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**NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN
DEPARTMENT OF CRAFT & DESIGN**

WATER AND DREAMS

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART
& DESIGN AND COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES AND IN
CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE, BACHELOR OF DESIGN**

BY

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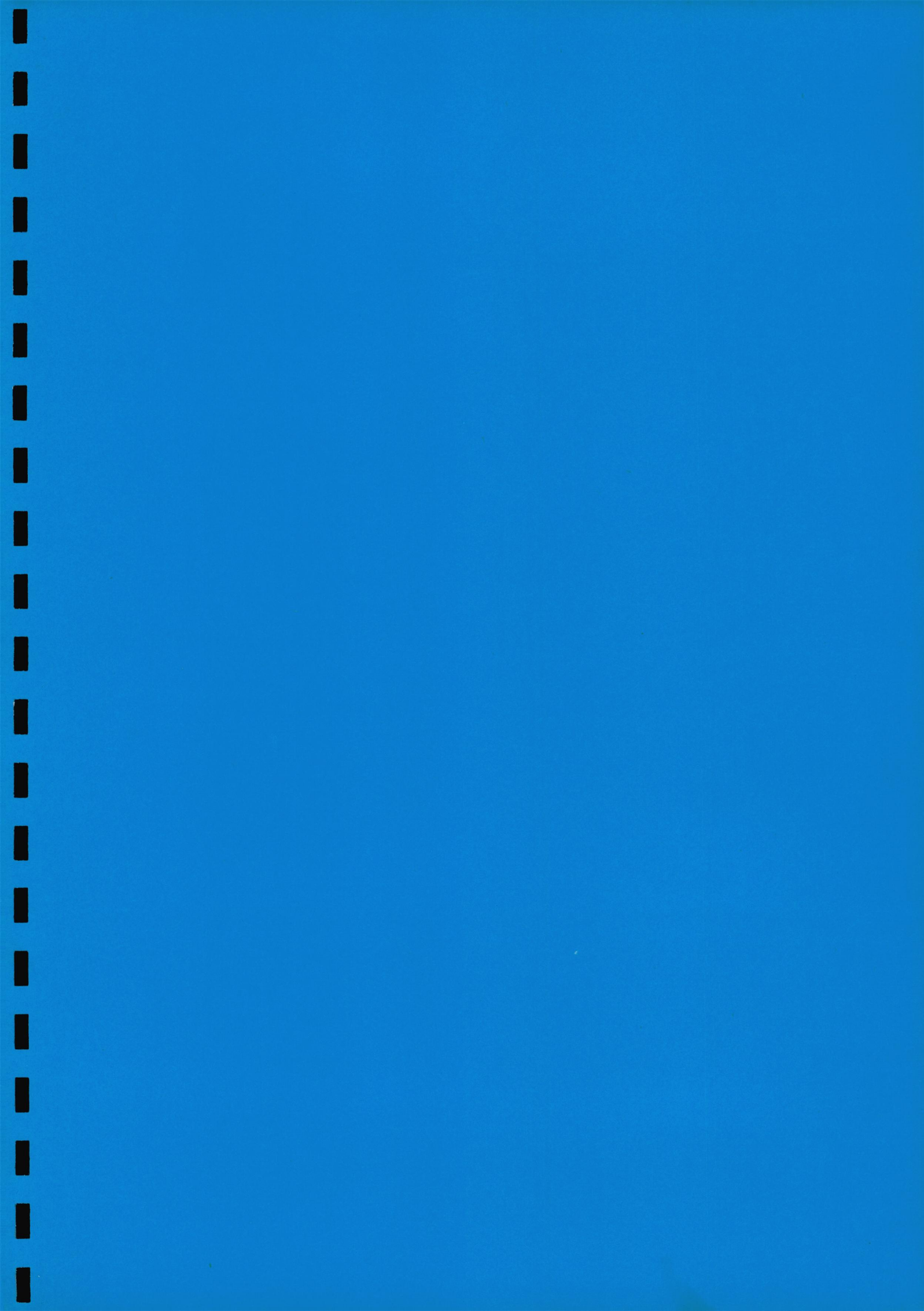
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Fernand Fonssagrives *The Diver* 1936

1. THE DIVER, 1936, FERNAND FONSSAGRIVES

Introduction

I first took on water as a source for my college work specifically because of the visual beauty of the human body in water, from looking through the surface at a submerged body fragmented by the lapping lens of water and the light's play to the splashing of water against the skin with its tremendous sense of invigoration. Working with this source, I began to entertain nostalgic associations with water, such as family holidays to the beach, the fun and excitement of childhood water, sunny associations in a wet-summered Ireland.

But the deepest appeal water held for me was the thought of that moment when I'd dive into the water, propelling my whole body to the bottom of the swimming pool, ears full and totally surrounded and paradoxically totally alone, until the surface demands you back, bubbles begin to escape and a physical strain drives our natural instincts to pull us up. However, that moment below is timeless. This more intense side of my attraction to water manifested for me the aspect of immersion. Below the surface, suspended in three dimensional movement, was equal to a type of transcendence.

Death associations then began soaking my mind, having lost a close friend and with thoughts of the drowning of my mother's friend. Totally alone underwater, yet totally surrounded by the element, one cannot be lonely. Grief makes you wish as much for the dead who are suddenly gone and suddenly alone.

At this stage, I realised that water as an element is vastly multifaceted. The energy of water can both vivify and kill. It has a magic that fuels the imagination, visually stimulating and extremely meditative with its patterns that are motion. The immense energy of water as you walk along a beach, eyes shut, chorused by the wind which wets you with the sea-spray and, for that split moment, dissolves your whole being into the roaring ebbing orchestra of the sea.



2. MS MABROAKA, SOUSSE, TUNISIA, 1982, HANS CHRISTIAN ADAM

This thesis is entitled *Water and Dreams*, being as much about our dreams which teach us to create from the feeling of physical sensual water as it is about our night time dreams in which water features. For me, personally, water is endowed with a power which far surpasses our regular employment of it as a symbol. By investigating the deeper powers of water, I turn to psychology as an explanatory faculty. Chapter One is a grounding in the psychology of water.

Relevant authorities in the field of psychology, such as Gaston Bachelard, Carl E Jung, Sigmund Freud (though briefly) and some contemporary dream therapists provide the bones of this initial discussion. This chapter is also the grounds for establishing the main contention of my thesis: that water as a metaphor alone is an underestimation of water. Water, before being a metaphor and symbol, is more succinctly a sensual matter of nature which feeds our imagination. To be truly potent as a metaphor, water is foremost an entity in itself, an element of nature, a founding stone of the imagination. Thus, to possess imagination is to be affected by water.

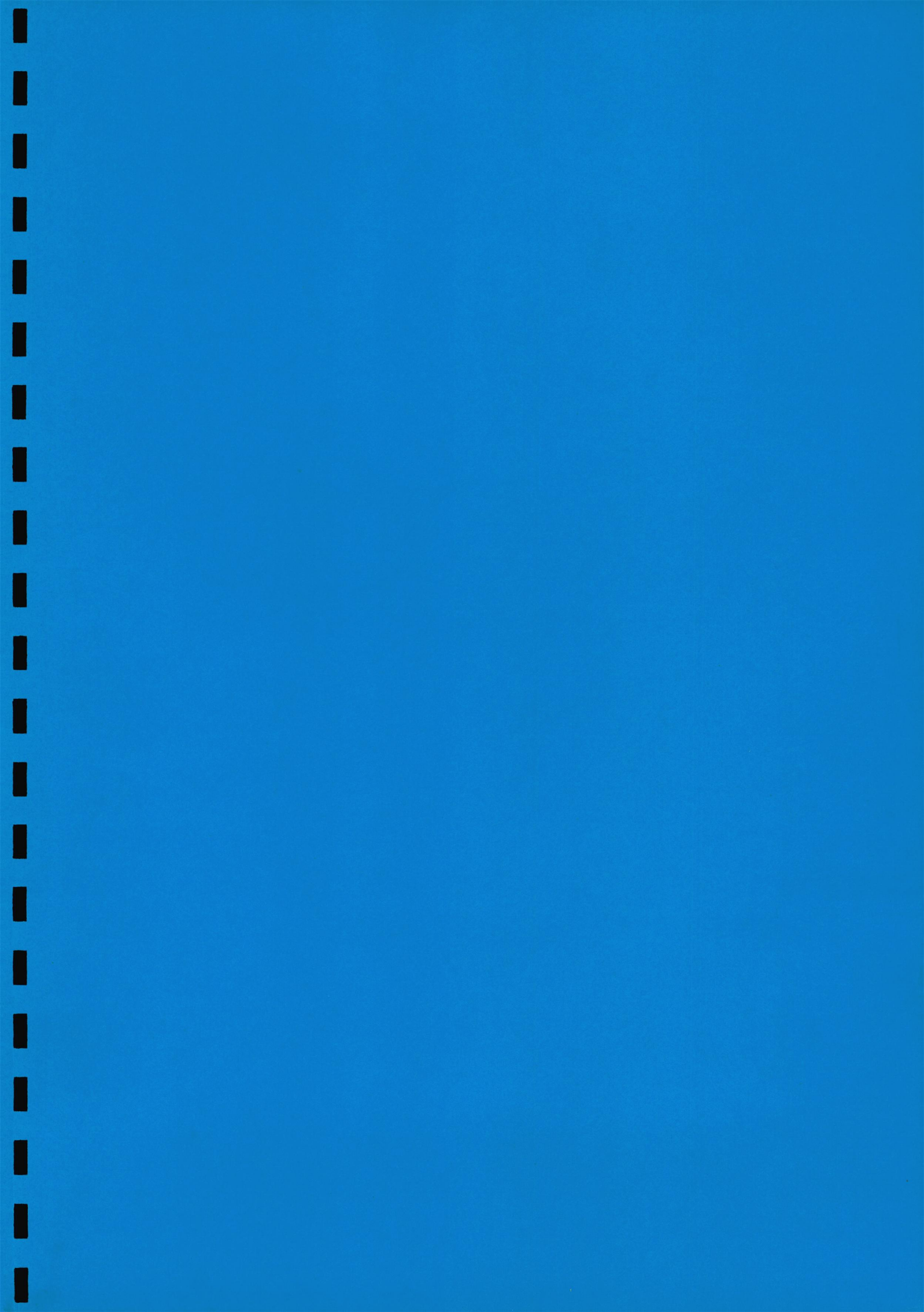
The Luc Besson film, *The Big Blue*, begins my main consideration of Chapter Two. This film is a creative process of the imagination; familiar under the heading of "the arts." Despite its residence on a shelf in the "action and adventure" section of the nearest *Xtra Vision* video store, it is an artistic work, with in-depth themes of death, love, search for the individual, escape, mystery and more, arising in a context essentially aquatic. By focusing my attention on the story, I shall elaborate on the revealed perceptions of water throughout, along with the notable ideas borne by the water in different ways. Besson films the opening sequences in monochrome and so conjugates the idea of a back-track in time, where the hero of the film is in his childhood. The main themes - underwater, unconsciousness, diving, Narcissism (see Appendix One), drowning and mother symbols - which arise in this part of the film and consequently dominate the remainder of the film, are the focus of Chapter Two.

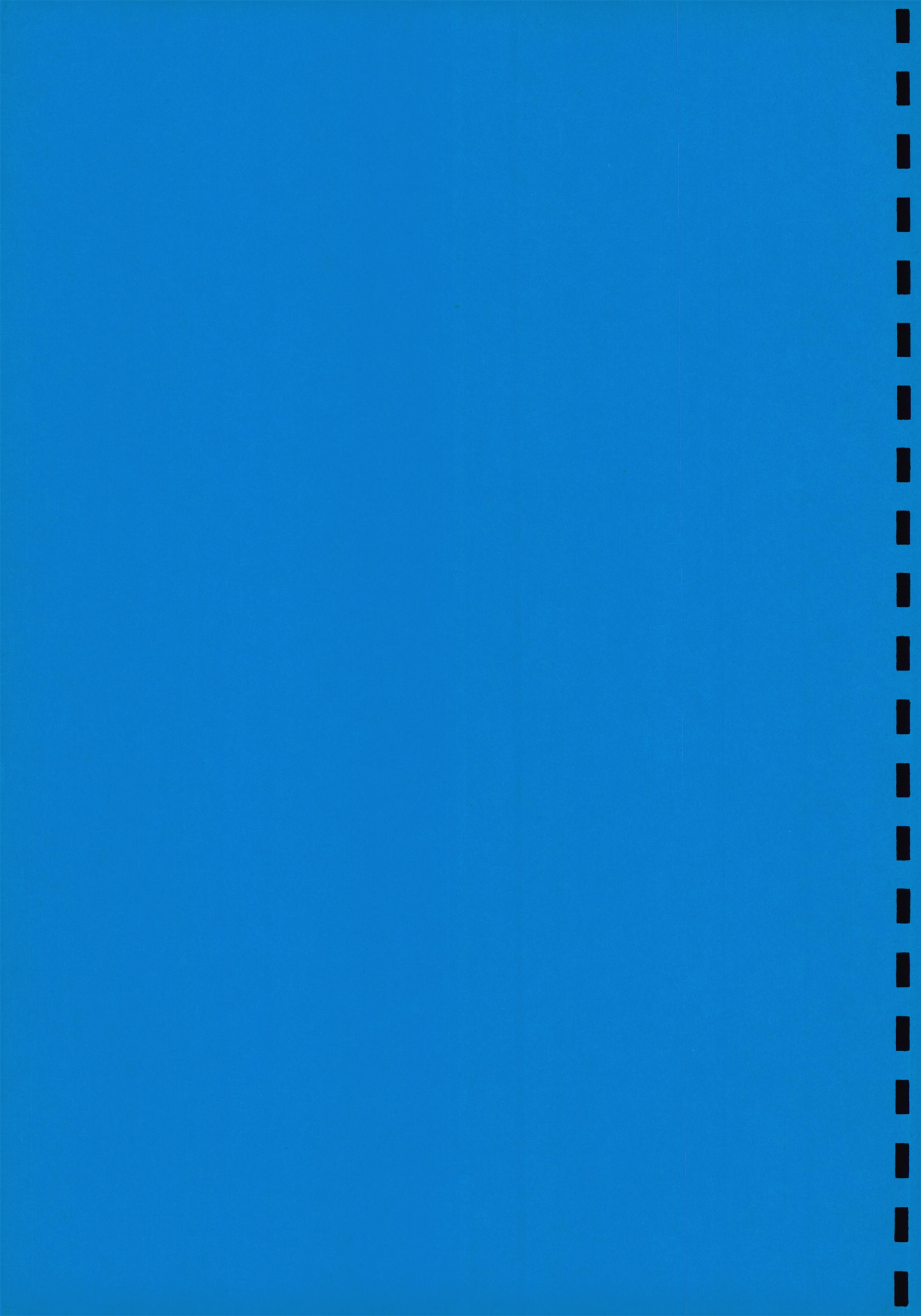
In Chapter Three, I continue my discussion of *The Big Blue* and concentrate on a variety of secondary symbolism related to water. Ideas of control of water, sexual and sensual water, spiritual water and of a mother's death feature here.

The main characters in the film, and what they symbolise, are my concern. Above all, the thesis is an exploration of my attraction to water, by taking a look at water through psychology and the personal affinities people have with water through the film *The Big Blue*. By founding an understanding of how water works on the imagination, I hope to somehow show where all our dreams and associations with water may come from, and also to confirm water's incredible influence. To quote John Hutchinson, the sculpture of Toshikatsu Endo and his use of water:

Water soon began to speak with many words, sending out mysterious signals from behind its transparent appearance. Water was the extra body of language given meaning in the long history of the human race. Water is not a liquid in a vessel, but a mass of words constantly springing up from the depth of the earth.¹

¹ Personal communication from Erica Cruttwell, who wrote an MA thesis on Water as represented in art and architecture, for the Chelsea College of Art and Design, 1993





CHAPTER 1

PSYCHOLOGY AND WATER

Say you are in the country, in some high land of lakes. Take almost any path you please and ten to one it carries you down in a dale and leaves you there by a pool in the stream. There is a magic in it. Let the most absent-minded of men be plunged in his deepest reveries, stand that man on his legs, set his feet a going, and he will infallibly lead you to water if water there be in all that region . . . Yes, as every one knows, meditation and water are wedded forever. ²

So Herman Melville begins his classic novel, *Moby Dick*. This novel invests the whale Moby Dick with mystery and associates him with old myth, rendering him an archetype. This story assigns as much value and more to water before it even begins. In this thesis, I intend to explore the value of water as a metaphor and as archetypal, but also, more importantly, I intend to establish water as something more basic than these. This chapter aspires to set forth the basics in psychology relating to water, and, in so doing, to uncover water's power in affecting the mind. Water, other than being a vital nourisher of the physical body, is a nourisher of the imagination, of the mind. The idea of this less recognised role of water as nourisher, as much of the metaphysical as of the physical, I plan to develop by examining examples of our psychological associations with water, water as nurture for the life of the imagination is the idea to be conveyed - basically, how the imagination is affected by water.

The most part of my research showed that water has been regarded as a conveyer of a message or story. Water, in psychological terms, is generally never dealt with as an element in itself. Hence, a true study of the psychology of water requires a definition of water in two categories: firstly as an element of mediation and dissolution, a carrier and bearer of meanings and, secondly, as fundamentally an element in itself, with, as it were, an

² Melville, 1961, p. 22

entity and life of its own. Real separation of these two categories is impossible. The first, metaphoric water, cannot be understood without primarily understanding the meaning of water as a natural element. In his book, *L'eau et les rêves*, subtitled *An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*,³ French philosopher Gaston Bachelard continually supports this idea. This book was the second of his five books on the elements, which Bachelard termed as "hormones of the imagination."⁴ Through a study of Bachelard, one can begin to understand the deeper psychological side of an attraction to water in its broadest realm, and not only limited to its familiar role as metaphor. Bachelard talks of water as the matter and element through which our imagination is nourished - as an imperative nurture of the imagination. For example, water teaches us what "to flow" means, as well as the meaning of other verbs and adjectives. Without any knowledge of or contact with water, how would a child learn the true meaning of the word "flow" and all its conjugates and conjures. Equally, without the understanding of water as a natural element, nobody could know water's power as symbol and mediator of meanings.

Bachelard begins his essay by describing two kinds of imagination: firstly, a formal imagination and, secondly, a material imagination. The formal imagination is the one to which most psychologists dedicate their attention. Formal imagination relates to images of forms. A form, to be precisely defined, is a shape, a construction, an appearance. However, more specifically it is an outer appearance. As an outer appearance, form must cover an inside. This inside is matter. Formal imagination is thus an imagination which talks of surfaces and exteriors which are in fact an ordering of matter. Formal imagination is more immediate and easy to understand, because it consciously names the components within an image. Formal imagination organises matter into form. Bachelard endeavours to address the balance between the attention given to formal imagination and that given to the material imagination. The material imagination to be found on a level below the formal imagination is, for Bachelard, an intimate imagination, which looks beyond form into the

³ Bachelard, 1983

⁴ Op. cit., p. vii

depth; volume and the inner recesses of substance . . .
searching behind the obvious images for the hidden ones, of
seeking the very roots of this image-making power. ⁵

It is almost impossible to separate these two divisions of the imagination completely. The material imagination co-operates with and within the formal imagination. However, the distinction between the two must be made for the study of the material imagination.

Images of matter stem from the material imagination, (despite the guise of form) and the psyche's creative potential is made present. An understanding of matter and what exactly it is cannot come from a formal knowledge, but only the senses can truly realise matter. Sensory knowledge precedes formal knowledge. My own attraction to water as a specific matter is rooted in physical contact with the element, as well as in a fascination with the visual movement of a body through water. The latter is obviously due to personal identification with the image of the moving body and so, in fact, reverts to the physical as well as the visual. First hand experience with water, a sensory experience, is my source of attraction. The senses are involved. Without the senses, no true understanding of water as matter, of matter in the realm of the material imagination, exists.

Without one's sensual relationship with water, through touch, sight, sound or taste, water remains only a word, without generating associations. To flow, to wash, to meander, to gurgle, to wet to gush, are just some of the verbs that would be denied us if we had no physical knowledge of water. Physical knowledge runs parallel to material knowledge. Both mean the same thing in regard to water, because water is first and foremost matter. We cannot properly study it on the deepest level possible through the formal imagination, but only through the material imagination. The formal imagination of Plato and Western metaphysicians, for example, constructs psychological theories out of formal cause. This formal cause basically separates consciousness into that of the physical and that of the metaphysical. In the same way, it may be used to set forth a material imagination and a formal imagination, both distinct from the other.

⁵ Bachelard, 1983, p. 2

Human consciousness, as Jung indicates, has a notable tendency to struggle to grasp allness, everythingness, by dividing it into four, by quartering the circle. "The four points of the compass, the four winds and the four elements are obvious examples." ⁶ Water, earth, fire and air thus pertain to distinct quarters of all human experience. These four divisions are conscious distinctions made in an effort to understand all the questions the human mind can pose about life and its meanings. As such, the unconscious becomes an integral subject to this discussion. "We can therefore speak of an unconscious only in so far as we are able to demonstrate its contents." ⁷ A conscious demonstration of the unconscious via its contents requires an order, a structure, all of which the four elements have been used to provide. This order/structure allows for a grasping of disembodied ideas. In the conscious terms of the elements, which are connected with a more physical world, ideas of the unconscious and a metaphysical world are represented.

Bachelard adapts the four elements as the four classifications of the material imagination. By defining the material imagination through the elements, psychological characteristics of the elements are aligned with psychological characteristics common also to man's imagination. Bachelard supports this ordering of the human mind under the four quarters of the umbrella of the elements - "in these philosophic systems learned thought is linked to a primitive material reverie." ⁸ He continues by discussing how dreams, more than clear ideas and conscious images, draw reliably from the source of the four elements. Clearly, the basis of all dreams, for Bachelard, is a material one, founded in the matter of which the elements are composed. The elements are computed as primarily matter. Therefore, their roles in our dreams are as matter. Matter in our dreams comes even before conscious thoughts, ideas and forms, just as our dreams come before waking consciousness - "Before becoming a conscious sight, every landscape is an oneiric experience." ⁹

Contemporary dream psychologist, Dr Roderick Peters, stresses the validity of this quartering of life's totality of experiences under the subheadings of the elements, by the traditional philosophies and ancient cosmologies. He

⁶ Peters, 1990, p. 214

⁷ Jung, 1961, p. 4

⁸ Bachelard, 1983, p. 3

⁹ Op. cit., p. 4

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the success of any business and for the protection of the interests of all parties involved. The document outlines the various methods and systems that can be used to ensure the accuracy and reliability of financial records.

It further details the specific steps and procedures that should be followed to implement an effective record-keeping system. This includes the selection of appropriate accounting software, the establishment of clear policies and procedures, and the training of staff members to ensure compliance with these standards. The document also addresses the importance of regular audits and reviews to identify and correct any discrepancies or errors in the records.

In conclusion, the document stresses that a robust and well-maintained record-keeping system is a critical component of any successful business operation. It provides a comprehensive overview of the key principles and practices that should be adopted to ensure the highest level of accuracy and transparency in all financial transactions. The document serves as a valuable resource for anyone looking to improve their record-keeping practices and enhance the overall financial health of their organization.

makes the point that such a structure may seem unfounded for "today's consciousness," that does not consciously employ the four elements systematically for comprehension purposes. However, "our dream symbolism arises from our unconscious and down there the ways of the past still exist." ¹⁰ By "down there", Peters is referring to the psyche. Just like the physical body has evolved over time, so too has the psyche. The phenomenon of the psyche is explored by dream therapists who, through dream analysis, bring up issues of the unconscious for the dreamer, apparently inexplicable to the dreamers natural conscious life. Often the dreamer must reach beyond their own personal unconscious to an unconscious that developed before their own. ¹¹ This unconscious is known as the collective unconscious, that which is common to us all. Throughout his writing, Jung has repeatedly shown the quaternary structure of the elements in the history of philosophy as itself, archetypal of wholeness - the wholeness of mandala, in Jungian philosophy. ¹² Archetype literally means the mode from which a thing is made.

Psychic existence, Jung contends, may only be acknowledged on the presentation of "contents that are capable of consciousness." ¹³ Therefore, to do so, consciousness demands the order of the four basic archetypes, the elements in order to interpret the unconscious in the conscious. Peters phrases it more concisely when he says:

... we can feel and intuit our way down into the natural world and know what psyche means by clothing its invisibility in this or that particular shape of nature. ¹⁴

Archetypes original contents of the unconscious could be compared to tools devised by philosophical man to consciously confront the greater worldly experience. Myth and fairy tales are the most obvious means of expression of archetypes. However, in myths and fairy tales, depiction of the archetype is of a far less serious nature than its depiction in primitive tribal teachings. In such esoteric teachings,

¹⁰ Peters, 1990, p. 214

¹¹ Op. cit, p. 214

¹² Neuman, 1955, p. 222

¹³ Jung, 1961, p. 4

¹⁴ Peters, 1990, p. 216

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4. The final part of the document concludes with a summary of the key findings and a call to action. It encourages readers to apply the principles and methods discussed in the document to their own work and to continue to explore the field of data analysis. The author expresses confidence in the power of data to drive positive change and innovation.

5. The document also includes a section on the ethical implications of data collection and analysis. It discusses the importance of protecting personal information and ensuring that data is used in a responsible and lawful manner. The author calls for a strong ethical framework to guide the use of data in research and business.

6. In addition, the document provides a list of resources and references for further reading. It includes books, articles, and online resources that offer more in-depth information on the topics discussed in the document. The author hopes that these resources will be helpful to readers who are interested in learning more about data analysis.

7. The document is written in a clear and concise style, using simple language and avoiding unnecessary technical jargon. It is intended to be accessible to a wide range of readers, including students, professionals, and anyone interested in the field of data analysis. The author has strived to provide a comprehensive overview of the subject while also highlighting the most important and practical aspects of the field.

8. The document is a valuable resource for anyone looking to improve their understanding of data analysis and its applications. It provides a solid foundation of knowledge and offers practical advice and examples that can be applied in real-world settings. The author is grateful for the opportunity to share this information and hopes that it will be helpful to many people.

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the archetypes appear in a form that reveals quite unmistakably the critical and evaluating influence of conscious elaboration.¹⁵

These teachings display a use of archetypes in religion and cults to impose a sense of morals which, in turn, achieved social control. As much characteristic of ruling dictatorships as ruling world religions, the archetypes have been adopted to achieve control of the mind of man.

Water, in an archetypal mode, is the commonest symbol for the unconscious. Its fluidity, mobility and ability to generate life, as well as to terminate life, qualifies it as highly symbolic. Through the characteristics and qualities of water, symbols, metaphors and analogies flourish copiously. The female, the mother, death and rebirth are but a few of the omnipervasive archetypes expressed as innate in symbolic water in the field of psychology and philosophy. A psychology of water, to be just that, cannot omit discussion of water's associated archetypes and metaphors. They all bear too much fruit in modern psychology, more specifically the psychology of Jung and the greater extent of dream therapy.

In relation to the four elements being archetypal of all human experience, Gaston Bachelard believes in a unity between nature and the human psyche. His thought is that the elements in contribution to this archetype of wholeness emphasise matter as a profound basis for conscious thought and language.¹⁶ However, the imposition of order, translated by archetype and symbols, is an imposition on the chaos of nature as much as on the chaos of the unconscious. The use of archetypes is a means to control as well as to understand the unconscious. We all need to make sense of our lives. As a group, we use the archetypes to do this. Yet they can create a distance between man and nature as they come from a formal imagination. Not of the material imagination, archetypes cannot directly convey the essence of water, as fundamentally matter. Bachelard does not give us new information but makes us aware of knowledge deep in our unconscious that we had previously been unable to articulate. By looking at water with the realisation that its archetypes and metaphors are secondary to its true essence, one can begin to develop an awareness of matter as, above all else, a sensory inspiration on which the imagination, and so the psyche, may draw.

¹⁵ Jung, 1961, p. 5

¹⁶ Bachelard, 1983, p. 3

Jung values nature by recognising its primary position in psychological discourse. He protests against an undermining of mythologised nature, i.e. summer and winter, the phases of the moon, the range of seasons, etc. For these in his words, are

symbolic expressions of the inner unconscious drama of the psyche which becomes accessible to the conscious by way of projection, that is, 'mirrored in the events of nature.'¹⁷

The expression of the archetype in myth is far less complicated and individual than in its existence in our dreams. Myths, in Jung's philosophy, are, above all, psychic phenomenon, revealing of the nature of the soul. Bachelard also shares this type of reverence for myth, believing it to have an unconscious influence on people today. However, water psychology is more complex than water mythology.

The human need for formula is basic to our need to conquer the unknown, the unconscious. Man's quest to control nature is as old as man. We control water and so it is ordered. Yet, as such, we lose a lot of the mystery of nature, the awe and power which led earlier civilisations - of a world of uncontrolled waters - to invest the water with deities and so honour it. Whether it is by containing water in a swimming pool or in the tap in our kitchen, we have succeeded in asserting control. This idea of containment, as a means of controlling, despiritualises nature and psychologically damages the psyche. It denies the existence of greater forces outside of ourselves. It simply denies nature. Edward F Edinger, in his discourse on alchemical symbolism in psychotherapy, talks of individuation as a psychological phase in which the individual equates with the world and so the outer world becomes mere consequence.¹⁸ This imbalance may be exemplified by the way the world today has lost its sense of wonder and awe in the element compared to lesser developed worlds of long ago. As a society, we are all too easily removed from nature by our need to control. Survival is obviously as much of an issue psychologically as physically. This will be discussed in the third chapter.

¹⁷ Jung, 1961, p. 6

¹⁸ Edinger, 1985, p. 9

I will explore the water from a psychological point of view at two levels; the objective and the subjective, the collective unconscious and the personal unconscious. Both are of equal significance, as both co-exist. The idea of duality is one Bachelard deciphers in discussing the ambivalences innate in water. Bachelard pronounces

as a primordial law of the imagination, a matter to which the imagination cannot give a dual existence cannot play the psychological role of fundamental matter. ¹⁹

For the material imagination to be wholly captivated by a matter, there must be a dual participation of desire and fear, a participation of good and evil, "peaceful participation of black and white." ²⁰ Thus, surely, water enshrines this duality. Even the visual symbol of the *yin* and the *yang* in ancient Chinese philosophy is based on two interlocking water droplets - a *yang* embraced in a *yin*. Generally, water is classified as feminine, yet when the waters become stormy and the matter is possessed by frenzied aggression, as water is conversely capable of, it becomes malevolent. Again, in reference to Chinese philosophy, "Water can float and sink a ship," so says the proverb. ²¹ Even the word "buoyancy" means elasticity of spirit, cheerfulness. ²² Yet the overriding truth, that water can kill us, never dissipates. To stop the joy of movement in water is plainly to surrender to the movement of water and die. This actual duality of water paves the way for an acceptance of contrasting and contradictory aspects of water. The most profound water paradox is that of death and birth.

Immersion in water symbolises a return to the preformal, a total regeneration, a new birth, for immersion means a dissolution of forms, a re-integration into the formlessness of pre-existence; and emerging from the water is a repetition of the act of creation in which form was first expressed. ²³

Immersion in water signifies a return to the prenatal state, with a sense of death and annihilation on the one hand, but of rebirth and regeneration on the other. It is a two-way positive and negative flow of creation and destruction. In relation to dreams which depict confrontation with water,

¹⁹ Bachelard, 1983, p. 11

²⁰ Op cit, p. 12

²¹ Croutier, 1992, p. 48

²² Dologus, 1988, p. 4

²³ Eliade, Patterson. *Comparative Religion*, p. 88, from: Edinger, 1985, p. 58

Jung says, "The descent into the depths always seems to precede the ascent."²⁴ That is, death precedes rebirth. The rudiments of the mediaeval philosophy of alchemy (see Appendix Three) insist upon the precession of death before rebirth, for one form to disappear so that a new regenerated form may emerge.²⁵

"To souls, it is death to become water."²⁶ Clearly our ability to empathise with death is far greater than we consciously know. The concept of death is so very powerful in life that it is easy to talk of death, without it being of a physical nature. Death as a spiritual concept is a powerful influence on man, used in all religions as a spiritual prologue to rebirth, it represents change. To attain the philosopher's stone, in alchemy, involves a procedure to transform the "prima materia." This transformation always makes death part of the procedure. The final result is always rebirth. It is obviously a rebirth of the spirit.²⁷

Freud, whom I have neglected in my discussion so far, states that birth is usually expressed through water imagery. In recounting a woman's dream of diving into a moon-reflecting lake of water, he commences with, "and here is a pretty water dream," which he almost immediately computes as a birth dream. For to dive into water, "we have coming out of the water, i.e. being born." On the subject of water in dreams, as with all else, Freud asserts that it must pertain to the physical, the sexual and the genital side of nature.²⁸ For Freud, water dreams relate to the waters of the womb, where our physical life begins. He deduces that dreams of being in water, like those of passing through narrow spaces, are anxiety dreams. This relating back to water as water of the womb may indeed be used to explain an unconscious attraction of man to water and perhaps even why suicide by water is so prevalent in society - reversion back to a place of epitomal safety before birth. However, a more extensive elaboration of such by Freud does not exist. Instead, he summarises water in dreams, relating it as much to urinary stimulus as to birth. He refers to Hippocrates' notion that dreams of fountains and springs indicate a disorder of the bladder. With Freud, genital

²⁴ Jung, 1961, p. 19
²⁵ Edinger, 1985, p. 51.
²⁶ Op. cit.
²⁷ Op. cit., pp. 47 - 73
²⁸ Freud, 1965, p. 500

organs are first and foremost and sexual dreams are often caused by urinary stimulus.²⁹

Some past infantile wish or fantasy regulates the basis of Freud's theories. On this account, I personally find Freudian theory as an empty source in the support of water as a psychological power. As such, I have not dwelt on Freud to any great extent. To quote dream therapist, Dr Anne Faraday,

... whereas Freud firmly believed that he had discovered the secret of dreams, Jung remained humble before what he felt to be a phenomenon larger than the individual mind.³⁰

Freud's dogmatism would not allow for the potential power of water as something more powerful and efficacious than its insignificant side part role in his studies. For Bachelard, Freudian psychology is too much of a "closed experience" A psychology through the study of the active imagination and how it works is Bachelard's concern. "Here, the depths are not so fearful nor the heights so unattainable."³¹ Here, our human experience through the medium of the imagination is of ultimate potential. Bachelard concentrates on poetry and literature and not on visual art, the reason most probably being that his imaginative expression is developed literately (as the literate style in which he writes more than verifies). Yet Edgar Allen Poe, to whom Bachelard makes extensive reference, needed his eyes as well as his other senses to describe the water so meditatively and to see beneath the layers. The same applies to the many other poets and writers of "water" related work, whom Bachelard discusses. For Bachelard, the imagination is a superhuman faculty, which produces images beyond reality.³² Art, music and literature all suffice and are mediums of expression of the psyche, on the unconscious.

He to whom Nature begins to reveal her open secret will feel an irresistible yearning for her most worthy interpreter, art,³³

Goethe has said. Indeed, it is by imitation that we invent. Beforehand, though, "Art needs to learn from reflections and music from echoes."³⁴

29 Freud, 1965, p. 227

30 Faraday, 1972, p. 125

31 Bachelard, , 1983, p. viii

32 Op. cit., p. 16

33 Schwenk, 1965, p. 80

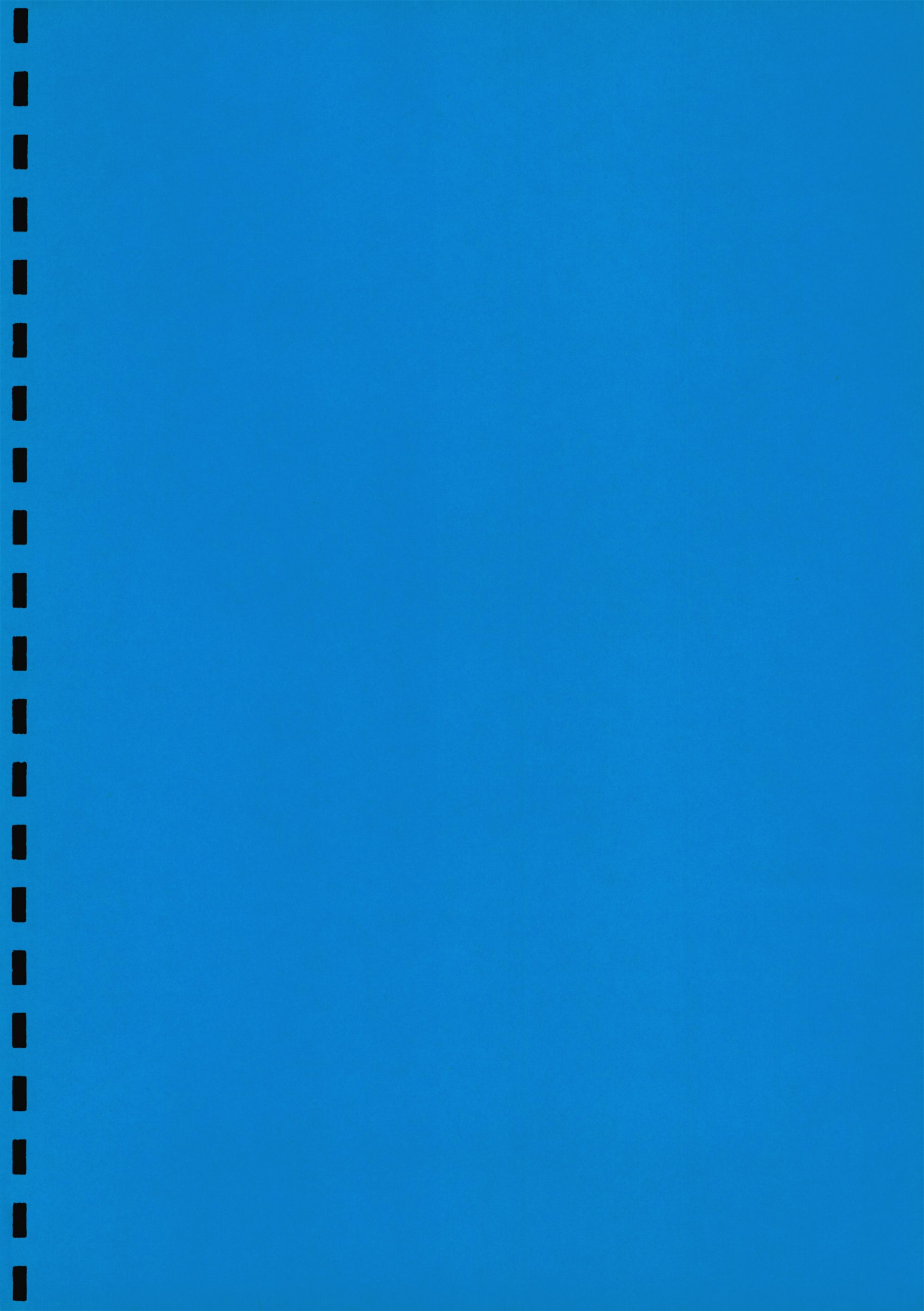
34 Bachelard, 1983, p. 193

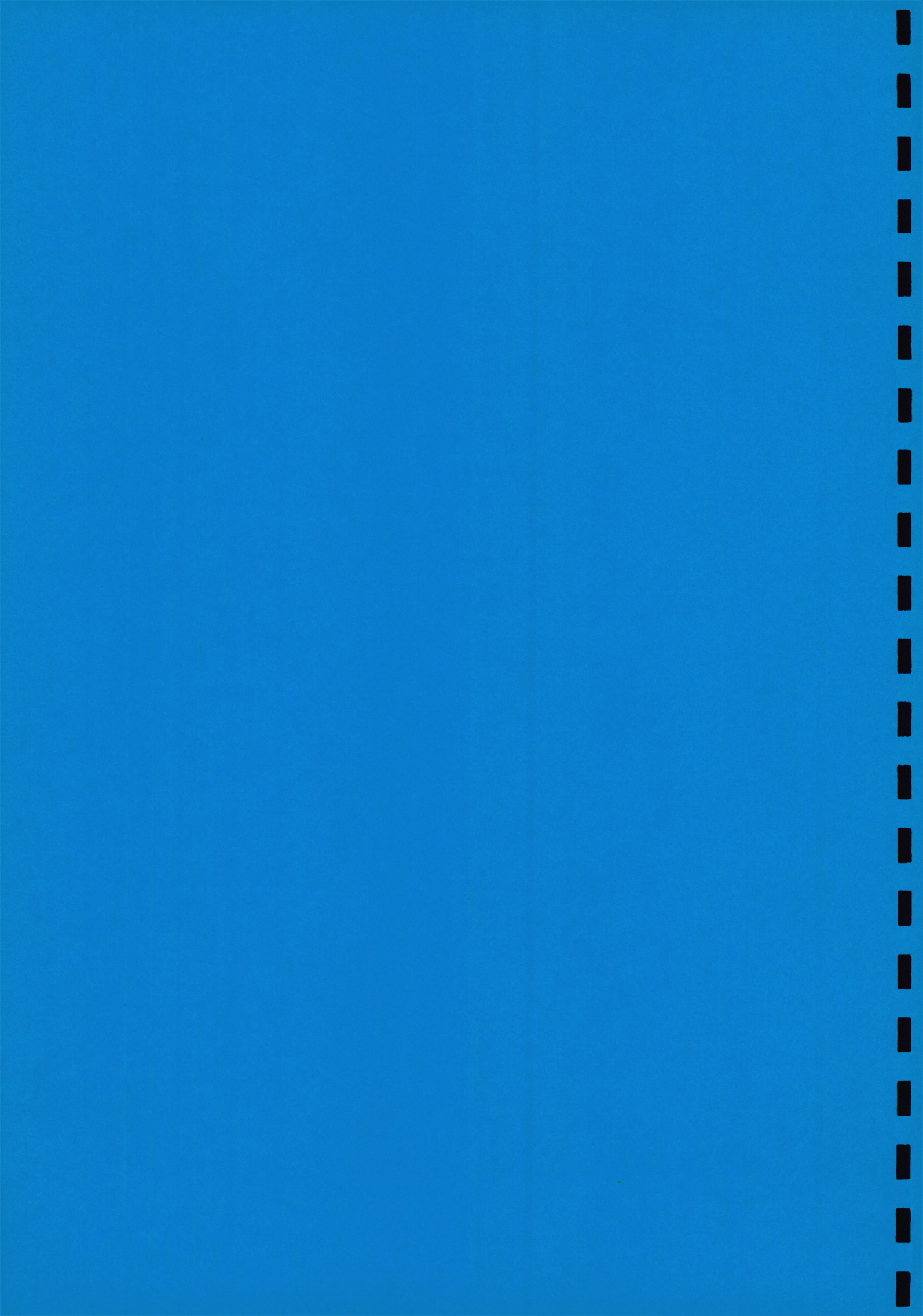
Nature is the prime source. Water as a natural element is equally so. Very often, though, water is reflected in art works as ephemeral. It is no more than a stage prop used to enhance the over-all picture. This use of water to make pretty and support affectations of the "picturesque" is not my ambition in this thesis. Consequently, discussion of art which does so is avoided.

The film, *The Big Blue*, by Luc Besson is definitely a most astounding artistic work. Goethe could not ask for a more comprehensive imitative illustration of water or nature. Both the narrative and images position water as intrinsic to the entire film. In this vein, *The Big Blue*, its themes and energy, will demand explicit attention from this on. By doing so, I hope to explore the importance of Bachelard's central question:

How can we recognise more clearly that matter possesses thought, a reverie, and that it is not limited to thinking, dreaming and suffering within us? ³⁵

The first of these is the fact that the
second is the fact that the
third is the fact that the
fourth is the fact that the
fifth is the fact that the
sixth is the fact that the
seventh is the fact that the
eighth is the fact that the
ninth is the fact that the
tenth is the fact that the





CHAPTER 2 THE BIG BLUE PART 1

After searching diligently for another self to whom he could confide his thoughts and whose life could become his own, he finally reached an intimate understanding with the ocean. The sea became for him a living thinking being . . . ³⁶

Precisely the same may be proclaimed about Jacques Mayol, the central figure of Luc Besson's film *The Big Blue*. Behind the film character there is a true-life Jacques Mayol. He is a veteran free diver whose descents without breathing apparatus remain unchallenged world records. Rivalry in the sixties, with a Sicilian, Enzo Maorca, supplies some basic tension in the film's storyline. In preparation for the film, Besson was in contact with Mayol. Listening to Mayol's story was not sufficient. Mayol "made me go down thirty metres in the sea," recounts Besson, "and then asked, 'Do you understand?' I nodded but I hadn't understood anything. I had felt it." ³⁷

For Besson, the sea held a strong attraction since early childhood, since he first discovered dolphins while on summer camp on the Moroccan coast. In his teens, he taught scuba-diving on the Greek Islands. Therefore, it is not so incredible that for ten years he dreamt of making a film about the sea.

You can't explain the exhilaration of the sea; of the big blue, you have to feel it. The sensation is intense and unique. When you are diving, you are alone. ³⁸

Besson asserted that his task was to make the audience feel the sea for themselves. Sensation was essential. Water was not to be explained but only felt, to be understood - a meeting of the senses with matter.

³⁶ Balzac, *The Cursed Child*, Bachelard, 1983, p. 173.

³⁷ Booklet accompanying the video, *The Big Blue*, Fox Video, 1991

³⁸ Op. cit.

CHAPTER
THE BIG ONE
PART 1

The first part of the book is a history of the...
the first part of the book is a history of the...
the first part of the book is a history of the...

The second part of the book is a history of the...
the second part of the book is a history of the...
the second part of the book is a history of the...

The third part of the book is a history of the...
the third part of the book is a history of the...
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The fifth part of the book is a history of the...
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The sixth part of the book is a history of the...
the sixth part of the book is a history of the...
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The seventh part of the book is a history of the...
the seventh part of the book is a history of the...
the seventh part of the book is a history of the...

This much of the story-line, then, is biographical and to a fair degree also autobiographical. The remainder is fictional. The story involves two men, the aforementioned Jacques Mayol (Jean-Marc Barr) and Enzo Mollinari (Jean Reno). As professional skin divers, they plunge to depths of more than one hundred metres on a single gulp of air. Holding their breath for long periods of time is a major preoccupation throughout. The film begins in the 1950s among the sponge divers and shipwreck looters of the Greek Islands. At this early stage, the two men, as children, were rivals, one trying to out-do the other in diving the deepest and staying underwater the longest. Enzo, the outwardly domineering party, sets the personality difference from the beginning, while Jacques is the quiet and introverted party. Twenty years later, they meet again as competitors in the same subaquatic championship. The challenge is to dive as deep as possible for as long as possible. Both are now grown men, Enzo physically larger than Jacques and holding the "biggest lungs" on record. Yet Jacques's growth is more inward and connected to his adaptation to the sea as a freelance professional diver for research organisations. The idea of the dive below the surface of the water becomes linked to Jacques's introversion.

It is common dream theory - especially in Jungian psychology - that the ocean symbolises the mind and more specifically the collective unconscious. The Big Blue is an infinite sea, a sea so deep that you can no longer see the surface, no coral, no tropical fish, no fine sand, nothing but blue. Jung writes,

Blue means air or pneuma and the leftward movement, an intensification of the unconscious' influence.³⁹

Almost in the same breath, Jung compares water with the "materiality of the spirit and so reinforces water as matter."⁴⁰ Blue water, in Maeterlinck's dialogue between Palomides and Alladine, is

full of unmoving strange flowers . . . Have you seen the largest one which blooms beneath all the others? It seems to live a measured life . . . and the water, it is water? It seems

³⁹ Jung, 1961, p. 322.

⁴⁰ Op. cit.

more beautiful and purer and bluer than the water of this earth . . . I no longer dare look at it. ⁴¹

For Bachelard himself,

one understands that matter is forms unconscious. It is the mass of water, not its surface, that sends us the insisted message of its reflections. ⁴²

Matilda Orcagno in her articles about water constructively criticises artists and scientists:

They cannot fully investigate water's flow by only looking at what happens on the surface. ⁴³

Obviously, the concern chiefly with what is going on under the surface far surpasses concern with the surface. The volume of water becomes important, because it gains for water depth. The notion of the depth of matter permits matter a distinctive individuality - water an entity. Bachelard notes that water as matter may be appraised in two ways: by deepening or by elevating.

Deepening makes it seem unfathomable like a mystery. Elevation makes it appear to be an inexhaustible force like a miracle. ⁴⁴

As such, *The Big Blue* refers to a mystery, an unknown, an unconscious.

The hypnotic music of Eric Serra saturates the air and commences the seduction, as a camera hovering low over the water's surface carries the viewer in a swaying path through an arena of cliff and water. Fierce sunlight and stark shadow are heightened by monochrome. Greece is the setting. No more apt a setting could be chosen. Ancient Greece felt that the influence of water's sight and sound could restore health and vitality. They built fountains in their courtyards, water sculptures, water runnels through hospital wards, merely for audio purposes. Water ran along athletic tracks and side streets.

⁴¹ Bachelard, 1983, p. 53.

⁴² Op cit., p. 6

⁴³ Orcagno, 1993.

⁴⁴ Bachelard, 1983, p. 2.



3. DIVING FOR A COIN. JACQUES, ENZO AND OTHER BOYS IN *THE BIG BLUE*, 1988

Greek civilisation seemed to revolve around water . . .
Significant events in their lives, as well as history, were
associated with water. ⁴⁵

The screen is filled with cliffs and awe-inducing sea, the same sea in which the Greeks appointed deities and gave birth to gods and goddesses.

Shortly after our first visual acquaintance with the little boy Jacques, the tranquillity is bombarded by a couple of boys imploring him to come quickly. A coin is shining in the harbour. Jacques prepares to dive with a passivity that is contrasted by the squabbling boys irritated by the problem of splitting the coin. Jacques's genteel and soft nature is immediately evocative of affection. Enzo, a bigger boy, arrives, followed by a group of subservient disciples. Suddenly the shot positions Jacques standing alone, isolated from the crowd. The first competition is staged. Jacques declines to dive in respect of Enzo's authoritarian stand. After diving, Enzo challenges Jacques once more in this childhood confrontation. Jacques declines submissively and sees Enzo (with evidently no intention of dealing with the problem of splitting the coin) leave, followed by everybody else. Left alone on the pier, Jacques is beckoned by a clergy man to dive in after another coin which he retrieves, believing it to be for the church, with no desire for personal remuneration. Jacques's selflessness continues to be contrasted by Enzo's more competitive aggressive nature throughout the rest of the film.

Der Taucher - The Diver by Schiller is a ballad which proposes the notion of the swimmer as someone rather remote and distinct in touch with experiences and mysteries denied to the common man. The ballad retells the fable of how Frederick II, the Emperor of Germany and King of Sicily, threw a golden goblet into the sea as a challenge to any diver brave enough to swim down and recover it. The reason behind the king's challenge was an effort to recapture a love for the deep seas that had long been forgotten. The king wanted to find out from the diver the secrets of the hidden world beneath the waves, a world undisclosed to man. Nicholas Persée -

a lone swimmer with fingers and toes webbed like a goose
who lived on raw fish and spent his days swimming among

⁴⁵ Sprawson, 1992, p. 55.



4. JANTZEN POSTER, GRANDE BOULEVARD PARIS, 1930, LUCIEN AIGNER



5. WEIMER DIVER, 1928, KURT REICHERT

the Lipari islands delivering letters in a watertight bag and diving for pearls, ⁴⁶

- dived from the cliff top into the black whirlpool. Spun by the current, he struggled to reach the goblet before the current swept him back up to the surface. His recollection of the swarming reptiles, salamanders, dragons and snakes below dissatisfied the king who placed his daughter as prize to the diver who would return to the depths. Jacques could be this diver without any golden goblet.

To dive, literature, mythology and history always seem to demand a substantial purpose as a prerequisite. In Classical Greece, a diving competition to leap into the seas from a cliff was a feature of the Apollo's Festival. In nineteenth century England, absorbed by a popularity for swimming, people leapt off the tops of bridges for wagers. Diving was a preoccupation of the years between the wars, with musicals full of girls swallow-diving from the tops of waterfalls and the world-leading American divers starring in Riefenstahl's Olympic film. The diver's taste through the ages became more complicated. Since the acrobatics performed over water on the Baltic beaches in Napoleonic times developed into diving, diving has become, in the words of Charles Sprawson, "a gymnastic exercise too intricate for the naked eye to follow." ⁴⁷

The heroic in life and passion for physical beauty are depicted by Leni Riefenstahl's powerful yet contrived cinematic invention *Olympische Spiele*. The film's succession of arched divers' bodies, arms extended among the clouds, is spun higher by the emotional effect of the music. The aesthetic far out-weighed the competitive context. Diving became an outward display with all associations taking root above the water's surface. Reifenstahl's film is acclaimed as nostalgic of

old German Romantic belief in the aristocracy of the spirit, the mood of yearning and restless search for self-fulfilment beyond the mundane and trivial. ⁴⁸

The majority of diving in *The Big Blue* leads from a sitting position omitting the physical manifestation of the body in air. American novelist, Jack

⁴⁶ Sprawson, 1992, p. 212.

⁴⁷ Op. cit., p. 258.

⁴⁸ Op. cit., 1992, p. 234.



6. DIVER, 1936, LENI RIEFENSTAHL

London's approach to diving states, "diving is first of all a psychological matter, after that it becomes physical."⁴⁹ In *The Big Blue*, although psychological preparation precedes entrance into the water, diving is foremost a physical matter before it can be anything else. Diving is an act in water, not in air. The "search for self-fulfilment" of Riefenstahl's divers refers to the external as opposed to the internal as constructed in *The Big Blue*. Besson's sense of the "physical" relates to immersion in water's matter: When you are diving, you are alone,⁵⁰ and thus the purpose of diving depends not on outside spectators. The gaze is the divers' alone and the subject the diver alone; most essentially in the water.

An underwater frolic, in which Jacques is startled by a circling dolphin, (the film's first dolphin), cuts to a scene of Jacques awaking. Jacques is a little boy who swims and dreams of swimming. Bachelard believed that:

a child's reverie is a materialistic reverie. The child is a born materialist. His first dreams are dreams of organic substances.⁵¹

By opening the film with Jacques's childhood, Besson exploits the knowledge that images of our earliest imagination govern our entire life. This part of the film presents the first of four dreams in the film. Freud, writing about childhood experience in relation to dreams, relates Strümpell's belief - "the earliest experiences of youth are buried in later times."⁵² For Jacques and his water-connected introversion in later life, these experiences are not so deeply buried. In review of the film, Philip Strick commented that "the end of the film is explained by its beginning."⁵³ Yet this is not before the most important final scene of the film's black and white recollective prologue, in which Jacques is with his uncle Louis, helping his father prepare to dive.

"You shouldn't dive every day, papa," Jacques says to his father, who replies comfortingly, "Don't worry, when I'm tired the mermaids help me out. " As his father descends into the depths of the water to fish for clams and oysters, a conversation begins between Jacques and his uncle. His eccentrically-

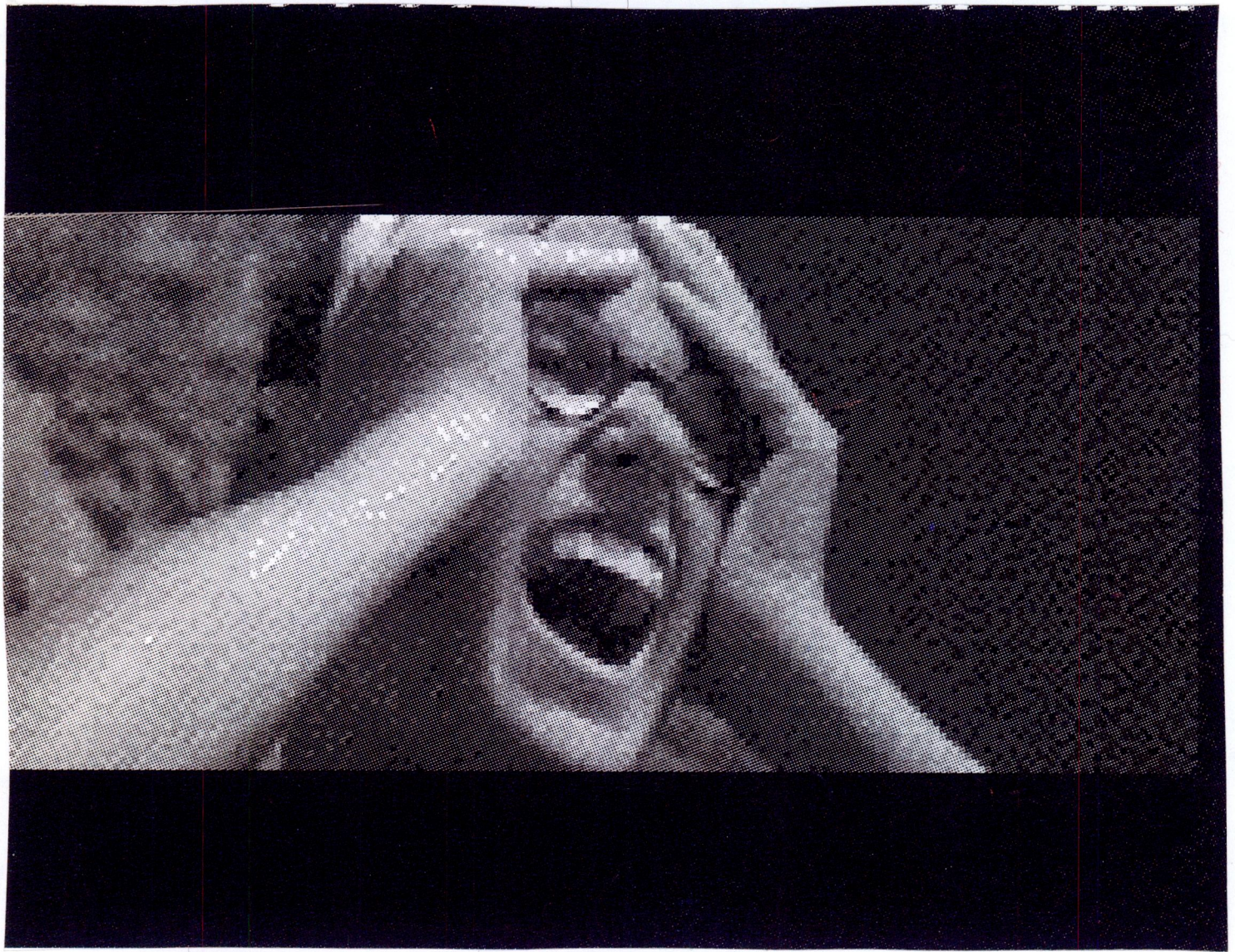
⁴⁹ Sprawson, 1992, p. 234

⁵⁰ Booklet accompanying the video, *The Big Blue*, Fox Video, 1991

⁵¹ Bachelard, 1983, p. 9

⁵² Freud, 1965, p. 49

⁵³ Booklet accompanying the video, *The Big Blue*, Fox Video, 1991



7. CLOSE-UP SHOT OF ENZO'S FACE IN DROWNING SCENE OF JACQUES'S FATHER
IN *THE BIG BLUE*, 1988

mannered uncle, tied to the topic of mermaids, is aggravated by Jacques's lack of inquiry and participation in the dialogue. Then Jacques asks, "Why did my mother leave?" "She didn't leave, she went back to America. Women are like that, unpredictable like the sea," responds his uncle. Suddenly his father below develops breathing complications with the diving helmet he is wearing. Losing his hold of the rocks of underwater cliffs, he drifts away, violently drowning, while Jacques is held back from the water, scraping the surface with hands like claws. Total frenzied disorientation ensues as the camera reverts to the boy, Enzo, fishing from a small cliff nearby, who is now squeezing his head between his hands, screaming Jacques's name in the now intensely maddening light of the sun.

Jacques is overwhelmed with his first encounter of death, the death of his parent. The profound gravity of this death colours Jacques's character for the remainder of the film. Before the drowning, we are informed of the absence of Jacques's mother, which presently makes Jacques parentless. He is without a family except for his uncle who is incapable, due to his mental instability, of psychologically fulfilling either parent's roles. For Jacques,

The sea contains all major solutions (to such mysteries as death, parenthood, religion, and probably the universe) and Jacques can accordingly only have a submarine destiny. ⁵⁴

Besson thus lays a foundation for an understanding of Jacques's obsession with the sea.

In Egyptian, the word for "drown" originally meant "praise." For the ancient Egyptians, the Hellenistic Greeks and the Romans, water was sacred and so they believed the greatest tribute to a god was to be drowned in the river and "consequently unite with him." ⁵⁵ In nineteenth century England, water was still an element of mystery, a matter quantified by the unknown. The sea expressed the romantic spirit of the age, despite the fact that instances of drowning were so common, their effect so devastating. Through that age's renowned literates, such as Wordsworth, Byron, Swinburne, Hopkins, the loss of loved ones by drowning in their personal lives fuelled the popularity

⁵⁴ Strick, 1989, p. 74

⁵⁵ Croutier, 1992, p. 55

of the theme of drowning in literature, along with all the Arts. Though, as Charles Sprawson points out,

These died by accident, others seemed to suffer from an appetite for death by water. ⁵⁶

The subdivision between suicidal drowning and accidental drowning submerges with as many examples in literature of one as the other. *The Big Blue* may too be termed as a cinematic example of both.

Famous drownings exemplified so extensively in all the arts throughout the centuries are laden with the myth of Narcissus. ⁵⁷ The beautiful Narcissus, upon seeing his reflection in the water, fell in love with it, unable to grasp the tormenting wild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. ⁵⁸ Psychoanalysis names the love that man has for his own image, for the reflection of his own face in water, after Narcissus. Narcissism, Bachelard notes, holds water as the vital key to any metamorphic powers it possesses. The image is reflected in water, as opposed to a mirror simply because water is natural and, as such, insinuates beauty quite easily, nature being beautiful. In water, the natural image is more credible and alive than in that of a man-made mirror. Ultimately, you can reach into water, whereas you cannot go past the glass of a mirror. ⁵⁹ In Bachelard's eyes, this constructs the contention that "To dream profoundly, one must dream with substances" ⁶⁰ - not with formal objects such as the mirror but with matter.

In reverse, the Narcissus myth, through the inclusion of the nymph Echo, serves to support the idea of water's duality, to which Bachelard dedicates so much attention. Narcissus, upon looking into the water at his own reflection, is looking into the water where Echo lives.

Echo is always Narcissus. She is he. She has his voice. She has his face . . . In the presence of water, Narcissus receives the revelation of his identity and of his duality; of his

⁵⁶ Sprawson, 1992, p. 34

⁵⁷ Croutier, 1992, p. 192

⁵⁸ Merville, 1961, p. 23

⁵⁹ Bachelard, 1983, p. 20

⁶⁰ Op. cit., p. 22



8. OPHELIA, JOHN EVEREST MILLAIS, 1852

double powers, virile and feminine; and, above all, the revelation of his reality and his ideality.⁶¹

Perhaps here is mythic co-existing of Jacques's obsession with the "plunge" into water, becoming a search for "his identity" and for "his duality." It is noteworthy here that Narcissism has also come to represent the challenge of self-confrontation, a journey so deep and unpredictable that the threat of drowning in one's own "afflictions" is just as great as drowning in the sea.⁶²

True, whoever looks into the mirror of the water will see first of all his own face; whoever goes to himself risks a confrontation with himself

and

more than one sorcerer's apprentice has been drowned in the waters called up by himself.⁶³

Therefore, Narcissism plays on the elaboration of water as metaphor for the unconscious. It also, by its attention to the notion of drowning, must bear much relevance to the underlying themes of *The Big Blue*.

Water and its power to drown, in its familiar tragic context, is repeatedly through mythology and literature connected with the feminine. Alev Lytte Croutier, in her book *Taking the Waters: Spirit Art and Sensuality*, talking of the "floating virgins" of nineteenth century art, the best example of which must be Ophelia. The painter Millais's 1852 version portrayed her floating down a scenic, flower-strewn stream. The whole sadness of Ophelia's situation (whose obsession with Hamlet led her to madness and death from a broken heart) is empathised by the water in which she floats, dead. Bachelard formalises a complex around the image of Ophelia. The image of the young and beautiful garlanded Ophelia, drowned and floating on the water's surface owes its force to "primitive imaginary nature."⁶⁴ It is reminiscent of water naturally covered with "sleeping beings who abandon themselves and float, beings who die quietly."⁶⁵

61 Bachelard, 1983, p. 22

62 Croutier, 1992, p. 194

63 Jung, 1961, p. 16

64 Croutier, 1992, p. 83

65 Jung, 1961, p. 19

In contrast to Ophelia and all her kind of maidens doomed to die, the more vibrant production in mythology and subsequently in art, of the feminine and water, takes shape in the world of nymphs, sirens and mermaids. The subject of mermaids is regularly alluded to throughout *The Big Blue*. In art, they are quite often used to represent the seductive and destructive aspects of the feminine. Naked young women at play in water, made more exotic by their mysterious only semi-human nature provide subject matter for many erotic paintings in the history of mermaids. With the coming of Christianity, there came a sea filled with fantastic and imaginary monsters. The mediaeval church condemned the lure of "fleshy pleasures" represented by mermaids: "Swimming, like sexual pleasure, came to be associated somehow with the devil."⁶⁶ Divine female power was often feared and associated with the seduction of mortal men, which could culminate in death and destruction. However, the mermaids which Jacques's father refers to are of a different kind. This kind is nostalgic of the mermaid in stories, who guided lost ships home, who warned sailors of impending danger and sometimes even, nursed men back to life. Mermaids are generally representative of both the "life threatening and the life-furthering aspects of water."⁶⁷ The mermaids of *The Big Blue* are of the latter variety. They are almost maternal.

With moods that mirror ours, ranging from ripples of interest and awareness, to the savage seas of rage and fury. And through all these manifestations, it carries a maternal voice and reminders of the womb.⁶⁸

Among ancient civilisation, water was sacred as the source of life, the seminal fluid, juice of the earth's womb. The idea that life began in the sea, the theory of the aquatic mammal, is not new, but found in early civilisation. The word for "sea" in most languages is feminine. The French word for sea, "mer," actually meant "womb." The Japanese word "umi" meaning ocean, is homophonous with the word meaning "to give birth." Wells, springs and rain water, along with their healing powers assigned them, were symbols of fertility. In Ireland, the cult of well worship and sacred springs was as readily integrated into the practices of Christianity as were the stone representations of Sheela na Gigs (ancient Celtic fertility goddesses). Moon goddesses, like

⁶⁶ Sprawson, 1992, p. 69
⁶⁷ Watson, Lyall. *The Water Planet*, 1988
⁶⁸ Croutier, 1992, p. 26

the Babylonian moon goddess, Ishtar, of the varied cultures, were usually guardian of wells, rivers and springs. These goddesses were always connected with life-giving sources. The ancient ritual of rain dancing rendered the forces of water as synonymous with fertility.

Marija Gimbutos pinpoints the lack of water for centuries during the sixth millennium BC (as discovered by geological research) as the reason behind the copious creation of symbolic images related to streams and mythical creatures considered to be the source of water.⁶⁹ In contrast to the Indo-Europeans to whom Earth was the great mother, the old Europeans created a maternal image out of water and air divinities. The snake, symbolic of meandering water, and bird goddesses were divinities who nurtured the world with moisture, giving rain, the divine food which metaphorically was also understood as mother's milk.

Relics from Neolithic Europe are all marked by a vocabulary of zigzags, chevrons, parallel lines, V shapes, striated diamonds and cross signs, all representative of water and made functional by their purpose of rain invocation. These markings were interpretative of the matter of water. Horizontal belts of zigzag translated as flowing water, while vertical zigzags translated as torrents of water, particularly invocative of rain. The forms they decorated were mostly basic torso shapes and that of the vessel. The vessel, according to Erich Neuman, as a container of water, simulates the feminine womb and belly region.⁷⁰ This, containing water, is the primordial womb of life in innumerable myths. The female torsos have breasts often denoted by cross signs, relating water to the breasts as well as the womb. Water as nourisher is thus construed as innately feminine and maternal.

Water which inhabits the womb, for Neuman, is

the water below, the water of the depths, ground water and ocean, lake and pond.⁷¹

Neuman might equally be talking about the water of *The Big Blue*, the deep blue ocean. Interconnected with the mother archetype, specifically by the womb and breasts, water is perceived as maternal, in the physical realm. As

⁶⁹ Gimbutos, 1974, p. 116

⁷⁰ Neuman, 1955, p. 47

⁷¹ Op. cit., p. 47

such, physical water, in this instance, precedes psychological water. Water is not maternal out of psychologising reason, but primarily out of a physical reason.

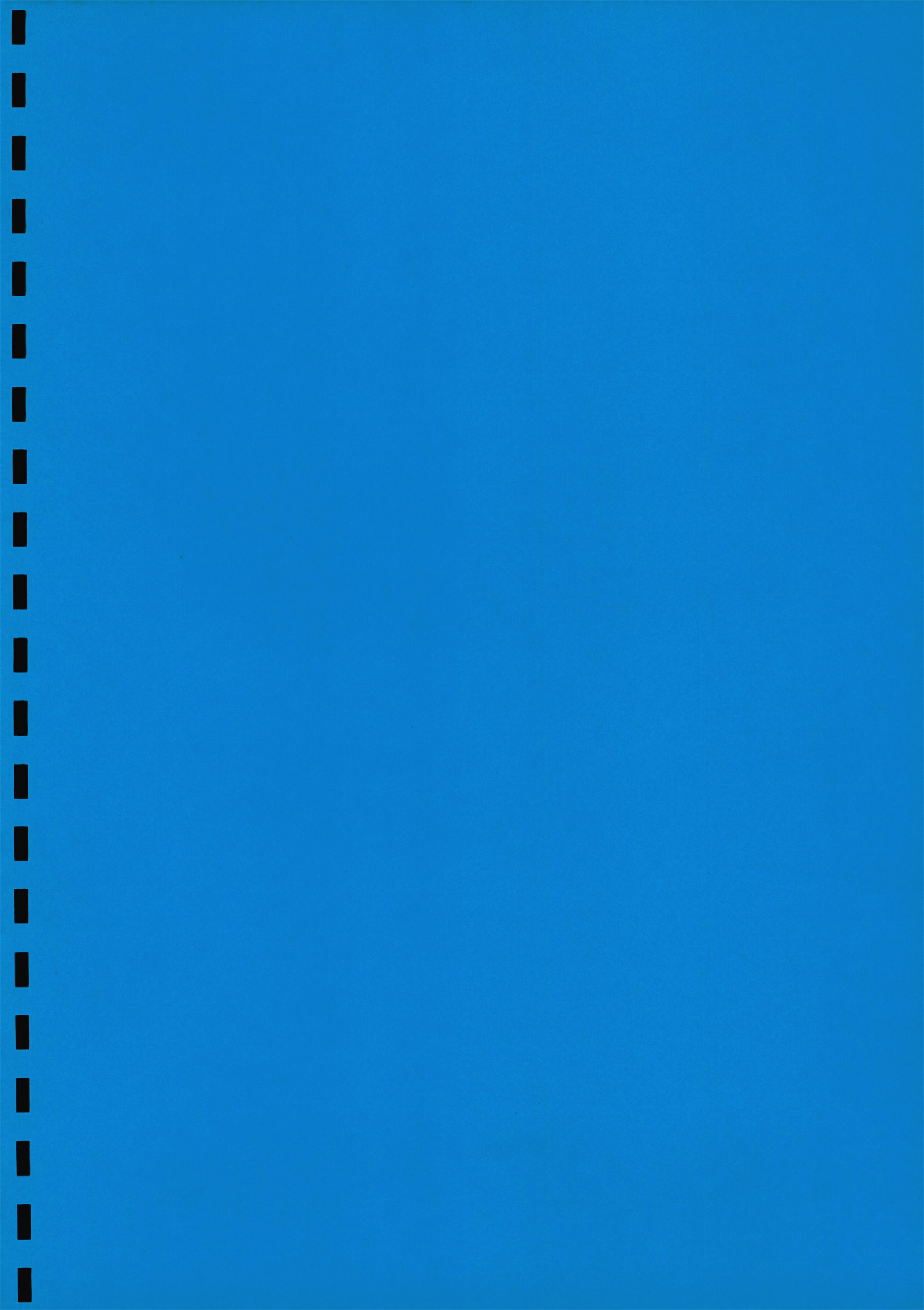
The child Jacques is without a mother and his mother substitute is embodied in the sea. Jung has noted the significance of the personal mother and yet is cautious that so much attention is not given it in case the importance of the mother archetype be overshadowed.⁷² For, as Neuman words it,

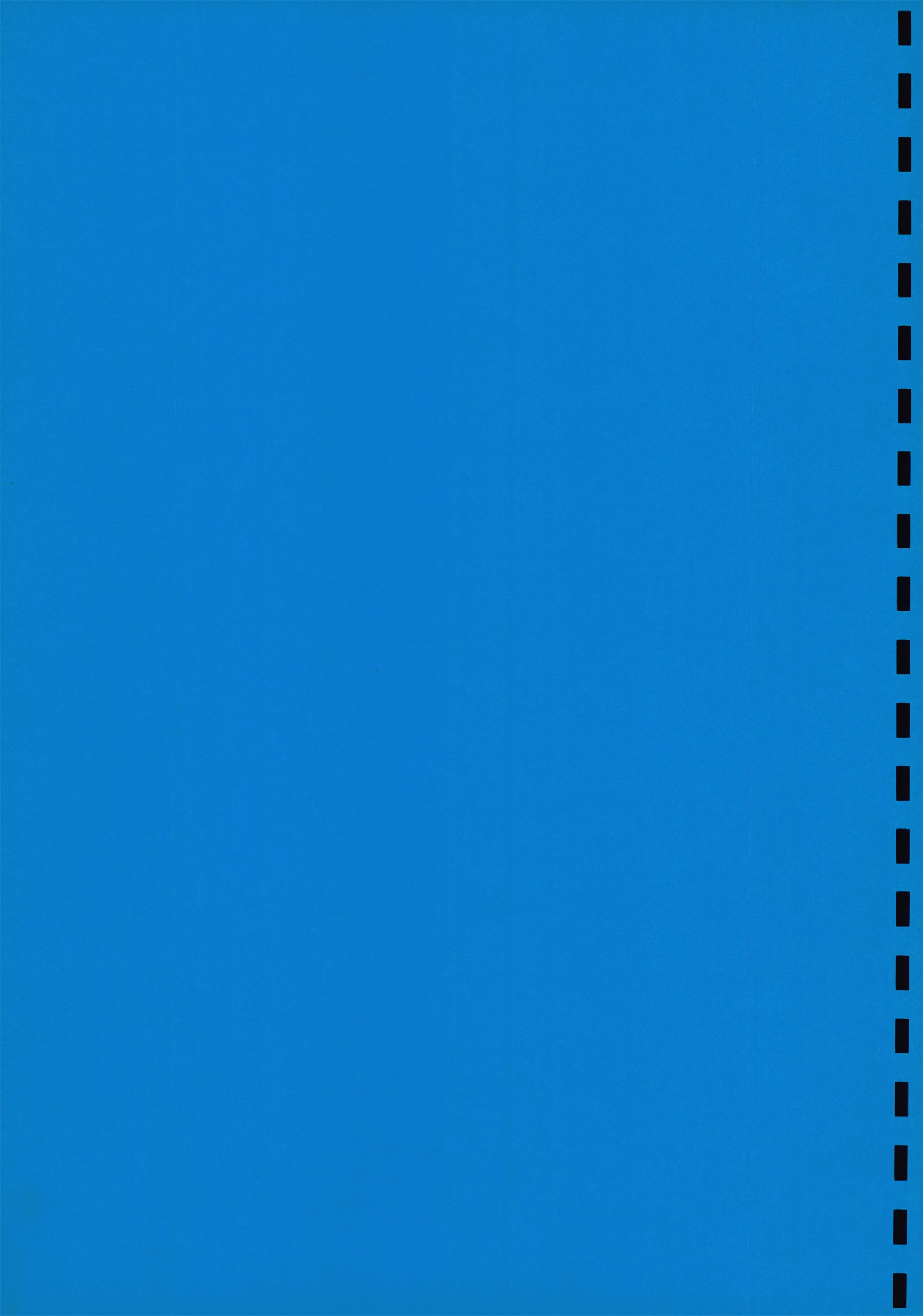
In fertility and generation woman does not set an example to the earth but the earth sets an example to woman.⁷³

Thus it is a mother of authority and generosity that Jacques inherits in the sea. This same mother embodies a fusion of opposites: the life giver and the death reaper. The entire film is constantly manifesting, via Jacques's obsession for the sea, his curiosity of love for it. Our first love, the love which teaches us its true meaning, is said to be the love experienced between mother and child. All kinds of love flourish from the originating love for a mother. Madame Bonaparte states that Nature, for the grown man, is "an immensely enlarged eternal mother projected into infinity."⁷⁴ This is Jacques's truth and much more. As well as an objective mother, the sea becomes his subjective mother. Physical immersion in the water makes matter his mother.

The word 'matter' is also derived from the Latin word for mother, 'mater'. Hence this archetype represents psychic elements related to the experience of the material, the concrete, the physical body and its needs.⁷⁵

⁷² Jung, 1961, p. 83
⁷³ Neuman, 1955, p. 83
⁷⁴ Bachelard, 1983, p. 115
⁷⁵ Jacoby, 1980. p. 36





CHAPTER 3

THE BIG BLUE - PART II

SECONDARY SYMBOLISM

A silent black still and then blue sea and Sicily sets the scene. It is as if the story begins again. Twenty years have elapsed and the screen is transformed from monochrome to luscious sun-filled colour. The tantalising perplexed face of the boy Enzo in the previous scene is out of sight and out of mind. The mood is changed. The accompanying music is alive and louder, suggestive of showtime.

Enzo is not quite a large, fully-grown man. A diver has become trapped in a shipwreck and Enzo dives to rescue him for a price settled by his manager-like brother, Roberto. Enzo is the star. Upon diving into the water, he begins his underwater performance. Diving without any air supply evokes an air of tension. How long can he hold his breath? His time consuming business under the water seems menacingly prolonged as the trapped diver is freed and surfaces. Substantial moments later, Enzo emerges to clapping spectators, like a Houdini emerging from trapping locks and chains in a bath of water on stage. Entertainment created by breath-holding aquatic scenes has its history. Music halls in nineteenth century England were customarily equipped with tanks for under-water performances.

Elise Wallenda could successively undress, write, sew, eat and drink underwater, but her greatest feat was to remain submerged for 4 minutes 45½ seconds in 1898.⁷⁶

The world's most famous female swimmer, Annette Kellerman, engaged in breath-holding under water ballets, which were extremely popular. Their popularity could only be attributed to the entertainment people derived from the tension associated with the airless underwater performers - the tension that becomes painful (and so, captive of attention) as the clock ticks. Enzo's

⁷⁶

Sprawson, 1992, p. 33



9. CLOSE-UP OF JACQUES'S FACE WITH WATER DROPLET AFTER DIVING UNDER ICE IN *THE BIG BLUE*, 1988

role as a diver in the film becomes obviously equivalent with that of a performer. As a world champion free diver that is his job.

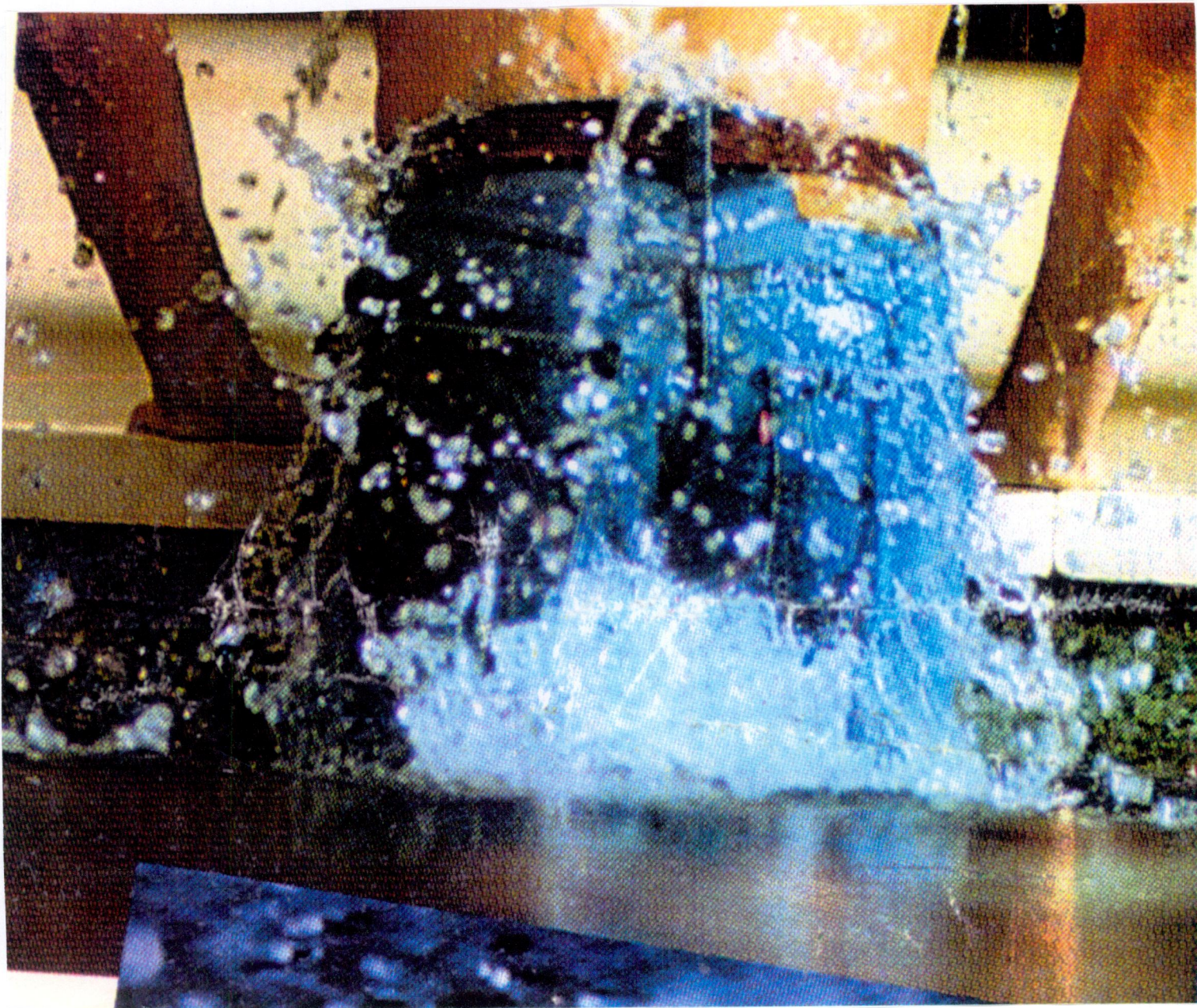
However he needs to prove himself better than the "French man Jacques Mayol." On a diving assignment in Peru, Jacques, also, is now a grown man, a grown man in a dramatic red diving suit. The music and the film speed suddenly become semi-paralysed as the character Johana Baker (Rosanna Arquette) comes in first contact with the "hero" of the film. No words are passed, but it is explicit that a chemistry between the two will undoubtedly develop with the storyline of the film. Johana is there as an insurance agent investigating the case of a truck which fell through the ice. Through a hole in the ice, Jacques dives into the same waters into which the truck has fallen.

His heart beat slows down, all blood concentrates in the brain and he doesn't feel his limbs anymore. It is a phenomena only known in whales and dolphins,

Dr Lawrence, the research marine biologist, observes aloud in Johana's presence. This is the first of many verbal pronounced comparisons of Jacques with a dolphin. Travelling upside down under the ice, Jacques looks physically calm, and even content, while the spectator must only hope for a hole in the ice. The ice seems to concretely signify the water's surface as a divider, a divider of two worlds. Jacques belongs to the water world.

Johana leaves the viewing window of the cabin and meets Jacques with a mug of coffee, in the snow, halfway from the cabin to the water hold. Hot melts cold. The rolling water droplets down Jacques's face in the proceeding close-up shot are clearly sexual.

The combination of water and skin in visual imagery almost always makes the imagery sexual. It is distinguishably a sensual sexuality. The water droplets that intermittently cling and meander along skin may be sexually sensual, while those on the windscreen of the car may not. Advertisements for Levi jeans continually depict a young male, almost naked except for his Levi jeans, his second skin, sinking himself in a bath tub of water or diving into a swimming pool. Most recently, the Levi's man is bathing in a water hole in the hot prairie. Under the gaze of two hiding adolescent girls, the camera focuses on water droplets on the man's skin with intermittent shots of



10. MAD ABOUT THE BOY, LEVI'S ADVERTISEMENT, 1992

one of the young girls, showing her pursing dry lips with open eyes. The water droplets are blown up to such magnitude on the screen that the physical outlined form of the man is excluded. The water as sensual matter in the form of the droplets on the skin causes the girl's sudden thirsting lips. The thirst in question is for the water, made sexual by its adhesion to the skin. The tactile senses make this an image of sensual water as much as an image of sexual water. A longing for the girl's lips to meet the man's skin is created by using the water as a sensual material before sexual. Only as a sensual material, as depicted by this advertisement, could water be perceived as sexual.

Dialogue between Jacques and Johana leads Jacques to compare her to someone he met "in the lake." The image of the mermaid is recalled. Now the mermaid has become supportive of its familiar sexual role, as Johana, too, comes to be identified with a sexual role in the film. The following morning, Jacques leaves to return home. Before parting, he gives Johana a present of a plastic dolphin. Returning to the French Riviera, we meet Jacques's family - three pooled dolphins. Dolphins have now become part of Jacques's life and the analogy between him and dolphins tends to separate him from the real world, the world in which the film's other two main characters, Enzo and Johana, live.

Diviner than the dolphin is nothing yet created for indeed they were aforetime men . . . but by devising of Dionysus they exchange the land for the sea and put on the form of fishes. ⁷⁷

Fish, like mermaids and any other inhabitants of the sea, have always held for humans an air of mystery. However, it is water's associations with a certain wisdom that are carried in the symbolism of the fish. Oannes, the mythical being who brings culture to mankind, is portrayed as half man and half fish. ⁷⁸ The mind's efforts to combine man and fish in this honorary fashion are best achieved in humans' sympathetic obsession with the dolphin.

In the human mind, dolphins are venerated. Although presented on the dinner table as *mahi mahi*, (large game), in some regions of the world,

⁷⁷ Linehan, 1979

⁷⁸ Pears Cyclopaedia, 97th ed., 1988



11. ENZO, JOHANA AND JACQUES, THE MAIN CHARACTERS OF *THE BIG BLUE*, 1988

dolphins are not valued in most parts of the world as a food. Heroic stories of dolphins saving man from drowning and solving problems is perpetuated by dolphins such as "Flipper" on the famous children's television programme, causing difficulties in their consumption as food. As mammals and not fish, scientists through research have verified the intelligence associated with dolphins, denoting their memory capacity as equal to ours, with brains one and half times the size of man's (among many amazing facts about their species). "Scientists and lay people often have trouble understanding one another," writes naturalist Kenneth S Norris, "and a wall rises between those who feel committed to basic facts about dolphins and those who are seeking contact on a more spiritual plane."⁷⁹ Increasingly, today's society is fascinated with the prospect of having kindred spirits in the alien sea. It is this fascination with dolphins that *The Big Blue* entertains. Jacques poses as a dolphin, one chromosome too much on the human side. Jacques, emphasised by his pre-diving hours of yoga, perpetuates the idea of the spiritual coming from the sea. His connection with water affords him this spiritual persona.

The film geographically moves to Taormina, where Jacques has reluctantly agreed to compete with Enzo in free-diving world championships. Johana finds herself there too, in pursuit of Jacques, the mysterious diver in Peru. The rivalry between Enzo and Jacques becomes accentuated by Johana's presence. As Enzo flirts innocently with Johana, Jacques, embarrassed, awkwardly retires from their company. His nature will not allow him to compete with Enzo for the heroine's attention. Enzo says to Johana, "Look at him, he's like a fish. You're so crazy about him you can't even see that he's from another world."

Like a fish out of water, to use the pun, Jacques's evolving relationship with Johana persistently highlights his social inadequacies - unlike Enzo who demands his acceptance in society. By his loud flamboyant character, Enzo is completely self-assertive. He comes from a family of "fighting and kissing" and exclaims to Jacques in the next scene "cos that's what love's all about." Jacques's lack of a human family is emphasised continually by "Moma, Roberto and Angelica," Enzo's family. We hear about them more than we see them. Jacques's family of dolphins, apart from the fact that they are not

⁷⁹ Norris, 1992, p. 30

human, differ from Enzo's family in description. "The dolphin only does three things all day - eats, plays and makes love."

Dolphins don't fight, but are noted for the amount of time they spend caressing one another.⁸⁰ Dolphins have become Jacques's family physically as much as possible, as well as psychologically. This family lives in a world of water beneath the surface, beneath the world, where fighting and loving are part of life. Life in the real world, the social world, as shown in the film, is about struggle. Jacques's abnormal obsession with the sea is thus born out of a rejection of this struggle in a world where he has no family, the absence of which contrives a struggle personal to Jacques. Social verbal communication is a problem for Jacques, whose introverted character does not allow for the development of verbal skills, as it belongs not in the sea. Neither does Johana belong in the sea. Johana is, inextricably, representative of the social world. To quote Captain Nemo in *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*,

The sea does not belong to despots. Upon its surfaces, men can still exercise unjust laws, fight, tear one another to pieces and be carried away with terrestrial horrors. But at thirty feet below its level, their reign ceases, their influence is quenched and their power disappears. Ah sir, live, live in the bosom of the water. There is only independence. There I recognise the master's voice. There I'm free.⁸¹

Thus Enzo is the most contrasting character to Jacques. "The sea is mine. I know when she's ready for me and when she isn't," is Enzo's reply to a medic who warns him not to dive. Enzo believes himself to be a controller. Jacques is more passive and submissive in the social context. While Jacques comes from the matriarchal world of the sea, Enzo's character becomes a presentation of a patriarchal world above the sea. By matriarchal, the archetypal feminine is inferred, as is also its ambivalent structure in relation to the sea. Water as undifferentiated and elementary contains male elements side by side with the female elements. "Moving rivers such as streams are bisexual and male and are worshipped as fructifiers and movers."⁸²

⁸⁰ Norris, 1992, p. 20
⁸¹ Croutier, 1992, p. 49
⁸² Neuman, 1955, p. 48

Swimming enthusiast, Rupert Brookes, on visiting the Niagara Falls, described it as:

Here the inhuman life and strength are spontaneous, active; almost resolute; masculine vigour compared with the passive gigantic power, female, helpless and overwhelming of the Falls. A place of fear.⁸³

The gravity of water's ambivalence always pertains to the knowledge that, as well as symbolising the womb, it can also be an abode of death. Duality exists.

In a later diving scene in the film, Jacques explains a bad diving performance by Enzo, as related to "when the sea doesn't want you." "Anyone can have a bad day, it's Mama, Roberto and that stupid actress, Bonita," retorts Enzo. In contradiction to Jacques's matriarchal world of water, Enzo's world is patriarchal in that it needs to be in control, to succeed and master. Erich Neumanns, in his explorations of the central symbolism of the feminine, determines that "unnatural symbols and hostility to the nature symbol - e.g. Eve taken out of Adam - are characteristic of the patriarchal spirit."⁸⁴ Enzo's attitude to the sea is at all times one of domination. In preparing to dive, "one inhales like a bull, the other meditates with yoga." Enzo is the former. His approach to water is aggressive, psychologically as well as physically. Enzo is symptomatic of a society acting to control water and to use it for purposes of advantage. From classical times, in which the Roman army "retained a regiment of swimmers and a special company of divers as part of their forces"⁸⁵ to an early twentieth century Nazi Germany, where swimming and diving were most popular (as Leni Riefenstahl's water films support), society has combined an idea of physical beauty and power in connection to water, in a martial and self-appraising way.⁸⁶ In water, "the swimmer conquers an element that is more alien to his nature."⁸⁷ Enzo is really as much swimmer as he is diver, and his own nature is that of patriarchy common to the most powerful ruling societies of the world.

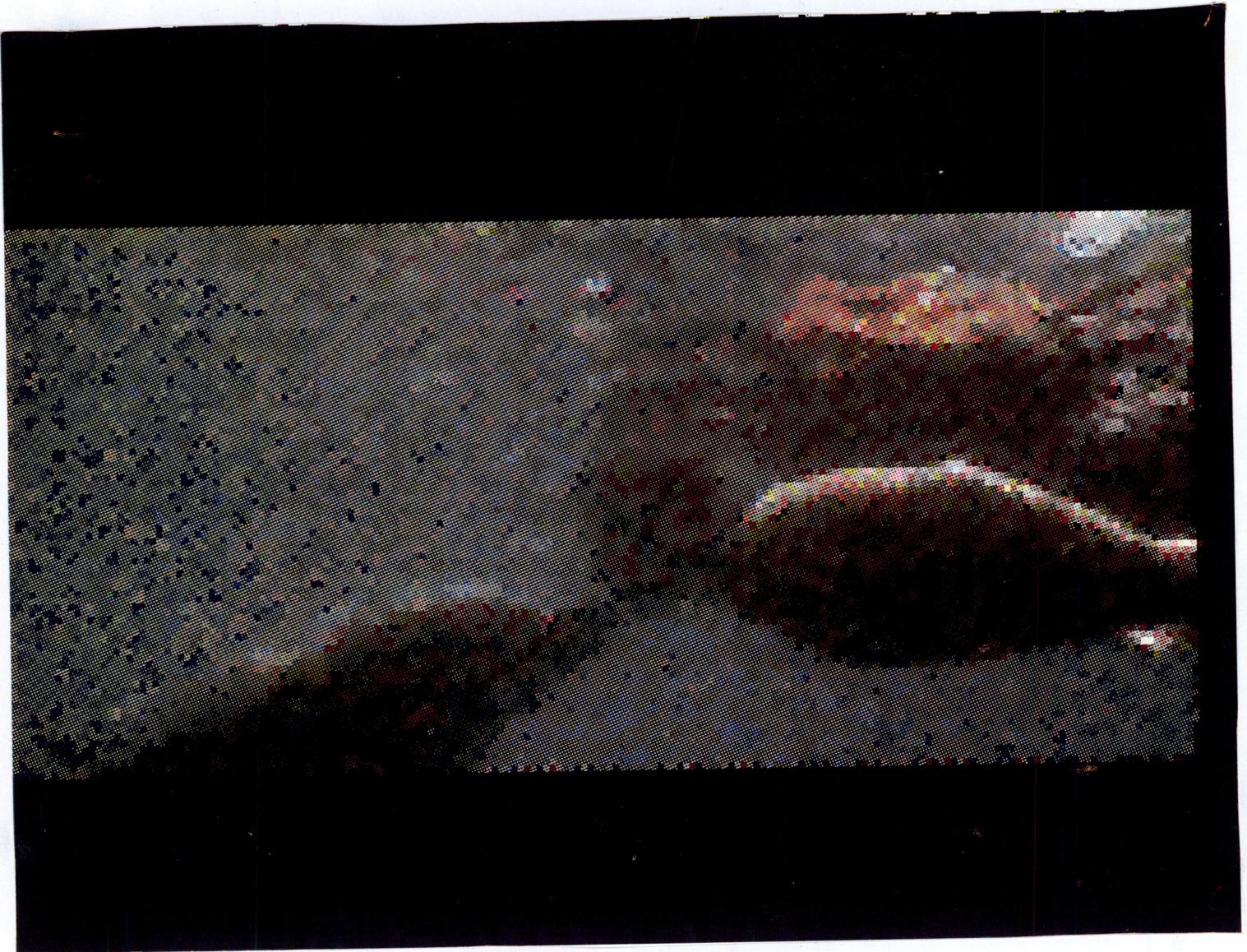
⁸³ Sprawson, 1992, p. 42
⁸⁴ Neuman, 1955, p. 50
⁸⁵ Sprawson, 1992, p. 46
⁸⁶ Op. cit., p. 46
⁸⁷ Bachelard, 1983, p. 163

Today's world is truly a conqueror of water. Water's domestication by society undoubtedly confounds the fact. A reminder of early civilisations is the Cogui Indians, an isolated tribe in the distant mountains of Columbia, untouched by world progress and technology. They believe that "Water is life itself. It thinks, it is alive, and it needs to be fed." ⁸⁸ This was the original idea of balance between man and water. Today's water retains not the spirits and deities of former ages, most probably because for first world countries, water runs from a tap and is generally taken for granted. "Water as a commodity has become a mere 'cleaning fluid,' devoid of symbolism and respect," comments philosopher, Ivan Illich. ⁸⁹ Control over water today is epitomised by the fact that water is transported hundreds of miles across mountains and deserts, from remote regions in the North of America (the Owens Valley and the Colorado River) all the way down to the Southern state of California. "God never intended California to be anything but desert. Man has made it what it is." ⁹⁰ Roman Polanski's film *Chinatown* depicts water through wonderful liquid sounds, which evoke a reverence for water against the background of the film's water conspiracy plot. The plot augments the ominous possibility of the land's return to a state of semi-arid desert. This film highlights the connection man makes between water and power, as a sinister process of acquisition of water is staged. California is the perfect setting in which to draw an example of such, with its mass population of "swimming pools, fountains, gushing pumps, irrigation channels and green sprinkled lawns." ⁹¹ The swimming pool in early twentieth century America became a status symbol, an emblem of wealth. Yet Jean Didion, in her book, *Holy Water*, contends that "a pool is for many of us in the West a symbol not of affluence but of order, of control over the uncontrollable." The sea is the uncontrollable in *The Big Blue*, which Enzo neglects to recognise until it becomes a fatal flaw.

She dived.

It was as though the violent agitation of the surface were a membrane through which she passed to a place of great

⁸⁸ Croutier, 1992, p. 183
⁸⁹ Op. cit., p. 183
⁹⁰ Sprawson, 1992, p. 274
⁹¹ Op. cit., p. 274



12. JACQUES KISSING THE DOLPHIN IN *THE BIG BLUE*, 1988

familiarity and quiet. This is how you enter certain rooms, certain embraces, this is what a recollection is.⁹²

So Jacques dives, shooting downwards through dreamy blue into a deep darkness lit by blue light. Once he is below, smiles of ecstasy make it clear that he doesn't want to return back up. Towards the end of the film, Jacques tells Johana that diving is like "slipping without falling, that is, the hardest thing is when you're at the bottom finding a reason to come back up." The sea is Jacques's intoxication. His love of the "uncontrollable" and his family of dolphins is all-consuming. It is what hurts Johana most in her love for him. Johana is the female above the surface competing with the female below, the archetypal feminine of the sea.

In a drunken stupor, by the edge of a pool of water, Jacques asks Enzo in relation to "everything about everything," "Women, are they what's most important?" This question governs Jacques's relationship with Johana from the beginning. He is looking for an answer to this. His identification with the female must be one of pain, due to the absence of his natural mother. Fear of the unknown and fear of being hurt again by the female, by Johana, will not permit him to surrender his emotions so easily. It is far easier for him to become involved with Johana sexually than emotionally. After making love with Johana for the first time, Jacques gets up in the middle of the night and leaves Johana to go swimming. He swims all night under a moon-lit sky. Engaging in a beautiful underwater experience, he dances with a dolphin. A tender shot shows him touching his lips against the nose of the dolphin in the fashion of a kiss, underwater. This scene is just as much, if not more, sexual than the preceding scene's passionate sex with Johana. As distinct from maternal water, feminine water also specifies the matter in which Jacques becomes immersed.

Novalis's novel, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, is about a poet who, in his flight from earthly restrictions, searches for the blue flower that he has glimpsed in his dreams.⁹³ In a dream, the poet is seized by an uncontrollable desire to bathe.

No vision invites him. It is substance itself which he has touched with his hands and lips, which summons him. It

⁹² Mooney, Ted. *Travel to Other Planets*, essay, Dologus, 1988, p. 70
⁹³ Sprawson, 1992, p. 201

...the ... of ...

...the ... of ...

...the ... of ...

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summons him materially by virtue it seems, of a magic participation.⁹⁴

As soon as the dreamer undresses and submerges into a water basin, images appear -

It seemed as if a sunset cloud was enveloping him, a heavenly sensation flowed through his soul with voluptuous delight, countless thoughts seemed to mingle within him. New images never seen before arose and interfused and became visible around him and every wave clung to him like a tender blossom. The waves appeared to be charming girls dissolved, which momentarily embodied themselves as they touched the youth . . .⁹⁵

In Charles Sprawson's study of the dream, he explains how these aqueous feminine merges into the blue flower to become the incarnation of whatever the dreamer desired and eventually found. However, apart from what Novalis's intentions were as to what the dream was to symbolise, before any symbol, one can descry the strength of the dream in its intimate awareness of the senses. Bachelard describes Novalis, in his own context as dreamer, as "a toucher who touches the untouchable, intangible or unreal."⁹⁶ Out of the matter of water arose the images which would remain dissolved and unknown to both dreamer and reader without, most essentially, "a primitive sensual reality."⁹⁷ Without such, Jacques's night swim with a dolphin, submerged and saturated by water matter, could not be sensual and consequently could not be sexual. After such images dissolve and the forms have gone, matter remains. Water remains out of which images can be born and reborn and out of which great experiences can be enjoyed again by Jacques in his next contact with the sea. Just as a material imagination is used, so too is a sensual imagination used.

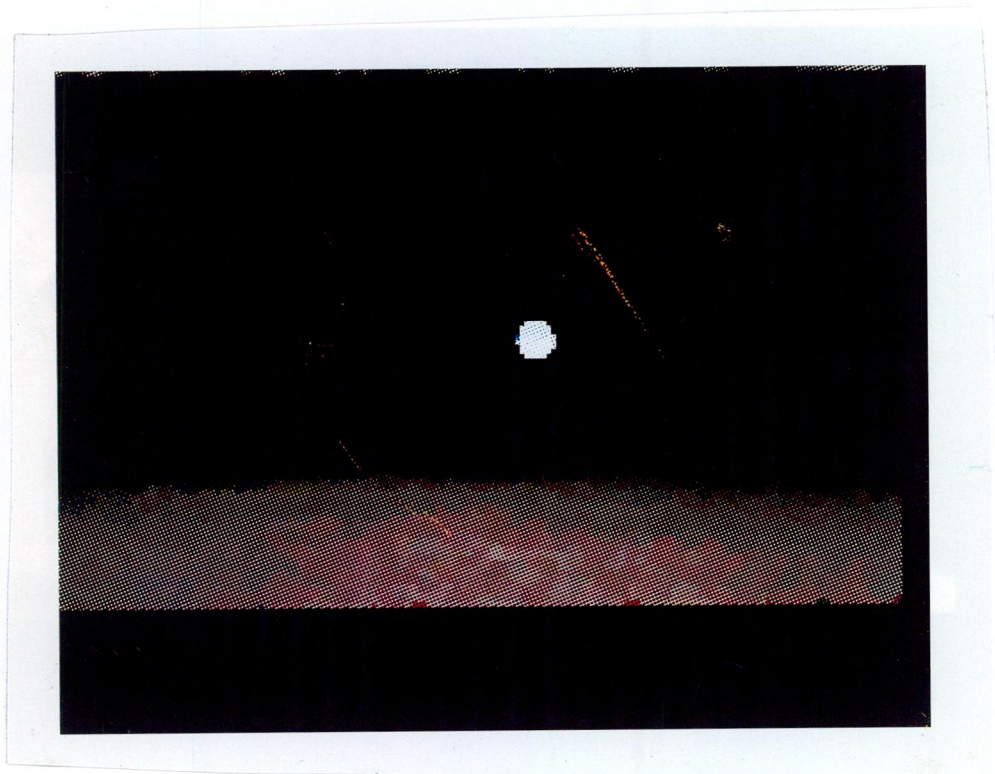
The fact that it is night-time in which Jacques swims adds more to an idea of absorption into matter. As such, night as nocturnal matter and water's matter combine, dissolving into one another to create a richer substance, a richer setting, which lends more sensuality to the scene. However, it is the presence of the moon in this image which adds a warmth to Jacques's

⁹⁴ Bachelard, 1983, p. 126

⁹⁵ Sprawson, 1992, p. 201

⁹⁶ Bachelard, 1983, p. 127

⁹⁷ Op. cit., p. 126



13. THE MOON SHINING DURING JACQUES'S NIGHT-TIME SWIM IN *THE BIG BLUE*,
1988

experience, a softness of light and a consequent passivity. Bachelard would equate these moon-lit waters as suggestive of a mother's milk and thus a feeling of well-being because of fond memories of such, arising.⁹⁸ Yet other associations may be drawn from the moon as a symbol. For centuries, farmers and sailors linked the phases of the moon to weather conditions, but also, more relevantly, the female, biologically.⁹⁹ Neuman considers the archetypal character of the moon as of "fructifying significance for the feminine."¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the union of the moon with water represents a union of opposites; of the male moon with female water, a sexual union. The cult of Isis and Osiris (see Appendix Two), the moon deities of ancient Egypt, is latent with water symbolism relating to sex. The Egyptians celebrated the union of Isis and Osiris in the annual procession of Phallegoria, which involved the carrying of a bowl of water (Isis) representative of fertilising moisture as well as the power of the moon, in front of an image of an erect phallus (Osiris). Year after year, the cult's mysteries were believed to be revealed through these icons of Isis as a power of regeneration and Osiris as the fertilising power. Those who understood the mysteries could, according to the cult, engage in a life that was renewed like that of the ancient and eternal moon. As characteristic of religion, the cult taught the idea of death and rebirth.

In innumerable representations, the out-stretched wings of Isis, a fundamental form of the Great Mother, embrace cover and shelter Osiris and, with him, all the dead.¹⁰¹

Suddenly in the inclusion of the moon as a symbol in this scene in the film, ideas of death and rebirth, more specifically of the mother archetype and death, appear. An overriding theme throughout the film of the paradox of water as mother and death is highlighted through symbolism of the moon.

As Jacques swims into the harbour, accompanied by his dolphin friend, Johana, cold and wet, is waiting. She stands like a dejected lover confronting her love on his return from a night spent with his mistress. She cannot understand the madness that is Jacques's obsession with the sea. She leaves to go back to New York as Jacques fails to verbally reassure her

⁹⁸ Bachelard, 1983, p. 120

⁹⁹ Croutier, 1992, p. 40

¹⁰⁰ Neuman, 1955, p. 141

¹⁰¹ Op. cit., p. 216

about how their relationship stands. When she is gone, Jacques is irritable. She has left him - and he does not know how to deal with it, as he had never really dealt with his mother leaving. In confronting Johana, the pain which he carries but always rejects stirs something inside Jacques. However, this something is connected to the mother archetype in his life, which makes our initial view of his relationship with Johana deceiving. For without an understanding of the theme of the mother archetype in the film, Johana "plays for light romantic comedy,"¹⁰² and her role is misinterpreted as trivial.

Jacques's second dream in the film is about dolphins, while his third dream in the film, after a reunification with Johana and intense sex, is of him swimming upwards, as if about to emerge (the sexual significance of such being explicit). However, this dream is about coming up to the surface which Jacques does not enjoy most when he dives. Johana grows deeper and deeper in love with Jacques, to the point that a smiling face of a young child in a magazine provokes the idea of motherhood as favourable and even desirable. Jacques instead is far from such a persuasion. When Enzo does not dive well, Jacques becomes moody. Obviously, Johana has not been the true answer to his discontent in the world above the water's surface. At this stage, the sea and her mermaid-like dolphins have won Jacques from Johana as Jacques becomes obsessive of the diving competitions.

The final diving competition returns the film's setting to Greece, from whence it began. Jacques and Johana's relationship now shows obvious strain. Jacques shows no consideration for Johana. When she feels sick and asks him to bring her some water, he does not hear her. It is as if he is in a trance. He has returned to the setting of his childhood. Followed by Johana, he walks down to the place from where he swam as a child, where his father drowned and where he developed a love for the sea equal to a child's love for their mother. In Bachelard's beliefs,

To love a solitary place when we are abandoned by everyone is to compensate for a painful absence, it is a reminder for us of the one who never abandons . . .¹⁰³

It is here that Johana, by jumping into the water, makes a deliberate protest against the lack of attention shown by Jacques to her. Ironically, here she

¹⁰² Strick, 1989, p. 74
¹⁰³ Bachelard, 1983, p. 116

announces that she is pregnant as Jacques swims around her as coldly as a fish, to cruelly employ the pun. Jacques's nature is evident, his despondence at her announcement is notably cold-blooded. Esther Harding, a physician and specialist in the treatment of psychogenic illness, considers mermaids in the same way one is to consider Jacques: "They cannot love, they can only desire. They are cold-blooded, without human feeling or compassion."¹⁰⁴ As such, Jacques, like this, is dispassionate at the news that Johana is pregnant. The deeper irony lies in the fact that his decision of total relentless devotion to the sea will leave Johana's baby fatherless, just as his own mother had decided to leave him. All this seems inexplicable and destructive of the verisimilitude of the film, unless we truly realise that the sea is both his life and mother. "The chronology of the heart is indestructible."¹⁰⁵ That is, although other loves will come in one's life, they will always be grafted onto the first ability to love. He is of another world, the world of water, where the maternal reigns supreme to the point of embrace by death.

Enzo's discontent with his world, no longer the world champion diver, after one last dive to attempt to recover his former glory, surrenders to the sea. Against the dictates of the medics controlling the competition, Enzo has dived. "It's much better down there, it's a better place, Jacques, take me back down," are Enzo's last words to Jacques as he cries over a dying body. Shots are interfused in this scene of Jacques's own father drowning. The ensuing associations are obvious. Jacques painfully drags Enzo's body back below the surface and lets it go. Its drifting off into a distance describes the vastness that is the Big Blue. Death as a returning to where one originally came from, to the elements, is an idea greatly exemplified by the Celts, in their tradition to bury their dead in the hollowed trunk of the maternally symbolic tree which had been planted at the deceased's birth and set them forth on water.¹⁰⁶ By such, Jung believed man's desire to be -

That the sombre waters of death may become the waters of life that death and its cold embrace may, by the maternal bosom, just as the sea, which, although it swallows up the

¹⁰⁴ Croutier, 1992, p. 26
¹⁰⁵ Bachelard, 1983, p. 116
¹⁰⁶ Op. cit., p. 72



14. HYLAS AND THE NYMPHS, JOHN WATERHOUSE, 1896

sun, give it new birth in its depths . . . Life has never been able to believe in Death. ¹⁰⁷

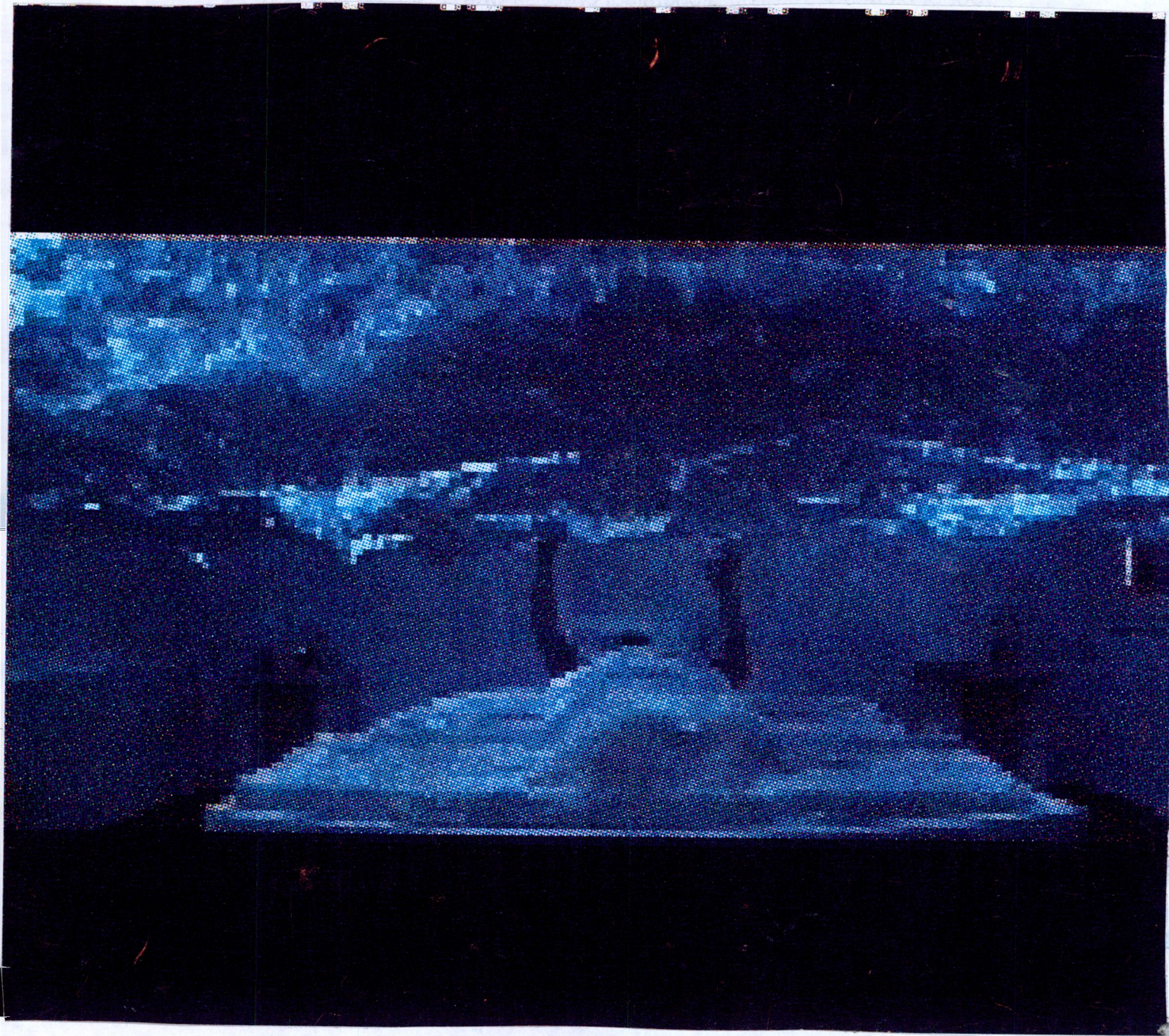
The term "solutio" in alchemy pertains to water. Water was considered to be of the womb and solutio as a return to the womb for rebirth. Solutio was the root of alchemy. ¹⁰⁸ The alchemical process was based on a very old method for extracting gold from crude ore. Thus, it is a chemical process adopted by the philosophers of the Middle Ages to present a picture of a descent into the unconscious which is the maternal womb from which the ego is born. ¹⁰⁹ Drowning is a synonym for solutio. The story of Hylas in mythology, telling of how Hylas, sent by Hercules to fetch water, was pulled into a pool by water nymphs and was never seen again, is a fatal example of solutio. As seductive mermaids or water nymphs lure men to death by drowning in mythological images, "love and/or lust are agents of solutio." ¹¹⁰ It is all about a dissolution into something broader, into the container of the archetypal feminine. ¹¹¹ Water in alchemical symbolism is represented "by a woman, a dolphin and the sea" ¹¹² - the fundamental elements of the story, *The Big Blue*.

Jacques's final dream portrays the ceiling above him visually transforming into a layer of water sinking down upon him until his whole physical being is absorbed into the water. This is undoubtedly the strongest of all his dreams, visually to the viewer as well as thematically, with its wealth of symbolism as an image. He swims among the dolphins and the viewer is brought along through the eyes of Jacques, to avail of the experience of the sense intrinsic to water. The film concludes with Jacques deaf to the final pleadings of Johana, tormented emotionally by her love for him, diving again in the symbolic night. Down deep in the "womb" of the sea, he leaves the blue light in favour of the enveloping darkness and his guide is a solitary dolphin.

Jacques has told Johana his story already during the film:

. . . to meet a mermaid, you go down to the bottom of the sea, where the water isn't even blue anymore. The sky is only a memory and you float in the silence . . . and you stay

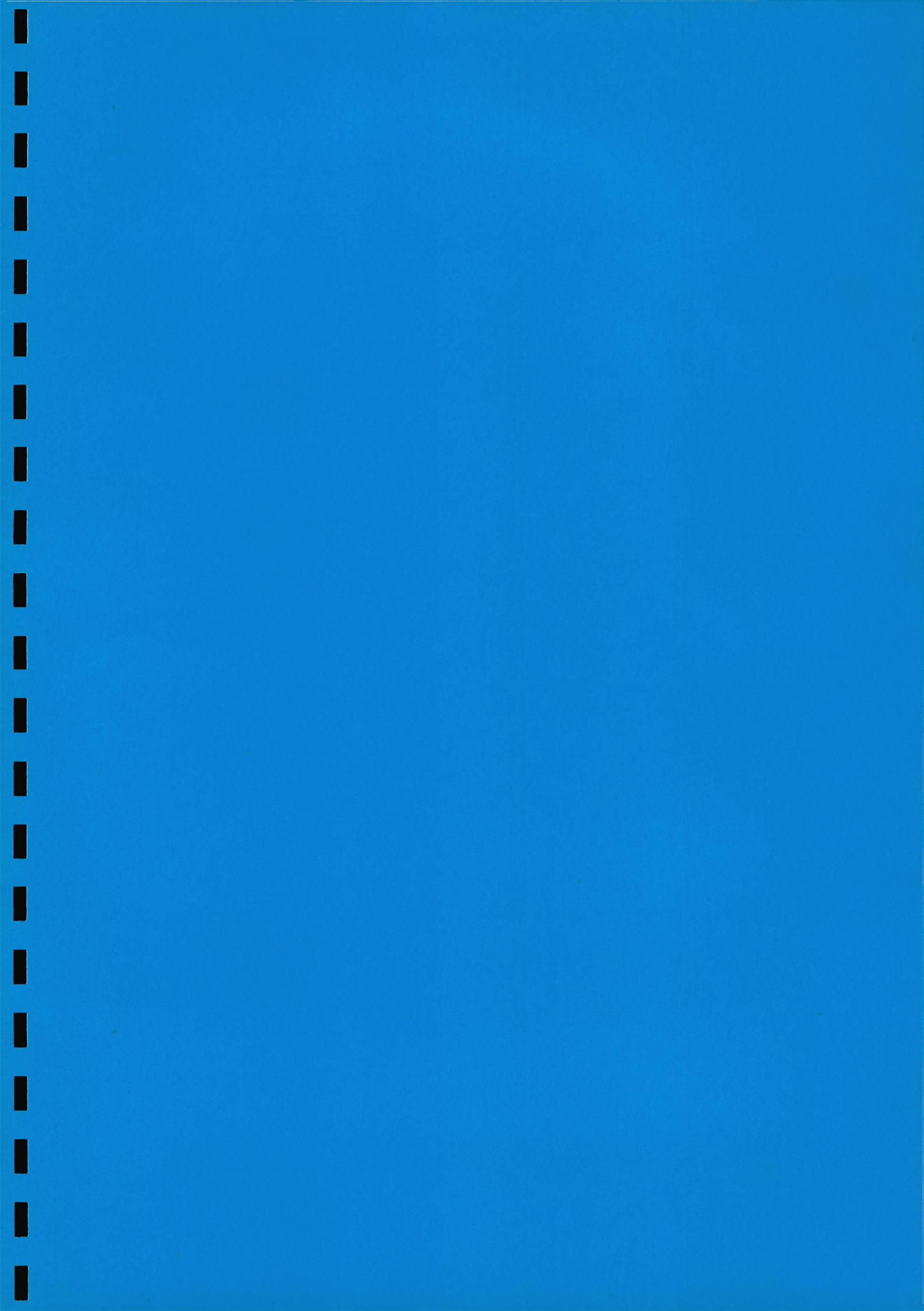
107 Jung, 1927, p. 225
108 Edinger, 1985, p. 47
109 Op cit., p. 48
110 Op. cit., p. 55
111 Op. cit., p. 59
112 Warlick, 1987, p. 63

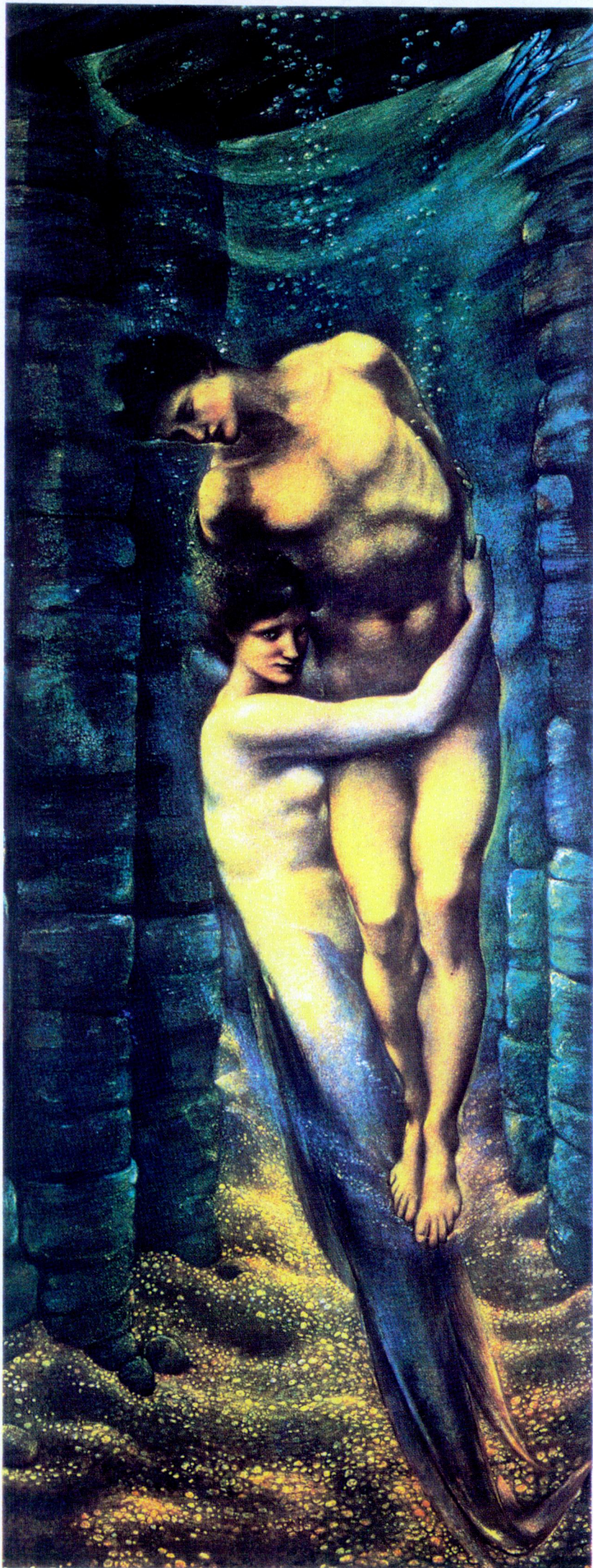


15. FINAL DREAM SEQUENCE IN *THE BIG BLUE*, 1988 (THE CEILING TURNS TO WATER)

there and you decide that you'll die for them . . . only then they'll start coming out. They come and they greet you and they judge the love you have for them. If it's sincere, if it's pure, they'll be with you and take you away. Forever."

As Schillers' diver in *Der Taucher*, he "once more accepts the challenge and never returns." ¹¹³





16 THE DEPTH OF THE SEA, 1887, EDWARD BARNE JONES

CONCLUSION

The Arte Povera movement, originating in Genova in the Sixties, turned its back on the current practices of formal imagination, away from the analytical subject, and toward the imagination of matter. Celant, a main contributor and commentator in the movement, spoke of the death and rebirth of art. This rebirth entailed "the acceptance and the search for a renewed unalienated, individual relationship between man and his environment."¹¹⁴

Process in Art became more important than the accomplishment of a finished product. It was an art that did not add ideas or things to the world, but one that discovered what is already there. The same description is true of the material imagination, which I became aware of through Gaston Bachelard, and the idea which I hope to have established in this thesis:

That water is a nourisher of the imagination. As matter, it relates to a material imagination. This imagination, as a primary image, is a creator of ideas and images, through its relation to the senses, as well as recollections. It precedes the formal imagination.

No linking of utility could justify the "immense risk of setting out over the water."¹¹⁵ *The Big Blue's* story of Jacques's reckless obsession with the sea is not explained by utilitarian interests either. The utilitarian attitude to nature, to the elements, dispels all the interest I have expressed in this thesis, relate to water. It is visionary interests that are totally responsible. To conclude, in the words of Bachelard,

These are the interests about which one dreams; they are not those about which one makes calculations. These are mythical interests. The hero of the sea is a hero of death. The first sailor was the first living man who was as courageous as a dead one."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Personal communication from Erica Cruttwell, who wrote an MA thesis on Water as represented in art and architecture, for the Chelsea College of Art and Design, 1993

¹¹⁵ Bachelard, 1983, p. 74

¹¹⁶ Op. cit., p. 75

LIST OF FOOTNOTES

- 1 Personal communication from Erica Cruttwell, who wrote an MA thesis on Water as represented in art and architecture, for the Chelsea College of Art and Design, 1993
- 2 Melville, 1961, p. 22
- 3 Bachelard, 1983
- 4 Op. cit., p. vii
- 5 Op. cit., p. 2
- 6 Peters, 1990, p. 214
- 7 Jung, 1961, p. 4
- 8 Bachelard, 1983, p. 3
- 9 Op. cit., p. 4
- 10 Peters, 1990, p. 214
- 11 Op. cit., p. 214
- 12 Neuman, 1955, p. 222
- 13 Jung, 1961, p. 4
- 14 Peters, 1990, p. 216
- 15 Jung, 1961, p. 5

- 16 Bachelard, 1983, p. 3
- 17 Jung, 1961, p. 6
- 18 Edinger, 1985, p. 9
- 19 Bachelard, 1983, p. 11
- 20 Op cit., p. 12
- 21 Croutier, 1992, p. 48
- 22 Dologus, 1988, p. 4
- 23 Eliade, Patterson. *Comparative Religion*, p. 88, from: Edinger, 1985, p. 58
- 24 Jung, 1961, p. 19
- 25 Edinger, 1985, p. 51.
- 26 Op. cit.
- 27 Op. cit., pp. 47 - 73
- 28 Freud, 1965, p. 500
- 29 Op. cit., p. 227
- 30 Faraday, 1972, p. 125
- 31 Bachelard, , 1983, p. viii
- 32 Op. cit., p. 16
- 33 Schwenk, 1965, p. 80
- 34 Bachelard, 1983, p. 193

- 35 Op. cit., p. 172
- 36 Balzac, *The Cursed Child*, Bachelard, 1983, p. 173.
- 37 Booklet accompanying the video, *The Big Blue*, Fox Video, 1991
- 38 Op. cit.
- 39 Jung, 1961, p. 322.
- 40 Op. cit.
- 41 Bachelard, 1983, p. 53.
- 42 Op cit., p. 6
- 43 Orcagno, 1993.
- 44 Bachelard, 1983, p. 2
- 45 Sprawson, 1992, p. 55
- 46 Op. cit., p. 212
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APPENDIX ONE

NARCISSISM

Narcissism became a metaphor for excessive self-absorption and self-love, to the exclusion of everything else. In a longer version of the story, a beautiful nymph (a divine spirit of female youth and beauty) named Echo had her voice denied her, as punishment for a former deed, leaving her with only the power to mimic other sounds she heard.

On seeing Narcissus, she fell in love with him, but he shunned her, as she was only able to mimic his words. Rejected and heartbroken, Echo faded away with grief into the water, nothing remaining except her echoing voice.

Narcissus, who continued to ignore all the other adoring nymphs, was finally punished for his self-centredness. On stopping to drink at a mountain stream, he spied his own image in the water and believed it to be a beautiful water spirit with which he fell in love. However, his reflection did not respond, so he pined away and drowned in his own image.

APPENDIX TWO

ISIS AND OSIRIS

Osiris, husband and brother of Isis, was trapped in a chest by his evil brother, Set, and thrown into the Nile. Isis went in search of her beloved, but in vain. Osiris's chest became entangled in the reeds near the shores of Byblos, where a tree growing in the marsh wound its trunk around the god's coffin.

This beautiful tree was cut down and became a pillar in the palace of the king of Phoenicia. Isis posed as a servant and reclaimed the coffin. But this time, Set dismembered Osiris into fourteen parts and threw them into the river.

Isis was able to retrieve all the parts except the phallus, which had been consumed by a fish. She put all the pieces together and, through her divine sorcery, fashioned a golden phallus, upon which she lay, conceiving their child, Horus. Afterwards, she buried Osiris's parts at Philae in Egypt, which became a centre of pilgrimages.

Much of Christian water symbolism was gleaned from the cult of Isis and Osiris, the moon deities of ancient Egypt. This cult spread throughout the Roman Empire and, at one time, had as many followers as Christianity.

APPENDIX THREE

ALCHEMY

Although alchemical writings are complex, confused, and even chaotic, the basic scheme of the *opus* is quite simple. It is as follows: The purpose is to create a transcendent, miraculous substance, which is variously symbolised as the Philosophers' Stone, The Elixir of Life, or the universal medicine. The procedure is, first, to find the suitable material, the so-called *prima materia*, and then to subject it to a series of operations that will turn it into the Philosophers' Stone.

Alchemy is defined in Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary as:
The infant stage of chemistry, its chief pursuits being the transmutation of other metals into gold, and the elixir of life. It is variously explained as the Egyptian art, the art of *Chymes* (its supposed inventor), or the art of pouring.