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NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

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**"PATRICK GRAHAM - AN EXPLORATION OF
SPIRITUALITY AND CONSCIOUSNESS"**

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	6
CHAPTER ONE: "Coming to Terms with Spirituality and Consciousness".	10
Deals with definitions of Spirituality and Consciousness and how they are relevant to, and manifest themselves in the work of Patrick Graham	
CHAPTER TWO: "The Light at the Journey's Source and the Self".	23
Discusses Graham's life in terms of a journey, encompassing Heidegger's philosophies in relation to death. It deals with light, dark and silence in Graham's work and the concept of the Self and the Artist.	
CHAPTER THREE: "A Terrible Beauty is Born"	49
Examines Graham's art in relation to the process involved in making the work. Graham's basic humanity is deliberated over as are the fundamentals of content, colour, aesthetics, language, as well as drawings, sketches and paintings by the artist. Specific paintings, primarily from the " <u>Lark in the Morning exhibition</u> " are referred to in the context of the above topics.	
CHAPTER FOUR: "A Difficult Homecoming".	83
Surveys archetypes of the unconscious mind as well as symbolism, particularly in relation to theories of Jung and Freud. Probes into the symbols of the psychic vessels of containment such as the cup, chalice, heart and boat imagery. It looks at consciousness and sexuality. This Chapter uses illustrations also, referring in this case to archetypes and symbolism within the imagery.	

CHAPTER FIVE:	"Roots, the Journey between Worlds; Modernism, Postmodernism, Ireland and America"	105
----------------------	--	-----

Examines how Patrick Graham's art relates to contemporary art practice, his religious and political influences and orientation along with a sense of spirituality and consciousness in America and especially Ireland. It looks at the concept of the Irish psyche.

CONCLUSION		114
-------------------	--	-----

APPENDICE:	Interview with Patrick Graham in the artist's studio, Firestation Building Buckingham Street, Dublin 1.	116
-------------------	---	-----

BIOBLIOGRAPHY		130
----------------------	--	-----

LIST OF PLATES

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| (Fig. 1) | "Requiem for Roses" |
| (Fig. 2) | "Study for the Blackbird Suite"
(Plain nude drawing No. 3) |
| (Fig. 3) | "Study for the Blackbird Suite"
(Plain nude drawing No. 5) |
| (Fig. 4) | "Study for the Blackbird Suite"
(Plain nude drawing No. 2) |
| (Fig. 5) | "The Lark in the Morning 11" |
| (Fig. 6) | "The Lark in the Morning III" |
| (Fig. 7 & 8) | "The Blackbird Suite" |
| (Fig. 9 & 10) | "The Blackbird Suite" |
| (Fig. 11 & 12) | "The Blackbird Suite" |
| (Fig. 13) | "The Life and Death of Hopalong Cassidy" |
| (Fig. 14) | "The Lark in the Morning 1" |
| (Fig. 15) | The Song of the Yellow Bittern" |
| (Fig. 16) | "The Blackbird Suite" |
| (Fig. 17 & 18) | "The Blackbird Suite" |
| (Fig. 19) | "Set Keel to Breakers" |
| (Fig. 20) | "The Captain's Hill: Heart 2" |
| (Fig. 21 & 22) | "The Blackbird Suite" |
| (Fig. 23 & 24) | "The Blackbird Suite" |
| (Fig. 25 & 26) | "The Blackbird Suite" |
| (Fig. 27) | "Study for the Blackbird Suite"
(Plain nude drawing no. 1) |
| (Fig. 28) | "The Legend is this" |

INTRODUCTION

This study of Patrick Graham, his sketches, drawings and paintings, was sparked off by a visit to a recent exhibition of his paintings in the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, entitled "The Lark in the Morning". The exhibition ran in this venue from the fifth of September until the fifteenth of October, 1994. It then travelled to the Crawford Municipal Gallery in Cork.

Initially, my intention was to explore the work of a contemporary Irish artist within the context of Spirituality and Consciousness. Patrick Graham appeared an obvious choice as his work embodies a deep sense of both of these lines of inquiry. As one of the leading artists and certainly one of the most well regarded and recognised within modern Irish art practice, I found a wealth of information relating to his work. This included newspaper reviews, interviews, catalogues and books on the subject. I also found access to magazine articles on Graham's art.

In order to find a primary source of information I conducted an interview with Graham, in his studio in the Firestation Building in Buckingham Street, Dublin. I found him very forthcoming and informative in relation to the art process and his working method along with insights into the ideas and influences surrounding the work. The quotes within the forthcoming chapters are from this interview with Patrick Graham, unless it is otherwise specifically stated after the quotation.

The text of the thesis is broken into five chapters, each one emphasising and highlighting what I see as incorporating key elements and aspects of Graham's art. Indeed, often they are aspects which Graham has in common with the work of any contemporary artist working in Ireland today, or with the greater international scene.

I chose to emphasise unequivocally spirituality and consciousness because these are elements which I feel have come to the fore in twentieth century art practice, along with an increasing interest in science in a general sense. Such interests give a larger scope to the creative individual. Issues such as psychology, feminism and philosophy are part of a wider interest and concern within the alienated psyche of the twentieth century. Graham's own interest in philosophy, especially in the work of Heidegger is examined as it is important to his personal conception of spirituality and consciousness, as is the work of Kirkegaard also.

The Chapters follow each other in what I regard as a logical sequence, each one broadening out on basic ideas I feel are of relevance. The individual chapters highlight specific areas, but there is not a large enough expanse to adequately reveal all that is important within Graham's art. That is why it zones in on the major themes and areas of importance.

The first chapter aims to identify the importance of spirituality and consciousness within our society and within Graham's art. It also explores what is meant by the use of these terms, especially in relation to Graham's images.

Chapter two highlights Graham's use of the terms light, dark and silence in relation to his images. It looks at the artist's life, his experiences, influences and the relation they bear on the work itself. The concept of the Self is examined, as is the equation of Graham's working process with a journey of consciousness and the possibility of spiritualistic ideals.

The next chapter concerns process, content, context and language and identifies specific images, especially those from the recent Douglas Hyde exhibition, "The Lark in the Morning".

The fourth chapter examines archetypes, symbols and the unconscious collective and also examines images, in relation to the icons contained within them such as the chalice, the heart and the boat, which are considered vessels of containment. This chapter endeavours to illustrate how such icons relate to religion and sexuality and thus spirituality and consciousness.

The final chapter deals with concepts of modernism, Postmodernism and culture and the effects they have on the Irish art psyche. It examines how the twentieth century is one in which culture has been under stress morally, aesthetically and spiritually. The Irish and American contexts are also identified.

Like his images, I would like this study of Graham's art to reflect more than just a purely biographical aspect of the artist's life and work. Rather, it seeks to establish possible links between concepts, interests and key elements in the

consciousness and psyche of twentieth century culture such as the self, religion, spirituality and the role of the artist.

CHAPTER ONE: "Coming to terms with Spirituality and Consciousness".

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference" - (Robert Frost - "The road not taken").

Perhaps in the case of Patrick Graham it was never a question of which path to choose, but rather, one of necessity, perhaps a subliminal calling, in a sense, leading to salvation. For Graham, now, art and life are part of an intrinsic, inseparable whole. He states in "a letter from the artist",

I had always known in some unlearned way that the few made art, and the rest made pictures. For reasons of my gift, and others hinted at there, I could not make a choice as to which road I should travel. I was too young and gifted. What this gift offered and presented drowned this truth in noise. It may surprise you to know that I never did make this choice. The road opened and I had no choice either way.

(Rutberg, 1989, p.5).

One way or another, a decision was made, conscious or otherwise - a decision which lead to an engagement with aspects of truth, spirituality and consciousness, and indeed, the need for banishing self consciousness in a general sense.

Although Graham's work transcends fashions and fads in the art world, he has nevertheless spoken of Spirituality at certain times, relating it to his own work. Recently, in an interview with Brian Fallon, he criticized those who use art as a means of expressing socio-political or psychological attitudes in a general sense;

Every age has its subject matter, but it's not that which lasts. A little while ago everyone was talking about 'spirituality', and before that it was feminism, and in the seventies it was mostly political, and so on. All these shooting stars as I call them, who come out of art school and blaze a trail for a while then vanish - all they can do is talk about their ideas and painting is craft before it is anything else.

(Fallon I.T., 1/9/'94)

So Graham's own subject matter comes from his ability to respond to his own (and others') humanity, which he believes is the secret of his work. He says, in an interview, "I am not in the prison of what other people's view of what art should be, so therefore I am more likely to make good art rather than fashionable art", while in the same interview he also says

no opinionated bastard has the right to tell me about the fashionable idea of what art is or is not, when I am trying to explain something more seriously or more humorously.

(O'Byrne, 1983, p. 12)

Before a logical discussion on the merits (or otherwise) of the presence of spirituality and consciousness in art can be attempted, one must firstly come to some definition of what is meant by these somewhat general terms. Firstly, it must be understood that terms such as "consciousness" and "spirituality" are not universal, but rather, they are specific. "Spirituality" is an important dimension which needs to be examined in the use of the term. Dictionary definitions of the terms are vague - for example "spiritual" is defined as "having to do with the spirit or soul: sacred: having to do with the church". Similarly, "conscious" is described as "aware of oneself and surroundings; aware of having knowledge". So too is the literal definition of "consciousness" unclear - "feelings, thoughts, mind in its widest sense: awareness: the working state of the mind".

Although such definitions appear somewhat general and vague, nevertheless they are specific in a certain sense, in that the terms relate to conceptual developments, and as such, any examination of their interrelation must address the conventions and structures which make it meaningful to speak of them at all. An extension of this thought process leads one to acknowledge that the actual existence of "ideas" themselves are only to be located in the social processes of language, communication and interaction. Ideas are part of, and bound up with the whole process of social communication.

Consciousness can, of course, exist without a verbal system. Evidence can be seen from animals, who also rely on sensations. As Harth says "it can be shown in fact that events can be simulated or thought about without recourse to language". (Hearth, 1985, p. 196) Undoubtedly "mind" and "consciousness" enter into questions of the Universe at large, but also on a more personal level, as is the case with Patrick Graham. A quote by Harth may shed some light -

The human observing any part of nature becomes part of the dynamics of what he observes. This is not just due to the physical procedures he employs in his measurements. Even his prior knowledge affects the state of the physical system he examines.

(Harth, 1985, p. 203)

So too, does Graham become part of what he observes, - part of the physical and emotional sensations he encountered as a boy, as a student and as a mature artist. People all too often confuse the man with the art he produces. Yet the man makes the art and naturally his experience will inevitably colour his performance,

but at the same time the paintings themselves should be looked upon as free-objects if they are to be appreciated in the most acute sense.

Works such as the "Blackbird Suite" have the resonance of an altarpiece, often engaging the observer without them being aware, drawing one in and leading the audience into a type of intellectual encounter with the work. Graham's trick, and this is where the success of his work lies, is that in his relative lack of ambition, (for he is not trying to tell the history of the world in any particular painting, just one small part of one person's life, his life); he approaches truth and honesty. Graham paints in order to nourish his own personal psyche. He speaks in terms of a specific "Irish psyche", but it seems that in modern times and with the advent of "Modernism" and "Postmodernism" which followed in its wake, that the consciousness and spiritual beliefs of people has changed. Zohar speaks of "Modernism" forcing people "willy-nilly to live in the age of the existential hero - defiantly indifferent to the dead God, becoming makers of their own values and guardians of their own conscience". (Zohar, 1990, p. 3) She follows this up quite rightly by saying that for this experience a high cost has had to be paid out, both in terms of physical and cultural uprootedness.

This leads back to the question of conscience, morality, religion and spirituality. These states of being can exist independently of each other, but in a wider sense man needs them all. It is possible that art has a role here in acting as an interface between them. Mankind is becoming increasingly aware that human consciousness is part of the organic whole of our universe, while "Mysticism" and

the "Occult" can be seen as drawing parallels in some respects, but once again we need to pin-point what these terms signify.

It is indeed questionable whether "spirituality" is an accurate means of describing inner expressions, whether it is possible, (or indeed practical) to translate into words, expressions which rise above the use of language. Indeed, terms such as "Occult" and "Mystic" may serve a better purpose. "Mysticism" is seen as a kind of transcendental knowledge, which unifies experiences of everyday life, which otherwise appear to be unconnected. Religion is turning towards experience and intuition rather than its previous concern with symbols. Although "Spirituality" does not necessarily have to have a direct link with religion and indeed much of our culture carries on without much specific reference to either, it is nevertheless a worthy topic of discussion in any examination of Paddy Graham's art.

Graham looks into darkness to find light. He speaks of lighting a match in the "silent" blackness. He gives his own interpretations of "Spirituality" on a personal and universal level;

We live in hope of spiritual truth, which is to know that there is no truth worthy of retaining. To know the impulse to truth, to the journey, to the ultimate revelation in death, is to give one only this knowledge ... In this notion of there being no truth in a spiritual context and that there is a moral truth in a world context, lies the hinge perhaps of where history ends and the allness of presence is.

(Hendriks, 1985)

It seems "Spiritual" is perhaps a somewhat old-fashioned word, at least, it has its roots firmly planted in history. Lipsey claims "only in spheres of religion and the history of religions is the term current, although it has no specific meaning in

academic analysis". (Lipsey, 1988, p.7). It nevertheless highlights the divide between "egotistical materialism" and religious thought. It is a term used often to describe a person, like Graham perhaps, who is in tune with that undefinable "something else", a higher power. Graham's art speaks out with more sincerity, honesty, unpretentiousness, truth and wisdom than is the common experience. Afterall, as he himself says, "you don't crawl on your hands and knees for years without learning something about the ground, picking up mud". (Hendriks Gallery, 1985). From the depths of despair and years of alcohol addition comes truth -

For many years I denied myself the reality of being a stranger. Being born with a sense of real truth, losing it, and finding it again leaves me knowing a bit about both sides.

(Hendriks Gallery, 1985)

Spirituality, in Graham's case is a "looking beyond" ourselves, or indeed more deeply within ourselves to find the answers, in order to find the truth, for many people, in modern society do not inherit "Religious" or "Spiritual" traditions. This was not Graham's experience, the child of his age, but very much the child of a Catholic Irish upbringing. It is precisely the religious tradition which he did inherit which is the source of much of his imagery. The strong religious content of much of his art is deeply rooted in his Catholic childhood in rural Ireland, where there was a strong Catholic ethos which lead to a conflict between mind, soul and body.

For most people a sense of the "Spiritual" only arises in times when a person is in the midst of experiences involving overwhelming ugliness or beauty. Graham,

too, has experienced his share of ugliness in the sense that he has experienced "continuous loss", but also "beauty" -

there have been two or three transcendent moments in my life when I ceased to think of myself ... you realise that pure love is within you ... one of the most beautiful things in life is the giving of self to another person.

(Hutchinson, 1987, p. 20)

The "Spiritual" can also be grasped at in times of fear or love, in the midst of fear or loneliness. Graham speaks of despair coming from self loss -

When I talk about absolute surrender in relation to my work, it can seem like a horrendous notion, but a loss of self-will combined with an awesome sense of - for want of better words, some sort of 'God experience', is what I'm trying to achieve. When you succeed you either die or you experience an alternative reality. Now, I could be talking about magic here, but all I can say is that I find in that search a tremendous source of continuity and revival".

(Hutchinson, 1987, p. 16)

Often it is a certain sense of the futility of a situation, a feeling that "this can't be all there is" that spurs the individual to look beyond their present situation. As Lipsey states - "beyond, there may be a void: whole sections of modern literature address the perception of a profoundly unwelcoming void". (Lipsey, 1988, p. 8). Graham has, in his time, suffered, and his art is his way of responding to that suffering. Existentialist literature and the work of Samuel Beckett for example (he himself Irish), shows suffering and death, but also a search for affirmation of the importance of life through its brief and harrowing media. Graham's work, too, displays a grim type of Irish humour, instilled in the Irish consciousness and

psyche, humour relieved by flashes of insight, warmth, human compassion.

A quote by Lipsey defining the 'Spiritual' is interesting in that, although somewhat romanticised, he mentions suffering and death as being part of the greater whole -

The essential message is that we live in ignorance and pain, but great and healing knowledge exists, that we sleep and could awaken, that we experience ourselves as isolated but could discover that we are participants in a large and grandly meaningful whole. The message suggests that suffering and death are included and eventually transcended within the greater whole which preserves us and however impersonally - wishes us well.

(Lipsey, 1988, p.8)

Joseph Beuys was a believer in the theory that life and death make up a unity, a "whole". He considered his own illness to have a spiritual significance, emotions being purified as a result. Illness, in his view, is a spiritual crisis in life, old experiences can be reworked into positive forms as a result. Beuys believed that through suffering a higher "Spirituality" would evolve. It could be said of Graham, that, in a sense, his own illness, despair and suffering was a type of journey or pilgrimage through which a higher spirituality would evolve. He says "I am a novice at faith really, but then in that dark I can glimpse, or am given light which reveals the journey". (Hendriks 1985). He claims "I learned an awful lot through drinking - a kind of spiritual dimension and I suppose the foundations of courage". (O'Byrne, 1983).

Graham talks of his artistic ability in terms of a "gift", but so too is his sense of the spiritual, which reveals itself through his work, in that it shows an intellect which transcends above pettiness. Lipsey speaks of the pilgrim, who, after finding new insight, sees it soon fading and so is left wondering, in doubt as to whether there is reason to continue in the wake of something which cost so much and only lasted a short time - "who but a fool would collect moments of vision and coherent being, when he obviously needs permanence". (Lipsey, 1988, p. 9) This is the pilgrim way of life. This could be said of Graham's life. He knows that what causes him unrest is not all that exists, that there is something beyond it and that although there are moments of beauty, there are also those of undeniable suffering. These impressions become part of what Graham knows to be true and yet he speaks of transcendence as being

based in the belief that when you despair of finding truth, you're actually only despairing about received and conditioned truth, which has trapped you into a kind of reaction. And that itself is governed by fear. That despair was thrown at me through alcohol.

(Hutchinson, 1987, p. 17)

Yet, it is often too easy to jump to hasty conclusions just by examining theory and trying to apply it to a perhaps unwilling subject. Graham himself is wary about interpretations of his work - "of course, everyone is an amateur psychologist now, and they all feel qualified to analyse painting and tell you what your work is really about. " (Fallon, Times, 1/9/94). Nevertheless analysis of certain elements of Graham's work from a psychological perspective is fruitful when talking in terms of consciousness. As Paul Funge said in "a broadsheet",

art affects us whether we like it or not, consciousness is the common denominator of humanity, art is the expression of consciousness. It is the great leveller of humanity.

(Regan, 1986, p. 16)

Thus, as well as the artist being witness to his own consciousness, he is also a witness to the "Universal consciousness" at large. Holists, like David Bohm, are not keen to compartmentalize aspects of life and matter into separate boxes, believing instead that everything is related. This leads them to believe that there is a link between physical states in the brain with conscious / mental states.

This type of thinking manifests itself in Western thought in the "Great Chain of Being" in which man, as a microcosm echoes the macrocosm, where each small piece of reality contains the whole. David Bohm, the eminent quantum physicist says "the source of everything is unfolded in the whole. The ultimate source might be called God, although it could never be a personal God". (SDU publishers, 1990, p. 55) He thinks that an awareness of what contemporary man is "actually doing" is what is truly spiritual, and also claims that compartmentalization, is "constantly promoted by what he calls 'thought'" (SDU publishers, 1990, p.56). For him, creativity is essential for all life, not only for art or science. He says of the scientist,

he even uses criteria such as beauty and symmetry to help decide which theory he wants. The scientist cannot capture the whole cosmos in thought. In his mind he makes a kind of microcosm, which we see as an analogue of the cosmos. In this way we try to get a feeling for the whole. The artist, I support gets a feeling for the whole some other way.

(SDU Publishers, 1990, p. 58)

I use the example of Joseph Beuys here once again to illustrate a point. He has said, "the basic production then is the quality of human consciousness and human thought "(Wijers, Pijnapple, 1990, p. 7). Graham's art comes from somewhere inside the creative mind, it stimulates the intuitive artistic mind, but also the intellect. Beuys described intuition in these terms -

intuition is none other than that which we understand as thought, but it is a superior form of thinking, an enlarged consciousness in which one realises man is free.

(Wijers, Pijnappel, 1990, p.7)

In a sense Grahams art connects two worlds, the visible and the invisible, the physical and the spiritual. Beuy's thought processes seem similar to that of Graham. Beuys sees religious activity as "the thought process which surpasses everything" while

experiencing the mythical as concrete is what it is primarily all about. But without a widened concept of art and a widened concept of science, a concrete religious understanding is entirely beyond the reach of discussion. Naturally no-one can produce the entire truth by himself.

(Wijers, Pijnapple, 1990, p. 7)

Graham, of course does not seek to discover the "entire truth" but rather his own personal truth, through his creativity. Creativity has been seen as the reason for man's humanity, his very existence from a religious view-point especially. Zohar notes

this capacity of living systems spontaneously to make ordered relational wholes is, I think, the basis of all creativity by extending these insights to consciousness itself to the source of our mental, psychological and spiritual life .. we begin to see the origins of higher forms of creativity.

(Zohar, 1990, p. 12)

Graham, as with any other artist, through his work, is discovering himself through his creativity and becoming more himself, thus he is in a "constant mutually creative dialogue with his environment", as Zohar also notes "this creative self-discovery has its roots in the physics of consciousness which is utterly different from the physics of a machine" (Zohar, 1990, p. 175)

Creativity, like intuition, acts under certain laws of its own origin in creating genius. It is debatable whether or not genius cannot be lawless, that it acts creatively under laws of its own origin. Certainly Graham himself, whether or not "genius" is a term appropriate or indeed applicable in this instance, undoubtedly acts according to laws of his own origin. Despite the fact that an emotional response to the subject is in evidence in much of this artist's work, he does not, however, approach his work emotionally. This is a guideline which steers Graham along his journey of exploration. It is a well-thought-out and preconceived decision.

Both the artist's appetite and his intellect, together leads to a release of pure creativity of the spirit, in its longing for some kind of beauty. But it is not beauty in a purely aesthetic sense that concerns Graham - for he does not seek the aesthetic end, although despite himself there is inevitably a certain aesthetic quality in evidence. Rather, it is the creativity of the spirit that passes through the senses. Creative intuition is born from the deepest depths of the intellect. What is essential is a reflective intelligence alongside a critical reasoning. Maritain claims that art has become conscious of itself in the last century to an

unprecedented degree and that it is poetry that is at the centre of this self-awareness, causing the artist to be loyal to his own particular vision. (Maritain, 1981, p. 71).

Patrick Graham combines his poetic vision and his reflective intelligence alongside his ability to reason critically in order to come to terms with both spirituality and consciousness on personal and Universal levels. The slight shift in direction of his recent works in 'The Lark in the Morning' exhibition illustrates this point, where the viewer is confronted with such concerns in an almost sub-conscious manner. The notion of spirituality is subtly dealt with because Graham believes that to consciously bring about some sort of "God-experience" in his work would be inviting disaster, therefore he avoids it.

The recent shift in direction in the work seeks to slowly move towards the real concerns. It is a slow process and one which Graham questions all along the way, while the artist patiently waits for the answers to be revealed. As Benthall states, since the whole cosmos cannot be captured through experiment or inquiry, it more important to note

the directions in which the artist moves in (is) at least as important as the individual statements which record the track he has taken.

(Benthall, 1972, p.153)

CHAPTER TWO (Preface)

"There is much to be said about journeying. Each posits the virtue of a migrant mind tired of the old ideologies and hungry for some 'other place', some utopia where they could meet strangers who would let them be, be themselves ... disillusioned with the 'hard ideologies' which have defined us according to a single, unadulterated 'identity' ... this new generation of Irish artists affirms the positive value of confusion, uncertainty, homelessness, migrancy, questioning, questing for 'another place' ... it is a place more local than the nation, more communally experienced - one not circumscribed by abstract statues or boundaries".

Richard Kearney
(Kidd 1991, p.8)

"But I believe I'm after truth, and that the journey is a very murky one - you're always having to turn the light on things you don't understand or like"

Patrick Graham
(John Hutchinson Interview, 1987)

CHAPTER TWO: "The Light at the Journey's Source and the Self"

We shall not cease from exploration and the end of our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

(T.S. Elliot, "Four Quartets")

Painting, Patrick Graham claims, still invigorates him, although not in the way that it once did. He avoids getting locked into one particular notion in a painting, seeking to both stimulate himself and the public, shunning the idea of not allowing oneself to abandon one particular creative endeavour. For Graham painting is a kind of exploration, a certain probing into concepts; those of humanity, spirituality, consciousness, truth, light, creativity and it is not incongruous to suggest that a certain kind of philosophical thought is in evidence. Indeed, neither Graham nor his art could be described as dull or apathetic. His images transcend the boundaries of both style and syntax in that they are used to express a vast array of human values.

The study of human values and human behaviour comes under the heading of philosophy, which also incorporates the use of reason and argument in seeking truth and knowledge of reality. It may also be defined as a personal rule of life. Graham has considered whether his art has any philosophical basis. He is of the opinion that, whereas at one time philosophy had some bearing on his work, nowadays he claims his concerns lie in creating an image, in finding something in his work that engages him. At one stage Graham sited the works of Heidegger, Martin Buber and Kierkegaard as having had affinities with himself. He said "I

began reading philosophy and after reading maybe one or two pages I knew what they were talking about, especially like Martin Buber, Kierkegaard and a number of others" (Regan, 1986, p. 65). Graham also asserts that

there was a time when I knew bucketfuls and skipfuls of shit, and if anything, all this philosophical wisdom is telling you you know fuck-all because everything you do keeps telling you that the last painting is no longer relevant.

This inclination of Graham's to strive for a clean slate, so to speak, in his approach to a new work, while to a certain extent carrying over old baggage, seems reminiscent of the quote by T.S. Elliott at the beginning of the chapter. It is clear that Graham has undoubtedly learned a great deal, both from his own painting and from his time as an apprentice to Dermot Larkin. He has discovered a means of finding what his personal psyche is searching for. His single year spent in the world of advertising in the mid 1960's was enough to allow him to acknowledge that such an activity was against the grain of what his psyche sought. All of this wisdom serves to nurture his art, but as he so aptly asserts, although this is indeed vital, it is how you articulate what you have learned that is consequential;

now as long as you have these internalised tools, what you know about colour, what you know about drawing, what you know about composition; so, what are you going to do with it?

This is an artist who would be more comfortable with the concept of philosophies of life, as he affirms "I would have political views. I'm not some kind of artistic

zombie". Although he may have views and rules in his personal life, these do not necessarily penetrate his images. Graham claims that although at times he may feel passionate or angry about a topic he nevertheless debates whether it is appropriate to use as a subject matter for his art. He says of his passion "I will sometimes let that breed into art, I can't help that. But I will stand back from it and say O.K. I hope I'm rid of that now I'm not dealing with that, I'm dealing with art".

It is not only philosophies of life that concern Graham. He also holds philosophies of death as being of relevance, as are ideas of existentialism. Graham maintains

"I believe in death just a little more than I believe in life ... and while something still unknown may be projected in mind as dislocating and full of dread, the soul waits in expectant anticipation"

(Gandon editions, 1992, p. 26)

It is not too presumptuous to suggest that the philosophical ideas of Heidegger came to the fore in the notion that death is of supreme significance, permeating all aspects of everyday life. Graham also identifies with aspects of existentialism as he puts it - "I identify with Beckett's notion of going on .."

Existentialism is a philosophical theory which emphasises the existence of the individual as a free and responsible agent, determining his or her own development. Danah Zohar makes an interesting point in relation to choice and free will, illustrating what may be drawn out of consciousness and here parallels can be drawn with existentialism:

It is our essential freedom, the fact that each choice we have made is only one of several choices that we might have made, which makes rebirthing possible and which gives the individual a crucial role to play in the gradual evolution of consciousness - the gradual increase of ordered relational holism as manifested in the worlds that we make.

(Zohar, 1990, p.184)

So according to Zohar's theory, everytime Patrick Graham makes a mark on a canvas, rebirthing is possible as is the evolution of consciousness and holism. This is possible because the artist has made a decision, conscious or otherwise about the direction of his art, the particular journey the image will take.

Graham does not define his art in terms of a spiritual journey, he does, nevertheless concede that it is a journey. In reply to the question of whether or not he deems his art as a kind of path or a spiritual journey he answered

well if it's a journey, it's mostly downhill ... what, painting? As a means of self-discovery and knowledge? Absolutely not. When you're dealing with painting as a physical, mental, rational, intuitive, as you call it, act all your life, it really tells you you know fuck-all ...

He admits to its being a journey which endeavours to evaluate the notion of "new" and also hints that it is not entirely a conscious act on his behalf, but rather at times the act of painting and having full control over what he paints is an unconscious decision. He states

everything happens in this exquisite present I only find in those odd moments when my ego, my sense of the world is beating the shit out of me by the painting, when I fall into the painting. A wonderful sense of "I don't know whats happening" and then you're coming back and struggling and trying to make sense. This is not therapy or religion or anything else.

For Graham the act of painting is not spiritual in a purely religious sense, however the unconscious act could relate to magic. As Graham himself says in relation to absolute surrender in his work-

a loss of self-will, combined with an awesome sense of some sort of 'God experience', is what I'm trying to achieve. When you succeed you either die or you experience an alternative reality. Now, I could be talking about magic here.

(Hutchinson Interview 1987, p. 16)

This sense of an "alternative reality" can manifest itself also through mysticism and the occult or Tarot, forms of magic in themselves. Individuation involves a sort of spiritual or "God experience". Individuation, in the sense of the search for wholeness and totality that each person seeks, relates to Graham's art. Here both positive and negative elements are joined, matter and spirit, materialism and spirituality, consciousness and unconsciousness, intellect and intuition, dark and light, silence and noise.

Similarly, Occultists, in an attempt to retrace steps to the source of their own being often seek a higher vision of the self which supersedes the more limited scope of the ego, and the process of spiritual transformation begins. This type of exaltation of the imagination, it is hoped, will lead to a purification of the personality and a spiritual state of consciousness. Graham transcends the ego on his journey and he too reaches a spiritual state of consciousness. In the twentieth century it is common for artists to consider the metaphysical implications of both

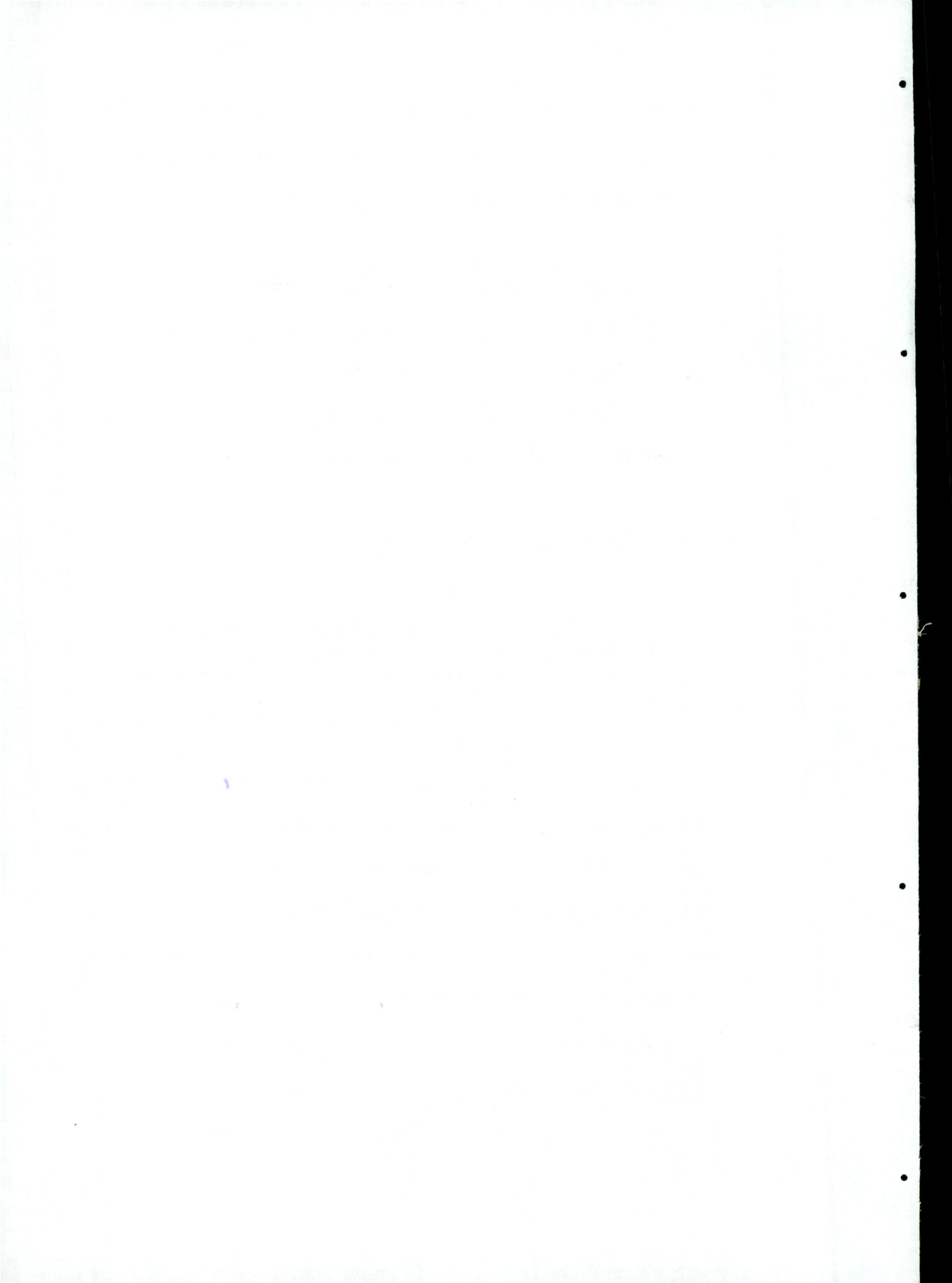
their lives and art. It is not uncommon for an artist to adapt the role of the mystic. Through the creativity of the artist it is possible to link both the realms of the conscious and the unconscious, as the mystic does.

Spirituality, magic, the occult and shamanism all involve elements of both consciousness and unconsciousness as well as a journey and a process of self-discovery. What is the journey that Graham speaks of, if, as he claims, it is not a spiritual path? It is undoubtedly an ongoing process and is similar in some respects to Ozaniec's discussion of initiation into the Tarot. She says, "we do not utilize initiation as a springboard into the spiritual life ... we do not value the spiritual goal". She consequently adds

Initiation is not an event but an ongoing process of events. Once begun the process is self-motivating and self-feeding. Initiation is the journey into self-discovery, the path of personal growth, the way to awaken.

(Ozaniec, 1994, p. 5)

Graham, however, remains slightly cynical of mysticism and shamanism as forms of spirituality. It is only the superficial aspects of it which parallel Graham's own sense of the spiritual and unconsciousness. He states "for religion or spirituality - we have shamanistic mysticism .. for sensuality - safe sex .. I think we like this because we do not really believe in death; we know it exists, but for another time" (Gandon ed. 1992, p. 26). Graham, on the other hand, concerns himself with the present. However, parallels may be drawn between this "initiation" and Graham's art in that both are an "ongoing process". Graham's journey involves the ongoing process of making marks, the process of establishing key colour -



ranges as well as content. The journey is nevertheless often a struggle.

Graham's deep need to continue painting one day at a time and for "one more day", day after day, reflects in his work. Tomorrow is but a vision, a vision of hope for the future. Although death is in evidence in his philosophies, manifesting itself in his paintings and despite the fact that many paintings draw a narrow distinction between the regions of heaven and hell, there is nevertheless amongst the confusion a continual search for rebirth. It is this search for rebirth which makes Graham's art full of hope, or "darkly romantic" as he himself suggests.

Death and Rebirth is the sixth archetype of the Tarot in the journey of transformation. It can signify crisis and revolution, terms which symbolise transition between depression, despair and optimism. The twentieth century has witnessed the separation of entities and mankind has become scared of its own mortality. Graham, on the other hand is not afraid of death and faces it head-on, but like the sixth archetype, as his ideas change, he is in effect reborn into new levels of consciousness. "Initiation represents a quantum leap in consciousness" (Ozaniec, 1994, p. 50). Other archetypes, too, bear relations to Graham's art, for example that of the self, feminine, masculine and the journey.

Of relevance to Patrick Graham's journey and his indications of a search for hope, is the following; "when occultists describe the inner journey of the psyche they commonly refer to such terms as 'astral projection', 'pathworkings' and the

'body of light'". (Drury, 1982, p. 49). Although Graham undeniably is no Occultist, his "light" and search for it may be discussed in relation to the inner journey of the psyche. He claims that, for him, a painting has to open up to him like a flood of light, "now when you've finished the canvas it looks like a 12 watt bulb, but at the moment it's a flood of light". He has said "we're all essentially moral, and, like all living things, we naturally turn towards the light". (Hutchinson, 1987, p.17). Light, however remains, though intangible at times, at the end of a long, winding tunnel.

Graham has spoken of his formative years as an artist and as a student at N.C.A.D. and his transition from college and its comparative uncreativity for him, to the world outside. The source of his journey began at a vulnerable stage for Graham, when he was to find light, hope and inspiration from an exhibition of Nolde's work. It was at this point that Graham could view his time at college as a form of "intellectual arrogance" on his part.

It appears that N.C.A.D. regarded the young Graham as a sort of prodigy, at least Graham maintains that there he had an "incredulous following" both from the student body, his fellow classmates and also amongst his teachers, some of which included McGonigle and John Kelly. Graham is of the opinion that he was "too young and gifted" to make a conscious decision regarding his career. Fortunately for him he pursued his own personal path, a journey which often led into a vacuum, a void, a darkness, and a sense of the spiritual, which N.C.A.D. and its teaching methods could not provide him with.

Emil Nolde provided the young Graham with a glimpse of light, hope for what was possible. He was to have a profound effect on Graham, who wrote in "A letter from the artist"-

In my heart I loved and dreaded this stranger. I knew he was the stranger I wanted to walk with in those times when I allowed the truth to come from secret places. He would be there, somewhere in the irredeemable dark.

(Rutberg, 1989, p. 5)

An exhibition of Nolde's works undoubtedly influenced the young Graham. At that time he was considered to be engaged in a constant battle within himself and his psyche, wrestling with his own personal demons in the darkness. It was quite a revelation to witness these demons being tamed in the work of Nolde. This was someone to whom he could relate. Graham claims he changed after visiting Nolde's exhibition as it subverted the notion of conventional skill. The light he had once thought was in sight, disappeared, and in its place was a new source. He reflects - "I escaped into the light that dawned when I found people applauding my brilliant draughtsmanship. It dissolved though when I saw Nolde's work. I realised the light was as false as it could be". (Hutchinson Interview, 1987, p. 17)

Graham's work has often been connected to Expressionist art. Indeed it is his own concern with the human element that allows him to hold the work of the German expressionists in esteem. He has respect for their work because they are generous to their own humanity and admires their "vulnerability", which, he

maintains, he does not see as being "weak". They had, he contends, "a humanity, an understanding of the deeper side" (O'Byrne Interview, 1983). It is this provision of such an insight into the human condition which is the key element in the success of expressionist art.

During the 1960's the artworld witnessed the coming of age of a strong generation of Expressionist painters in Ireland. Among them were figures such as Michael Kane, Patrick Hall and Brian Maguire. These were a group with which Graham himself was linked although this labelling was often quite inappropriate. It is indeed a vast oversimplification to include Graham in a definition of Expressionism as an ego-centred maelstrom. His work is not purely autobiographical. For him content is a secondary issue. He is not interested in placing himself and his emotions centre-stage, as he claims that to do so would be "an exercise in self-adoration, where painting is just comment, or opinion or confession or whatever".

Graham's images differ considerably from McAvera's opinion on Expressionism, who thinks that, "with Expressionism the ego-centred, angst ridden, let-it-all-hang-out nature militates against anything other than a general registering of social disquiets". (McAvera, p. 89) There is a far greater depth to Patrick Graham's imagery than a definition of a "general registering of social disquiets" would allow. Indeed the same holds true for the majority of those who may be defined as Expressionists. These artists, many of whom are male, address issues of sexuality, life and death, with insights in many cases which stem from direct

experience. They give vent to their frustrations and anxieties, many of which stem directly from their gender.

In contrast to the energy and vibrancy of Expressionist art is the work of Della Francesca, who, as Graham claims, is "not there to tell me about himself" (Gandon ed, 1992, p. 18). He does not subject himself to the "ego-centred, angst ridden, let-it-all-hang-out nature" which McAvera speaks of, and it is for this that Graham holds his work in esteem, as he does his other heroes Grünewald, van Eyck, Goya and picasso. These provide a source of light and inspiration for him which serve to nurture Graham's journey. Graham speaks highly of Della Francesca's sublime faith and silence, which are the reasons he values the art, "in his contemplative presence there is described that transcendent potential in every human heart .. it whispers to the heart and soul and leads one into eternal space". (Gandon ed. 1992, p. 18)

These artists are acclaimed by Graham (and he speaks particularly highly of Goya in this respect), because of the Universality of their imagery.

Contemporary painting, although bringing about a revolution in many respects, is nevertheless intrinsically bound to painters of the past. Indeed it is conceivably legitimate to view Della Francesca, for example, as a predecessor or precursor of many of our present notions in painting, not least those of spirituality and consciousness, the present unshackling of the poetic sense in painting and the notion of the journey, light and the self in art. Graham, at any rate, has found

a continual source of inspiration and guidance from the painters of the past.

If it proves unproductive to draw conclusions from information gleaned from Graham's background, it is nevertheless fruitful to examine Graham's discovery of Giotto, Mantegna and Della Francesca. Indeed, despite all we know of Patrick Graham's background, of his mother's tuberculosis, his upbringing by his grandparents, his years of alcoholism and visits to mental hospitals, it is not a fruitful avenue of exploration in assessing whether any of it bears any direct relation to his work. To claim that it did would be naïve. It would be merely supposition. Afterall Graham claims he does not paint his own personal history. However, it is legitimate to claim that the aforementioned artists, Giotto, Della Francesca and Goya all bear a very direct relationship with Graham's work. They are a source of light and inspiration in the chaos of the present.

Light in relation to Graham's work refers not to daylight, but, rather to a light that is sometimes Spiritual, often unconscious, always in evidence to some extent. It is hope. Graham does not view his paintings in what might be considered a "negative" light. Even his colour scheme, which some may deem muddy,(F. 1) to him appears like a jewel. He questions himself as to how to make his colours

f 1. *Brian Fallon described Graham's palette as "muddy" at one time, but more recently he refers to it as being "close", moody" or even "dour".

(Irish Times, March 22nd, 1990)

"sing like a lark", instead of being muddy. He says of his so-called "dull" colour - "I love that with all my little heart because there's colour in it that nobody sees and it's thought about ..." It is evident, however, that Graham sees the colour, for it is within himself.

His philosophy is, he claims, that newness, and originality and honesty to oneself can only be found in the dark. Thus, instead of claiming his paintings are positive and full of light, he prefers to term them as "darkly romantic". He makes an interesting insight in stating

"Anything that's of any use to me is found in the dark side of life. It's an underground engagement, Aidan Dunne called it a 'subterranean activity', but it is".

Thus the "known element of experience" is of no interest to Graham who feels that such a second-hand idea or experience is of little importance. Graham would rather seek out images or ideas from his subconscious than illustrate the obvious. He exalts what he defines as a "beautiful falling" which only occurs on the darker side of life, when you learn something about yourself. Patrick Graham regards it as: "the beautiful falling where you sometimes catch a glimpse of something .. and it's then you find a kind of humility about the whole notion of what you do, of how inarticulate you are".

A notion of truth and humanity comes out of the blackness. He claims that it is from the darkness that "truth came shuffling, grunting and bleeding into view".

(Rutberg, 1989, p. 5). He defines truth from the basis of reason and experience.

He sees it as a "revolutionary" experience. It has the ability to, he claims ,

give you wisdom if you have faith in it and the ability to analyse it. Truth is the most exciting thing I know, because it won't stand still .. it is impossible to define. Perhaps truth is a series of events that you know will lead to some ultimate truth in which you have faith, but of which you have no intellectual understanding.

(Interview Hutchinson, 1987, p. 17)

Humanity is bound up with Graham's notion of truth. Both are concerned with personal qualities within the individual. This is the reason why he holds the work of the German Expressionists in high regard. They possess humanity and truth, the two major concerns of Graham's art. Graham too possesses these qualities, along with an understanding of the darker side. The journey through this dark cavernous process and method of coming to terms with himself, leads Graham to a greater understanding of himself, his creativity, poetry, intellect and aesthetic values. Above all, it is only on this underworld journey that Graham's personal light can be sought. Truth and humanity do not appear out of the blue but must be looked for. Heidegger puts forth the notion that truth is not to be assembled from what is merely present and at hand as an object, or from what is ordinary. He finds it in "the opening of the open and the clearing of the being come-to-pass only when the openness, which so makes its advent into Dasein's thrownness, is projected" (Kockelmans, 1985, p. 187). Graham too, holds the notion that truth cannot be assembled from what is at hand. A deeper search is required, a search

into the very essence of being, of the artist and the notion of the Self.

PART TWO

In his introduction to the "Yahoo" catalogue, for the Lincoln Gallery in 1981, Patrick Graham made the following statement;

my painting at this time is concerned with the conflictual no-man's-land between two realities. The "I" reality of being in the world as against the "not-I" reality or spiritual sensation of a hidden "I". In this first and most obvious of realities I am confined to paint in physically obvious and objective terms, with the very humanity my being presents, as against the spiritual "I" which only silence observes.

(Hendriks, 1985)

Graham continues by suggesting he is a "satellite" between these two kinds of reality, between what may be deemed conscious, subconscious and what may not, between ego and consciousness.

In this statement Graham refers to several of his major themes or influences. He speaks of a "Spiritual sensation" within himself as against a more materialistic notion. He talks of two conflicting notions within himself, within the artist as self. He mentions, too, silence, which for him is, inextricably tied to a sense of the spiritual. He claims he paints in "objective terms". A beneficial and rewarding route of exploration within Graham's imagery is to examine how the artist deals with the notion of the "Self": self-esteem, consciousness and self-consciousness and how the artist applies this.

Jung would have us believe that everything in the unconscious seeks outward

manifestation, not lest the personality. Elements of Graham's personality evolve subliminally in his work. The images themselves are a manifestation of a kind of synthesis of previous experiences and processes. Graham burrows into the depths of his personal psyche in his journey. The conscious act itself, of painting, reveals elements of the repressed unconscious. The personality itself contains both conscious and sub-conscious elements, it evolves out of a conscious condition to experience itself as a whole. It embraces the sub-conscious.

There has been conflicting opinions on the notion of the advent of the self in the Western tradition, as opposed to that of the East. Maritain sets forth a highly debatable view, that Western art passed from a sense of the human self first grasped as object, to the human Self grasped as subject, or as he says, in the creative subjective of man, as man the artist. (Maritain, 1981, p. 21).

The following stage in the development of the notion of the self in the Western tradition, (according to Maritain,) includes figures who have influenced Graham. These include Duccio, Fra Angelico, Giotto, French and Spanish Pieta's, as well as Grünewald. Christ is of major importance at this stage and the self comes to the fore in the manner of an object. Of this stage Maritain contends

Soon it will feel lost in its human loneliness, when the sacral order of old Christendom dissolves and man begins seeking in a hostile earth a place for his newly discovered autonomy. And we shall contemplate the dances of the dead, and the great "existentialist" distress of the late fifteenth century.

(Maritain, 1981, p. 21)

Graham, in the twentieth century, seeks his autonomy and contemplates

existentialist ideas. He possesses a sense of self-government in his work in avoiding fashions. He would, however be wary of talking in terms of "self-discovery" and "personal growth", as he claims he does not deal with "Confessional Expressionism" and that painting as a craft comes first. Graham differs from his contemporaries in that he faces the notion of the "self" head-on, he faces the reality. For him, painting seems an emotional means of dealing with the self, although he does not engage in a struggle with it in the manner of Anselm Kiefer, for example. Graham manages to maintain a certain degree of harmony and continuity between inner and outer vision, as an artist. Nevertheless a private self exists, unknown to most, within Graham. It manifests itself in his work. Of his former days the artist says

in my private world there existed an innocence of God and of Beauty, a magical belief in nature. My Holy Trinity so to speak, was God, nature and a secret self receptive to a vision not to the eye, but of a sensual engagement that saw from within.

(Hendriks, 1985).

The notion of the Self, for Graham, is connected to a sense of the spiritual, or a "God experience" as he calls it. This is not an uncommon opinion. Haeckel believed in the State Monism, a kind of Spiritual level where mind and matter were one, a notion which conflicts with Joseph Beuys' opinion, (F. 2), for example. Haeckel did not distinguish between the natural and the spiritual sphere, but rather claimed that harmony was intrinsic to the world and that man was needed to fit into its particular framework. For him the universe existed on one

F2 Beuys believes in mind over matter

level. The "real world, the object of science, can be truly known only by experience and pure reason". (Bramwell, 1989, p. 43).

One may conclude that for Patrick Graham a notion of the self and the spiritual can only be truly known through experience and a reasoning process. The self represents a unity of subjectivity and objectivity, it is the ultimate unity of internal reasoning. It is the free self, representing consciousness and unconsciousness. The very core of the personality is the consciousness that takes place in self-awareness and self-esteem. Self-esteem for Graham comes during the painting process itself. The artist, while painting and creating bears witness to an awesome sense of unity within himself. A moment is reached where everything is understood. But as the moment passes, there is already hope for the next image taking its place, a new chance to prove and strive to find a truthful means of expression.

The self is the centre of the psyche within the individual. Symbolically it is represented in terms of wholeness such as the philosophers stone, the butterfly, the mystic rose or the mandala. The search for the self lies at the heart or core of the journey, particularly the spiritual journey. It has been suggested that

the self and the world have become one through a mysterious journey of transformation. We cannot become identified with the self, the centre of pure consciousness unless we are willing to undertake the journey.

(Ozaniec, 1994, p. 44)

Along the journey the artist gives birth to himself as a creative being and in a

sense becomes more himself through a process of coming to terms with, and learning about himself. Graham, through his art, realizes a whole new dimension of consciousness which rises above a purely conscious, intellectual, cerebral level. Graham's imagery shows evidence of imagination and poetizing. The term poetizing does not refer specifically to poetry as an art form, but rather to a much more broad concept - that in which all art forms; and especially painting in this context, find their essential quintessence.

Graham's poetizing, for it may be seen as such, makes language possible. Heidegger claims that the poet stands between the Gods and men, in the domain of the holy. This arguable, if not somewhat lofty notion, claims that the essence of art is poetizing. Between 1929 and 1943 Heidegger explained how what he called "genuine thinking" can be reduced to a response to the address of Being. (Kockelmans 1985, p. 197). This notion of the address of Being has affinities with the notion of the self, thus poetizing in Graham's art has parallels with both.

Kant implies that the core of poetic eminence can be understood from the power of the imagination. Graham's art undoubtedly possesses evidence of imagination. He speaks of his childhood in terms of "uncluttered, undamaged openness" and seeks out the truth in his poetizing. Although much of his discussion about his imagery and indeed the work itself has poetic qualities it is nevertheless possible to argue that at times Graham hides behind language. Despite the fact that he is wary of others labelling his art, he often uses this as a ploy himself. For example, he is sceptical about the use of the term "intuition" in regard to his art.

He says "we've all nice words for how we protect ourselves and there's ... well, intuition is not quite right, there's no rationale to it, therefore it's suspect". Graham has, at times, used language as a deliberate barrier between the audience and himself, both on the surface of the canvas in his stream - of - consciousness method of writing on the two-dimension surface and also in his discussions on his work. All of this serves to make his paintings both accessible and remote. He does not yield the secrets held within his paintings easily. It could be said that he adopts an intellectual stance as a form of self-defence.

While both the critics and the audience will inevitably hold some counsel with an artist's statement, one should not be prepared to accept every caprice without some degree of questioning. An open-minded opinion is necessary. There are always the cynics who regard art in monetary and materialistic terms, regarding this, rather than its true worth in the spiritual sense, as its primary value.

Robert Hughes makes an informed, though somewhat deficient (in the sense that it appears undiscerning) statement. It refers specifically to the 1970's, but its applications are reminiscent of the present day. He holds the view that

The price of the work of art now becomes part of its function. It re-defined the work - whose new task was simply to sit on the wall and get more expensive. by the 1970's we were getting to the point where everything that could be regarded, however distantly as a work of art was primarily esteemed, not for its ability to generate aesthetic pleasure, but for its convertibility into cash.

(Hughes, 1980, p. 383).

Hughes accused Beuys of using his depression and social anguish to his advantage in so far as it became a legend for his fans. He added "for them, Beuys' wartime

sufferings has joined Van Gogh's ear in the hagiography of modern art". (Hughes, 1980, p. 381) . Some may feel that this is not applicable to Beuys and even less to Graham. Graham's art and its true worth transcends the materialistic value.

As he himself says,

I know what I need from art, and I know very well what I could want and desire from it and give it to myself and therefore give it to the public and maybe get more money than I'm getting now. But I know what I need from it, which is a different thing entirely and I need to go on just one more day.

Patrick Graham is an artist who tries to remain true to himself above all else. He is aware of the conscious and unconscious factors which have an effect on this.

He says

But to be yourself in all this is impossible, if you try to be as near the truth of this moment of unconsciousness, yeah, that's about all that's left. You know, in a world full of images and magazines and things about art, there's nothing left but five minutes of unconsciousness where you can potentially be yourself and grasp your own sense of the world. After that the struggle is to reshape this art.

This statement is particularly interesting in that Graham declares that his grasping "a sense of the world" is an unconscious rather than a conscious decision. He implies that after the initial moment has passed he continues to "reshape" this act from a conscious perspective. His images are an accumulation of both a cerebral and an aesthetic activity.

Although it is arguable as to whether the practice of art is principally a psychological activity, nevertheless one may concede that its value would be

destroyed entirely if it was solely regarded as a purely cerebral activity. Despite the fact that the material of Graham's art and his handling of it could be traced back to his personal life and background, this does little in enabling us to understand his art any more clearly. Such analysis strips art of its inherent value and brings it to the same basis as analytical psychology. Art would then be treated in the same manner as a neurosis is analyzed.

Carl Jung makes an interesting observation in noting that if an artwork is defined in a similar manner as a neurosis, then either the painting is a neurosis, or a neurosis is a painting. He affirms that although

a work of art arises from much the same psychological conditions as a neurosis. This is only natural because certain of these conditions are present in every individual and owing to the relative consistency of the human environment are constantly the same, whether in the case of a nervous intellectual, a poet, or a normal human being.

(Adler, Fordham, Read, 1966, p. 67)

Neurosis and psychosis is often attributed to infantile relations with parents, but in the case of the "normal" person, or an artist or poet, there are many common denominators between them, which makes it impossible to attribute a broad, general theory to any of them. Similarly, in an examination of any personal scandal or deviance from what is considered the norm in an artist's life, we turn away from the proper objective of the artwork. Here, the risk is run of labelling the artist as a sexual psychopath or to adopt some other such irrelevant terminology.

Graham asserts the need for a concentration on a conscious level, while he also

finds that to feel physically well is also a requirement, as he says "I have to feel physically well to paint effectively". (Interview, Hutchinson 1977, p. 16). While the process of making art is a chain of free decisions on both a conscious and unconscious level, the spiritual incorporates both subjective creativity and the intuitive impulse. This manifests itself in the process, in deciding what colour - scheme to use, or how to make a mark, for example, the artist must make a choice. In this process Graham moves from what is potentially possible, to the realisation of his own particular vision, his selection from all the various possibilities in his psyche.

It is evident that many theories are required before one can even start to come to terms with the complexity of the human psyche. Biology certainly has an input into the relationship between the unconscious process and what is seen as the activity of the unconscious mind. However biology on its own is not enough. Even the most original ideas do not drop from the sky, rather they grow from an objective network of thought. This process is similar for all artists and so binds Graham to his contemporaries.

Graham's process was perhaps not a case of courage in his abandonment of what he calls his "gift", but rather out of what he saw as a necessity, an unconscious decision, one in which he felt he had no choice, no input one way or another. In answer to the question as to whether he could see his imagery taking off in a new direction, he replied "yes sure, but that's not choice, that's simply out of necessity or out of evolution. It's simply that as a creative person I'm bored easily". An

examination of Graham's "gift" is useful when looking at the idea of self-esteem.

It is in struggling to bring order, "order out of chaos" as Graham quips, that a creative being gives birth to themselves and to their morality or spirituality, to a new dimension of consciousness. Although art develops an inner strength in man it is in some ways separate from morality, being linked to intellect and creativity instead. Meaning, in the sense of reality, may be seen as fundamental in defining consciousness and here we see pure humanity. Kitaro contends

Since the fundamental act of the establishment of this kind of consciousness is the act of aesthetic consciousness, pure humanity becomes the content of aesthetic consciousness. Hence there can be nothing artistic apart from the "purely human". The a priori of art is the a priori of pure consciousness. The understanding of the essence of art must be sought herein.

(Kitaro, 1973, p. 14)

When discussing aesthetics in relation to a Patrick Graham image, it must be clear that "making art" or just "pretty pictures" is not what is the subject. Although Graham certainly does not set out in any conscious manner to produce an aesthetic object, there is nevertheless an aesthetic quality about every image he creates. It is always evident in his style, the colour ranges, or in his draughtsmanship or handling of paint. It is an unconscious act of creation which rises from the artist's "Self" and creative intuition.

In any examination of Patrick Graham's art one should be aware primarily of the art itself rather than content as such. Creativity takes precedence above anything

else. It is of paramount importance. The free-will is in evidence in this process as is Graham's stream-of-consciousness method which stems from his regular use of language and writing in a painting or drawing. It is important to gain an insight into conscious and unconscious processes and methods in an examination of any artist's work, not least Graham's. For here we see an artist who works in darkness to find light, his personal light, in order to deal with, not his history, but himself, his personal demons and his own psyche.

CHAPTER THREE: 'A TERRIBLE BEAUTY IS BORN'

In the more vulnerable of conditions one is more likely to arrive at a moment of truth in the making of art, of being an artist, rather than the other, the conditioned act of being about being an artist.

(Graham "Hendriks" 1985)

The Painting process is innate, almost in bred into Patrick Graham's life. It is a very substantial element of his life and his art. He began to come to terms with himself as a whole person only when he began to arrive at an understanding of his art and his intense need to create images. Through his work Graham gives vent to emotions within himself, a combination of furious and painful lashings-out at the painting's surface. The images often bear witness to forces beyond the artist's control, and compassionate as they often are, they are also full of pain, humanity and loneliness. The canvas and it's surface bears the brunt of pent-up anguish as Graham continually rails at Catholic and sexual repression, as well as the general tyranny which is deemed pervasive in contemporary society.

For Graham, painting is primarily an exercise in understanding his own humanity and that of others. He is a "humane" painter, and is affected by life surrounding him, with it's suffering, pain and isolation, and concerning himself with human feeling and emotion above any degree of emphasis on intellectualism. He contends the notion that

where life and the soul, art and intellectualism are sealed in containers of ideologies, dogma and aesthetic laws not validated by my spirit of innocence, I will doubt. Doubt is my ultimate act of survival, my ultimate act of faith.

(Hendriks, 1985)

Creativity, in Graham's case, hurts, although not in a physical sense, for Graham needs to feel physically well in order to paint effectively. Rather, it causes emotional pain at times. Through dealing with his own humanity as an artist, in his work Graham also reaches out to touch his audience. Humanity acts as a common denominator. He speaks of a "unity of self to the world and self to goodness or Godness". (Hendricks, 1985) He adds that, as a consequence, a chasm exists between what he paints and experiences and the ultimate sense of truth the world holds for itself.

Graham's work is not only a realization of the self, it explores what is possible. It shines a light on oppression and its' complex subject matter highlights the existence of problems within Irish society at large. The imagery itself is dredged up from a combination of both personal and human dramas, where issues of identity and faith are explored. The imagery, in this respect, is rooted in the common experience, the routine. Heidegger holds the notion that

a work is actually at work only when we remove ourselves from the ordinary and common routine and move into what is revealed by the artwork, while inviting and urging our own coming-to-presence itself to take a stand in the domain of the truth of beings.

(Kocklemans, 1985, p. 190)

Graham's work is rooted in what may be defined as the "routine" in an Irish context. Although this is the case, that is where the parallel with Heidegger's declaration ends. It is precisely a link with the ordinary in Irish society that is reflected in Patrick Graham's work which urges the viewer's own coming to presence to "take a stand in the domain of the truth of beings". Therefore, Graham's painting is not only at work when the audience removes its gaze from such imagery. Rather, the imagery itself works on the viewer, provoking an emotional response to the work. Heidegger's quote does not allow for such a close contact with an audience. On the other hand, Patrick Graham's art is at its most successful when there is a passionate engagement with the viewer, allowing for a sense of identification with society's oppressed.

Graham's working method, too, involves a passionate engagement on his behalf. Indeed, here he is almost obsessional. There is a sense of the paintings being borne of necessity rather than from pure pleasure. The surface quality and Graham's urgent relationship with the paint itself bears witness to this particular characteristic. The paintings, though, are not the emotional splurge they appear at a casual glance to the untrained eye. They are deceptive in this respect. In fact, much of Graham's method is deceptive and remains so to those who do not linger long enough to witness its full manifestation.

He has spoken, on various occasions and at some length, about his working method. He suggests his aim is to create a sense of energy when beginning an image. This artist draws a distinction between facility and talent within the

painted image. Although there are parallels in the energy they create, or the time that goes into the process for example, the two, however, must not become confused. There is a distinct difference between them. Becoming proficient in an area is purely an academic exercise and in many respects is meaningless. Dexterity is not the same as talent. Graham alleges "I was to find art and the difference between facility and talent. I know what facility is, it is about 5% talent; talent is the whole person". (O'Byrne interview, 1983)

It is Patrick Graham's considerable talent which gives rise to the final worked-up image. Before the final manifestation, several stages must firstly be arrived at. Prior to working on canvas there are the initial sketches and keying-in of colour ranges. This method of making perfunctory work is part of the painting process for Graham. His paintings are arrived at, they do not just simply "happen"; "out of the destruction comes the final painting". (Hutchinson interview, 1987).

In many ways, Graham presents us with a somewhat stereotypical view of the artist, rising from strength to strength, due to luck, hard work and talent, primarily. His paintings, coming from destruction, are grasped from the hands of despair into the light and truth. Graham's success lies in his method of obscuration and revelation. Hope is revealed through the often obscure and dimly lit underground process. Graham's images are racked with agonies, conceding nothing, and yet the pain of the journey is visible in Graham's face. Alongside the humour and self-mockery comes a sense of pain which belies the surface mask. Yet Graham is not one to allow himself, or to show, self-pity. Rather,

he engages his time in an exaltation of imagination which leads to a purification of the personality. Instead of becoming bitter, Graham achieves a spiritual state of consciousness through his own creativity, although at times he is wavering between states of either confidence in his ability, or doubtfulness and despair. While at N.C.A.D., his personality acquired a mythic quality, following this he assumed a virtually anonymous position within contemporary Irish art. Later, he ranged from the famous to the heroic.

Graham tries desperately to come to terms with himself and his own experience, his own emotional life. He throws his heart and soul into his works and yet they are never subjected to becoming merely hold-alls for what are considered controversial "issues", being too rooted in the personal for such a likelihood. They manage to avoid becoming a showground for contentious debate. Graham's art derives from a passionate engagement with the totality of experience. To a certain extent his works are self-conscious and they appear to draw attention to themselves because of the fact that their meaning for the public at large derives from the drama that the audience finds itself engaged in. As Michael Kane says in an article in "In Dublin" in 1978; "the purpose of this drama is to draw attention to ourselves and the need we too have to authenticate our existence as individuals and units in a collective endeavour". (Lincoln Gallery, 1984)

In other words Graham's success lies in his ability to be true to himself ultimately and to the inward nature of experience. It is out of this experience that Graham achieves his ambition of reaching out to the inwardness of others.

Evidence of self-expression manifests itself in "Victims". Here is a conflictual boundary between what may be considered the traditional constraints of painting, and the need for a more personal mode of self-expression. In a painting such as this, a co-existence evolves in both the content and the formal elements intrinsic to the working process itself. It is in a work such as "Victims" for example, that such terms as "faith" and "despair" can be best exemplified. The spectator can see evidence of, and relate to, Graham's claim that

creativity is destructive of myths and delusions. It is urgent, moving and it hurts. It shakes condition and conditioning to the roots. It liberates us from the supposed and presumed and its workplace is in the dark of our being. For this one only needs faith and despair.

(Hendriks - 1985)

Such Spiritualistic concepts are reminiscent of Anselm Kiefer, who, along with Beuys for example, saw the artist as a shamanistic figure. Aidan Dunne declares that the artist, in the role of the newfangled shamanistic figure, the contemporary medicine-man curing social-ills, is in touch with the spirit world. He claims that the artist possesses a primitive state of consciousness and asserts that, as such, the artist is capable of "regenerating worn-out societies". Dunne further elaborates by alleging (although in the context of Michael Mulcahy's work) that "the artist is an adventurer who sets out across uncharted regions of consciousness". (Dunne, 1994, vol. no. 30. p.21). Despite the fact that this statement bears a direct relationship to Michael Mulcahy's paintings, the same holds true for Patrick Graham. Graham's work comes from the darkness, the void. It is, however, transcendent. It is more than an egotistical painted space. Graham's continual

soul-searching poses the same questions over and over again. The same concerns are introduced in a new manner, a variation, repeatedly.

Patrick Graham is not an artist who could be described as being on an ego-trip. A rhetorical question Aidan Dunne asks of Brian Maguire certainly could not be said to have any bearing on Graham, who undoubtedly concerns himself with more than building up his own self-importance. Dunne asks, in relation to Maguire, if the artist is merely warming his ego on the reflected heat of his red-hot concerns.

Rather, ironic as it seems, it is colour that is the major red-hot concern for Graham, along with painting as a craft. It is Graham's innate sense and free handling of colour that makes an initial and lasting impression on the viewer. Both the drawings and paintings of Graham share the same palette, the same range of red and brown hues. Black, too, is a common denominator for sketches and paintings. His reason for using it is best expressed by himself. It seems the logical conclusion. He maintains " I use a lot of black in paintings, because black is where the light is. Out of the blackness comes light. It is the black hole from which truth comes". (Bulmer, Summer 1994, p.51)

The characteristic symbolism attached to the use of black in paintings is reflected throughout the history of the practice of art. Black has been seen as an aspiration towards the expression of a spiritual reality. Abstract art bears witness to the relation of pure colour and form. In "Abstract art and the rediscovery of the

Spiritual", an interesting point is documented. It relates specifically to the work of Robert Fludd, but parallels may be drawn with Graham's work. The article states that with the origin of the abstract form,

the relation of pure colour and essential form with the expression of spiritual vision can be seen in one of the earliest manifestations in the mystical cosmological imagery of Robert Fludd. The pure colour black is used to express the infinite in a seminal image from Fludd's "Utriusque Cosmi", 1617.

(Art and design series, p. 4)

As with Fludd's work, Graham's use of colour expresses a Spiritual vision. This bears a similar relationship to a remark by Kandinsky on the use of colour. Colour, he claims, has "a corresponding spiritual vibration felt only by those experienced and developed enough to feel a colour statement may have an inner meaning and eventually a spiritual harmony". (Art and design series, p. 11)

Indeed, many of Graham's muted tones hark back to his days as an apprentice to Dermot Larkin. It was during this period that he experimented with mixed media and encountered wax, tempera and a range of various primitive media. He learned to work with a specific and particular range of colours. The tonal values of the bogs in his native Mullingar, too, seem important to Graham. The "blanket-bogs" appear to wrap him in a shroud of emotion. The range of colour in many of the paintings echoes the damp, viscous earth of the bogs. Rather than Graham being analytical about his use of colour, it seems to seep into the subconscious depths of his psyche. Yet Graham is intensely aware that his palette has in a sense, been derived from a landscape basis. He does not splash colour

around at random. Instead, art for him is about questioning; questioning "how am I to analyze colour, probably working with a simple naive aesthetic, how to carry an image, how to use colour ... what are the neutrals I'm going to use to highlight the secondary colours".

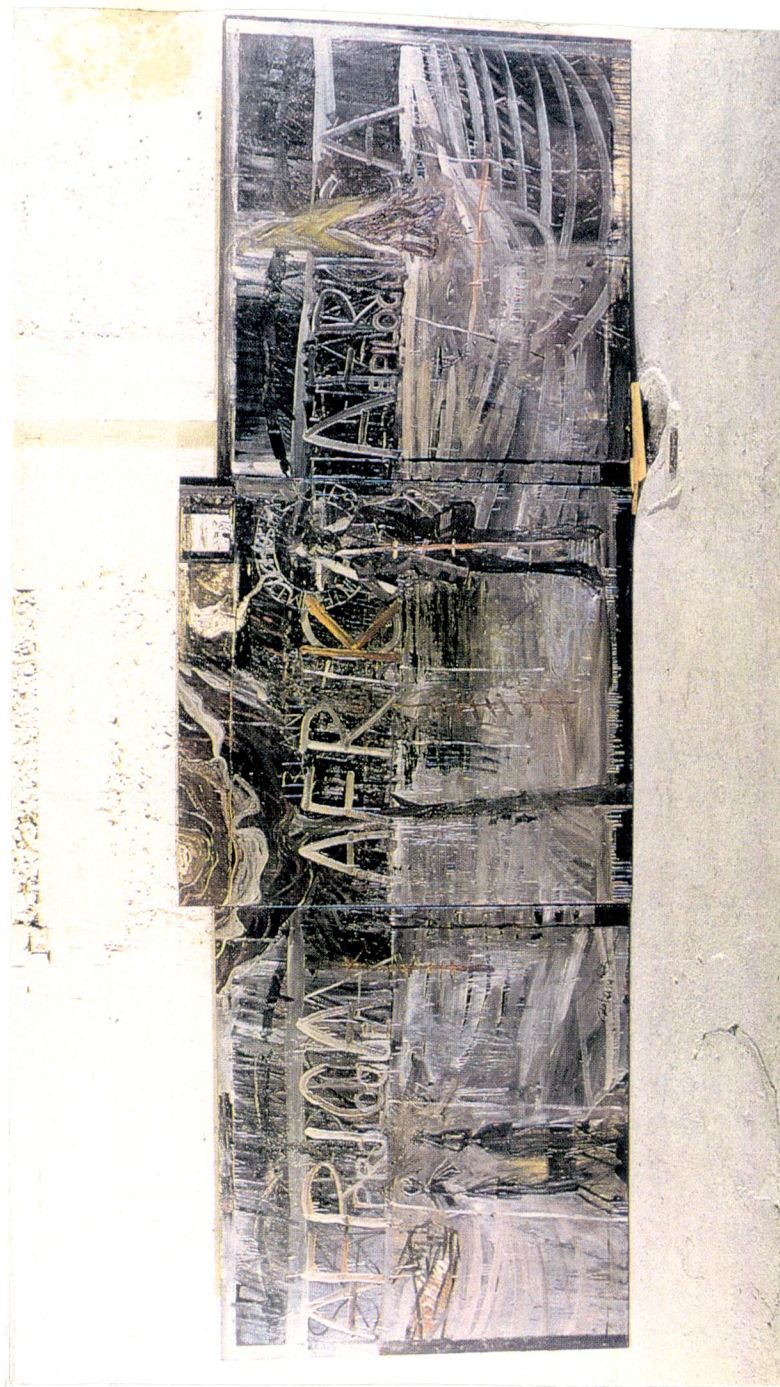
Graham speaks of preserving elements of his childhood in the manner of a precious object being preserved in a bog. He speaks of wanting to memorise elements of the landscape from his early years, rather than returning to them, and in so doing, destroying a piece of the past. It is through such a recollection that Graham visualises himself as a two foot dwarf in a bog, amongst a

vast empire of colour, an empire of line, literally, this kind of linear division of sky and this absolute whole sensuous lower space, and this magical flying space above it in which birds used to fly ... and this dense sexual earth, dense browns, reds.

It is clearly evident from such vivid description as this that there is a considerable connection between Graham's youth and its influence on him as a mature artist. He is adamant, though, that the palette he chooses is not "some mad gestural homage to a bog", as it has on occasion been suggested. He insists that it is "thought about as art" and indeed his colour range could be considered conceptual, as in his use of black, and the reds which echo the heart image he uses from time to time. The red is bloodstained, it drips and soaks the canvas. It is reminiscent, too, of the colour of a rose in its warmth.

It is in a painting such as "Pilgrim" that Graham's interest in aesthetics becomes apparent. The title itself points to the reference, the pilgrim is on the journey towards the aesthetic end. Graham's own art seems to lead him on an aesthetic journey, although aestheticism is never considered the ultimate goal. His images manage to transcend the somewhat meaningless entity of the classification of being described as "beautiful". However there is inevitably a quality about this painter's art that is beautiful, whether it is present in the use of colour, the fine quality of the drawing, or Graham's facility and ease with a pencil or brush in his mark-making. There is always a grim yet resonantly beautiful quality. No matter how hard Graham tries to be ugly, the aesthetic quality remains ingrained and imbedded into the images, twisted into a sensitive aesthetic as can be seen in "Requiem for Roses", (Fig. 1) Yet Graham sets forth the notion that "aesthetics is soliciting". He later in the same interview goes so far as to suggest that what interests him is the need for the artist to be real rather than a work of art or an object "to admire about surface, about paint, or colour and things like that". (Regan Interview, 1986).

Nishida Kitaro makes a noteworthy comment in reference to the "beautiful" in art. It details how the "associations of the past are important elements of beauty because through them we touch, in the depths of the consciousness of the present, the flow of a profound consciousness that has transcended the present". (Kitaro, 1973, p. 18)



(Fig. 1) "Requiem for Roses" 72 x 210 ins.



This is true of the relationship between Graham's past and present. Associations he has with his youth are important elements and are intrinsic to the particular aesthetic in his consciousness at the present.

As far as Patrick Graham is concerned, great painting has a Universal quality about it. It is this "profound Universal message" that sets it apart from what he describes as "bad art". Great painting is particular, but also maintains a universal quality. Indeed his own paintings come close to his personal notion of "great art", although he maintains the notion of "great art" is gone. Rather than being part of an art that he categorises as "art that is particular to itself, to its notion of law", Graham's art succeeds in avoiding becoming too focused, too bound up in a notion of itself. It breaks beyond such a narrow boundary. His images succeed where many of his contemporaries do not. Many fail, as Graham alleges because they "would not read anywhere else as 'this is a great notion of human injustice', quite simply because it's too focused".

Graham's own success in America, for example, testifies his ability to be Universal in his own right. Although the content of many of his images would seem at first to relate primarily to an Irish audience and the Irish psyche, nevertheless American audiences are undoubtedly capable of identifying with the subject matter. Graham's use of spacial devices consciously and elegantly draw in the viewer and yet they manage to maintain their arresting, startling, baffling quality. This is fundamentally due to the sexually graphic imagery, which is the

content of many pieces. Such images ignite the thoughts and feelings of the observer and operates at different levels. The strong religious content of much of the imagery is rooted in Graham's own experiences of being a Catholic child of, and in, rural Ireland. They are reminiscent of a strong Catholic ethos, of a conflict between mind and body. The images often relate to the Irish as being repressed sexually, especially by the Church.

Content has become synonymous with a definition of Postmodernism, where there is strong evidence of an obvious attempt to reinstate it as an intrinsic element in the process of painting. This follows on from Modernism, which seemingly abandoned content in favour of flatness. As Graham says of his art, "I see it purely in art terms, and if it's not good art why be bothered?" Yet, Graham was concerned with content at one stage. He cites the period during the hunger-strike as an example of this. He states, in reflection of that time. "I felt so powerfully about the whole attitude of the self, refusing to give a voice to people who, I believe, had a very legitimate concern". Whereas nowadays the political element still excites Graham, he strives now to deal with art rather than issues.

Content is, however, intrinsic to the success of the paintings, which inevitably relate to something specific. Content and a conscious concentration on such, can result in an emotional distance from the work on the behalf of the spectator. Graham manages to avoid distancing the viewer from his paintings, through his conscious effort not to allow himself to focus purely on content alone, for it is not content which lasts. Great art transcends the dictatorship of fads. He does not

wish his paintings to be seen purely as objects, instead he allows the emotional element of humanity and the darker side of life to seep in. They are embedded in the specifics of the Irish situation, of the cultural tradition apparent in Ireland today.

Graham's inherent poetic sensibility comes across through the content of the work. Through this process the history of the Irish as a race can be illustrated. Heidegger sets forth the notion that the poet, or one who poetizes, such as the artist,

is a man of his people who must make it possible for the sons of the earth to dwell there poetically when the holy addresses itself to the poet and when the latter responds to this address, the origin of the history of a people comes to pass. Thus the poet grounds the history of a people. He makes ready that poetical condition whereon a historical people dwells as upon its ground.

(Kockelmans 1985, p. 196)

Similar to Heidegger's comment on the grounding of the history of a people is Bulmer's comment which refers more specifically to Graham. It suggests that Graham stresses what is considered as the confusion of the present day by revealing a glimpse of his own ancestral past. It follows by claiming "aware of the masochist Irish struggle that victimizes its own people, Graham's political consciousness deeply affects his work". (Bulmer, Summer 1994, p. 51)

Although the American audience relates to Graham's imagery of acceptable levels of violence and of the deconstruction of myths and of society in general, the true significance can be best grasped at by the Irish audience. Graham's personal

internal battle with the Catholic ethos is more relevant to the Irish audience, who can identify with it in a more direct manner. Works such as the "Family" display the church and a type of father-figure and shows evidence of what may be considered as a typical Freudian scenario. The Madonna / Whore image is evident, too, in many works which often succeed in making the audience uneasy with such violent and graphic sexual imagery being placed in the context of what is considered traditional religious art. Images such as these display a startling mixture of cruelty and tenderness. They are gritty, fecund and rebellious all at once.

In the process of producing a finished piece of work, Graham's progress follows a pattern. Rather than a preconceived notion of how the finished piece will appear, it is a common practice for Graham to work up a series of sketches first in order to start off the thought process. Such a process reveals the evidence of a conscious and ongoing thought-process in the artist's mind. Sketches are used as an external storage space, a place where ideas can be contemplated without the use of a verbal system. Erich Harth makes an interesting observation on the relevance of the artist's sketch. He declares

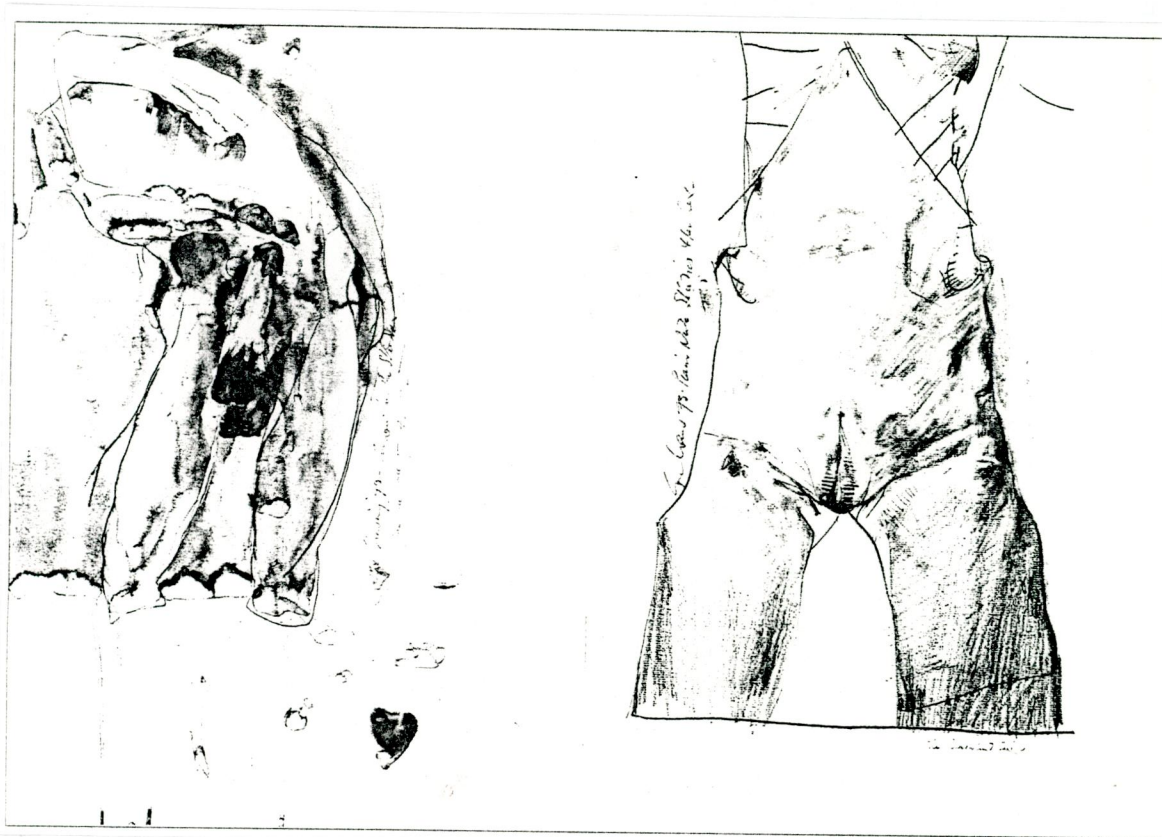
An artist, before starting a new painting, usually begins with a sketch. The dynamics of this process is intriguing. An idea originates in the brain of the artist and is projected, made concrete on a piece of paper, only to be examined and judged by the same brain that was its source. Changes are made, features are added, and again the concrete results are scrutinized by the creating mind. Eventually the artist may be satisfied to advance the sketch to canvas, or he may tear up the sketch in dismay. But without the sketch the artist's ability to judge his own ideas would be limited.

(Harth, 1985, p. 169)

Drawing, too, is of paramount importance to Graham. He claims that his drawings are as good, if not better today, than the academic studies he practiced in N.C.A.D. He alleges "for quality it's as good. There is a different emphasis on line, on weight, all that, but its far more exciting anyway. I had to struggle for it, which I love doing". (Regan interview, 1986)

The drawings involve a more personal iconography on the part of Graham. Like the paintings, they too explore sexuality and eroticism, energy, the need for self-loss and the banishing of self-consciousness. The series of "Plain nude drawings" represented in the recent Douglas Hyde exhibition bore resemblances to the work of Egon Schiele, Graham's technical finesse and fine draughtsmanship being similar to that of Schiele. The human figure in the case of both these artists serves as a conductor for various emotions, ranging between hope and despair, as the pendulum swings either way. The drawings of late, represented in Graham's recent Douglas Hyde exhibition include those which may be regarded as studies for the "Blackbird Suite" as well as those considered as 'studies' in the artist's studio.

The drawings, such as "Plain nude drawing" number three (fig. 2), or number five, (fig. 3) for example, are executed in ink and wash technique. They appear paintings in everything but title, but are also reminiscent of large scale sketches. Through the drawings, an intimate quality is displayed. In appearance they are less melodramatic in impact than many of the paintings and take much less time to produce. Graham has spoken specifically about the need for drawing and its



(Fig. 2) "Study for the Blackbird Suite"

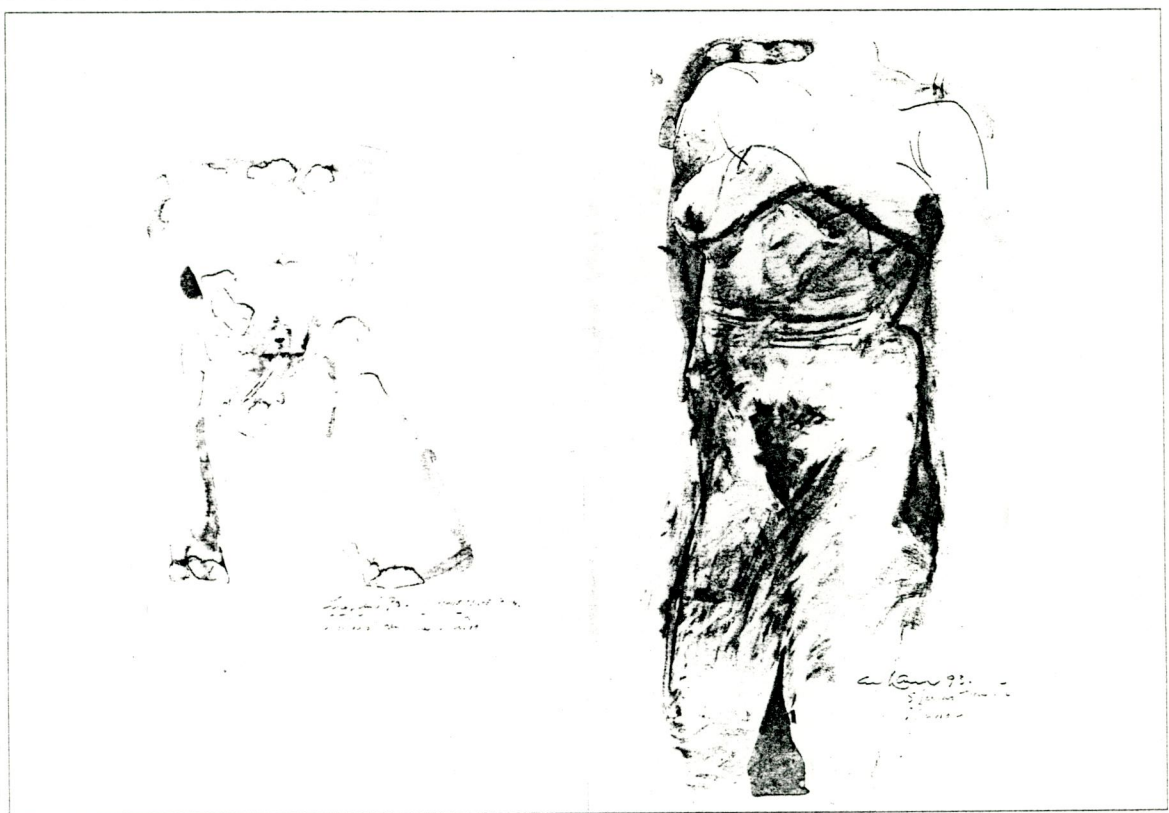
(Plain nude drawing (No. 3))

Line and wash on paper 81 x 112 cms.



"power" or "purpose" for contemporary society. Although to some, Graham appears determined to undermine his inborn gifts, he admits that in the recent Douglas Hyde exhibition he consciously set about finding out whether drawing had relevance in a contemporary world. He is fascinated, as he himself admits, with the notion of being directly confronted with the image and asking the question of whether it is technically good or bad, rather than concentrating on an engagement with issues surrounding it such as feminism or psychology. He maintains his primary, conscious aim at this stage included "dealing with contemporary issues of, perhaps psychological issues of sexual oppression or whatever, but in a very almost practical way, seeing simply if drawing had any relevance anymore for contemporary art".

Indeed, the sheer power and strength of the images prove that Graham has succeeded in his ambition. The depiction of the fragmented figures is economic, with lines left open or left out entirely. They identify with Heidegger's notion of death, the figure being hurled towards such by its own complexities. The visual impact of the cut-off torso, fragmented images of "Plain nude drawing number two" (Fig. 4) is a stunning example of the ability of the artist. Here the drawing displays a very sensual quality. The twisted torso, oblique rather than purely explicit, reflecting the artists own fears, bears resemblances to many of the paintings. The drawings possess the poetic quality evident in many of the paintings, where the boundaries dividing real-life and the life of art crumble in ruins.



(Fig. 4) "Study for the Blackbird Suite"

(Plain nude drawing (no. 2))

Line and wash on paper. 81 x 112 cms.



Viewing the paintings fills the audience with emotion. Pamela Hammond states "viewing them is like witnessing an Irish wake, spilling over with mournful wails and yet reaffirming the dearness of life" (Hammond, 1991 p. 144) This is a somewhat apt method of examining the paintings. The concept of the "wake" is a fitting comparison. There is light at the end of the tunnel as all is not lost where hope remains. There is a need to start over again, to rebuild.

The surface itself reflects the desire to build layer upon layer, rebuilding and remodelling in order to come to a truth which is ever-changing. The bones of the painting are revealed as the stretcher itself is on show. Graham shows the viewer what lies behind the external, the sham hypocrisy existing in a seemingly cosy social situation. The very language of painting itself is examined as Graham explores the surface by tearing and rebuilding the jargon on the image. There is a continual process of breaking down, deconstructing, erosion and then a starting again, a rebirth, a quest to come to terms with the need to be reconciled. The writing on the canvas punctuating the surface image combined with the painting on the reverse are methods of consciously outpouring, turning the inside out. They also involve a conscious decision to alter the way the two-dimensional surface itself is perceived. This stream of consciousness method of writing on the canvas involves a constant questioning and reappraisal of oneself and one's beliefs, alongside a larger, more Universal approach. The words themselves are often treated as a purely visual phenomenon, although this is not the case in "The Lark in the Morning 11", (Fig. 5) where the word "bone" is blatantly meant to



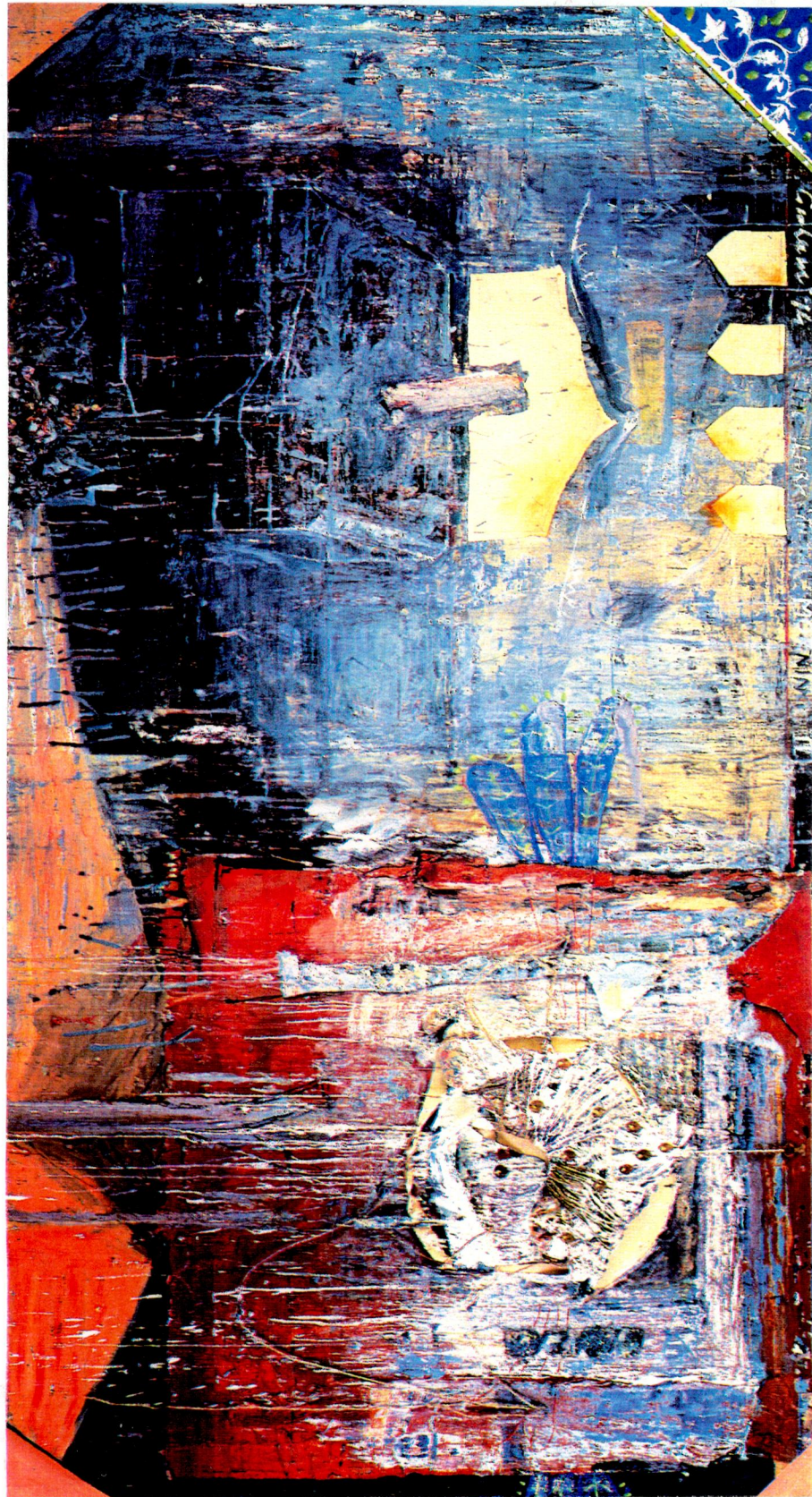
(Fig. 5) The Lark in the Morning 11

1991 - 93, Oil, Mixed media on canvas, 214 x 366 cms

refer to the skeleton on which the image is placed. Painting, for Graham, is a language for himself about himself and the world he occupies. The visual images themselves are often scripts, imploring to be deciphered, to have their poetic meaning grasped at.

The artist has himself revealed the origins of the poetic images of the likes of "Hopalong Cassidy", (Fig. 13) "The Lark in the Morning", (Fig. 14) and the "Blackbird Suite", (Fig. 7) three of the paintings contained in the Douglas Hyde exhibition. In these images, Graham's maturity as an artist is in evidence, to a larger extent than earlier images. He continues to make direct references to his former themes of politics, religion, innocence and corruption, but on a new level, where art is the all-important concern.

Self-loss is involved in the process of making art, even now, for Graham, although he claims 'I'm feeling more cynical nowadays. I never lost this notion of losing myself entirely to the imagery and magic and being carried away'. The buzz is still there for Graham. Cinema, he claims, was a big addiction for him since childhood, with its motion-pictures and sound combined containing magic. His 'Hopalong Cassidy' (Fig. 13) painting directly relates to that and also to America as an ideal. He claims it 'attempts to connect that kind of awesome innocence with decay'. (Bulmer, 1994, p. 51). A work such as this projects Universality and a move towards purity and honesty. He states 'Hopalong Cassidy' is a paragon of truth and justice



(Fig. 6) "The Lark in the Morning 111"
1991 - 1993
Oil, Mixed Media on Canvas 183 x 366cms



and the 'right guy always wins'. In a sense it's about America - the death if you like ... it's not just about me it's about the beauty of something getting slowly destroyed, not only destroyed, but rising as a corrupt power.

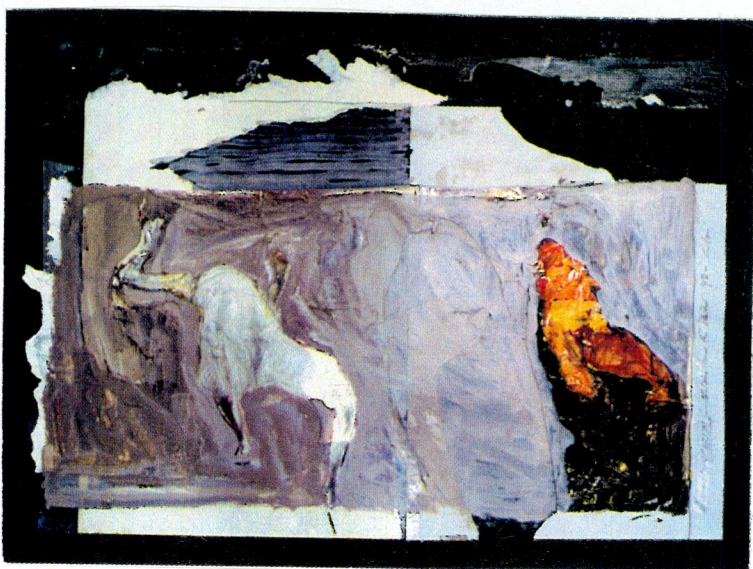
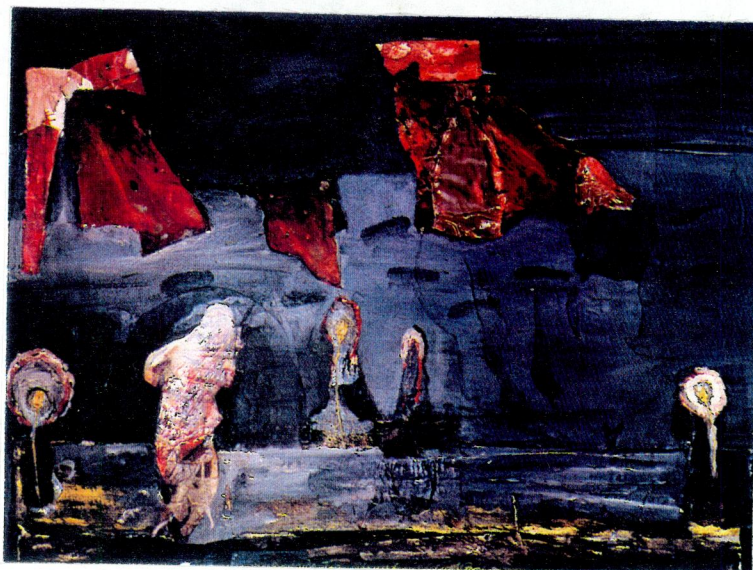
On the other hand, 'The Blackbird Suite' concerns childhood and 'the shrill scream of birds when you startle them'. Both 'The Blackbird Suite' and 'The Lark in the Morning' are images which Graham considers as being hymns. The former to sexuality, while the latter concerns childhood. 'The Lark in the Morning 1', 1991-1993 is a dense, uninviting painting. It is a very worked-on image, which avoids becoming laboured.

It contains many common traits within Graham's working method, the layering and re-layering of the surface contradicts itself, there is destruction within the very process of creation, aestheticism alongside and within the ugly. This image depicts the female genitalia alongside symbols relating to the female, the boat and the journey.

'The Lark in the Morning II', 1991-1993, displays the word 'Bone' suggesting the image has been pared down to the very bones. It relates to death in this way, but also to life and childhood, the low horizon-line resembling that of the bog landscape in Graham's native Mullingar. 'The Lark in the Morning III' also of 1991-1993 (Fig. 6) contains a suggestion of a bed or cart-like structure, it too being related to death and funerary transportation.

The 1988 painting 'Song of the Yellow Bittern' contains a figure in a declining pose, a heart and a tree stump. It too symbolises looming death and the familiar vessel symbol.

Now more than ever, a comment by Emmanuel Cooper, from 'Tribune Arts' London in 1985 rings true in relation to Patrick Graham's art, "the shapes and emotional force of these paintings demand belief rather than thought or logic, involve us - images triggering off the taste buds of experience almost against our will'.(Hendriks, 1985).

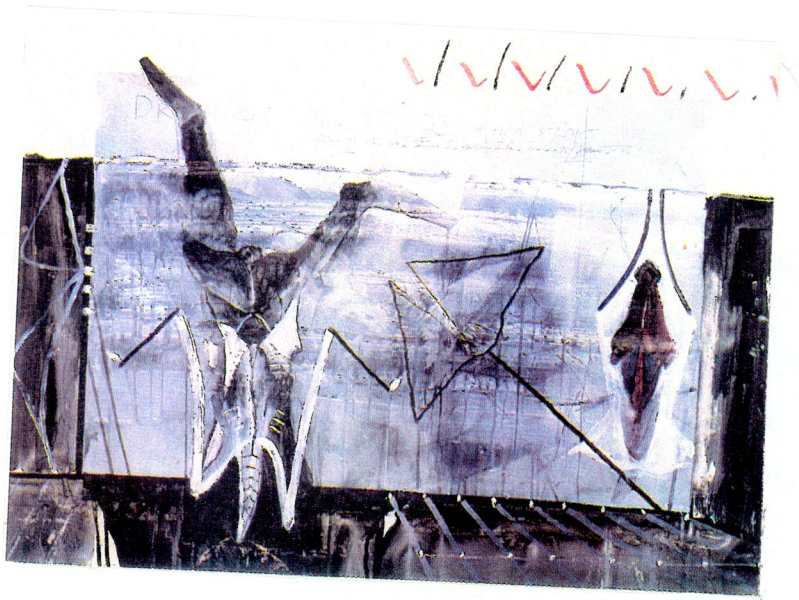


(Fig. 7 & 8) "The Blackbird Suite"

1992 - 1993. Mixed Media on Board

19 works, each 81 x 112 cms

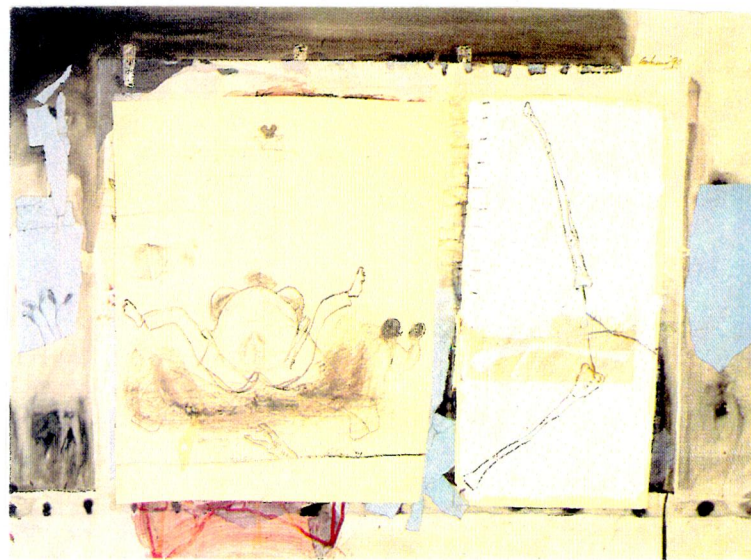
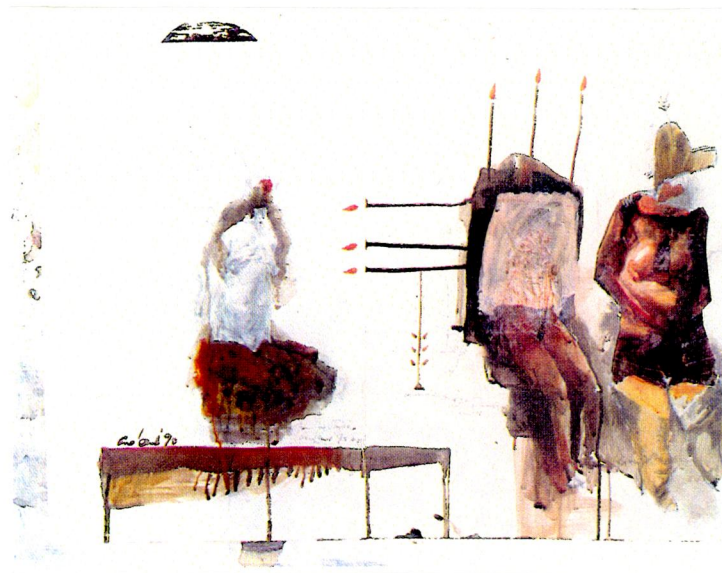




(Fig. 9 and Fig. 10) "The Blackbird Suite"

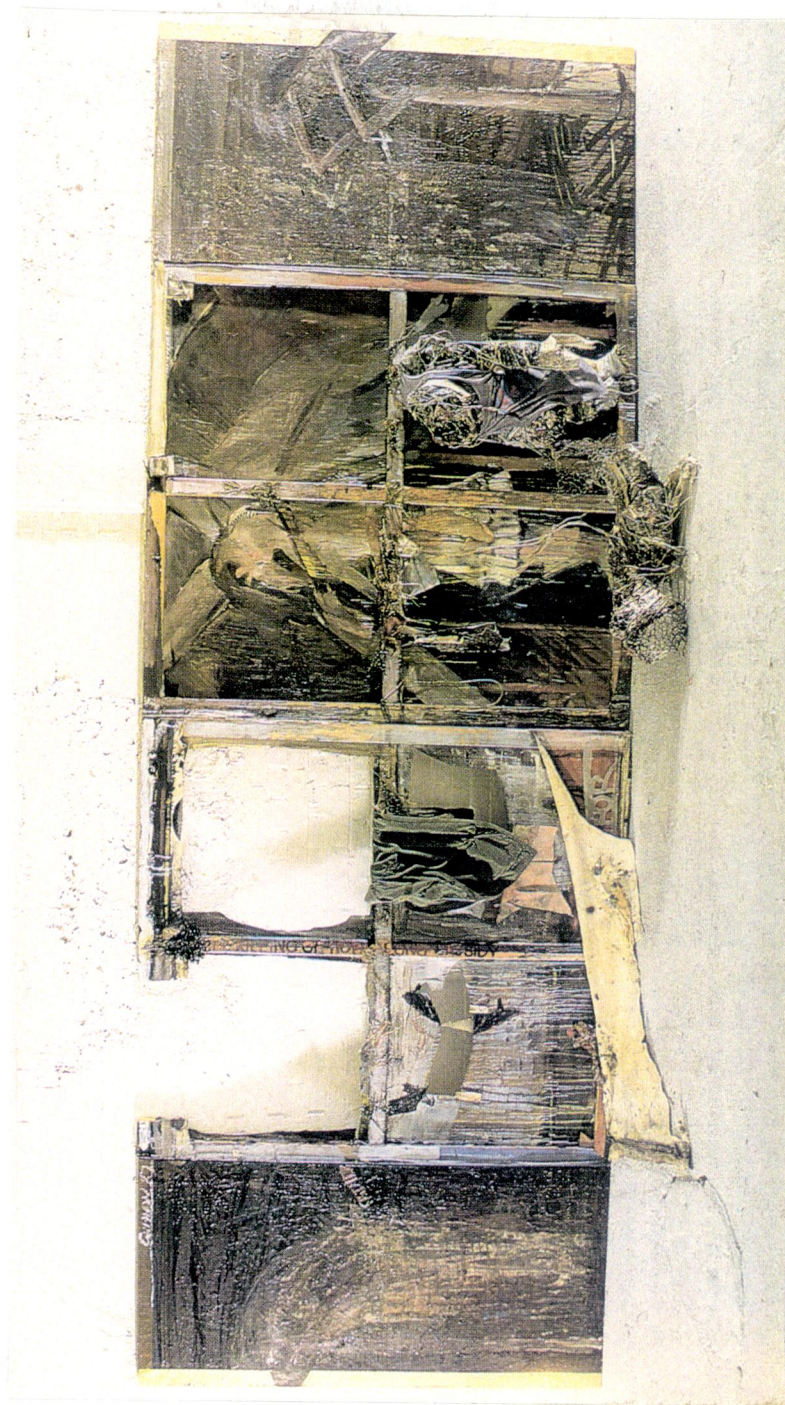
1992-93





(Fig. 11 and Fig. 12) "The Blackbird Suite"
1992-93

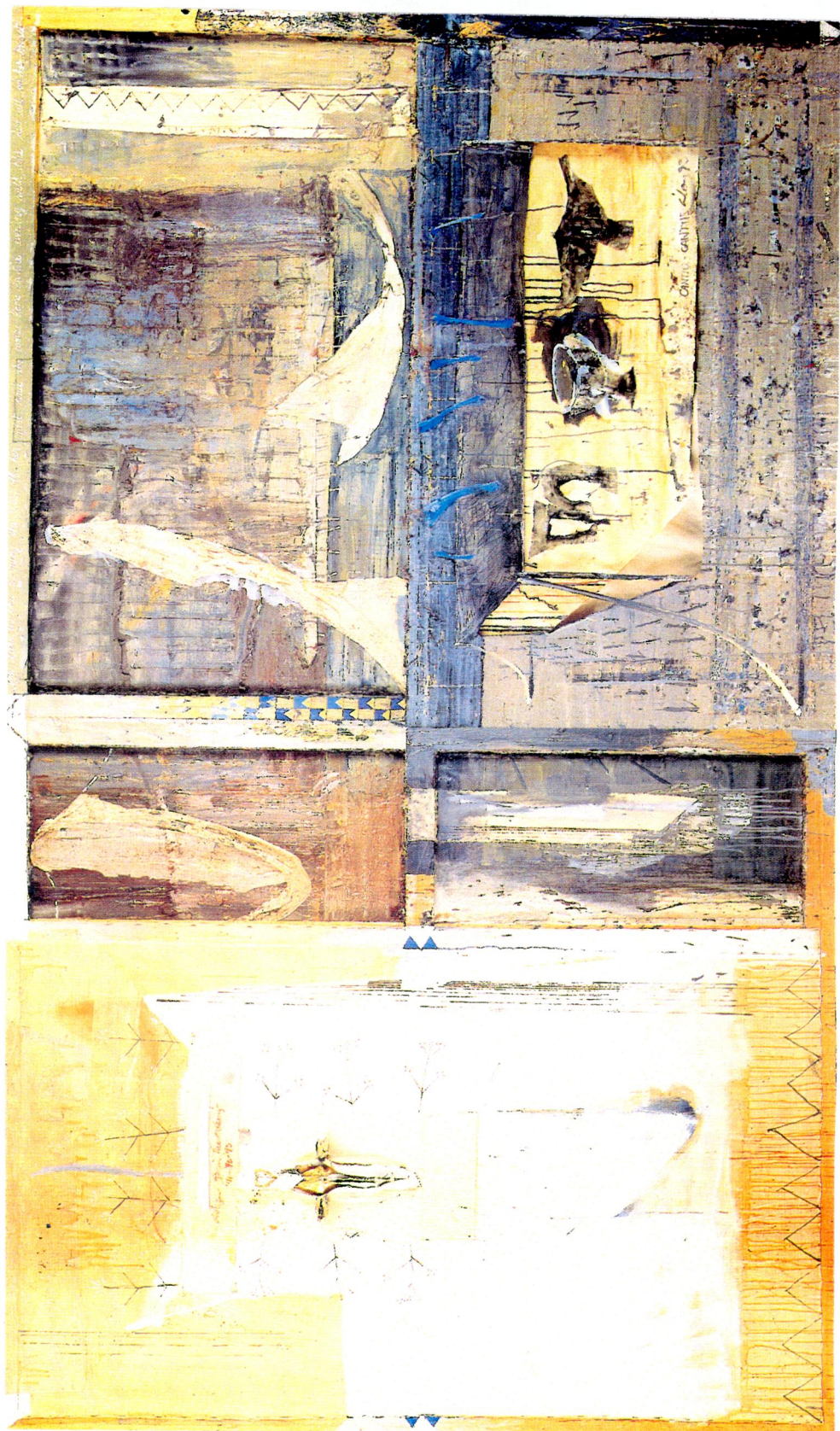




(Fig. 13) "The Life and death of Hopalong Cassidy"

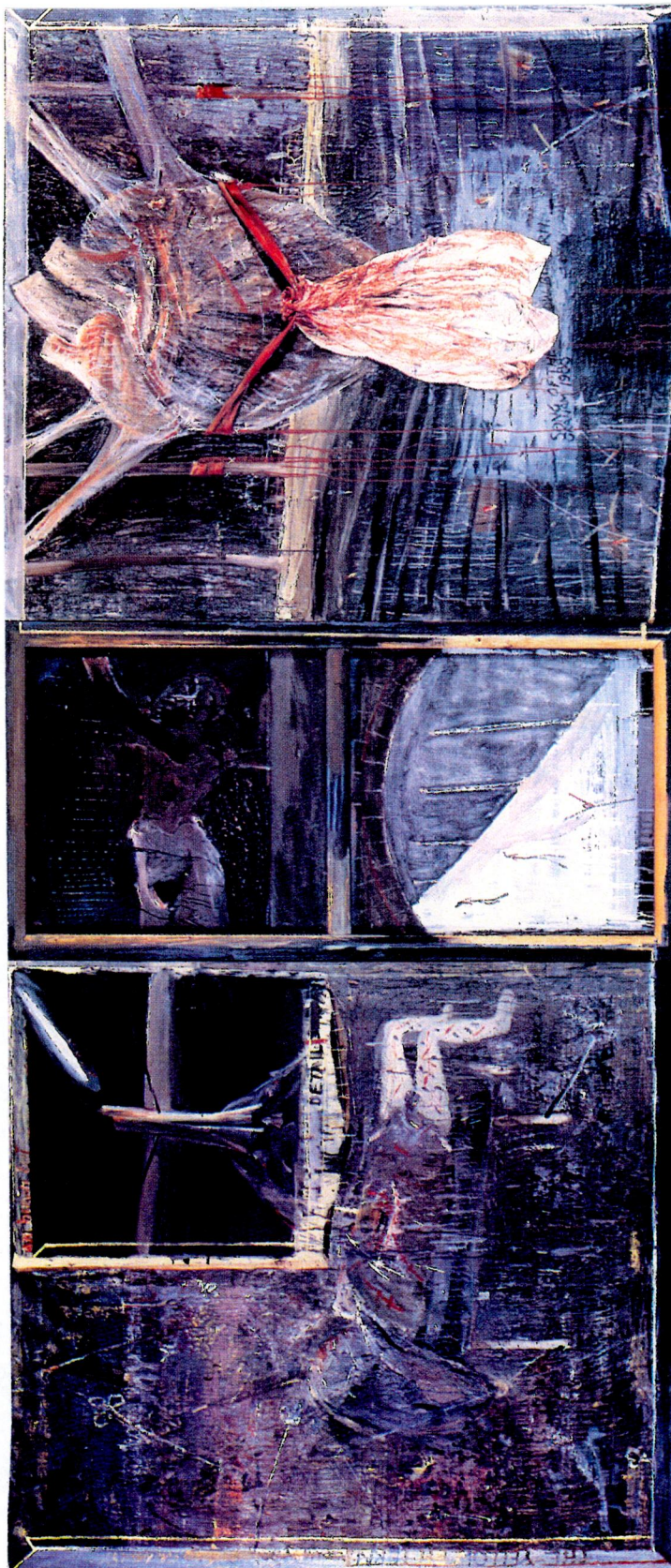
72 x 216 ins.





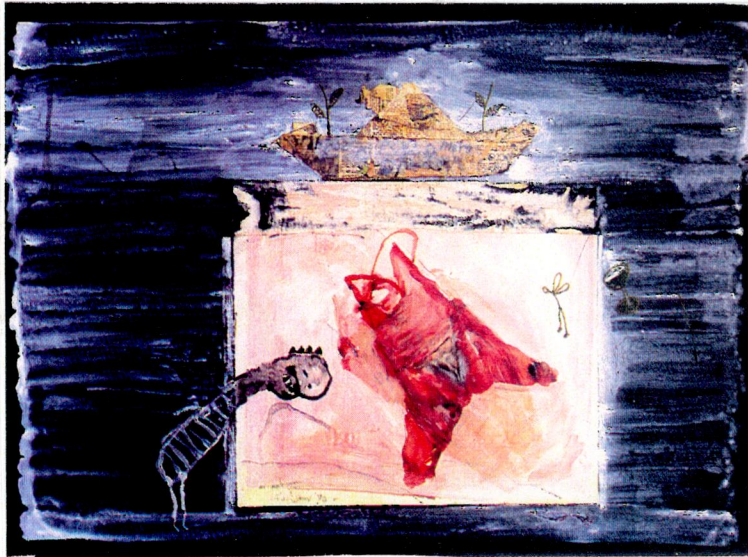
(Fig. 14) "The Lark in the Morning 1"
 1991 - 1993, Oil, Mixed Media on Canvas
 214 x 366 cms.





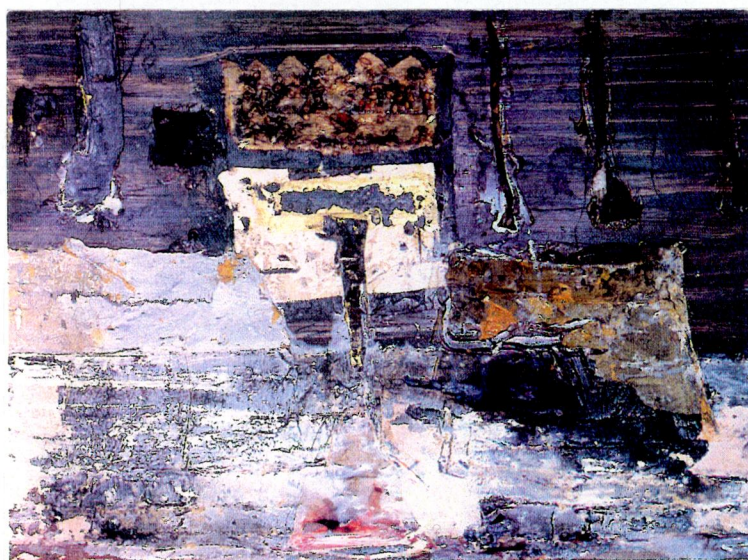
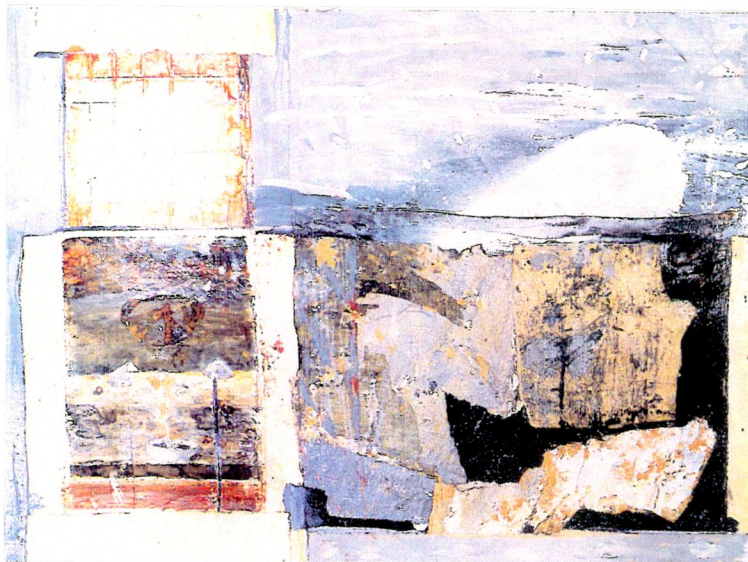
(Fig. 15) Song of the Yellow Bittern
1988, Oil, Mixed Media on Canvas,
183 X 457 cm.





(Fig. 16) "The Blackbird Suite"
1992-93





(Fig. 17 & 18) "The Blackbird Suite"
1992 - 1993



CHAPTER FOUR: "A difficult homecoming"

.... leaving their footprints
in my mind, deserts hungry
for remembered weather,
like your canvas hungry for paint
each painting a difficult homecoming
A muddy thaw, savage archaeology, the slow
decolonisation of childhood
letting us see
what is in the black light visible

(extract from 'Heimat' by Michael O'Loughlin, - Hendriks 1985)

Patrick Graham only allows us a fleeting glimpse of what is "in the black light visible". The onus is on the spectator to decipher the meaning of the piece, or indeed, its symbolism, or more to the point, whether it contains any inherent symbolism at all. Symbolism, if it is present, may not yield any great insight into an individual work. It is often irrelevant and a waste of time to attempt to develop a specific iconographical dictionary in relation to a work of art. At the same time it is interesting and often proves a valuable source of inspiration and something on which the audience can attempt to focus.

In relation to archetypal symbolism, where it exists in a Patrick Graham image, it is apparent that certain symbols crop up again and again. These include the altar, the body, the cup, the chalice and the boat imagery, all of which now appear to be quintessential Graham. In many respects such blatant re-occurrence of familiar imagery leads the viewer who is acquainted with several works by the artist, to acknowledge that some sort of symbolic imagery is being brought into play.

Such a canticle or mantra, as it appears to be, is reminiscent of the Shamanist's method of chanting, which is really a method of channelling the concentration towards, in the case of the Shaman, a magical or cosmological goal. In specific relation to the Shaman, who retraces steps to the source of his own being, "such chanting of god-names and concentration on the images and symbols of the gods have a profound emphasis on the creative imagination, stimulating the archetypes of the unconscious mind". (Drury, 1982, p. 33)

So too is Graham's continuous dirge or hymn and recurrent concentration on familiar images and symbols having an effect on his own personal creative imagination, and so too animating the archetypes of the unconscious mind. Graham transforms the symbolic vision in each image in a slight variation. This transformation of the symbolic vision also links Graham to a similar theme which recurs in Shamanism.

Like Shamanism, the Alchemists, (approx. 1000 A.D.) also sought a wholeness within mankind, which would encompass both mind and body. They exalted the mysteries of matter and paralleled them with Christianity. They even "invented a thousand names and symbols for it". (Jung, p. 246). They, like Graham, were inspired by the darker side of nature, but also by the dream, as well as evil. Death, rather than evil is the darker side of life which concerns Graham, he says in relation to it and self-loss "you begin to die when you own something; possession is death. There is no truth that you can possess; you have to keep losing it". (Hutchinson, 1987)

As Shamanism involves archetypes of the unconscious mind, so too does the work of Graham. He confesses to a "dark night" of the soul and to finding himself "halved like the black northern horizon that halved the paintings I saw". (Graham, 1989). These are conscious reflections, but as Jung would have us believe, often events are absorbed subliminally, without any conscious knowledge. It is the subconscious, unconscious and subliminal messages that are important in an examination of archetypes and symbolism. So too are the artist's statements, of a very conscious manner, important aspects in any discussion of his own imagery and symbolism.

At one stage, Patrick Graham equated himself with a Spring pool. This is a conscious comparison and reflects to a degree, how Graham wishes to be seen. It, like Graham, has a type of mirrored surface, it takes the "world so far, reflecting it back, never letting it penetrate its depth. Underneath it had reality ... it let light deceive the looker". (Hendriks, 1985) Such a poetic, Spiritual, and above all, conscious, description of this parallel between the artist's self and the pool of water reveals the depths of the psyche, the current below the seemingly calm surface, the turbulent water of emotion. The pool and the artist's self act as a microcosm for the greater macrocosm of the Universe. As water is seen as the source of all life, it is interesting that through the description of the depth of water, Graham is consciously comparing it to the depth of the psyche. Through this plunge into the stagnant depths of his personal psyche, Graham is returning to the source of life. It is somewhat ironic that he chooses to use water as a metaphor for the self. It is during this resurfacing or reversion to the source of

life that the artists very consciousness itself is submerged and so the contents of the unconscious mind leaks out. This process is the source of a rebirth of awareness and a more alert consciousness on the artist's behalf. Such a digression, rather than serving to dilute the power of the consciousness, makes it stronger. Yet, if it is almost static in its pace, it can be equated with an unfathomable depression, or death-like state.

Carl Jung has spoken of the "shadow" and the depression that is its' hallmark. It is here that the wretched parts of the self must be confronted or integrated. He says of it, "the shadow is the thing a person has no wish to be, and yet in some way is". (Jung, 1988, viii). It is from this "shadow" that Patrick Graham gets much of his source material. It represents the negative side of every personality and presents itself consciously and unconsciously. Yet the two are intrinsically linked and as Jung states, "the unconscious background does not remain inactive, but betrays itself by its characteristic effects on the contents of consciousness". (Jung 1966, p. 69).

Indeed, Jung has gone on to illustrate how the conscious mind is in fact guided by that of the unconscious. Direct proof of such is reflected in Graham's work. He is frequently unwavering in his account of his work, expressing its origins and source in a clear manner, but often he is actually saying more than he is aware of. Graham has given accounts of how the paintings, especially, seem to take off on a tangent of their own, they take flight almost by themselves, after the initial and perfunctory sketches and keying-in pattern has taken pace. This is redolent

of the "indirect proof" Jung uses to illustrate how the artist's conviction, that he is creating out of absolute free-will, can sometimes be an illusion. He highlights this example, which is suggestive of Graham, in the case of the artist or poet, who, behind their apparent free-will

there stands a higher imperative that renews its peremptory demands as soon as the poet voluntarily gives up his creative activity, or that produces psychic complications whenever his work has to be broken up against his will.

(Jung, 1966, p. 74)

Russian artist Naum Gabo, articulates, "the artist, with his sensitiveness, acts like a sponge. He may not know (about what's going on in science or politics) but he sucks in ideas that are in the air ... and they work on him". (Art and design series, 1987, p. 6) Whereas in the case of the latter quotation, the artist is being sub-consciously directed by external forces, in the case of the former, it is internal elements within the psyche which are coming into play.

Despite the fact that Graham sees the arts as being important in that they establish a country's cultural and spiritual identity, a confidence and a sureness of being alongside a declaration of individuality; this is by no means all art establishes. Graham would no doubt agree that Universality is important. As Kitaro testifies, "every phenomenon of consciousness that immediately includes its object must be regarded as including a requirement of Universal validity". (Kitaro, 1973, p. 8).

Patrick Graham's work has this "Universal validity" about it. Much of the content is Universal, but it is elements such as symbolism and the use of archetypal imagery that also adds to its Universality. This involves the use of the

creative imagination, a spontaneous and active function present in Graham's psyche, present on both conscious and sub-conscious levels.

Symbols must be directly worked on through reason and also through intuition. Symbolism frees the viewer from tunnel-vision, its interpretation is not straightforward, it is an exploration on a mental level whereby the process of association is allowed to take place. A symbol offers interpretation on a personal level.

Jung makes an interesting observation in relation to the artist who ceased to be in fashion for a time, but was rediscovered. This relates indirectly to Graham, as he consciously steers clear of trends within the artworld, although this does not alter the external trends which the public relate to. Jung maintains that an artist returns to public acclaim and the limelight when

our conscious development has reached a higher level from which the poet can tell us something new. It was always present within the work, but was hidden in a symbol, and only a renewal of the spirit of the time permits us to read its meaning.

(Adler, Fordham, Read, 1966, p. 77)

Although this refers especially to artists from previous generations whose work is being re-examined at the present, it is also the case with Graham. A society generations on from our contemporary twentieth century will doubtless find that the symbols within the imagery will be more easily deciphered.

Naomi Ozaniec delineates the following in her account of symbolism,

symbols, unlike words, offer an unlimited series of associations and connections. Complex human realities such as love, suffering and death are merely limited by words. A symbol points to the impossibility of defining these vast experiences through simple descriptions. We need to understand symbols both intellectually and intuitively. We need to understand how symbols have served culture and religion. We must also come to our own understanding of symbolic knowledge . (Ozaniec, 1994, p. 39).

This somewhat lengthy passage is necessary in that it sums up the essence of symbolism, whether of a religious or sexual nature, which are the essential elements used in symbolism within Graham's art.

Water is a common symbol used in many of Graham's paintings. As can be seen in images from 'the Blackbird Suite' (Fig. 21). It is present in the 1994 mixed media "Set keel to breakers", where it holds up the boat icon, the psychic vessel of containment. In this particular example, as in many others, water is used in a religious, spiritual context, possibly symbolising purification, rebirth, baptism or indeed a combination of these. Flowing water, as is the case in "Set Keel to breakers", is traditionally acknowledged as representing the flow of life. However, conversely, it may also represent the boundary between states of life and death, which is the more common assumption when taking statements by the artist into account. Ozaniec specifies,

the great seas, like the collective unconscious, represent a collective experience and potentiality ... (the act of pouring water produces a dynamic activity). The life energies are being circulated. Water nourishes the land and symbolizes the harmony within a balanced landscape.

(Ozaniec, 1994, p. 32)



(Fig. 19) "Set Keel to Breakers"
1994, Mixed Media



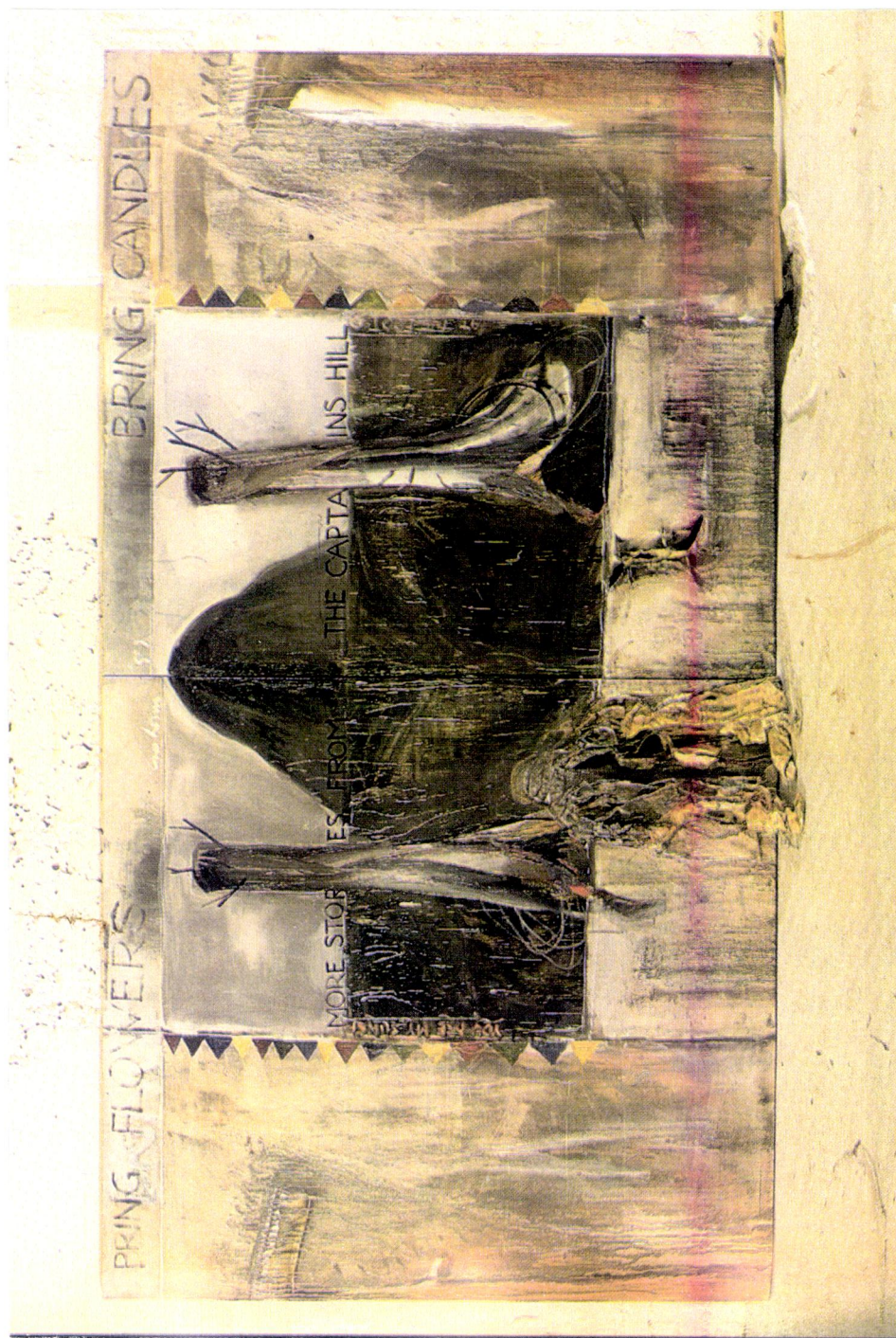
To equate Graham's paintings with symbolism, whether of a conscious or unconscious level is to ignore the true nature of the work, however, symbolism does not allow scope for the enigmatic imagery which lends a visionary quality to the work. It de-personalises the work, in a sense. The following quotation may shed some light on the subject,

But an object of art is artistic only in so far as it is not real. But not many people are capable of adjusting their perceptive apparatus to the plane and the transparency that is the work or art. Instead they look right through it and revel in the human reality with which the work deals.

(Sontag, 1982, p. 145)

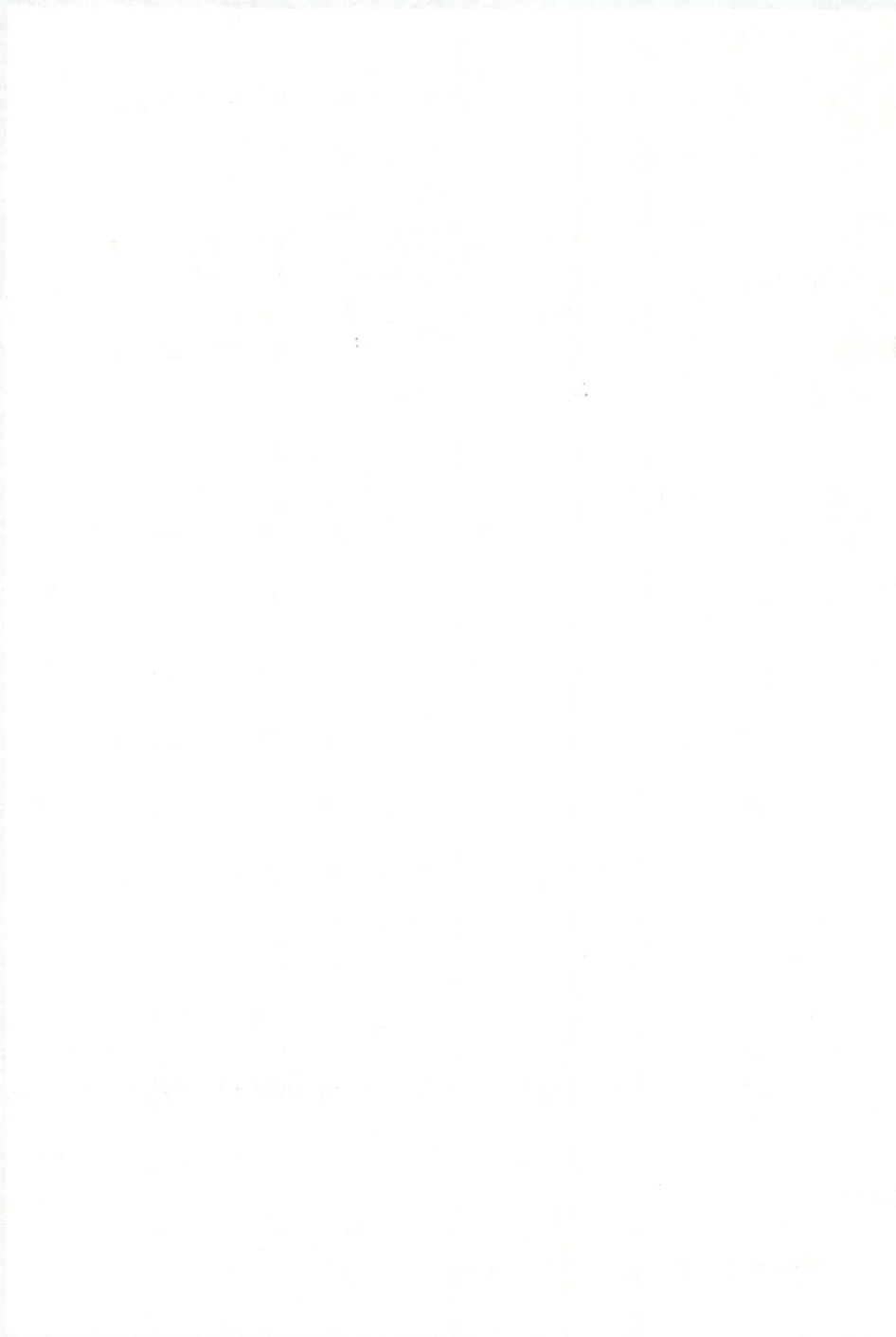
Just as many people's perception cannot deal adequately with art, neither can it deal with inherent poetry or mystery within an image, insisting instead on using symbols to equate it to the collective unconscious.

A painting such as "The Captain's Hill: Heart 2" (Fig. 20) shows evidence of religious symbolism in that it takes the form of an altar-piece, complete with wings to the sides. Despite the fact that the entire is covered by splashy paint, the centre is, however, sombre in mood, depicting what is perhaps the hill of Calvary, with the trees at either side symbolising the thieves. Such a reading, however naïve, is pure supposition. There is no literal symbolism present within these pieces. It does not particularly bother Graham what people read into the images. As he himself reports, "this is a democracy. Well, I do like the notion of people reading things in it. I may totally disagree. It would never, occur to me to write and say 'you're totally wrong there', because they're not, to themselves".



(Fig. 20) "The Captain's Hill: Heart 2

72 x 144 ins.



Symbolic terms represent concepts beyond the limited scope of our comprehension. It is due to this that symbolism is used so widely in a religious context. It expresses what is divine, or that which is "felt". Jung would have us believe that as far as the link between symbols and religion is concerned,

A psychological approach is permissible only in regard to the emotions and symbols which constitute the phenomenology of religion, but which do not touch upon its essential nature. If the essence of religion and art could be explained, then both of them would become more subdivisions of psychology.

(Adler, Fordham, Read, 1966, p. 65)

Hence, it is clear from this account that the nature of religion, art, humanity and the Self cannot be defined in purely psychological terms alone. Thus, the advent of archetypes becomes both necessary and apparent as a means of hinting at or suggesting subtle points within a painting. Archetypes and symbols point to the common experience. The symbol, far from preventing the artist from realizing a personal means of expression, allows for the personal experience to become universal. Maritain specifies that

when art primarily intent on the artist's self succeeds in revealing creative subjectivity, it does also reveal obscurely things and their hidden aspects and meanings and with greater power of penetration indeed, I mean onto the depths of this corporeal Being itself and this Nature that our hands touch. While endeavouring to disclose and manifest the artist's self, the poetic perception which animates art catches and manifests at the same time what matters most in Things, the transparent reality and secret significance on which they live.

(Maritain, 1981, p. 33)

From this statement, it can be ascertained that the conscious mind must be penetrated in order to grasp the depth underneath the surface, the "subterranean" element. This relates to Graham's retort; "I truly believe painting is about not

knowing, or turning out the light. Again, this cannot be a knowing gesture". (Hendriks, 1985).

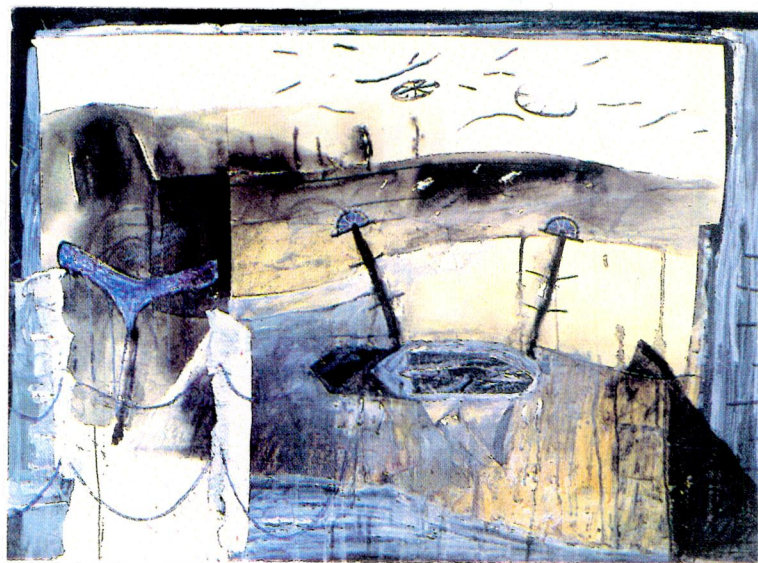
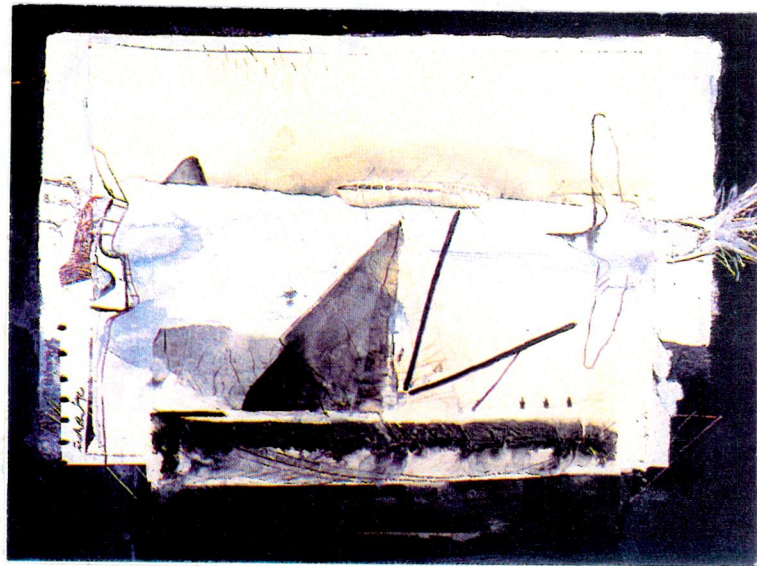
Jung relates the "psychoid" layer of unconsciousness with archetypes. These, he considers, are the truly collective aspects of the human psyche. Archetypes are the contents of the collective unconscious. They are, as Ozaniec confirms, identified both at the transpersonal and personal levels, but at the collective level archetypes are not personalised. Ozaniec specifies the example of birth as being a common element to all. It is transpersonal. (1994, p. 41). It is this form of transpersonal archetype, relating to daily life, as well as a combination of personal experience and spirituality, that leads to the creation of "The lark in the Morning". The supra-personal is also in evidence, although not to the same extent.

The Tarot may be seen as a symbolic wheel of life in regard to the human. It represents human experience. Within its archetypes exist many of the themes embedded within Graham's art. Among its archetypes include those of the self, the feminine, the masculine, the heroic, adversity, death / rebirth, and the journey. The seventh archetype, the journey, can be seen as a path on which evolves the expansion of consciousness during the start, at the destination and throughout the journey itself. Or, as in Graham's case, during, in and through the creation of an image. Graham's use of ocean and sea symbols within his images, which usually serve to carry the now-familiar boat icon, may be seen as a conscious choice, an expansion of consciousness. The water transporting the vessel on the journey, serves to link itself to the journey as can be seen in images

from "The Blackbird Suite". (Fig. 21 & 22)

The fourth archetype, the heroic, also has parallels with Graham's art. The heroic, like Graham's images brings order to chaos. The hero brings hope, another aspect relating to Graham's recent images, such as the "Lark in the Morning". The symbol of the heroic which relates most prominently to Graham's imagery is that of the great heart. It is evident in "The Song of the yellow Bittern". The heroic also connects itself with the symbol of healing. The healing of a presumed wound is of major concern to Graham. It is a wound which exists within the self, within society. The mutilation and scar is visible on the surface of the "Song of the Yellow Bittern", a wound which emphasises humility and sensitivity, which brings resolution to the split.

The two archetypes which relate most prominently to Graham's art are those of the masculine and feminine, although the masculine seems only to be suggested at in relation to the feminine "other" at times, a Yin to equate the Yang, an expansion to oppose the containment. The masculine symbols the journey and the light, along with solar colours such as red, yellow and orange, are in evidence within Patrick Graham's creations, although not in equal proportions to those of the feminine. Stephen Kaplan Williams defined the feminine archetype in terms of "dwelling within by being perpetually open to all aspects of life and death". (Ozaniec, 1994, p. 44) . It is considered an initiator into emotional nature, demanding openness to experience. The presence of the feminine in Graham's imagery is clear in his depiction of the chalice or cup, water and the woman as



(Fig. 21 and Fig. 22) "The Blackbird Suite"

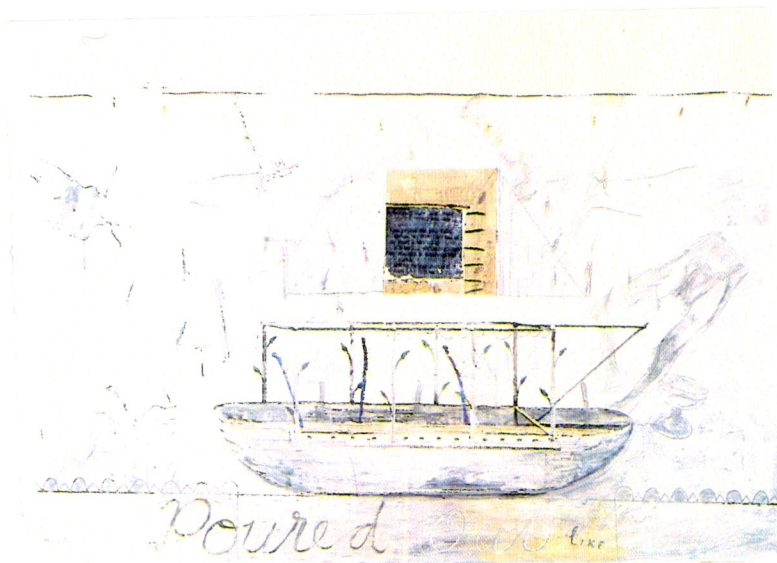
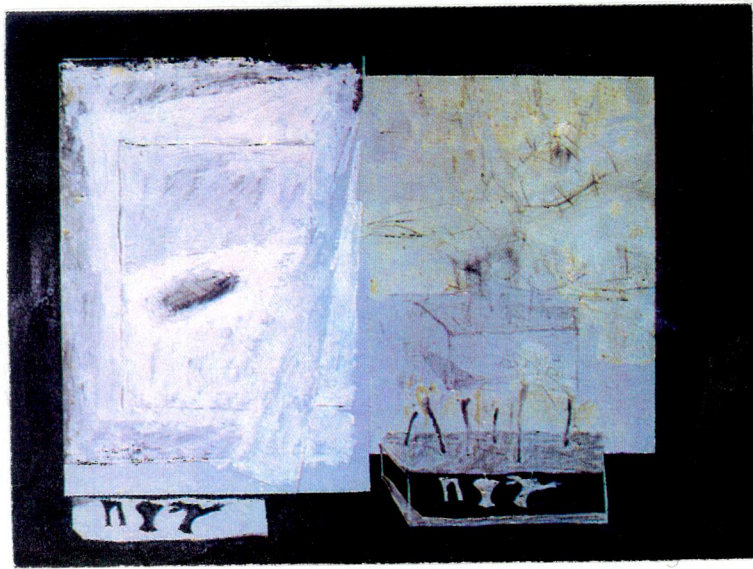
1992 - 1993



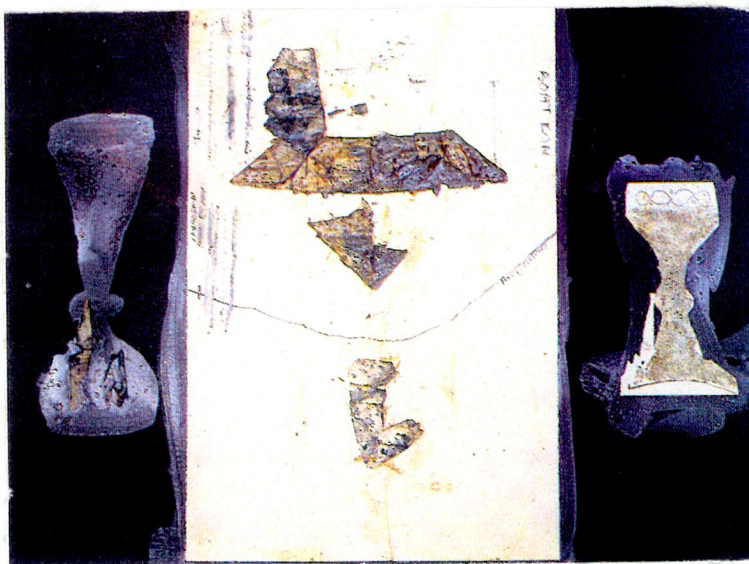
bestower of love and fertility, "The Blackbird Suite", contains many of these images throughout the series. It is evident also in the colour blue which refers to water symbolism, the substance on which the feminine vessel of containment may be carried. The ideal of the "Mother country", "Mother Ireland" and the "Virgin Mary" image is a variant of an archetype which is evident in Graham's earlier works such as "Ireland III"). The power here dwells in the symbolic value of the native land of the Irish.

The "Mother country" imagery, along with the feminine archetype, brings questions relating to Graham's early life into the foreground, as a brief biography leads the researcher to determine the fact that there was a predominantly female influence on the young Graham. Such an approach is similar to the Freudian method of closely examining childhood influences. Such an approach has one major flaw in that it examines the work of art in relation to the artist's personal life, and in doing so reveals aspects of the artist which the artist has either intentionally or unintentionally interwoven into the piece.

Freud's Reductive method, which is a medical technique that investigates morbid psychic phenomena, aims to read the unconscious. It is based on an inclination that the repressed contents of the psyche must have negative traits which correspond, and so making them objectionable to consciousness. As "The Spirit in Man, art and literature" acknowledges; "it is based on the assumption that the neurotic patient expresses certain psychic contents because they are really incompatible with his conscious values". (Alder, Fordham, Read, 1966 p. 69) In this light, Graham's art is likely to read as a repression of the sexual instinct.



(Fig. 23 and Fig. 24) "The Blackbird Suite"
1992 - 1993



(Fig. 25 & 26)

"The Blackbird Suite"

1992 - 1993

Yet this is not true, Graham does not hide behind the erotic element of his art. He is not afraid to deal openly with sexuality. In fact the sexual emphasis is prominent within Graham's art. He considers it as encountering openness and reports that the "Lark in the Morning", is a hymn to sexuality, specifying

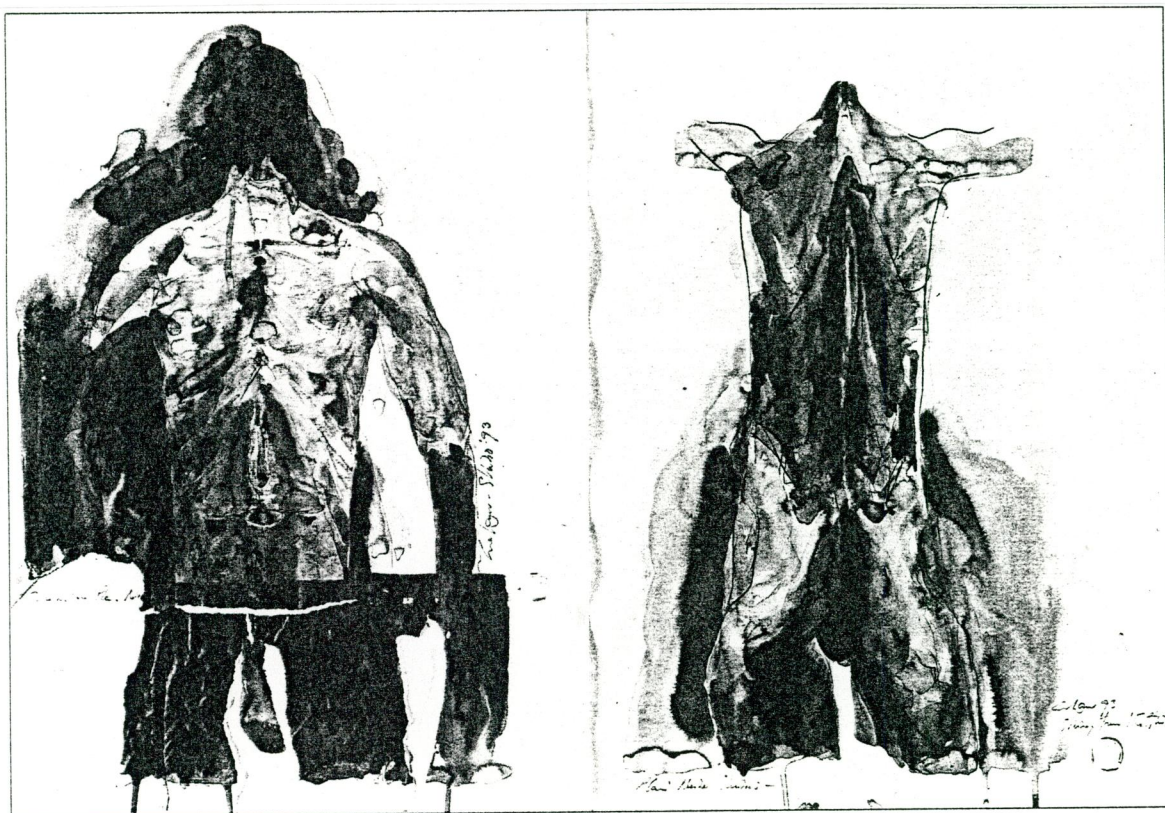
my first encounter with the female was unbelievable in the sense that I didn't fall, I kind of plummeted ... I locate things like that about sexuality, about relationships, about the trembling in the back seat of a cinema with this paragon of beauty, of virginity, of wholeness.

He insists that there is no socio-political content within his nude drawings and says in relation to the "Plain Nude Drawings", number one, for example

I get my models to pose for me here in the studio, they are young women who are relaxed and quite at ease with themselves and their own sexuality. I have them in front of me, I just paint and draw them, there's no ~~socio~~ political content, they're erotic and that comes out in the work. Yet people call you a woman-hater.

(Fallon, Thurs. Sept. 1994)

Graham relates in "Requiem, a bouquet of Innocence", 1986, how his youth was an "innocent experience of the transcendent body made one in god and nature". (Hendriks, 1985). This is followed by an account of how the Christian Brothers changed his outlook; "my trinity was turned to salt by the insidious repetition of the belief that the body in itself was corrupt, a cesspit of evil and unclean, that purity of act was impossible and salvation only for religious martyrs who disowned the body". (Henriks, 1985)



(Fig. 27) "Study for the Blackbird Suite"

(Plain nude drawing No. 1)

Ink and wash

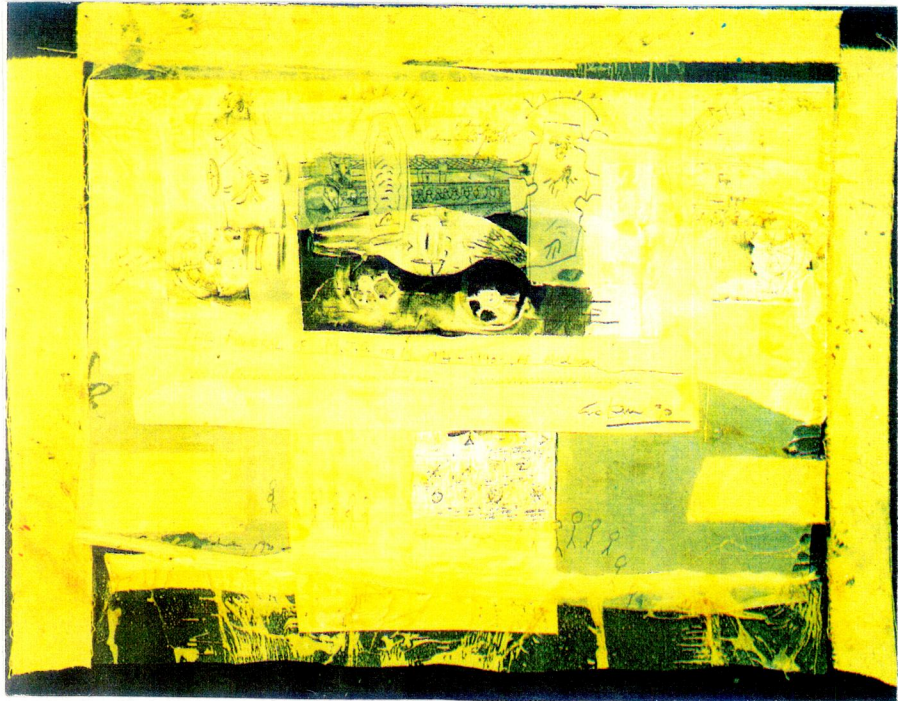


Despite this salt, the wound may be healed by the openness of which Graham speaks. Graham uses a number of devices to project this feeling of openness within his art. These include icons such as the cup or chalice symbol, the boat image and the heart.

Drury articulates how the magician "believes he must fill his cup of consciousness with an understanding and knowledge of his Higher Self". (Drury, 1982, p. 42) Alongside this understanding and knowledge comes a forum for renewal and a link with Spiritual life. A painting such as the 1990 "The legend is this" is a reflection on the death of his mother at that time. In this painting and in others such as "Set keel to breakers", "The Lark in the Morning 1" and small works within the series "The Blackbird Suite", Graham depicts a host of funeral transports such as the coffin, the boat, or a cart.

Graham has gone into indepth description concerning these icons, explaining how images appear. At the time of the manifestation of these works, the death of the artist's mother was a very conscious aspect within his psyche. He was aware of "death and life and the magnificent tragedy of it". Rather than relying on a conscious understanding or awareness, Graham dredged up shapes from his unconscious collective. However, he prefers to equate the process with doodling, declaring

it's probably the last resort of an uncreative person, that everything's dried up, a prune-like state, hoping that through some kind of doodling ... images come up and you can get to read them and I know enough about art history to suddenly realise the connection.



(Fig. 28) "The Legend is this"



Graham will take the image and use it his way. He subverts it to his personal way of thinking. He sought to acknowledge his mother's life through the image in what he describes as a "sensitive, practical farewell". Graham was well aware of what he describes as the "iconic way of travel through history" and draws parallels between his work and "the Egyptian thing of death, passage, journey, the Nordic notion of setting the body sailing out into the sea, all these fantastic, deeply rich symbolic notions of life and death".

Carl Jung alleges;

it seems as if it were only through an experience of symbolic reality that man, vainly seeking his own "existence" and making a philosophy out of it, can find his way back to a world in which he is no longer a stranger.

(Jung 1973, p. 44)

Graham makes this process his own by personalising it . The simple boat depictions trace the course of his life, of his mother's life and death. The boat icon begins its journey of the family in life and ends up in death and the spiritual life. As Carl Jung says

such things cannot be thought up, but must grow again from the forgotten depths if they are to express the deepest insights of consciousness and the loftiest intuitions of the spirit, thus amalgamating the uniqueness of present-day consciousness with the age-old past of humanity.

(Jung, Man and his Symbols, 1964, p. 243)

**CHAPTER FIVE: Roots, the Journey between the World's
Modernism, Postmodernism; Ireland and America.**

The appeal to thought arises in the odd in-between period which sometimes inserts itself into historical time, when ... the living themselves become aware of an interval in time which is altogether determined by things which are no longer and by things which are not yet. In history, these intervals have shown more than once that they may contain the moment of truth.

(Hannah, Arendt; Kearney, 1988, p. 9)

Patrick Graham's skill as an artist lies in his ability to exalt the immense human presence in his works. Thus, in their humanity they cry out to the viewer, lamenting the drastic effects of Modernity on the contemporary subject, on mankind. They are larger - than - life reflections on Modernity itself and the Modern existence. They contain the only moment of truth possible within such an abyss, the void of Modernism and Post-modernism in its wake; they reflect humanity.

The paintings seemingly mock Greenburg and his followers' theoretical basis, the concentration on formal values, and exaltation of the flat surface which was in evidence throughout much of the movement collectively referred to as "Modernism". Yet Graham's images have a greater motivating force than merely to outline such failings. His images show the failings of the twentieth century at large.

Graham is loathe to become linked with any classification as a specific movement. He fits neither into Modernism, nor Postmodernism with any degree of clarity. His use of figuration links him with the artists of the past, but instead of dredging up a tradition which in many respects has become bankrupt, devoid of meaning for today's audience, Graham chooses instead to allow this age of the "existential hero", of Postmodernism, to have an effect on his consciousness, and so on his art. Hence he is similar to what Rosenthal says of Kiefer, "modern man's lack of shared spiritual language and a common mythology does not lead Kiefer to the conclusion that art must be created for its own sake, but rather that such a language must be renewed or reinvented". (Rosenthal, 1987, p. 7) Instead of Graham imitating his mentors Giotto, Grünewald or Della Francesca, in a desire to be seen as sophisticated, he strives, rather, to bring their influence into the light of modern interpretation. In this manner, Graham brings his notion of "truth" to the fore, along with Spirituality and the realisation that art is as, (if not more), important than ever.

Heidegger feels that the situation contemporary man finds himself in allows mankind to reflect upon the "arts so that we can now ask more thoughtfully about the origin or art and the destination of thinking". (Kockelmans, 1985, p. 206) It is Heidegger's opinion that modern man must question himself, he must take a "step in reverse" from our present society and civilisation. Such a process would allow contemporary man the time to examine the state he finds himself submerged in.

In the twentieth century the emergence of a low level of spiritual life leads to a low level of morality. Society is aware that there are many urgent subjects which must be dealt with before either religion or ideological differences may be resolved. It is a spiritual awareness which is needed in order to come to terms with the existing problems. There is too much emphasis within contemporary society on the materialistic goal. Graham expresses his personal concern regarding this in relation to the role of the artist,

I am not saying that an artist should disdain genuine public and critical enquiry, but the artist as the critical or media-inspired other half of the painting, in my view, leaves us with the dilemma that is obstructive to contemplating that which is made, by the added confusion of modern day.

(Gandon ed. 1992, p. 17)

The twentieth century global-village concept expands the horizon. Kocklemans suggests that

modern art works no longer originate from the form-giving boundaries of a world which is the world of a people and of a nation, and which consists of things that are relevant to that people or nation. Today they all belong to the Universality of a world-civilisation which is governed and dominated by science and technology.

(Kockelmans, 1985, p. 205)

Graham's art is part of this Universality. It is art of and about the time in which it is generated. The twentieth century is an age of complex ideas in science, art, technology and philosophy. The artist, being a child of the age, must inevitably respond to some degree, whether of a conscious or unconscious nature.

This century, thus far, has brought about a dissolution of culture, one which is under stress from moral, Spiritual and aesthetic levels. There is a growing sense of alienation from nature and matter, from culture and aestheticism. Joseph

Beuys, while discussing newspapers as a reflection on society, commented on how such an important element as art could be placed at the back, shoved under the carpet, so to speak, while politics dominated the front pages. He comments on how culture has "become totally alienated from life". (Pokorny, Oct. 1983, p. 51). Thus it is apparent that our present culture is not actually moulded by its cultural environment, but rather, by economic powers and wealth. Yeats described this occurrence as the "filthy modern tide" which threatened culture, and as Richard Kearney adds, during the 1960's and 1970's, in the era of Lemass in Irish politics, this gave way to a "rising tide of multinational prosperity" which would "lift all boats". (Kearney, 1988, p. 9) It is somewhat ironic, then, that the boat symbol is such a large part of Graham's Spiritualistic imagery.

It is not only contemporary man's spirituality that is lagging behind, but also his sense of consciousness. While modern man craves the lost sense of Spirituality and a sense of place within the Universe, as Zohar suggests "our reason too demands that we make better sense of our experience". She holds the notion that "consciousness is a fact of that experience, and a philosophy or a science which can't account for consciousness, is a necessarily incomplete philosophy or science". (Zohar, 1990, p. 55) The same may be implied by an art practice which cannot account for some degree of consciousness.

However, Patrick Graham is fortunate in that he is the guardian of his own conscience, and as such he is very aware of the importance and effect consciousness has upon his work. He is all too aware of the Spiritual sense which

proves to be lacking in this century and resents media, artists or critics who, he suggests, appear to be "seeing a want in society and filling it with buckets of shit" (Gandon ed. 1992). Graham's keen consciousness leads him to believe that

as time passed and silence became more needful in my painting and my painting made me more defenceless, rid me somewhat of my reliance on my intellectual deceit of myself as an artist, I came to realise that I had a need for something I was to vaguely call spiritual hope. It was vital to myself and therefore important to my art.

(Gandon ed. 1992, p. 18)

It is this heightened and acute sense of spirituality which articulates much of Graham's work. It illuminates the work, like a beacon of light guiding the boat to safety, steering it clear of the dark void of despair, into the light of dawn and hope.

Yet it is a false hope, a failing, to try to express in words the feelings and gestures which give rise, through the artist's consciousness, to the manifestation of the work. The paintings come from and are a product of silence. Although, as Graham would agree, the silence itself is not a conscious decision, the very fact that he claims that it cannot be defined in the same manner as a non-aesthetic object, shows that a conscious thought process has led him to affirm this concept in the first place. The silence of which Graham speaks leads him to ascertain that

it has reduced my notions of art, history and aesthetics, eliminated even devastated the notion of art production, cash aesthetics, linear critical thinking on art and the incontinent notion of the new.

(Gandon ed. 1992, p. 17)

This "incontinent notion of the new" as Graham so aptly describes it, has been observed within Irish society. It is this which has led to the lack of a proper

concept of Spirituality within contemporary society. Television, cinema and the mass-media have led to a virtual ambush on our culture. This has been absorbed into the Irish psyche. Nevertheless, it is not this which has proved to be the most damaging within Irish society today. It is not, to a degree, the external forces such as the mass media which has replaced the "sense" of ourselves and of our culture. Rather, it is ingrained within Irish society and culture itself.

Elizabeth Kidd claims that a specific and definable "Irish art" does not exist. Yet, she claims that common "Irish experience" exists. (The Fifth Province, 1991). It is this "Irish experience" in which Graham roots much of his work. The works reflect the fragmentation which has become synonymous with the experience of the Irish, embedded within our psyche, seeking to mediate rather than agitate. Hutchinson parallels Graham's ever-increasing complexity within the painted surface with his quest for self-knowledge, which seems "invariably to end in silence and dislocation". (Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1990, p. 83). This may be equated with the "Irish experience", whose quest for self-knowledge has all-too-often ended in "silence and dislocation".

There is a continual striving within these paintings for a challenge and attack on the stereotypes and ideologies existing within Irish society. This subject animates Graham, who holds very strong opinions on the matter. He describes Ireland as a "battered child", which has been psychologically scarred day in, day out. This equation leads Graham to say in relation to the child, although implying both, "the kid grows up with these conflicting notions of itself, whether it hates itself or its

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history or should dispense with it. There's a clinging to this as the only paradigm of the way to be".

This, Graham claims, has had a profound effect on each individual and on the Irish psyche. He adds "there's a damaged psyche within the race". This does not refer specifically to the political effects England has had on Ireland, but also to culture and the arts. The problem leads to the nation suffering from a "respectable response to the world, its notion of its art".

Despite this renewed concentration for Graham on the art aspect within Irish society, his old interest in both politics and religion has not been cast aside. Works such as "The Life and death of Hopalong Cassidy", portray the deconstruction of society, not only in America, but in Ireland also. Graham maintains a high degree of interest in religion and politics, albeit on a toned-down level. His most recent works tear away at the layers of the surface, revealing the false identities beneath, which exist within both Irish and American society, indeed within society in general. The idea of the Irish as oppressors of our own culture manifests itself within Graham's imagery. The viewer is confronted with the artist's concerns - that of the Irish race, guilty and unsure of its national identity, embarrassed about sensuality and sexuality while at the same time remaining very rational about emotional issues.

Political and religious oppression concerns Graham. Nowadays he makes a conscious decision not to allow it to dominate his art without intention. Therefore

these issues, which Graham feels are linked to the enslavement of the people, are not the concern they once were. Graham's own sense of enslavement, the repression by the Catholic church and the void he experienced within it, along with the lack of Spirituality today, are important concerns. Nevertheless the art process has replaced the political issues in order of relevance for Graham.

However, Patrick Graham's political consciousness effects his work. It could not fail to do so in the case of Graham, an artist who feels so deeply about political issues. The critique on Irish society at large which Graham concerns himself with is very much based upon his own personal experience. Gillian gives this account of Graham's public concerns,

... although centred around personal experience it is informed by a very strong political sense - political in a general sense. Everyone has political opinions. Some people consciously set them aside, or don't acknowledge anything of the political when they paint, whereas Paddy Graham has very strong political views which he doesn't bar from the studio.

(McAvera, p. 17)

Graham does not impose politics upon his images of late, much to his benefit, as art which does so ceases to be art and becomes instead a political statement. His images are messages about truth and justice rather than "political paintings". He scorns artists who aspire to creating "political paintings", claiming "I know artists who paint directly from a political background. Their concerns are about political imagery, not art. It is simply a badly painted backdrop, semi-illustrative stuff and because of that the notion of 'bad art' at the moment is O.K."

As can be acknowledged from this quotation, the issue at hand here, rather than

that of politics, is the notion of "good" and "bad art". Thus a shift can be seen. Graham's art has evolved over the years, but what is of equal relevance is that it is apparent that so too have Graham's notions of spirituality and consciousness.

John Banville commented that the notion of an Irish national literature is a myth, instead there are only Irish writers engaged in the practice of writing. (Kearney, 1988, p. 13) The same could be said of painting and individual artists creating art. Patrick Graham is one such artist, one of the most gifted of his generation. Thus the following negative statement and others like it must be contested in order to preserve the role of the artist within twentieth-century society. It implies that in a world which is dominated by technology and science, "the arts have really lost their function in that art is now no longer permitted to be a place in which the truth unfolds itself". (Kockelmans 1985, p. 210) Instead, we must agree with Heidegger, in that art can have a function today, its essential function being in the destiny of its people, despite the fact that art is currently experiencing setbacks in committing itself to its function because our world is dominated by materialism.

CONCLUSION

It is apparent from this study of Patrick Graham's recent paintings that the images themselves have become more competent of late, focusing on the artwork itself, rather than on "issues". Not only have the actual images evolved, but so too have the very notions of consciousness and spirituality which gave rise to them in the first place.

The "Plain nude drawings" are a key in establishing this new level of consciousness in the work, which also explores the modern conceptions of sexuality, sensuality, religion and indeed spirituality, within the framework and context of drawing.

The Douglas Hyde exhibition of 1994 embodied all that has become synonymous with the work of Patrick Graham, a search for originality and honesty, truth, justice and humanity which can only be found throughout the process of the long journey of discovery, the voyage through the dark. It is on this journey that the ghosts of Goya, Picasso, Della Francesca and Nolde have been confronted. Graham's personal sense of the Spiritual must be burrowed into in order to deal with the notion of the Self.

The familiar boat icon may be seen as a metaphor for Graham's voyage but also for the Universal voyage of discovery. In many respects the surface of the canvas

itself is a kind of vessel in that it travels through uncharted waters, into the light of self knowledge and self discovery, encompassing the turbulence of modern-day traumas, - dividing itself geographically and mentally between the context of Ireland and America, while all the time being steered by a more calm and powerful inner force.

Graham's art is both autobiographical and Universal. Having seemingly survived a dramatic struggle for sanity and survival, through his own constant self questioning, Graham has developed his personal style of frank art which is imposing yet unpretentious. Although expressive, the images are never marred or tarnished by mawkishness. Indeed Patrick Graham's type of "silence" is one which speaks, directly and unapologetically.

Graham sums up both himself and his art process clearly and perceptively in asserting "if my art sinks or swims, it doesn't matter because I'll still do it. Because it's all I know. It's the only way I know how to live. It's where I can deal with possibilities". (Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1994, p. 36).

APPENDICE

INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK GRAHAM

The following interview with Patrick Graham, was conducted by Karen Sweeney in the Artists Studio, Firestation Building, Buckingham Street, Dublin on Tuesday November 15th 1994 and was transcribed from a Tape.

Abbreviations: K.S. = Karen Sweeney.

P.G. = Patrick Graham

K.S. How do you go about the process of painting. Do you begin with a conscious, preconceived idea?

P.G. Yes, there always is ... at some level, yes, certainly, to start a painting from blind-faith is almost impossible. But, what I've learned over the years is not to start a painting with a whole concept of what the painting might be, or you lose the whole adventure of the thing. I do certain things, like, I'll make very perfunctory sketches of vague, not ideas, but pictorial, visual images of symbols or ideas of what kind of things I'm thinking of, and it's essentially at that level, and they are kind of key-sketches. Also, I think of key colour - ranges, which may amaze people, because everybody just thinks I use mud.

K.S. Do you do the sketches on paper?

P.G. Oh, Yes, usually on paper, but when you see them they simply don't look like appropriate preparations for a painting. It's a language I've learned for myself over the years that's very, very straight forward. I mean, what you see is not what you're going to get at the end (points to work-in-progress in studio). Mostly what I do is give myself keys to open the painting, and they are simply keys, there is no notion of a finished sketch or a cartoon, or the complete colour-keying or anything, it's simply a key for opening the door into something.

K.S. And these are conscious things?

P.G. Yes, a kind of conscious introduction into it, but it has no real meaning, it's simply before you start something, because I like the

sense of what happens in the painting, where the painting sometimes takes over and you simply go along with it and at some stage step back and say 'what the hell is going on here?' that couldn't happen if you approached it from a very conscious level.

K.S. Would you say that you learn from your paintings?

P.G. Yes of course, absolutely.

K.S. Do you work out personal situations in your paintings?

P.G. No, despite what everybody thinks, no, as I said before, I don't paint my own history, I don't paint my own psychology. I do, in a sense, paint personal history or what I'd call collectiveness, in that sense I'm part of a ... you know, it comes in, it's obviously personal but its also a wider issue. I'm not interested in autobiography or confessional Expressionism and all that kind of stuff. I'm very wary of opinions and comments in painting. I'm wary of the fact that they become propaganda, I'm not sure if that's making art, or just, you know, a pictorial way of just making public statements ... but I'm very wary also, of what happened to paintings in the eighties - quite simply, few people could paint, but discovered, if you like, the power of content, or the power of the psychological context in which they made or attempted to make paintings. And where both artists and critics responded to the context, or the content of, the psychology of the artist, 'this is about my sexual languages, life,' you know, and actually forgot about the means of doing this, you know, simply painting. This, I can assure you from my own experience from looking at it, that very few people painted, but they certainly can splash around with paint, and mask, if you like, their ability to paint with content, which, I don't know if you remember all the kind of critique over the last maybe 8 - 10 years has been about the psychology of the artist, what they're dealing with, the subject matter. So I'm very wary of that. I'm absolutely anchored in painting, not content, that's something that takes care of itself. Painting fascinates me, it's hundreds of years of history, the way people actually make marks and what the kind of aesthetic history is that they deal with and try and re-engage all of that, that's what fascinates me, not content as such. They're kind of secondary issues, content and placing myself centre-stage in that is simply just an exercise in self-adoration, where painting is just comment, or opinion, or confession or whatever.

K.S. What is your opinion of art for arts sake?

P.G. I'm never quite sure what people mean by art for arts sake. How

I understand it is in the sense of what's happened to art, probably since Picasso in a way, but gathering momentum in the 80's or 70's where art was all about itself and looked into itself in a very linear manner. If you like, the history of painting, or the notion of what great painting was, was lost in the whole concept of idea, in a very superficial notion of responding to that as a kind of an artistic endeavour. You have to look at what's happened. What Warhol says is true, art has its 15 minutes of fame, every movement has its 15 minutes, O.K., call it a self-life, of anything from 5 - 10 years, and then its consigned to ... people no longer pay attention to it, it's gone, the next thing has happened. So what I'm saying is that art has the power to contemplate what its function is, or its role is ... and yet great art throughout history, there has been this powerfully transcendent kind of notion that you stand in front of this great piece of work and you're fxxxing knackered. In every sense, I like to say you're screwed and I mean that literally. Great art has the power to screw the fxxxing arse off you. You're left, if you like, in silence, you're not reasoning or rational about it, truly subservice in a sense, that it gets behind all the rationale and all the logic and all art history and movements. You simply are expressionless in front of it. But art nowadays, everybody has an opinion about what they're doing, it's at this level of, what will I call it, a kind of literal engagement and it's all readable and it's about itself as a movement. I was actually looking at the exhibition presently on in the Douglas Hyde, it's a lovely little show, it's about painting, it's very powerful, it's all of those things I think art should be. I was just talking to John about it and he said "what do you think?" and I said here's something that we actually don't consciously think of as art. You simply walk in and you're not conscious of the fact, in a sense, that this is art. It is not telling you it's art, you get engaged in each little piece in a way that's not making a statement about itself as in 'I am art', but you had a few exhibitions before that, excluding mine, which were all about saying 'I am art'. I don't think about that and that's all I'm saying. It's all about, "you hang something in one corner and you hang something in the other". When you think of the dynamics of space or anything like that, all this thing of 'I am about art, that's all I'm about, art about art', whereas good art, in my view, you're not conscious of the fact that it's making a statement about art, it's actually being itself and it's truly subversive in the sense that you can't actually forget you're in to have to deal with art here, whatever that means. I'm engaged in another kind of response altogether, it's an emotional heartfelt response before it ever is an actual notion about art. So, I don't know if that's clear. But that kind of thing saddened me in a sense. It's excluded art from itself or from the functional meaning as I understand art, fallen into this very exclusive notion of self-contained notion 'I am art, I am about art', it's an intellectual

puzzle.

K.S. Do you intellectualize your art?

P.G. No. That's not to say that I'm not intellectual or I don't have an intellectual input into what I do. I mean the analysis of what I do is about art, but not art in the sense of 'how am I going to present my work as this exclusive thing we call art, real art,' but 'how am I to analyse colour, probably working with a simple, naïve aesthetic, how to carry an image, how to use colour, what is the key reference, what are the neutrals I'm going to use to highlight the secondary colours'? All of this old-fashioned stuff, and yet having to rotate itself so it has contemporary value for a contemporary world. It's complex.

K.S. Are you conscious of its having value for a contemporary world?

P.G. Perhaps the one conscious thing I did about the last show in the Douglas Hyde was, very consciously, I suppose, challenging myself about the notion of drawing as having meaning to a contemporary world or contemporary art language, and if you like an old-fashioned notion of drawing, a certain kind of if you like, academic, or good draughtsmanship, we'll put it like that; have any strength or power or purpose of meaning in a contemporary sense. So I actually set out to draw that. Also dealing with contemporary issues of, perhaps psychological issues of sexual oppression or whatever, but in a very almost practical way, seeing simply if drawing had any relevance anymore for contemporary art. I don't know what the result of it is but I would continue simply just to try and see if drawing has any power or meaning for a contemporary art world or art history and actually seeing how people deal with it. It doesn't allow room for all this rambling engagement with psychology and theory, you're confronted with 'is it good or fucking bad'? Ah Jesus, what is good or bad, I mean do we know anymore. That stuff fascinates me.

K.S. Does your art have any kind of philosophical basis?

P.G. Ah look, there was a time when I knew bucketfuls and skipfuls of shit, and if anything all this philosophical wisdom is telling you, you know fuck-all 'cos everything you do keeps telling you that the last painting is no longer relevant. So all the knowledge you have is irrelevant to that little worm of creative endeavour. I want to say something. To make something that excites me. I can't repeat myself anymore. Holy shit. So all the bullshit that goes into that, that has to go out the door. So the only wisdom I have is that the things I used to think were worth knowing are not worth a shit is actual fact. There are philosophies of life I have. I would

have political views. I'm not some kind of artistic zombie. But in the studio it's settling in and getting rid of all the crap of what I know and that goes for the havoc of making a mark. You engage some kind of part of yourself that actually thinks I'm alive. I amn't dying! So it's not worth knowing anything that's new. And seriously, I know that's a kind of cliché and every old arse-hole artist says that, but it really isn't worth knowing. Now, as long as you have the tools, those internalized tools, what you know about colour, what you know about drawing, what you know about composition, so what - now what are you going to do with it? I find the whole thing slowing me more and more. You can say that either one is getting more difficult or ... it's hard for me to find something in the work that engages me. I can get very pissed off with a lot of the work I do. Simply because it is kind of regurgitating something else, it's just all there, it just comes out again. I'm not talking about, in a sense, the way modern art is 'I want to do something sensational' I want to actually make another inch extra for myself so I can feel I can go on with it.

K.S. Does art still give you a buzz?

P.G. Yes, but not in the way it used to. A very small buzz. A cheap 'Woolworths' type of buzz, no great kind of big 'Brown Thomas' kind of buzz anymore and I'm perfectly happy with that 'cos you can get very locked into a notion of what you do and the public gets locked into it and it's very hard to actually rid yourself of it. You find you're repeating things, painting can become a habit. So what I do is start a painting, get half-way through it and realize it's just another slight difference or variation on a theme, and I then have to work up the courage to say it has to go, and from there I dream about the painting. I then go, one having excluded all this stuff and approaching with nothing and hope that there will be something to engage with. And this is not about subject, its' not about anything, it's as simple as maybe colour, or maybe just line, or 'oh I haven't seen myself do that before, that's interesting, can I use it?'

K.S. Could you see yourself taking a different direction, maybe losing the figure?

P.G. Yes, sure, but that's not choice, that's simply out of necessity, or out of evolution. It's simply that as a creative person I'm bored very easily, absolutely, or you could say I'm like a child, I throw tantrums when I'm bored, and I throw them at the canvas as well. But I do bore very easily and I bore myself to death.

K.S. And would you leave it and come back to it later?

- P.G. No, I get rid of it because otherwise you fiddle around with it. This is stuff you can't fiddle around with. It has to open in a way that's like a flood of light. Now, when you've finished the canvas it looks like a 12 watt bulb, but at the moment it's a flood of light. It's a cheap game this, there's nothing in it folks, stop doing it!
- K.S. What do you mean by terms such as light, dark and silence?
- P.G. When I'm painting there's lots of things going on in the head, an emotional response, I'm aware of myself. But there comes a moment when I lose all this sense of myself and sense of painting and there's this event that is not consciously painting or I'm not consciously doing. Something happens in there, it's being able to stop, step away from it and see what the hell's happened to it. It's then you become the artist in the sense that you choose a way to see what's happened, what so engaged you. Try then to work around that, to save it or whatever. I make art sound very ... you must remember I've been at this for years. I went through millions of stages of knowing what I was doing and what I was all about. I absolutely knew. I think Nick Cage said that he has so much shit and knowledge he could drown in a spit. And that's the way it is. It's just overpowering. But I'm happy with it, otherwise you have all these references, crows on your shoulder, all screaming at you 'that's not true, yeah that's O.K.', all yelling for their piece. But to be yourself in all this is impossible, if you try to be as near the truth of this moment of unconsciousness, yeah, that's about all that's left. You know, in a world full of images and magazines and things about art, there's nothing left but 5 minutes of unconsciousness, where you can potentially be yourself and grasp your own sense of the world. After that the struggle is to reshape this art.
- K.S. Do you connect a notion of 'Spirituality' with your work?
- P.G. Only in the sense that again, as being some kind of wisdom or whatever, that tells me, anyway despite all my intellectual arrogance about things and the logic and rationale of belief, this belief, there is in me a real need for some kind of religious sense of the world or the extra-world, or 'otherness', or whatever and only in those terms is it implied in the painting. I have nothing to say about religion, left, right or centre, or Catholicism, or Protestantism, or Buddhism or anything like that. All I have left is, in a sense, the vacant space left for what might be my own sense of 'otherness' or 'religiousness' or whatever that is, and that, I think, manifests itself in the canvas every now and again. But it certainly has no particular axe to grind about religion, for or against. I would intellectually hold the rule that religion is just about, you know, the dogmatic arseholes shouting about it, whose

notion of truth is dogma, which in biblical terms is not truth, there's truth in revelation, but dogma and revelation are entirely different things. I mean, revelation tells you there is no truth except the next stage, so therefore you cannot have some spectacular notion of fixed truth, of what is or what is not, everything is not, you know. But that's just logic, I mean, spiritually, emotionally, whatever it is. Unconsciously, I know there is a space for religion in my sense of being, and 'religion' may be a wrong word, but a sense of the potential of 'otherness' that is not particularly logical, reasonable, rational, of this world; and it, as I said, manifests itself in the painting. In the sense of space, like a child seeing the horizon of a bog for the first time, in a way it's an awesome kind of thing.

K.S. And a question of innocence as well, maybe?

P.G. Yeah, I'm not talking about - you know the way this country talks of innocence. This country thinks that everything is sexual, sexual innocence, it's always to do with sex. I'm talking about a child's awesome vision of the world and it's about memory, it's not in a sense about innocence, but it's about memory, and it's in this sense that I refuse to go back to the places I locate my places in, quite simply because it destroys. I carry all this adult baggage to it, and it's never what ... I've learned to preserve some things of childhood, by simply not going back and looking at it. And it's this awesome sense of the world I used to have as a midget, a 2ft. dwarf in a bog, in this vast empire of colour, an empire of line, literally, this kind of linear division of sky and this absolute whole sensuous lower space and this magical flying space above it in which birds used to fly and all this kind of thing. Also this dense sexual earth, dense browns, reds, all that kind of thing. And I had a kind of sense of fear of that, that was sexual, that was religious. Don't tell me a kid of 3, 4 or 5 doesn't know these things, they are maybe not able to articulate them for themselves, but they know and there is an awesome sense of things at that age and that's what I'm talking about, so it's not really in a sense about, you know, sexuality or politics, but about the unadulterated awesomeness of uncluttered sense of the world, where everything enters and nothing is excluded and it enters fully as sensual, sexual which evokes sexuality, everything is awesome with splendour, it's panoramic.

K.S. Is it intuitive?

P.G. I don't know if that's intuitive. I think it's very logical. But it's a very rational experience to a kid. I think we like to call it intuitive because it's not available to us anymore because we're so full of shit.

K.S. But it's not something you can learn?

P.G. No, it's a gift that's there and the great thing about this uncluttered childhood is simply accepted, it's amazing what adults won't accept. We've all nice words for how to protect ourselves and there's ... well, intuition is not quite right, there's no rationale to it, therefore it's suspect. It's that English imperial notion of the world of cause and effect. I'd simply call it the uncluttered, undamaged openness. Growing up damages you, it should have a health warning on it. - 'this will severely damage your creative potential!'

K.S. What about the boat imagery?

P.G. They're just icons, that came from not just my unconscious collective of course. It's like doodling in a sense, and it's like writing, it's like poetry. You're scuttering around on a piece of paper looking for something to hang onto and suddenly an image comes up, well there is a conscious problem in a sense of ... when the boat kind of icons or symbols, or whatever you want to call them, were arriving at me, I was fairly conscious of my mother's death and life and the magnificent tragedy of it. I could have approached it in a hundred different ways, in a very logical sense. I could have done a kind of political woman's painting which is really impersonal, it's just comment - my poor mother's tragic existence as a political being or whatever. But I just didn't want to do that. I don't want to do that kind of shit. So, if you like ... (end of side A of tape) ... anyway, before we were so rudely interrupted .. as I say, it's this doodling, I've learned to do that in the sense of a way of removing this consciousness about how to approach something, suddenly you'll find shapes and things happening. It's probably the last resort of an uncreative person, that everything's dried up to a prune-like state, hoping that through some kind of doodling .. and yes, images come up and you can get to read them and I know enough about art history to suddenly realise the connections. I could have gone to a book and looked for - 'let me get myself some kind of reference book here about symbolism', that's the easiest thing in the world, that's what art students do. I prefer the notion that if something arrives at me I'm going to look at it in my way, I'm not going to have this intrusive other person's way of dealing with it. And I can get into a process of developing this image to my way of thinking as an artist. I was almost instantly aware that this was an iconic way of travel through history, the Egyptian thing of death, passage, journey, the Nordic notion of setting the body sailing out into the sea all these fantastic, deeply rich symbolic notions of life and death. They become very personal for me and for her rather than getting into a literal,

political rant about 'my mother's life'. What I was doing was looking for a very sensitive, practical farewell, an acknowledgement of her life. But not in a way that it made it just my political diatribe against the figure of things, do you know what I mean, that made it so personal that it simply was, what a lot of artists do nowadays is having people on the outside peering in some keyhole. I don't believe that' art, art, I think has the universal notion of itself as being truly subversive, that it sneaks up behind you, doesn't always sit in front of you, where it's saying something and you're answering back, where you set up dialogue between the content and the subject, you simply soap-box it. I think painting is far too powerful in its subversive sense of itself.

K.S. Do you see it as some kind of path or spiritual journey?

P.G. Well, if it's a journey, Jesus, it's mostly downhill, depends on what bike you're on. What, painting? As a means of self-discovery and knowledge? Absolutely not. No, when you're dealing with painting as a physical, mental, rational, intuitive as you call it, act all your life, it really tells you, you know f***-all, so, in a sense, what it does is give you a sense of irreverence about thinking, about opinion, about politics, about art, hopefully, first. About what people want and desire rather than what they need. There's a huge difference between what you want and what you actually need. That can happen in here. I know what I need from art, now I also know very well what I could want and desire from it and give it to myself and therefore give it to the public and maybe get more money than I'm getting now. But I know what I need from it which is a different thing entirely, and I need to go on just one more day, I need to find something for myself that gives me the potential for another day's hope and it's a romantic kind of notion, not this depression everyone talks about. But to go on with what - I haven't a clue - just the next day's painting or the next day's sunshine or the next Spring, who knows. The journey is somehow also about evaluating the notion of 'now', not in the way people felt in the '60's and - '70's 'now' as you must be aware of 'now', you must paint about 'now'. My notion of 'now' is a timeless sense of now which is gathering in history, gathering in this all present, all in this exquisite sense of the moment. But it's also timeless. Everything happens in this exquisite present I only find in these odd moments when my ego, my sense of the world is beating the shit out of me by the painting, when I fall into the painting. A wonderful sense of "I don't know what's happening" and then you're coming back and struggling and try to make sense. This is not therapy or religion or anything else. I was an artist born, bred, I was apprenticed. So it's not about the confusion of the present day or about art as therapy for this or that. I'm a natural born artist. I've been trained as an artist. Everything I do

is as an artist, not therapies, not psychology. Now, with that, you're thinking. Things are going to happen. It depends on how people want to read them. If people want to read them as some kind of psychological insight into myself, Jesus, good luck to them. I don't, I'm dealing with art all the time. I'm dealing with the history of art and aesthetics. "That red's not as good as this red, why, how do I key that red, how do I make a secondary colour sing like a lark instead of having to use a primary'. All these things. The shit-muddy colour I use that I love so much, that people think is just pure dull shite, I love that with all my little heart because there's colour in that that nobody sees and it's thought about, it's not simply some mad gestural homage to a bog. It's thought about as art. It's not the black space people thought. Nobody thinks, even critics are not able to think about art anymore, they keep thinking of 'the psychology of' or 'the movement within', 'what's the intellectual notion behind'. This is why people responded to me as some kind of a reactionary Fascist-academic, or someone who should be living in the eighteenth century. I'm very conscious of the age I'm in and very conscious of making contemporary art. But I'm also conscious of the fact that there's a history of aesthetics and classical notions of art which is entirely different from the dogmatic academicism. This is, to use the boat again, the boat that carries the painting. If the boat is leaking it's going to sink and the painting will sink and so it should. There's an awful lot of leaky boats around and that's me speaking purely as an artist. I'm not dealing with other people's concerns, giving me their internalized notions of sex, psychology, notions of female, male. I see it purely in art terms and if it's not good art why would I be bothered. I'm 52 years old and I've lived in pubs, mental hospitals and in the road and I've seen it all, from zero to 135. I've heard an awful lot of things, so, as an artist, I'm interested in art. If there's no art there, I'm simply not going to tolerate some arsehole using art for telling me their opinion about sex. I can do that on a television set.

K.S. And was there a stage when you were interested in that?

P.G. Yes, there was a time when I was interested. I would say during the hunger strike, I felt so powerfully about the whole attitude of the self, refusing a voice to people, who, I believe had a very legitimate concern. I'd say that if you don't give a voice to people you give them a gun 'cos there's no option and we don't understand that. We have this self-righteous licking at the door of the castle attitude. We demean ourselves and our whole sense of ourselves. I have great passion, I can get very angry about stuff. I will sometimes let that breed into art, I can't help that. But I will stand back from it and say "O.K., I hope I'm rid of that now. I'm not dealing with that, I'm dealing with art". I have this debate

with myself, whether this is appropriate stuff for art and I look back at history and I think, yeah, there's great political painting. Great painting is different. They have a very profound universal message, sense of justice, fairness, rightness. That's entirely different from the direct political picture. It's not as simplistic as people think - is it a political painting, or is it a painting with a profound message for truth or justice. I know artists who painting directly from a political background. Their concerns are about political imagery, not art. It is simply a badly painted backdrop, semi-illustrative stuff and because of that the notion of 'bad art' at the moment is O.K. We presume 'bad art' happened because people intended it to be like that, bad art is simply bad art. That cleverness all new artists have - 'I have to do something different, I want to be unique, I'm tired of Minimalist, I've got to find something else', so they say 'let's try painting', but they couldn't paint because no-body could teach them. Art books are full of people who came out of art college in the '70's when painting and drawing was considered with supreme disdain - 'it's irrelevant to art', and now they're all trying to teach them to paint and draw because it's 'in'. When, at least, I think of politics and wonder about how I can bring it in - the first notion is about art, and in a sense looking for the universal, like Goya. Even though Goya's was particular, it's universal. There's a lot of art here that's particular to itself, to its notion of law. It would not read anywhere else as 'this is a great notion of human injustice', quite simply 'cos it's too focused. It's a piece of very direct propaganda for a very direct group of people. The notion of great art is gone. What great art should be is this universal stuff that you stand in front of and say you're screwed. Some of this stuff you stand in front of and say 'what's this about, people getting shot and Worker's Party view of the World'.

K.S. What does your recent 'Blackbird Suite' have as its main concern?

P.G. It concerns childhood. I was born in the country. The shrill scream of birds when you startle them. And the 'Lark in the morning' is a hymn to sexuality. It's actually a hymn, it's not this political imagery. I never have dealt vigorously with what people consider political notions of art, as I hope I see art. 'The Lark in the Morning' and the 'Blackbird Suite' is another hymn. I have a way of locating things and it's usually through a first meeting with something. My first encounter with the female was unbelievable in the sense that I didn't fall, I kind of plummeted. I knew at a very early age, people used to comment on it, you really get into stuff. When things happen, they happen in a big way, with all this mad, not innocence, but openness, it's never happened before. I locate things like that about sexuality, about relationships about the tremblings in the back seat of a cinema with this paragon of

beauty, of virginity, of wholeness. It's an impossible situation because you were crippled by your own notions of what was going on. You were left with no arms or legs or anything, just useless and the heat - I must have had temperatures of 110 degrees. I felt things intensely. I saw things intensely, colour, I love these browns, the tense, subtle ranges between. They're like jewels. It's a hymn to that kind of thing, of encountering things with that kind of openness.

K.S. Would you agree with the 'funeral hymn' description in the catalogue?

P.G. Not at all. That's a view. With the best political cliché in the world let everybody have a view - 'this is a democracy'. Well, I do like the notion of people reading things in it. I may totally disagree. It would never occur to me to write and say 'you're totally wrong there', because they're not, to themselves.

K.S. Do you see your paintings as being positive?

P.G. That's too reasonable a word. 'Darkly romantic' in a sense. My philosophy is that you're only going to find something new in the dark. You can't find anything new in the light, if you do it's obvious to everyone. If you haven't seen it somebody else has. What they call the 'known element of experience', it's useless if you haven't discovered it, someone else has, and if you borrow it from them it's a second-hand experience. One thing that interests me is what you're liable to find in the darker side. Now people think that's a rather depressing engagement. I feel its like flying. It's this beautiful falling where you sometimes catch a glimpse of something. And if you've never really met it before, 'how do I articulate what this is' and it's then you find a kind of humanity about the whole notion of what to do, of how inarticulate you are. You deal with that discovery. Anything that's of any use to me is found in the dark side of life. It's an underground engagement, Aidan Dunne called it a subterranean activity, but it is. The known is above ground. I know less about underground, I know enough about overground and if I don't know it somebody else will. That's not to say I don't engage with it or find it fascinating. I engage with it like theatre. I identify with the theatrical.

K.S. Do you identify with poetry?, Existentialism?, Beckett?

P.G. No, I hate poetry, I hate plays, I identify with Beckett's notion of going on, but I couldn't tolerate going to the theatre to see it. I got addicted to cinema when I was 5 or 6, I never lost that ... but I find myself getting more cynical nowadays. I never lost this notion of losing myself entirely to the imagery and magic and being

carried away.

K.S. Does 'Hopalong Cassidy' relate to that?

P.G. Yes. They're references ... well intellectually I make direct references to politics or innocence or corruption of whatever. 'Hopalong Cassidy' is a direct reference, probably lost on the younger generation. 'Hopalong Cassidy' is a paragon of truth and justice and the 'right guy always wins'. In a sense it's about America - the death if you like. America at one stage had a lovely notion of itself in its constitution, everybody has the right to pursue happiness. It's a lovely notion and I think they actually did practice it for the first 150 years. The fact that they opened the borders to all kinds of people, Jews, Irish, 'give us your poor'. Power corrupts, you can't get away from the cliché, it's a corrupt state now. It's colonial. All you have to do is look at the right-wing Republicans who've been voted into power. The power they have, in a world where it's real, in the sense of influence, it's detestable. 'Hopalong Cassidy' was about, not just America, but I know Irish people who know exactly simply from the notion of 'Hopalong Cassidy'. There's a kind of Universal notion, this is not just about me, it's about the beauty of something, getting slowly destroyed, not only destroyed, but rising as a corrupt power.

K.S. And what about the Irish psyche?

P. G. You have a perfect example of it on the 'Late Late Show' of what I mean by licking at the castle gate. We have this notion inherited from England of the middle-class, especially, wanting to be invited to the castle and being ashamed of their background. Also the battered child syndrome, if you're battered day in day out and your whole self is abused, your opinion of yourself is shit. It's done year after year, century after century. Look at what happens to the kid. The kid grows up with these conflicting notions of itself whether it hates itself or its history or should dispense with it. There's a clinging to this as the only paradigm of the way to be. Some people in this nation believe they have not suffered because of this, yet they manifestly show this when they get on a television set and are venomous, spitting their contempt for a fellow Irishman who is still suffering the reality of the notion of self and another power. So yeah, there's a damaged psyche within the race. You're seeing the response through this fellow Waters who writes in the 'Times'. He's written about U2 as a manifestation of potential Irishness, of a truly unique creative response to itself, through U2. He's been writing in the Times as a columnist. He's been condemned left right and centre by the people who believe Conor Cruise O'Brien is a fountain of truth. It's an old thing.

K.S. Do you think that's purely just an Irish mentality?

P.G. Any battered child, I will refer to it as that, any country who has gone through that has a problem. It's notion of a respectable response to the world, its notion of its art, has suffered from that notion for years. Despite the critical condemnation abroad, bland soft-focus, blue tinted Modernism, this '50's Modernism, I don't know if you know it, this Romantic semi-Cubism, semi-Matisse type shit, - all have been lifted from this pond of France or whatever, it's not going to raise issues that will trouble the emotional notion of your confidence, you could be confident that this will not cause any problem ... (end of tape)....

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