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by

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Declaration

This dissertation is submitted to the Department of Fine Art in partial fulfilment for the MA (RCA) in Photography. It is entirely the author's own work except where noted, and has not been previously submitted for this or any other educational institution.

Patricia Chan

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Note. The illustrations presented in this dissertation are not to be considered in critical understanding with the text. Rather they are a subjective response to certain ideas within the dissertation and should instead be accepted as pictorial supplements.



Wayland Smith's Cave
1845

Introduction

A cave is also known as grotto, cavern, cellar, pit etc., and these terms will be used throughout the dissertation and although not precisely synonymous they should be understood to (in most cases) imply a place, “roofed with rock or earth, at any depth in earth or mountainside, more or less dark, often lying at the end of a long passageway and without direct daylight.”¹ It is a dark space, an inhuman space ultimately but it provided humans with shelter from the dangerous, be it animals or weather etc. It protected them. The cave in this context is shelter and as is one of the basics of survival, enabled the first people to survive in the world.

Today their equivalents are houses and this discussion makes a phenomenological reading the different sides of the cave image and what it tell us about the “nature of its being” In the past it has often been used in metaphors ranging from origin and rebirth to death and deceit and many of these theme have been translated countless times by, philosopher’s, novelists, poets, etc., throughout the centuries and the present day. In Chapter one, the beginning of the discussion corresponds with the “physical” approach to the cave itself.

By way of introduction to the cave, it follows the passageways, entrance and finally the cave itself in order to give the reader a sense of journey into the cave both physically and psychologically. What follows this is a brief overview on the symbolism of the cavern. The metaphor of the cave is quite contradictory at times and some of these oppositions are examined in the second chapter. It investigates the human being as a “communal animal” and also its diametrical opposition, the figure of the hermit. This contrast is developed further when applied to concepts of “public” and “private”, when discussing looking at the development of early communities and the spatial condition of agoraphobia.

These contrasts highlight how contradiction is inherent in the cave image. Although the hermit was discussed in the previous chapter, in chapter three it is developed more with the suggestion that there is continuance of hermitic existence today as exemplified in the “urban hermits”. In addition to that, the notion of “loss” is applied to the exiled and Lascaux Caves? It shows how on the one hand the cave, in this context, is a place of solitude, where the human is outcast and exiled from society. On the other it is celebrated as a monument to our past, where we are invited or encouraged to find an entry point perhaps to a repressed (natural) condition.

Chapter One

Before the Cave
Myths and Symbolism of the Cave

Before the Cave

It is noted that in many cases, a maze or labyrinth is situated before a cave. The passageways leading up to the cave itself are characteristically complex in nature with tunnels and dead ends providing an infinite series of solutions and possibilities. In some cultures the cave itself has a role to play in magical practices. It is seen as a gigantic reservoir of energy and it is believed that “the roughly circular shape of the cavern, its depth underground and the twists and turns of its passageways leading up to it, reminiscent of human entrails, made it the perfect site for magical practices.”²

The origin of the labyrinth comes from the Greek mythological figure Daedalus who invented it to house the Minotaur. However the labyrinth, according to Denis Hollier, cannot be described or characterised as a human creation for it has no inventor, “no father”. Nor can it simply be a product of nature because “the labyrinth is basically the space where oppositions disintegrate and grow complicated, where diacritical couples are unbalanced and perverted”.³ Perhaps the interest in the labyrinth both as an physical object and concept fulfils our paradoxical desire to be lost and contained at the same time and “wanting to explore the labyrinth only confirms this further: there is no getting around it”⁴

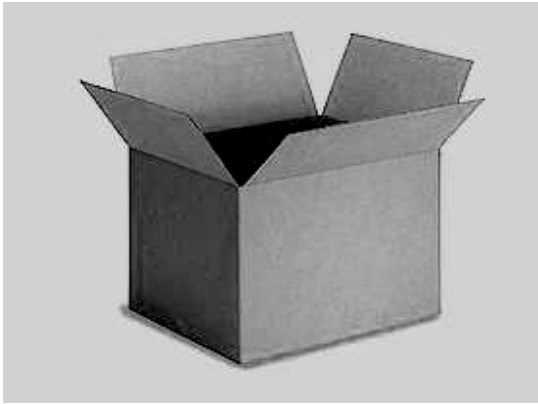
The passing through the mouth of the cave is seen traditionally as the symbolic entry from the external to the internal state. The significance of the mouth/threshold is typified through the image of the door, representing notions of separation and union. It is the point where two distinct spaces meet and *passage* or journey can occur between them, “the threshold concentrates not only the boundary between outside and inside but also the possibility of passage from one zone to another.”⁵ Much has been said about these concepts and for Gaston Bachelard there are two “immense” types of space. There is the space of intimacy and world space and when human solitude deepens, the two immensities touch and become identical. In this space of dreaming and dwelling, of imagination and physical existence he writes:

Two depths pair off, reverberate in echoes which go from the depths of being of the world to a depth of being of the dreamer. Time is suspended. Time no longer has any tomorrow. Time is engulfed in the double depth of the dreamer and the world. The world is so majestic that nothing ever happens there; the world reposes in its tranquillity.⁶

In a different way, Mircea Eliade sees a duality embedded into the experience of space. He has written extensively on what he calls religious man and non – religious man's experience of the world in, *The Sacred and the Profane*. In part he explains this in terms of how it is not the appearance of a thing as such that gives it weight but man's perspective on it. On one level, he states that “by manifesting the sacred, any object becomes something else”, yet on another level, “it continues to remain itself”. To the profane man a stone may look like any other stone on the ground but for those who view the stone as sacred, “its immediate reality is transformed”.⁷ It is, according to Eliade, only in this sacred space where man finds truth:

For religious man, space is not homogenous; he experiences interruption, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others. . . There is then, a sacred space, and hence strong significant space; there are other spaces that are not sacred and so without structure of consistency, amorphous. Nor is this

all, for religious man, this spatial nonhomogeneity finds expression in the experience of an opposition between space that is sacred- the only *real* and *real-ly* existing space- and all other space, the formless expanse surrounding it.⁸



1.1 Open Box



1.2 Ladder in a Cave

Myths and Symbolism of the Cave

In his allegory of the cave, Plato's says that if mankind would begin to attempt to loosen the chains of our society and the exit of the cave, they could see true reality but instead we sit without knowing the truth. To Plato this world was a place of ignorance, suffering and punishment, in which human souls were chained and imprisoned by the gods as if it were in the perpetual darkness of the cavern. At the start of many Greek initiation rites, as ritual expression, the candidate enters the cave or pit. Mircea Eliade defines this as the symbolic, "return to the womb".⁹ He tells of one culture, which separates girls who have their first menstruation from the rest of society by shutting them in a darkened hut until the menstruation is over. The intent is to symbolizes for the girl, her return to the womb as a reminder that her own womb is fertile and to emphasise that she is dying as a girl to be born again as a woman. In these rites, symbolic logic was strictly translated into action where candidates were placed, bound, in a cave from which they had to escape to reach the light of day.¹⁰

In Roman mythology Somnus, the god of sleep resided in a cave where the sun never shone and everything was in silence. Similarly, the serpent Python born from the slime of the earth dwelt in a cave.¹¹ Pan he had the "power of striking terrors" in people due to his ugly appearance and was known for haunting caves and mountaintops.¹² The parallelism between these three legends, Somnus' darkness, Pan's isolation from civilization, and Python's concealment within the earth, is their association with the myth of the cave as a container for the "negative" aspect of man. The souls of the dead in American Indian culture were thought to be the most malevolent of all spirits, and were held within the deepest parts of the cave. It was thought that negative thoughts or spirits influenced the outcome of all human endeavors, and therefore had to be maintained inside cave.¹³ The philosopher Francis Bacon theorized about the myth attached to caves in which he maintained that "idols", meaning prejudices and preconceived notions possessed by an individual, were contained in a person's "cave", or obscure compartment, with its "intricate and winding chambers"¹⁴.

Since the female body produces new life it followed that metaphor of the cave represented the origin of all life. As an archetype of the maternal womb, caves feature in myths of

origin and rebirth. Many cultures - most notably the American Indians - believed that mankind was born of embryos, which matured within underground caves. For the Ashanti people of Ghana, the first men came up to the surface from holes in the ground.¹⁵ In Asia too was the belief that man came from gourds, which grew in caverns, and in ancient Chinese, *K'iao* represents both womb and cavern as mankind is born from it and upon death, returns to it.¹⁶



1.5 A Sea Cave



1.6 Lasithi Cave in Crete

There is a fourteenth century Turkish legend which tells how, “on the borders of China, on the Black Mountains, streams flooded a cave shaped like a human being and filled a pit with mud. The cave acted like a kiln and nine months later the heat of the sun brought the figure to life”.¹⁷ This is the birth of the first man, Ay - Atam and for the next forty years the man lived on his own until one day the rain brought a fresh flood bringing a woman into existence. They had forty children and upon the couples death the eldest son buried them in the pit of the cavern in the hope that it would bring them back to life.

Many of the myths associated with caves describe a human being's cycle of existence as it begins and ends in the same location. Life begins in the “womb” of mother earth as two individuals conceive a child within the shelter of a cave. And regardless of what has taken place throughout his life, he is eventually returned to the soil in the form of a grave where he is released as a spirit back into the cave. Though ultimately, “the [cave] has been the locus of mysterious forces, of unanswered questions, of states of being and becoming . . . it is above all a metaphorical portal; an entrance . . . to enter is to acknowledge the distance between outside and inside, between reality and illusion, between nature and art.”¹⁸

These oppositions are examined more in the following chapter. It applies this aspect of the cave primarily through the individual experience in society. It will look at the human being as a “communal animal” through to its diametrical opposition, the figure of the solitary hermit. While the latter is characterized by stillness and stasis, the former is “mobile”. The movement from one to the other serves to highlight how the cave image houses contradiction, which in turn affects notions of public and private space. However it makes the suggestion that today more so than ever, there is a blurring of boundaries between the two.

Chapter Two

Aspects of Dwelling I
Aspects of Dwelling II

Aspects of Dwelling I

Aristotle describes man as a “communal animal” to highlight society - building as a central trait of human nature. In *Politics*, Book 1, he writes: “The family is the association established by nature for the supply of man’s every day wants . . . But when several families are united, and the association aims at something more than the supply of daily needs, the first society to be formed is the village.”¹⁹ The German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies presented a differentiation between the terms “community” and “society”. He argued that “community” is perceived to be a tighter and more cohesive social entity within the context of the larger society, due to the presence of a “unity of will.”²⁰

It is generally understood that two million years ago in the Stone Age period, people lived in extended families, clans or tribes and survived on scavenging, hunting and gathering food that grew wild.²¹ By twelve - thousand years, human populations had spread into most of the habitable regions of the globe. These groups are characterized as hunter -gatherer societies and tended to be relatively mobile or nomadic.²² Due to changing climate most of these societies did not establish permanent settlements. Rather, they have relatively temporary encampments with tents, huts, or other easily constructed dwellings. The length of time that they stay in any one location is largely determined by the availability of food and water that is readily obtainable.²³

Gradually people began to grow food, rather than hunt for it. Once agriculture became the main source of survival they established villages of permanent houses therefore they moved out of the cave but found new uses for caves, mainly as hunting and herding campsites and for ceremonial activities.²⁴ The cave no longer served as a place of refuge against the elements or wild animals but for some it remained a place of solitude. Thus there is figure of the Hermit, seen as the silent wanderer, standing apart from the world; he acts as the inner voice, our hidden self. He is the semi - mythological Egyptian sorcerer and magician who is said to hold within himself ‘three parts of the wisdom of the world’²⁵.

From a religious point of view, the solitary life is a form of asceticism, where the hermit renounces worldly concerns and pleasures in order to become closer to their object of worship. In this sort of ascetic hermitism, the hermit seeks solitude for meditation, contemplation and prayer without the distraction of contact with human society. For Bachelard, a dwelling space is defined by the imagination and is not a mere shelter but a refuge from society. He suggests why we seek the hut as psychological necessity. It can be said that the cave space itself is reminiscent of a person crouched in contemplation; his back is curved forward, and tensed up. It seems the weight of the world is on his shoulders. For him, the physical characteristics of the house are a metaphor for the self, complete with its “nooks and crannies of solitude” and goes on to say the hermit hut, with its lack of embellishments, embodies solitude, “it possesses the felicity of intense poverty; as destitution increases, it gives access to absolute refuge.”²⁶

Roman Catholic monks and nuns of the Carthusian order live in what are essentially, communities of hermits, each monastic having their own cell with sleeping chamber, study and workshop where they spend most of their time alone, except when they meet for prayer in church.²⁷ However, this in general reculsiveness does not necessarily connote geographical isolation as a recluse may live in a crowded city but infrequently leave the security of their home.

To return to the image of the door/threshold in this context, it operates as not only as the unifying entity of separation and union but can also act as a barrier. It is the open door that welcomes but “at times, it is closed, bolted, padlocked.”²⁸ However, Bachelard recognizes the way in which the “outside and inside forms a dialectic of division . . . it has the sharpness of the dialectics of *yes* and *no*”²⁹ and according to Jean Hyppolite there is:

a first myth of outside and inside, you feel the full significance of this myth in alienation, which is founded on these two terms. Beyond what is expressed in their formal opposition lie alienation and hostility between the two.³⁰



2.1 A family hunting and gathering



2.2 A depiction of early burial ritual

In their essay which analyses the different concepts of public and private life, Mimi Sheller and John Urry criticize the characteristic ways of defining them which is in terms of *spheres* or *spaces*, concepts which they view as being “static” in character.³¹ Instead they propose a “sociology of mobilities”, which recognizes the boundaries of public and private life to be in constant state of change.³² An example of mobility they have observed is how informational systems have become increasingly mobile with various gadgets with each supplying us with data, visual images, sounds and texts regardless of a person’s geographical or physical location. There are also physical mobilities; cars they say also contain this hybridity, they simultaneously inhabit and move in and out of both the private (mobile privatization) and public roads.³³

[The car] is a private room, a moving private capsule, in which the sensing of the public world is impoverished. The speed at which the car is driven constrains the driver to always keep moving. Dwelling at speed, drivers lose the ability to perceive local detail, talk to strangers, to learn of local ways of life, to stop and sense the particularity of place.³⁴

The attachment and use of objects seamlessly completes the protective shell around us. As Henri Lefebvre expresses it: “to privilege [these objects] affectively, is today, as in the past, to create a shell or a bubble – that is to say, a protective layer against the assaults of a hostile world. This protection is simultaneously apparent and real, lived and valued as such. The more threatening the outside world becomes, the greater the importance.”³⁵

Aspects of Dwelling II

When Vitruvius described the origins of architecture he speculated about men living in caves, digging them out of mountainsides or making shelters out of leaves and twigs like birds. In an endeavour to connect the past to the present, he says that through “observing the shelters of others and adding new details to their own inceptions, they constructed better and better kinds of huts.”³⁶ He then proceeds to give a list of examples of modern people living in huts thereby implying that what we live in today is a direct extension of these kinds of dwellings.

And in some respects it seems that is the case, for instance, we are living in increasingly small spaces. We learn to adapt to this by limiting their movements, to make them smaller and neater. In Japan, 1990, 43 percent of the population was concentrated within a 50 - kilometre radius of the three large metropolises: Tokyo Osaka and Nagoya.³⁷ This over population is reflected in the design of sleeping capsules where your body is required to remain horizontal in order. In his essay on Japanese urban landscapes, Cotton Mather explains however that this culture of “compactness” is not solely a modern phenomenon but is a long - established characteristic evidenced in for example, their “verse form known as *haiku*, [the] scaled down garden, the bonsai, their box within a box”³⁸



2.3 Book Sample, single-hole stitch



2.4 John Sloan, *Reading in the Subway*, 1926

One of the more extreme effects perhaps born of the status quo is the irrational fear of crowded spaces which results, in time a loss of contact with the outside world which is known as agoraphobia. In the late nineteenth century there were reports from various cities of Europe describing the emergence of a new set of symptoms. While moving through public space (the etymological study of the word itself shows that in Greek, *agora* is a place of assembly, marketplace) some people experienced a deep sense of anxiety that manifested in bouts of sudden sweats, palpitations and nausea. For these sufferers, “space itself seemed to be pathologised”.³⁹ Writing in 1878, Legrand described how:

the fear of space. . . is frequently produced at the very moment the neurotic leaves the street and arrives at the heart of the square and is marked by a sudden anxiety, an instantaneous beating of heart. The patient, then prey to an indefinable emotion, finds himself isolated from the entire world. . . he feels as if he is destroyed, makes no step either forward or backward, grows pale, shivers, blushes, is covered with sweat, grows more and more alarmed.⁴⁰

According to Paul Kilsby, “these neurasthenic manifestations were sometimes associated with [...] what might be described as a profound sensitivity and fear of proximate objects.” As such people resorted to “traversing a piazza by maintaining bodily contact with walls and buildings along two of the four sides”⁴¹ The author of *Repressed Spaces*, Paul Carter looks at the construction and planning of public space and the role it has to play in the understanding of agoraphobia. Similar to Kilsby, he explains agoraphobia as a “movement inhibition” rather than an irrational symptomatic response to public space.⁴²



2.5 Hanami Bento Box



2.6 Kyoto Capsule Bed

The speculation on the possible causes of this type of spacial condition has chiefly revolved around a sense of increasing subjective alienation in the vast expansive spaces of the modern megatropolis. According to Henri Lefebvre in *The Critique of Everyday Life*, at the beginning of the nineteenth century life changed from the modern to modernity. He explains this in terms of how previous systems of power began to disintegrate. He says, “. . . all coherent, developed systems broke up: philosophy, the city (the historical town), the family and the figure of the father, history itself.”⁴³

Likewise for Jacob Burkhardt, the individual now came into focus whereas before “man was conscious of himself as only as a member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation – only through some general category.”⁴⁴ And because of this the individual in the twentieth century climate lived, as it were, free, from the binds of the larger sociological, historical, political constraints. In reference to this, Meszaros writes that by the twentieth century there is “the belief that “liberty” is inherent . . . in the isolated individual.”⁴⁵ Meszaros accentuates this by adding a passage from T. S. Eliot’s *The Cocktail Party*. In it, the character Celia, is frightened suddenly by an “awareness of *solitude*” and seeks to find explanations for it outside herself and it distresses her to think that it may mean putting the blame on the world in which she lives. She says thereafter:

I mean that what has happened has made me aware
that I’ve always been alone. *That one always is alone.*
. . . it isn’t that I want to be alone,
But that everyone’s alone – or so it seems to me.
They make noises, and think they are talking to each other;
They make faces, and think they understand each other.
And I’m sure they don’t.⁴⁶

Chapter Three

The Exiled

Lascaux: A Monument to our Past

Figures in Exile

The figure of the hermit was discussed in the previous chapter; here it is developed more with the suggestion that there is continuance of hermitic existence today as exemplified in the “urban hermits”. It takes the perspective that these hermits are an extension of, if not exacerbated, form of exile. The last part of the dissertation looks at Lascaux as a memorial to our past. It puts forward the idea that in the “preservation” something has been lost, a real sense of history, which in turn affects remembering and memory. And also perhaps a loss of identity in the search for answers, as it lies not in historical artefacts and objects but ultimately within oneself.

Expressions of exile have traditionally focused the lost homeland and the associated feelings of disorientation; it is place of loss, lack and nostalgic longing. The quest for identity be it cultural, ethnic, national, etc., has likewise been characterized by the search for a particular hidden truth or liberation the self. For Edward Said reflected many times on the benefits and also the strains, of being an outsider – an exile, “most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimension.”⁴⁷

He stressed the intellectual advantages to be gained from such a position and granted the intellectual exile an especially crucial role in modern culture. He suggested that an “exilic” consciousness, and the always problematic relationship to a lost “home”, shaped his entire critical disposition and influenced his memory, the way he thought and wrote. For an exile, he said, “habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment.”⁴⁸

The intellectual as outsider is best exemplified by the condition of exile. . . for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You cannot go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and, alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one in your new home or situation.⁴⁹

Ovid was banished from Rome by Augustus in AD 8 to Tomis on the Black Sea for unknown reasons. He wrote that it was because of *carmen et error*, meaning “a poem and a mistake”.⁵⁰ It was during this period of exile that he wrote two collections of poems, *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, which illustrates his solitude and desolation. The famous first two lines of the *Tristia* demonstrate the poet’s misery:

Little book – and I won’t hinder you -
go on to the city without me:
Alas for me, because your master is not allowed to go!⁵¹

It has a long tradition as a form of severe punishment, those exiled were forced into strange or backward regions, cut off from all the possibilities of life as well as their families and friends. Dante, who was also exiled, died in from his native city of Florence in 1321 at Ravenna, where he was buried. The Florentines attempted to recover his remains but when his sarcophagus was opened nothing was inside apart from a few withered laurel leaves and small fragments of bone.⁵² Dante writes of his pain in *The Divine Comedy*:

. . . You will leave everything you love most:
this is the arrow that the bow of exile

shoots first. You will know how salty
another's bread taste and how hard it
is to ascend and descend
another's stairs . . . ⁵³

While exile, is usually an outcome of forced migration where typically, violence, real or imagined, the Hikikomori are in voluntary exile. Hikikomori is a Japanese social condition and the word translates as “withdrawal” although the condition falls under the term, Acute Social Withdrawal. Since its discovery ten years ago the term has been used to refer to the phenomenon of reclusive adolescents and young adults who have chosen to withdraw completely from social life.⁵⁴ Officially, it is defines Hikikomori as individuals who refuse to leave their parents’ house and isolate themselves away from society and family in a single room for a period between six months to fifteen years.⁵⁵ However this behaviour is not isolated to Japan, it is reported that thousands of teenagers and young adults in America and the UK have also shut themselves off from the outside world.



3.1 A Hikikomori in Japan



3.2 Urban Hermit in America

Due to the controversial nature of the disorder, there is a reluctance towards open discussion and goes largely unnoticed by the public. As a result, there is apparently a larger number of cases than previously thought. A leading psychiatrist claims that one million Japanese are Hikikomori, which, if true, translates into roughly one percent of the total population.⁵⁶ “America is at risk of becoming an Acute Social Withdrawal nation - inward-looking and very cold to outsiders,” says Jerry Koepp, a youth director with the American Health Association (AHA). “It is simply a consequence of a social system that has collapsed. As more and more of our young people refuse to assimilate into mainstream culture and reject our core values, the more likely we are to follow in Japan's footsteps.”⁵⁷

Lascaux: A Monument to Our Past

“You are standing in the midst of the thing that arose in your imagination and then it’s all gone and the photo takes over”

“The grotto will kick off the exhibition since it represents the beginning of all dwellings.”

“The Cyclops lived in a Grotto and kept Odeysseus captive there. The grotto is a home for bears and the first dwelling for human beings [...] It’s a trope that of course stretches back a long way, but it still fires the imagination.”

“Instead of describing the topography of a landscape or the surface of a mountain, I was concerned with the inside, with the under world within the mountain.”

Thomas Demand⁵⁸

Cave exploration has existed since humans began to walk. Investigating the subterranean inspired raw, primeval fear. They have become homes to devils and demons, capturing and distilling our dread of the unknown. What is it like to walk into a dark unknown space? As you take the steps, the flame from the gas lamp shivers like you do, maybe from the cold or fear. You cross the threshold, leaving the sunlit world outside you advance further into the cave. The greyness now becomes yellow and ahead you see blackness - a thick black void. For cavers, challenging the unknown is part of the thrill. As a sport, caving grew out of the initial explorations of the 1800's, when Victorians would light the darkness with candles and oil lamps, mapping out nameless cave systems. As already mention, throughout human history, people have made use of caves for shelter, burial or as religious sites and because of the darkness and location of the space away from direct sunlight, whatever was brought into the cave stayed there, naturally preserved.

Much of what we know today comes from these artefacts. And one of the most illuminating artefacts of mankind are the pictorial representations seen in the Lascaux caves in France. There are numerous examples of cave art, simple yet beautiful depictions of their reality but it is Lascaux that plays to the imagination the most, due to its clarity and colour. There, depicted on the walls are scenes of hunting where man triumphed over beast. Perhaps early man celebrated their success of a hunt by making marks on those walls inside the cave but today we can look at them and view them as a mark of humankind's success. The cave today is seen as a celebration to our past. We are invited to take a look at our history in these caves which stand as monuments to our past.

The most common story tells of a lightning storm a few years prior to the discovery, a pine tree was struck down and opened up a hole. As the four boys and their dog Robot walked though the village they found the hole and after enlarging the hole, they went inside the narrow crevice and fell down towards a mound of rocks which hid the original entrance to the cave. Writing of Lascaux, Georges Bataille said the cave paintings symbolises, “the passage from the work world to the play world”,⁵⁹ thereby marking the beginning of man's humanity, he says, “man wrenched himself out of the animal's condition and into manhood.”⁶⁰

Public access was made easier after World War II and because of the increased of carbon monoxide produced by the large number of visitors, the paintings became damaged. By 1963 the cave was closed to the public and restoration works took place to restore them to their original state. Interestingly, the caves that thousands of visitors see each year is actually a fake. *Lascaux II* is a replica of two of the cave hills, *The Great Hall of the Bulls* and the *Painted Gallery*. The reproduction was opened in 1983 and inside a shell of reinforced concrete with replica contours of the cave inside, the paintings were executed using the same types of materials and exact methods believed to have been used 19,000 years ago, natural pigments like ochre, charcoal and iron oxides.⁶¹

In the essay, Eco talks about the “hyperreality” of American phenomena like their wax museums, theme parks, the Madonna Inn etc., alluding to a “frantic desire for the almost real” in order to fulfil what he sees as a cultural void. He calls museums America's fortresses of solitude; a place where personal history “surrounds you like a warm blanket.” Accordingly, Baudrillard says the hyperreal does not question its morals about the

experience of the real and the fake “because it is measured in such terms of its performativity – how well does it operate?”⁶² To return to Eco, he states that this attitude towards the merging notions such as ideal and real, past and present, art and nature is common in the American attitude to sentimentalizing history:



3.5 Fire



3.6 Lascaux Cave wall painting

The Lyndon B Johnson Library is a true fortress of Solitude: a *Wunderkammer*, an ingenious example of narrative art, wax museum, cave of robots. And it suggests [that] the past must be preserved and celebrated in full-scale authentic copy; a philosophy of immortality as duplication. It dominates the relation with the self, with the past, not infrequently with the present, always with History.⁶³

Is there a desperate need to recover a lost past and if it doesn't actually exist, to invent something? Barthes says everything can be a myth because basically it is something that contains elements of an illusion, of something that is, yet isn't at the same time. Perhaps the possibility of retrieving a real past is impossible: “the recovery of memory and the seeking of one's past do not - and cannot - ultimately resolve the problems of being in exile. Knowing one's past has no ultimately redemptive qualities. The condition of exile remains irredeemably liminal and there is no repairing the damage.”⁶⁴ Despite this, the quest for truth is an endless pursuit that concerns all subjective beings and since people come from different historical, religious, socio – political backgrounds, perception of how things appear also differs. That is not to say that we experience totally contrasting things but different aspects of those things. As Paul Tabori says, “the search for a stable identity . . . is an integral part of exile itself.”⁶⁵

Conclusion

Writing in 1964, Bachelard comments that the house as primarily a space for daydreaming, that it is a social and poetic space. The cave, hut, house, bedroom all exist on a boundary between public and private, between waking and dreaming. Somehow “every corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination.”⁶⁶ The *Aokigahara* or the *Sea of Trees* is an old forest at the base of Mount Fuji and one of the few areas of untouched wilderness left in Japan. It is a place where people go to commit suicide.

Eliade asks, if there is any “possibility for man to discover the sacred dimension of existence in the world,”⁶⁷ for it seems that today for all cultures, experienced at home or in exile, the hybrid is norm, change is law, impurity standard. The exile experience of being between homes, languages, nations, cultures, lives, territories, has become a model for human experience altogether. Maybe as a response or reaction to this increasing uncertainty of the modern world Borges developed idea of the *Aleph* which is a space that is nowhere and everywhere at once.

Borges chose to situate this universe in a cellar beneath a house and underneath a step of a staircase, on the right hand side. There one could see a small hole or slit about “two or three centimetres in diameter, but universal space was contained within it, with no diminution in size.” The *Aleph*, is the point where everything in the world can be seen from all sides, a spot where “all the places of the world, seen from every angle, coexist”.⁶⁸ Perhaps in the *Aleph*, Borges has described the perfect space in eternity where one can transcend time, make everything still, eternally.

All sense of time has fallen away, there is no external or internal, an open space or a confined one. It will take you across cultures and culture; you will dip into dark spaces and experience profound *solitude*. It will end by coming back through a hole. You will have seen your past and future, birth and death, and as you will know that the future is only a result of what has gone before – it’s a return, a constant cycle. We cannot, as Benjamin says, partake of a future scenario without referencing the past, we walk into the future backwards: as History is an angel being blown backwards into the future.⁶⁹

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