rather adheres to the Hermetic, esoteric view which perceives the divine ‘presence’ through archetypal signifiers in those profane (earthly) narratives. The key findings of my research have been the uncovering of these ‘signifiers’ through generating a kind of historical iconography of seven split-screen montage works, the figures of which are re-contextualised into venerationary symbols, akin to the religious icons of the Russian Orthodox Church. Through this split-screen method generating a common evocation between the previously unaffiliated narratives, historical reality gives way to mythical and, through the rumination on these archetypes, a kind of ‘sacred space’ opens up where the gods of antiquity are seen to live on in our technological age, which is made possible through the application of that very technology in creating these works.

To summarise the nature of those divine signifiers, as perceived within the seven intermedia works which have been constructed as our liminal framework, the key findings have been as follows: in the first montage, in correlating a Roman Catholic hymn dedicated to the stabilising purity of the Virgin Mary with the provocative, destabilising effect of Anne Boleyn and Christine Keeler, cast by the English establishment as profane ‘temptresses’, we identified their personification of an ancient archetype affiliated with the Love Goddess of antiquity. This goddess, whose sensual qualities would demonise her in the eyes of the Christian church, was deified for mirroring the processes of Nature. By casting Boleyn and Keeler as the icons of a transitional time in their nation’s history, they are affiliated with the Love Goddess deity only through liminal evocation, not sharing the Virgin Mary’s

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<sup>270</sup> Miller, J. (2004) *The Transcendent Function: Jung’s Model of Psychological Growth Through Dialogue With the Unconscious*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: State University of New York Press., p. 104.

incorporation into the Catholic Church's established post-liminal rites, but having the same captivating effect by virtue of their ambiguous power.

In the second montage, a Russian orthodox hymn concerning a 'Fallen Woman's prostration to Christ is correlated to the public ascendency of Jackie Kennedy and Edie Sedgwick depending on the power of their male counterparts (President Kennedy and Andy Warhol) and the turmoil therein when access to this 'male god' is stripped from them in a liminal rite (by death or disillusionment). The signifying archetype here is associated with an esoteric branch of the Russian orthodox church that venerate the idea of the divine feminine as wisdom (Sophia) and seeks to incorporate her into the monotheistic Godhead. As this notion of Sophia as the Father God's emanation has been historically rejected by the main Orthodox body, she is therefore affiliated here with the same 'Fallen Woman' of the Orthodox hymn and her subjugation as mirrored to the plight of Jackie and Edie becomes a divine evocation of that Sophia idea becoming obscured.

In the third montage, a parallel montage between Napoleon Bonaparte and Richard Nixon is overlaid with text from an Orphic Hymn to the Sun God (worshipped as a heroic, generative deity in many cultures of antiquity). As Bonaparte and Nixon begin the liminal rite as having fallen from grace, the Sun God archetype is an idealised self-image which they yearn towards and strive to manifest. Similarly, in the fourth montage, an Orphic Hymn to the warrior goddess Pallas Athene venerate her as an impregnable deity who reinforces masculine values. In the correlation between Eva Peron and Margaret Thatcher, this androgynous, fearsome goddess archetype which sustains the nation in times of war ultimately becomes an elusive, liminal ideal which cannot be sustained in perpetuity, owing to human foibles.

The fifth montage, which takes as its text an extract from Euripides' classical drama *The Bacchae*, invokes Dionysus as its archetype, being the ancient Greek god of ecstasy. As the text stages the confrontation between the ambiguous, emotional god and the formal sovereign

who acts as his stable counter, Dionysus becomes the common archetype manifesting in liminality from the parallel narratives of Thomas Becket and Rasputin, who have a destabilising effect on their respective establishments that make them a threat to the reigning order. In the sixth montage, the archetype of Saturn the Father God becomes the point of focus as the force which seeks to maintain status and stabilise chaos into order. Being in a mode of liminal transition however, this becomes impossible. In correlating Saturn to Sigmund Freud and Sergei Diaghilev's need for control over their pupils Carl Jung and Vaslav Nijinsky, the latter two figures are subject to psychosis should they reject their own inclinations towards the Dionysus archetype and accept the deferential status assigned to them by the Saturnian mentor figure before the liminal rite began. It is through a Hermetic mediation and toleration of liminality that a reconciliation between the Saturn and Dionysus archetypes can be achieved in one psyche: a reconciliation which the Jung figure, becoming Hermes, achieves.

Finally, in the seventh and last montage of the sequence, an extract from Richard Wagner's 1870 music drama *The Valkyrie* utilises the confrontation of archetypes between the Father God Wotan and his androgynous warrior daughter, whose autonomous defiance he punishes by stripping her of immortal status. In correlating these archetypes to the visual subjects of the montage, it is the liminal rite of Adolf Hitler and Sylvia Plath preparing for suicide that evokes the sense of these divine 'others' becoming their sole identification. To that end, as Hitler and Plath increasingly disassociate from corporeal or historic time, they are consumed by the mythical realm, where these archetypes abide as aspects of the unattainable transcendent whole.

### **Conclusion of Key Findings**

In drawing conclusions from the key findings of this research, we refer back to Erich Neumann's statement from the Literature Review that "festivals and rites are the nodal points

of the numinosum, which shapes everything that comes into contact with its sacral sphere.”<sup>271</sup>

Recalling Mircea Eliade assertion that the festival can become the “reactualisation of a sacred event”, for the “reintegration” of “mythical time”<sup>272</sup>, we see how this aligns with Neumann’s interpretation of these rites being where “the collective unconscious” and its world of archetypes extends “into the living reality of the group.”<sup>273</sup> It is here then where Eliade observes that “the sacred dimension of life is recovered”, allowing those present to recover a “primordial situation” where, through the perception of the various “symbols” in ritualised display, the group can find “metaphysical comprehension of the world.”<sup>274</sup> To that end, when Neumann states that “the function of art to represent the archetypal and to manifest it symbolically as a high point of existence”<sup>275</sup>, we can perceive this practical research to have been a demonstration of that notion, utilising the idea of bringing various strands of narrative together into the transitional rite of the liminal experience by emphasising how the individuals who share the same ‘divine’ archetypal power can become a symbol for their society, in a way that has been represented in communal festival rites down the centuries. In actualization of this, it is through the ritual environment where the group historically gathers to present the social figure of interest in effigy and lead it through a procession (be it in celebration or in revolt), especially in times of social, liminal transition. In each of the seven works then, Neumann and Eliade’s ideas are demonstrated through the group or social body projecting onto public figures the archetypes of the collective unconscious through a liminal ‘rite’. In the first montage, we see this group ritual played out through the public focus upon Anne Boleyn and Christine Keeler as the avatars of the collective body and its rapidly changing

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<sup>271</sup> Neumann, E. (1959) *Art and the Creative Unconscious: Four Essays*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge, p. 69.

<sup>272</sup> Eliade, M. (1959) *The Sacred and the Profane*. Translated by W.R. Trask. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, pp. 68-69.

<sup>273</sup> Neumann, E. (1959) *Art and the Creative Unconscious: Four Essays*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge, p. 92.

<sup>274</sup> Eliade, M. (1959) *The Sacred and the Profane*. Translated by W.R. Trask. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, pp. 211-212.

<sup>275</sup> Neumann, E. (1959) *Art and the Creative Unconscious: Four Essays*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge, p. 92.

consciousness. Boleyn's Love Goddess archetype as destroyer of the Roman Catholic order becomes publically ritualised both in the masque she conducts that mocks the execution of a cardinal and in the desecration of the Catholic Monasteries. Mirroring this, we see a collage of Christine Keeler's name on the front of every major newspaper, as the chosen symbol of the new epoch that threatens to bring down the British establishment, further emphasised in Keeler as the focal point of the crowd's attention both within the courtroom and on the public stage outside of it.

In the second montage, the group ritual is initiated through the public assassination of President Kennedy which strips the First Lady of her status but also coincides with the advent of Andy Warhol's Pop Art as the major innovation in art, which utilises as its narrative public figures such as Jackie, whilst Edie Sedgwick is privately discarded by the artist. For the third montage, the group ritual is initiated through the Watergate proceedings that lead to Richard Nixon's downfall as President, mirrored to Napoleon Bonaparte's attempt to reclaim his lost Empire through emphasis of himself as the Sun God symbol of the French Revolution's collective ideals. Similarly, the fourth montage has Margaret Thatcher's evocation of the Athene archetype occurring at the transitional, liminal period where Britain's sovereignty over the Falklands is threatened by Argentina. To that end, Thatcher's manifestation of the archetype comes about through the collective imagination of the British people, who will her through this rite of passage to protect their nation's interests abroad. The same process plays out in the parallel narrative where the people of Argentina project onto Eva Peron the attributes of the ancient warrior goddess, making her the iconic figurehead for her husband's authority.

In the fifth montage, the social rite becomes an overtly religious one, with the English people venerating Thomas Becket as their spiritual leader and the emotional focus of their Dionysian devotion, even above the ruling King. A counter-version of this takes place in the parallel narrative, where the Russian people demonize Rasputin as a destructive influence within the

ruling body of the nation, thereby taking on the negative characteristics of the Dionysus archetype. The sixth montage presents the social rite as manifesting in the staging of the Rite of Spring ballet, the Modernist innovations of which are met with violent rejection by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century audience of French society who invoke the Saturn archetype to impose order and suppress the emotional frenzy. The violent expression of this ballet that is so disturbing to audiences as to inspire their own expression of rage becomes a prescient rite that foreshadows the Great War to come, which will sweep away the old order to which this society belongs. As this tension between order and chaos becomes a reflection of the times, so is it reflected in the anxiety of Diaghilev and Freud, who begin to lose control over their visionary protégés. Finally, in the seventh montage, the destructive legacy of Hitler's Nazi regime is ritualised as the social rite that identifies him as Wagner's Storm God of Germanic paganism, who captivates the social order and leads them into warfare. The ramifications of this figure's effect on the collective consciousness is played out in the poetic expression of Sylvia Plath, who reckons with her paternal German heritage through various Nazi references.

Having played out Neumann's idea of the 'group rite' through the content of these assembled narratives, we now focus on their assemblage into pairs and the relation therein, thereby referring back to James Hillman's idea of mythological thinking coming from the connection of these pairs "into tandems", as opposed to " separating them into opposites."<sup>276</sup> By identifying the common archetype at work between the two assembled elements of each montage (and not differentiating), the mythical, divine evocation within each work can be grasped, thereby bringing to life Henri Corbin's idea of *ta 'wil* and "carrying the sensible forms of the world back to the forms of Imagination"<sup>277</sup>. From this renewed perception, archetypal reflections of the sacred within the worldly domain become apparent, giving us the ability to perceive the "suprapersonal realities that lie behind all the acts and all the events of

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<sup>276</sup> Hillman, J. (1985) *Anima: An Anatomy of a Personified Notion*. Washington, DC: Spring Publications, p. 173.

<sup>277</sup> Cheetham, T. (2012) *All the World An Icon: Henry Corbin and the Angelic Function of Beings*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, p. 116.

human life.”<sup>278</sup> The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman’s idea of a mental emancipation through perceiving the common relation between objects and not their differences is aligned to the outcomes of Corbin and Hillman’s mythological thinking, which the works in this practical research have sought to demonstrate through the liminal mediation of elements. Bauman’s assertion that identifying these relations marks “the end of fear and the beginning of tolerance” is also a toleration of liminal ambivalence, opening us up to these archetypal impressions of the numinous instead of rejecting and classifying them as illogical.

### **Contribution of research and beyond**

This research is important for researchers and practitioners in the sense that it demonstrates how further enlightenment can be gained from existing materials once they are brought into new analogies; most crucially, in a way that invites readings from across a range of disciplines. For instance, these works would be of mutual use to traditional historians researching the various subject matter as symbols of their respective societies and those in the depth psychology field who are immersed in the research of archetypes. By applying those archetypes to historical figures, we therefore bring the two disciplines together and can perceive the notion of historical figures being studied through the application of depth psychology as opposed to merely being players in a historical event. As set out in the Methodology, the biopic genre was utilised to extract the chosen subject material as a way of emphasising the ceremonial aspect of the actor transforming into the mythic personality, thereby demonstrating a liminal interplay between the worldly and the ‘other’. In understanding how the alchemical framework was implemented by the practice, we refer back to Giuseppe Del Re’s statement in the Methodology about “the spirit of alchemy” being “the

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<sup>278</sup> Cheetham, T. (2012) *All the World An Icon: Henry Corbin and the Angelic Function of Beings*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, p. 116.

doctrine of analogies and correspondences” and thereby identifying “some common reality underlying the relations and the modes of change.”<sup>279</sup>

Describing this alchemical process as “form uniting to matter”, Del Re describes Sulfur component as being the active ‘King’ element (correlating to our use of text and audio in Intermedia) which establishes the receptive ‘Queen’ or Mercury principle that is conveyed through the images and subsequently creates an “heir to the throne.”<sup>280</sup> Through an analogy made between these elements; that analogy being our detected archetype, or divine presence. Just as Del Re’s description is in accord with Robert Allen Bartlett’s assessment of the alchemical process, where he describes Mercury as forming “the link or bridge”<sup>281</sup> between Sulfur as mind or “the world of the Gods” and Salt as body or “the world of the mortals”<sup>282</sup>, so too has this research adopted the framework of alchemy for its purposes; demonstrating how historical correspondences can allude to deeper mythical narratives at work, where the formerly unseen divine element resides. Furthermore, the application of Intermedia in the potential teaching and cross-dialogues of these subjects has been demonstrated here for researchers and practitioners to draw upon. Finally, as this research doesn’t present ideas of the numinous through a fantastical representation (akin to the angel with wings represented in Christian art), but through a human presence that conveys a mythical, archetypal reality, it thereby endeavors to be illuminating to the atheistic mindset which has been traditionally alienated by classical renderings and interpretations of the divine concept.

In terms of proposals for future research, I believe that the liminal concerns of this practical output can be applied through other variations of Intermedia as a way of further invoking the various archetypes, such as live performance with text and visual image – as demonstrated by

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<sup>279</sup> Del Re, D. (1997) Technology and the spirit of alchemy. HYLE--International Journal for Philosophy of Chemistry, Vol. 3 (1997), pp. 51 - 63 [online]. Available from: <http://www.hyle.org/journal/issues/3/delre.htm> [Accessed 1st March 2017]

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Bartlett, R. A. (2009) *Real Alchemy: A Primer of Practical Alchemy*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Lake Worth: Ibis Press, p. 19.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

Neil Bartlett – or Janet Cardiff’s example of utilising audio with a specific environment which is enriched with new associations from her applied narrative. For future works, the historical subject matter could be interpreted in live performance with actors, with a corresponding aural, visual or textual element referring them to the archetypal analogy.

Referring back to Bill Viola and Douglas Gordon’s use of montage, we recall that as Viola had split screen narratives at work in thematic correlation (as does this research), so Gordon’s method of dual image projected the two film narratives into the same frame, rather than in parallel. In expanding applications of this research, Gordon’s approach with montage can be further utilised in play with new media, such as the incorporation of the ritual hymn through spoken oration, rather than text, along with applications of site specific liminality by screening the works in ‘threshold’ environments between areas of civilisation and the wilderness.

### **Final Statement**

In liminality, what we think we know about ourselves or about the world is suddenly disarrayed, making the liminal state a destabilising experience where our former certainties become inhibited and may lead us on to new kinds of perceptions. In other words, an empirical minded person in a liminal situation is potentially more receptive to a perception of the numinous than they would be in a more stable environment, hence the liminal being refuge for the divine. In conclusion then, my practice led research has been concerned with applying divine or archetypal attributes to real figures, as opposed to keeping this concept of the sacred within the confines of mythological and religious pantheons – the narratives of which are deemed as fictional and of little use to the empirically minded. I believe that these archetypes can become genuinely evocative to an atheistic mindset when they are intuitively perceived in living beings within the ambiguous, shifting climate of liminality and not incorporated into a post-liminal confirmation for the purposes of institutional dogma. By demonstrating this liminal concept in works of intermedia, we have simulated the religious

ritual and yet not participated in its traditional confirmation rites. In doing this, we have merely evoked an association to these universal archetypes through various human subjects of history, be they political or cultural, thereby seeking to understand why these figures continue to captivate western culture. To that end, in applying archetypes to worldly figures instead of simply fictional ones, this research demonstrates how various human subjects fulfil a primal and essential need in humanity for living representations of the divine.

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