

“The Curry Bunch”: A Semiotic Exploration

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Abstract

Art takes many forms and is understood by different people in different ways. Within these understandings, art, in the case of my dissertation, incorporates the semiotic analysis of two oil-on-canvas images of *Mikebhai Bradybhai* and *Carolben Bradybhai* by Bepen Bahana. My semiotic analysis maximises the positions of Barthes and his emphasis on ideology (myths and archetype), cognisant of the work of Jung. That theoretical base is complemented by my own ontologies and epistemologies as an Indian international student studying in Aotearoa New Zealand. Consequently, I realise *Mikebhai Bradybhai* and *Carolben Bradybhai* in metaphorical ways and within multiple layers of meaning and semiosis that focus on tracing the images of *Mikebhai Bradybhai* and *Carolben Bradybhai* particularly within Indian myth and archetype. However, the *Mikebhai Bradybhai* and *Carolben Bradybhai* images convey the symbols and signs of two distinct nations: The United States of America, and the Indian sub-continent. Within that merger are historically embedded notions of the British Raj, colonialism, and imperialism that I suggest hold relevance today within a revised version of imperialism: American imperialism. Underpinning that assertion, my dissertation begins its exploration of the images of *Mikebhai Bradybhai* and *Carolben Bradybhai* within considerations of denotation and connotation. The former provides an agreed meaning, while the latter extended my analysis, tracing my images in binary ways through both Eastern mythologies and archetypes. In these ways, connotation provides the gateway to my exploration of the underpinning myth and archetypes that I believe are conveyed within the images of *Mikebhai Bradybhai* and *Carolben Bradybhai*. Yet, within my exploration of Eastern themes of myth and archetype, my work reflects the wider considerations of Jung in as much as my analysis reveals the similarities between cultures. Consequently, I am reminded that within change, similarities of meaning, interpretation, and history are perceived. In this way my work subscribes to the Jungian consideration that myth and archetypes are pan-cultural constructs.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date: 02/1/2021

Opening Remarks

Welcome to my research dissertation! My work semiotically explores two oil-on-canvas images from Bepen Bahana's *The Curry Bunch* series. My analysis concentrates on just two of *The Curry Bunch* images: *Mikebhai Bradybhai* and *Carolben Bradybhai*. As you may have guessed, Bahana's work derives from the popular television series *The Brady Bunch*. Consequently, given the curry moniker, Bahana's work blends themes of Eastern and Western cultures. As an Indian international student studying in Aotearoa New Zealand, that combination was part of my attraction in selecting two of Bahana's works for my research.

Consequently, what you are about to read is the culmination of at least six months work, and so many versions of each Chapter that I have lost count of them. Nonetheless, I am delighted not only to have completed my work, but also to have the opportunity to reflect upon it. I have had an interesting research journey. The combination of art, semiotic analysis, myth, and archetype has provided a compelling research experience for me. Part of that compulsion was the expression of my own Indian identity. I used my own cultural knowledge, backed by the academy, to explore how myth and archetype pervades Bahana's work. For some that may signal a limitation. However, it should be remembered that Jung (1959) realised that although cultural expressions of myth and archetype initially appear similar and are expressed in different ways and forms, their essence is none the less pan-cultural. Consequently, my use of Indian myth and archetype is applicable to Western ways of being and becoming. Consequently, I invite my readers to consider what Western myths and archetypes spring to their minds, as they read my work.

Research Aim and Questions

The aim of my research was to semiotically explore two of Bepen Bahana's images, *Mikebhai Bradybhai* and *Carolben Bradybhai*, taken from his series *The Curry Bunch*. To achieve that aim, my research asked the following questions:

My primary research question asked:

- In what ways is *The Curry Bunch* a metaphorical illumination of Indian culture?

Underpinning that question were my two supporting questions:

- What themes, myths, and archetypes does a semiotic analysis of *The Curry Bunch* reveal?
- How might *The Curry Bunch* incorporate a future view of being and becoming Indian?

Research Rationale

Two factors influenced my dissertation choice. During my study within the Master of Gastronomy programme, I took the paper The Semiotics of Gastronomy. That paper enthused me. Until that point, I had not considered how myth, archetype, or the significance of signification permeated food or our lived experiences. Despite my cultural awareness in being Indian and possession of some knowledge of Indian myths, grounding myths in gastronomy was a revelation for me. Consequently, it was at that time that I decided to undertake a semiotic research methodological approach for my dissertation. Secondly, my other reason for completing this dissertation was that it is a requirement for me in completing my Master of Gastronomy degree.

However, that necessity was mitigated by my enthusiasm for the topic. While my journey has had periods of negativity, in hindsight I am grateful for my choices and have found within them, and my dissertation's completion, a fuller awareness of myself. In these ways, doing a dissertation has meant much more to me than something to do to gain a qualification.

Methodology: An Overview

Within a qualitative framework, my research semiotically explored two Bepen Bahana images, *Mikebhai Bradybhai* and *Carolben Bradybhai*. Key to that exploration was my awareness of the origin of semiotics (de Saussure and Pierce) and its contemporary application within the works of Chandler (2002), Barthes (1972), and Jung (1959). Considering these theorists, I used Chandler's (2002) considerations of denotation and connotation within my image analysis. Then, combining the work of Barthes (1972) and Jung (1959), I explored the images of *Mikebhai Bradybhai* and *Carolben Bradybhai* within considerations of implicit myth and archetype. After deconstructing my two images in this way, I was then able to reconstruct them through the extrapolation of each image's semiotic meaning. Yet, within my reconstruction and evaluation of meaning comes caution. As Chandler (1959) advised, the work of

semiotic evaluation is a constant 'work in progress'. In this way, my research dissertation represents an analysis bound within socio-temporal constraints.

Dissertation Structure

My dissertation is structured in the following way. After this brief preamble, my first chapter, Chapter 1, presents contextual information. In Chapter 1, I present basic information on *The Curry Bunch* and *The Brady Bunch*. Then, I present a discussion defining and understanding art, how art has developed over time and Tolstoy's (1904/2014) theoretical views on art. Rounding out Chapter 1, I discuss how I perceive art, cognisant of Tolstoy's position.

Chapter 2 presents my Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks. There, I present how I see the world and what meta-theories have influenced my research. Key to that chapter is information on ontology (Smith, 2012) and epistemology (Buchanan, 2010); the social construction of reality thesis (P. L. Berger & Luckmann, 1966); and Mead's (1934) symbolic interactionism. Within that chapter, I also discuss how those theoretical positions apply to my research within my Conceptual Framework.

Following on from that, Chapter 3 presents my literature review. My literature review discusses the construct of pop art. However, and possibly unlike other dissertations, my Discussion and Conclusion chapter not only draws from my literature review, but also the other relevant chapters of my dissertation. In this way, my dissertation has taken a holistic approach to my topic.

Chapter 4 presents my methodology and method. I differentiate those terms in proposing that methodology represents a theoretical approach to research, whereas method reflects and incorporates its operationalisation within research. While my research involved secondary research techniques, with no requirement for ethics consent, my selected methodologies of Chandler (2002), Barthes (1972) and Jung (1959) have provided an extensive and in-depth overview of my topic.

Following Chapter 4, Chapter 5 presents my research findings. I begin that section by semiotically exploring the words *curry* and *bunch*. Then, to facilitate my findings I deconstruct the images of *Mikebhai* and *Carolben* within considerations of background (indigo); mid-ground (the portrait images); and the foreground (the Indian motifs). I extend those perspectives within various themed considerations. Then, I extend my research within considerations of myth and archetype.

Finally, Chapter 6 presents my Discussion and Conclusion Chapter. I have combined these chapters to avoid the unnecessary duplication of my dissertation's content. Within this chapter I explore my topic, cognisant of my other chapters and themes. Additionally, I present discussion on my Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks and my Methodology and Method. Key to Chapter 6 are my responses to my research questions, my identification of my research limitations, and my recommendations for future research. In completing my dissertation, I close with a short reflective statement.

Chapter 1. Contextual Information

The Curry and Brady Bunches

My dissertation explores *The Curry Bunch* (refer to Figure 2) using a semiotic methodology. With that in mind, and to provide context, this chapter begins by presenting a brief overview of *The Brady Bunch* (refer Figure 1), the television series of the 1970s upon which Bepen Bahana based his series of paintings *The Curry Bunch*. *The Brady Bunch* was popular viewing between 1969 and 1974 (Jackson, 2019). *The Brady Bunch*'s introductory music lyrics encapsulate the theme of the series (refer Table 1). Essentially, *The Brady Bunch* related the day-to-day lives of a mixed middle-class American family of Mike and his three sons, and Carol, and her three daughters (Hudnutt, 2013). The newly mixed family was complemented by their housekeeper, Alice ("Ann B. Davis, Housekeeper Alice," 2014).

Figure 1: The Brady Bunch



Source: "The Brady Bunch," (2020).

Table 1: The Brady Bunch Lyrics

Here's the story of a lovely lady
Who was bringing up three very lovely girls.
All of them had hair of gold, like their mother,
The youngest one in curls.

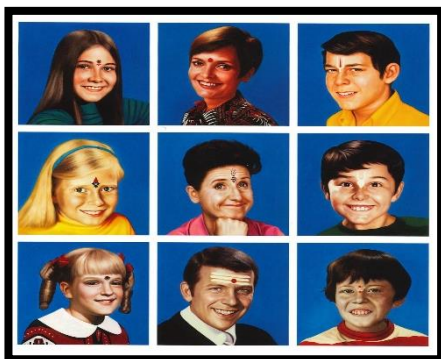
Here's the store, of a man named Brady,
Who was busy with three boys of his own,
They were four men, living all together,
Yet they were all alone.

Till the one day when the lady met this fellow
And they knew it was much more than a hunch,
That this group would somehow form a family.
That's the way we all became the Brady Bunch.
The Brady Bunch,

That's the way we all became the Brady Bunch.
The Brady Bunch.

Source: Song Lyrics (2020).

Figure 2: The Curry Bunch



Source: Bahana (2013). Image reproduced with permission.

In almost every episode a problem within the family – either between the husband (Mike) and his wife (Carol) or between any of the six mixed-marriage children – was presented and solved by the programme’s end (Hudnutt, 2013). Given the turbulent times in which *The Brady Bunch* was aired (the late 1960s and early 1970s), its presentation of positive problem solving, an ideal marriage partnership, and lack of financial family problems starkly contrasted with the realities of many families at that time (Hudnutt, 2013). In these ways, *The Brady Bunch* reflected Storey’s (2018) suggestion that popular culture “is widely favoured or well-liked by many people: [and that] it has no negative connotations” (p. 11).

The Brady Bunch simultaneously influenced and reinforced traditional gender roles (Jackson, 2019). The show concentrated the expected roles of “men [and] boys [...] and women [and] girls who take care of the[ir] need[s]” (Jackson, 2019, para. 5). In the programme, the girls were restricted to their dolls, fashion, and magazines (Zambito, 2019). Additionally, the series depicted girls who aspired to “gender-appropriate” careers “like nursing, teaching or receptionist” work (Jackson, 2019, para 7). Contrastingly, the Brady boys played sport, rode bikes, and made aeroplanes in their blue-coloured bedrooms (Zambito, 2019). Reinforcing that and reflecting other American sitcoms of the 60s and 70s, *The Brady Bunch* depicted “super parents” (Butsch, 2005, p. 6) who were intelligent, calm, and mature. Within their super-parenting stereotypes, Mike Brady was ‘the man of the house’ and whatever he said represented the final word on most topics. Supporting that, and reinforcing yet another stereotype, Carol Brady stayed at home, looked after the children, with the help of her housekeeper Alice, and ensured the Brady home was a welcome retreat from the rigours of everyday life for the children and her husband (Zambito, 2019). Yet, despite those stereotypes and quest for ‘perfection and positivity’, *The Brady Bunch* was an extremely popular and highly viewed television programme. However, it never made Nielsen’s top 20 ranking (Ulaby, 2019).

Defining and Understanding Art

An Introduction

While the origins of the Bepen Bahana’s *The Curry Bunch* sit within *The Brady Bunch* television series, the following sections within this chapter explore my understanding of painting as art. To facilitate that understanding, I introduce two themes. The first

theme explores art as a socio-cultural construct and as a way of understanding and appreciating beauty. My second section extends that information by presenting a brief history of art as a developing construct. Finally, I introduce a section of writing titled *Tolstoy and Me: What is Art?* In that section, I illuminate the construct of art within Tolstoy's (1904/2014) theoretical positioning, and from that understanding present how 'I see and understand art'. For me, that juxtaposition is an important consideration. In my experiences of art, until this dissertation, I have never considered the theory of art in my viewing of a painting or other artwork. I suggest that many other people view art in many of the same ways. Similarly, I propose that many people respond to art in many of the same ways that I did until I felt this dissertation's influence. Those basic responses to art sit in contrast with Tolstoy, in as much as decisions about art are often made on the basis of 'like and dislike'. Considering these points, I believe that the amalgam of Tolstoy's (1904/2014) theory and my own subjective experiences of art appreciation present a unique and interesting way to view works like *The Curry Bunch*.

Defining and Understanding Art

'Art' can be defined as "the conscious use of skill and creative imagination ... in the production of aesthetic objects" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.a). These aesthetic objects, for Frank Lloyd Wright (as cited in Popova, 2012), position "art as a discovery and development of elementary principles of nature into beautiful forms suitable for human use" (para. 4). Tolstoy (as cited in Martinique, 2016) proposed that "art is a human activity, consisting in this, that one person consciously, by certain external signs, conveys to other feelings he [sic] has experienced, and other people are affected by these feelings and live them over in themselves" (para. 3). The word 'art' derives from the Latin word "*ars*" combined with the Greek word "*techne*" (Shiner, 2001, p. 5). As 'art', that combination references "any human skill" and reflects activities ranging from shoemaking to horse riding (Shiner, 2001, p. 5). Yet any art exists within a hierarchy that considers not only taste but also the notion of 'what is art'. Within those considerations, notions of 'art' are contested. Exemplifying that, Crowther (2007) argued that art, through its "normative significance" positions itself as a "privileged value [that] entails various kinds of *social exclusion* (author's emphasis)" (p. 16). Extending that view, Crowther (2007) suggested that art reinforced dominating socio-cultural values and, in doing so, subtly encouraged minority groups to "give up the

practices which are basic to their identity in favour of those of the ruling culture” (p. 16). In that way, the construct of art has not done “justice to the experience of women, and racial and sexual minorities” (p. 16). Yet, taking a broader approach, Crowther (2007) also suggested that while art, particularly images, often represent known forms, those forms are often expressed and represented as a reflection of the “fragmented and variable character” (p. 30) of the artist’s mind. If consideration was given to the idea that an artist’s mind is an extension of their socio-temporal positioning, then this places artists as potential agents of change. Within that consideration, Crowther (2007) suggested that art can say more about an artist than the dominating culture in which they are positioned. Consequently, art can be perceived not only as a visual image, but within notions of representation. Those representations might reflect dominating cultural mores, or they might well reflect art as a “site of struggle” (Eggermont, 2001, p. 132). As the former, art could be perceived as a controlling entity; as the latter a liberating force. Either way, Crowther (2007) alerted us to the contested nature of art, who is an artist, and the nature of art’s representation. In these ways, Crowther (2007) subtly draws attention to art’s link to ontology and epistemology (refer Chapter 2). That realisation reflects what constitutes our realities and, within art’s reality, how we come to know and realise those constructs. In these ways, art, as Crowther (2007) suggested, represents a phenomenological truth, “one which describes a universal characteristic of the human experience” (p. 31), albeit tempered by constructs of taste and wider social acceptance. Consequently, taste plays an important role in understanding and appreciating art.

For Bourdieu (1984), taste and class are linked. Bourdieu (1984) proposed a top-down model of taste. He suggested that the upper class set the standards of taste. Those standards were then subscribed to by middle- and lower-class groups. As the upper class came to realise that their subordinates were ‘catching up’ on their taste, then the upper class simply reinvented taste. In doing so, they differentiated themselves and created a new cycle of aspiration and consumption. For Bourdieu (1984), art, literature, film, and food, were markers of class taste and therefore distinction. However, considerations of taste pre-date Bourdieu (1984). Kant’s early work provided insight into considerations of taste that are relevant to understanding art and constructs of taste today. As Guyer (2017) explained, Kant (1781/1998) realised the aesthetics of taste in four key ways. Firstly, according to Guyer (2017), Kant reflected taste through

aesthetic appreciation within “judgment made *on the basis of* and *about* one’s feeling of pleasure in the representation of an object [...]” (p. 353). Secondly, Kant considered ‘experience,’ particularly within the sublime considerations of fine art, by linking our appreciation of beauty to reason. Guyer (2017) argued that this construct assumes that those who appreciate art think in similar ways. Thirdly, Kant linked “the source of our pleasure in the experience of beauty” within an artwork’s “spatiotemporal form because he assumes that people necessarily agree about it” (p. 353). Finally, Kant considered art’s aesthetic to be separate from its “explicitly moral content” (p. 354). According to Guyer (2017), Kant considered that the balance between a work’s moral message, and its content and form, as perceived by its viewer, added to its aesthetic understanding and appreciation. As Kant (1790/2000) himself remarked, “the beautiful prepares us to love something, even nature, without interest,” and “the sublime, to esteem it, even contrary to our (sensible) interest” (p. 267). Cumulatively, Kant (1790/1987) realised,

we can easily see that, in order for me to say that an object is beautiful, and to prove that I have taste, what matters what I do with this presentation within myself and not the [respect] in which I depend on the object’s existence. (p. 46)

Within that consideration, Kant (1790/1987) realised that our appreciation of beauty – what he termed our ‘pure aesthetic judgement’ – pivots upon our sensory understanding and appreciation of an object. Consequently, Kant’s (1790/1987, 1790/2000) philosophical understandings of our sense of aesthetic and taste provisions our contemporary understandings of each domain. In this way, Kantian (1790/1987, 1790/2000) theory underpins much of our understanding and appreciation of beauty and European art.

Reflecting Kantian (1790/1987, 1790/2000) aesthetics, Shiner (2001) proposed that the history of European art constituted art’s primary corpus. That acknowledgement is particularly relevant within considerations of fine art. Fine art, as Merriam-Webster (n.d.i) noted, includes “art (such as painting, sculpture, or music) concerned primarily with the creation of beautiful objects” (para. 1). In contrast to that association, the art of Sub-Saharan African, Egyptian, and Pacific cultures are often classified as primitive art (Shiner, 2001). That binary reflects how art is contested in multiple ways and how art can be used as a gatekeeping mechanism that helps to maintain the power of particular groups, especially the canon of classical European art.

Art: A Developing Construct

Around the 14th century, European art and artists tended to capture their world without dimensional considerations that are now commonplace within contemporary art. However, at that time, there were a few attempts by artists to portray three-dimensional images (National Art Gallery, 2020).

Figure 3: Virgin and The Child



Source: Atchison (2008).

Then, Byzantine era churches were richly adorned with mosaics, sculptures and frescos reflecting Christian iconography and religious themes (Ramirez, 2018). The mosaic noted in Figure 3 is *The Virgin Mary and The Child* adorning the ceiling of the Hagia Sophia Mosque in Istanbul. The image of the Virgin and the Child reflects the traditional style of that time (Briceño, 2020) emphasising dynamic lines, colour flatness, rather than dynamic and organic form (Hurst, 2014). Later, in the 14th century, Giotto di Bondone pioneered a new approach to painting. That approach incorporated his focus on observation and nature (Ramirez, 2018).

As Ramirez (2018) elaborated, di Bondone's considerations promoted a more humanistic approach to religious art content. Those innovations laid the foundation for art's 'revival', particularly within the 15th and 16th century European Renaissance. That time witnessed the 'rebirth' of art, sculpture, and architecture (Briceño, 2020). Later, Shiner (2001) proposed, during the 18th century, art became identified with considerations of "fine arts and crafts" (p. 5). That realisation implied that painting, poetry, sculpture, and music were considered to be fine art. Contrasting that, crafts as McAuley and Fillis (2005) noted, incorporated "skillfull work" as a "class of objects" (para. 2). Crafts maximise the hand itself, or the use of hand-tools (McAuley & Fillis, 2005). Shiner (2012) clarified craft as a "set of disciplines defined by the material,

techniques or craft product [...] as a process and practice focusing on the four contested characteristics of the hand/body, material/medium, skill/mastery, and feature" (p. 230). Finally, and encapsulating these concepts, Merriam-Webster (n.d.h) defines craft as an "occupation or trade requiring manual dexterity or artistic skill" (para. 2).

Figure 4: *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci.



Source: Italian Renaissance (2015).

Setting crafts aside and showcasing how the Renaissance changed art is da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. This image captures the moment when Jesus announces that one of his disciples has betrayed him. Da Vinci's image simultaneously captures its actors' action as well as incorporating visual depth. The painting's action is evidenced by its subjects' mannerisms. Exemplifying that physicality, the painting expresses "emotions rang[ing] from protest (Philip, #8) to sadness (John, next to Christ) to acceptance (Christ)" (Italian Renaissance, 2015, p. 5). Jesus is positioned centre image. His body is triangular in form. That could be read as symbolising the holy trinity. Judas, Jesus' betrayer, is semi-shadowed (Italian Renaissance, 2015). His shadowing could be read as the darkness associated with that betrayal. The image's visual depth is created by the hazy background and bucolic views. In creating this depth, da Vinci used an artistic technique known as "aerial perspective" (Italian Renaissance, 2015, p. 3).

During the Renaissance era, Langfeld (2018) observed the emergence of the artistic canon. According to Langfeld (2018), artistic canons identify works of art by their association to other works of similar art produced by other artists within that same style. Thus, artistic canons serve as reference points for the evaluation and appreciation of similar and different artistic categories or canons. However, the notion of artistic canons could be used to reinforce the power dynamics of an artistic status

quo, one reinforcing the power dynamics of an existing artistic elite. Reinforcing that idea, Dickie (1969) proposed that a non-artist viewer tended to appreciate or acknowledge art by considerations of “conferring the candidacy of appreciation” (p. 245). For Dickie (1969), the “candidacy of appreciation” (p. 245) suggests that the status of an artwork is confirmed as ‘worthy’ if the piece is displayed in an art museum/exhibition or another public platform.

Additionally, Dickie (1969) proposed that the way in which the artwork complemented the established genre of artists and styles that categorised its canon further established its credibility. While for some people the “the candidacy of appreciation” (Dickie, 1969, p. 245) provides a guideline to understanding and appreciating art, Grilo (2018) offered an alternative perspective on the relationship between viewers and artwork. For Grilo (2018), art does not need to be profoundly emotional or evoke a philosophical experience, but rather facilitate a viewer’s interaction. For Grilo (2018), such interaction transcends the artwork’s own characteristics.

In this way, Grilo (2018) emphasised something that we already know but may take for granted: that art appreciation is subjectively experienced and therefore appreciated on multiple and subjective viewer levels. While art appreciation is subjective, the construct of the artistic canon (Langfeld, 2018) provides not only art’s categorisation but also, for viewers of art, a ready reference point in its understanding and aesthetic appreciation.

Understanding art and its appreciation, and critique, are also linked with the notion of connoisseurship. The word ‘connoisseur’ derives from the French word *connoisseur* meaning, an expert, a judge, or one well-versed in a speciality area (Harper, 2020). Additionally, a connoisseur can be defined as a person “who understands the details, technique, or principles of art and is competent to act critically” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.g, para. 2). Opperman (1990) described connoisseurs as collectors, museum curators and experts who contributed to scholarly knowledge by identifying works of art and artefacts within considerations of their dates, provenance, and authorship. Additionally, Opperman (1990) suggested that connoisseurs evaluated a work of art within considerations of its quality and condition. Connoisseurship plays an essential role in the construction of art, because as, Opperman (1990) proposed, art connoisseurs validated works of art ranging from “better to good and the best

from better” (p. 10). Arguably, at the apex of “best from better” (Opperman, 1990, p. 10) sits the ‘masterpiece’.

Goldstein (2018) and Arnold (2020) proposed that an artwork achieves masterpiece status if it exceeds three criteria. Those criteria included authenticity, durability, and inspiration. In these ways, Goldstein (2018) and Arnold (2020) suggested, a masterpiece must, within its authenticity, overwhelm its viewer with its power; stand the test of time; and inspire and change the way in which future generations of artists consider their art. In Paris, France, the Musée du Louvre exhibits many masterpieces.

Figure 5: *Mona Lisa*.



Source: Musée du Louvre (n.d.).

One of the most popular is da Vinci's, *Mona Lisa* (Goldstein, 2018), aka *La Gioconda* or *La Jaconde* (refer Figure 5). Sassoon (2001) suggested that da Vinci's image represented the quintessential portrait of feminine beauty. Da Vinci's masterpiece portrays a seated woman in reserved posture. Her arms are folded. Her gaze is fixed on the painting's viewer (The Mona Lisa Foundation, 2012).

The *Mona Lisa* is one of the most celebrated paintings within the broad canon of Western/European/classical art. The canon of the classical masterpiece, with the *Mona Lisa* at its apex is practically a “cultural archetype” (Sassoon, p. 7). In that way, da Vinci's image of the *Mona Lisa*'s is part of our collective unconsciousness. However, the ‘installation’ of the *Mona Lisa* into our collective unconsciousness cannot be solely attributed to da Vinci or the Musée du Louvre. Rather, it is through

the reproduction of da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* on biscuit tins, chocolate boxes, and jig-saw puzzles that has caused this image to 'move' beyond masterpiece status and into the popular yet unconscious imagination. That movement can be associated with Baudrillard's (1983) second order simulacrum. For Baudrillard (1983), the notion of second order simulacrum reflected how, within the 19th century's industrial revolution, mass production promoted a rise in commercial and consumer culture (Toffoletti, 2011, p. 21) that democratised cultural icons and masterpieces like the *Mona Lisa*.

In that way, the mass production of the *Mona Lisa* on chocolate boxes represents a constructed representation of a representation: the original Musée du Louvre *Mona Lisa* image. However, Baudrillard (1983) noted the construct of simulacra at three levels. Baudrillard's first order simulacrum reflected obvious forgeries or imitations that he associated with classical Renaissance times (Baudrillard, 1994). Baudrillard's second order simulacra are associated with the pre-modern period and demonstrate that "the original is no longer privileged over the copy. The simulacrum demands instead recognition for its productive power". Dino (2015) explained that the second order simulacrum can be identified when the distinction between an image and its representation continues to disintegrate as a result of the mass (re-)production of its copy. Such output distorts and hides the underlying truth by imitating it too well, and, in doing so threatens to erase the original art's potency (Dino, 2015). Finally, for Baudrillard, third order simulacra superseded his other two orders. Baudrillard (as cited in Sichler, 2010, p. 49) perceived third order simulacra as follows:

Here we are in the third-order simulacra; no longer that of the counterfeit of an original as in the first-order, nor that of the pure series in the second. Here are the models from which proceed all forms according to the modulation of their differences. [...] We are in simulation in the modern sense of the word, of which industrialisation is but the final manifestation. Finally, it is not serial reproducibility [,] which is fundamental, but the modulation. Not quantitative equivalences but distinctive oppositions. In third order simulacrum the unreal configures reality. (p. 83)

In that way, the third order simulacra represent the evolution of our realities within their construction "without being based on any particular bit of the real world" (Lane, 2000, p. 30). Consequently, viewing art and our wider being and becoming within Baudrillard's (1983) construction of simulacra not only adds to our depth of understanding, but also sheds light on how semiotic analysis can aid our

understandings and lived experiences (refer Chapter 4, Methodology and Method, and Chapter 5, Findings).

Impacting considerations of artistic 'value' are concepts of kitsch and pop art (refer Chapter 3, Literature Review, for information on pop art). Ortlieb and Carbon (2019) link kitsch and, by association, pop art to avant-garde art:

Firstly, kitsch and avant-garde art ideally represent two types of aesthetic experience, which can be reliably discriminated in terms of processing characteristics and positive emotional content; secondly, preference for the one or the other is modulated by needs for intimacy and autonomy. (p. 6)

London's Tate Gallery (n.d.b) defines 'kitsch' as "the German word for trash [which] is used in English to describe particularly cheap, vulgar and sentimental forms of popular and commercial culture" (para .1). Călinescu (1987) traced kitsch art's origin to Munich's art community during the 1860s. There and then, they used the word kitsch to describe "cheap artistic stuff" (p. 234). Merriam-Webster (n.d.k) defined kitsch as "something that appeals to popular or lowbrow taste and is often of poor quality" (p. 301). Ortlieb and Carbon (2019) proposed, within their psychological considerations of the aesthetics of art, that kitsch art's 'place' reflected humankind's vulnerability in times of uncertainty. For them, kitsch art connoted the "longing for safety and relatedness (nostalgia) [that] attracts us not only to familiar and trustworthy individuals but also to conventional aesthetic stimuli charged with positive emotions (kitsch)" (p. 1). This, they suggested, contrasted with times when we felt "safe and self-sufficient" (p. 1) inasmuch as, in those times, our interests increase into the exploration of "innovative, [and] cognitively challenging aesthetic stimuli (art)" (p. 1). Earlier, Benjamin (2008) proposed that "art begins at a distance of two meters from the body [while] in kitsch, the world of things advances on the human being" (p. 238). Kulka (1996) proposed three criteria identifying kitsch art. They included the item being "charged with stock emotions [that] spontaneously triggers an unreflective emotional response" (p. 26); being "instantly and effortlessly identifiable" (p. 33); and, finally, for Kulka (1996), lacking the ability to enrich its viewer's "associations relating to the depicted objects or themes" (p. 37). Considering these suggestions, it is not surprising that the notion of kitsch has been blamed for the deterioration of artistic canons and their consideration (Binkley, 2000).

However, that understanding was contradicted by Becker (2008). Interestingly, Becker (2008) perceived that kitsch art challenged the hierarchical distinctions of 'higher' artistic canons. In that way, Becker (2008) suggested, kitsch art exposed, through its negative connotations, the attitudes of disapproving art authorities and the institutional limits and freedom of artistic expression they promoted. Reflecting these restrictions, Tedman (2010) stated, kitsch art represented a subculture that had emerged alongside the avant-garde movement.

As Kostelanetz (2019) explained, avant-garde is a French term referencing those who forge a new and, until then, unknown artistic pathways that will subsequently be taken up by others. Reflecting that newness, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.b) defines the avant-garde as "an intelligentsia that develops new or experimental concepts, especially in the arts" (p. 34). Earlier, Greenberg (1939) proposed that avant-garde art, in challenging the artistic status quo, needed neither approval nor disapproval. In that context, Smolianskaïa (2013) regarded avant-garde art and its considerations as the basis for a contemporary theory of art reflecting a new and wider socio-cultural experience within artistic 'movement'.

Key to that socio-cultural movement was the evolution of pop art (refer Chapter 3, Literature Review). London's Tate Gallery (n.d.c) defines pop art as an artistic "movement that emerged in the 1950s and flourished in the 1960s in America and Britain, drawing inspiration from sources in popular and commercial culture" (para. 1). In this way pop art, like kitsch art, includes imagery of the banal, the vernacular, and the everyday (J. Jones, 2013).

Pop Art and Gastronomy :

While gastronomy is difficult to define (Santich, 2004) and (Gillespie, 2001), it is nonetheless linked to art. As the Merriam Webster (2021) dictionary defines gastronomy is "the art and science of good eating".

Later, Shiner (2001) proposed, that during the 18th century, art became identified with considerations of "fine arts and crafts" (p. 5). That realisation implied that painting, poetry, sculpture, and music were considered to be fine art. Contrasting that, crafts as McAuley and Fillis (2005) noted, incorporated "skillful work" as a "class of objects" (para. 2). Crafts maximise the hand itself, or the use of hand-tools (McAuley & Fillis, 2005). Shiner (2012) clarified craft as a "set of disciplines defined by the material,

techniques or craft product [...] as a process and practice focusing on the four contested characteristics of the hand/body, material/medium, skill/mastery, and feature” (p. 230). Finally, and encapsulating these concepts, Merriam-Webster (n.d.h) defines craft as an ”occupation or trade requiring manual dexterity or artistic skill” (para. 2).

Consequently, and overtime, food as both art and craft has appeared within pop art (Butler, 2017). Exemplifying that, artist Wayne Thiebaud’s painted rows of pastries and cakes that Butler (2017) suggested reflected both an “itinerant society” (para.5) and “American Abundance” (para. 5). Similarly, Andy Warhol created white paper shopping bags with Campbell's soup cans printed on them (Cohen,2018). Mary Inman created life-size wax reproductions of meats and cheeses, while Jasper Johns supplied a sculpture that resembled two beer cans (Cohen, 2018). In those ways, the role of food within both art and gastronomy is made clear within the merger of sensual experience that whets multiple aesthetic appetites.

Tolstoy and Me: What is Art?

While Jahn (1975) characterised Tolstoy’s (1904/2014) *What is Art* as unremittingly moralist, as a “bitter polemic which characterises many of its passages and the unreasonably narrow, exclusive and arbitrary nature of theory” (para. 1), and as limiting, much can be gleaned from Tolstoy’s (1904/2014) position. Specifically, Tolstoy enabled our wider understanding and appreciation of how we come to ‘know’ art. At first glance, Tolstoy (1904/2014) realised art not within its beauty or aesthetic, but within the moral message that it conveys (Antonov & Chernyak, 2016). In this way, for Tolstoy, art facilitated the misrepresentation of human nature. Within this notion, Tolstoy considered two points. The first was that the beauty inherent in art provided a vector of enlightenment that guided its viewer toward God (Tolstoy, 1904/2014). For Tolstoy, everything ‘good’ signified the presence of God. Good and God, were synonymous concepts for Tolstoy (Antonov & Chernyak, 2016). Thus, Tolstoy linked art to positive moral messages conveyed within artwork. Tolstoy’s second point reduced that vector to God within considerations of ‘what pleases the viewer’. Consequently, Tolstoy’s views on art could be considered within Bakhtin’s (1984) dual realm of existence, in as much as art reflected not only the potential for a moral

message but also beauty as understood by a viewer. However, Tolstoy was clear: art's beauty reflected the pleasure it gave viewers, and not as a vindication for the existence of art itself (Antonov & Chernyak, 2016). As Tolstoy (1904/2014) himself noted, "the aim of art is beauty [...] the pleasure from art is good and important. The pleasure from art is good because it is pleasure" (p. 83). Yet, within that 'pleasure', Tolstoy realised that art created a vector of communication. Therefore, for Tolstoy, art was not only a moral and pleasurable vector, but also a means of communication between people. Again, Tolstoy (1904/2014) observed that, "each work of art makes a perceiver engage in certain communication with the one who produced or produces art, and with all those who have simultaneously, had before or will have after him [sic] the same artistic experience" (pp. 84-85).

In these ways, Tolstoy posits that, within art, successful communication occurs when artists and viewers share in the same emotions and feelings, like nostalgia, that an artwork might promote (Antonov & Chernyak, 2016). Consequently, and although Tolstoy (1904/2014) does not say this himself, art is a sign, in as much as it stands for something else, possibly something morally orientated, pleasure focussed, or communicatively shared. In this way, as Antonov and Chernyak (2016) observed, art must act as a shared "infection" (p. 98). However, Tolstoy (2014) offered caution inasmuch as his views on what constitutes art were limited. Exemplifying that, Tolstoy (1904/2014) proposed that items of food and drink, while pleasurable, did not constitute art. This view sits in contrast to the contemporary abundance of culinary arts programmes delivered at many tertiary institutions both here in Aotearoa New Zealand and abroad. While pop art was somewhat off, Tolstoy recognised art's evolution. As Antonov and Chernyak (2016) noted, Tolstoy considered that "many things and events used and produced by people in their everyday life can be emotionally infectious and hence may be considered pieces of art" (p. 99).

Nonetheless, while Tolstoy perceived art as an infectious communicator, a conveyor of moral message and a provider of viewer pleasure, he held strong feelings about the 'regulation' of art. Specifically, Tolstoy was highly critical of two institutions influencing art: art schools, and art critics. For Tolstoy, art schools limited the primacy of artists because art schools encouraged their students to follow the styles of artistic canons. That adherence, according to Tolstoy, negated what the artists themselves had to offer

and encouraged artists to engage in “counterfeit art”¹ (Antonov & Chernyak, 2016, p. 100). Additionally, Tolstoy rebuked art critics. For Tolstoy, art critics represented self-interested people, immune to art’s infection, who created and reinforced canons of art that in turn encouraged artistic counterfeit. Yet in realising how art represents reality and conveys knowledge, and considering the canon of vernacular art, Tolstoy (1904/2014) is clear, “the stronger the infection the better the art as art, not to mention the content, i.e. regardless the value of feelings which it communicates” (p. 180).

Tolstoy and Me: My Views on Art

Growing up amid India’s diversity, I have been surrounded by culture and art. I remember my first art gallery visit. At the age of 12, I visited the Modern Art Museum in New Delhi. There, I observed the works of famous Indian artists including M.F. Hussain, Ram Kenkar Beige, Mario Miranda, and Amrita Shergill. Their artworks fascinated me because of what I perceived to be their simplicity. Additionally, I wondered ‘why is this art in a museum?’ Reflecting my notions of simplicity, my first reaction was that ‘they look so simple; I could paint one of these.’ My mother dispelled such thoughts telling me that ‘it might look simple, but it has much more meaning attached to it than you think’. I didn’t know it then, but my considerations of art aligned with Arnold’s (2020) suggestion that “I know what I like, and I like what I see” (p. 2). Yet within that appreciation and understanding of ‘liking’, I began to develop a sense of genre and in later life arrived at a point where I could differentiate an impressionist work from an abstract artwork.² Later, as an adult studying gastronomy in Aotearoa New Zealand, I began to look beyond what I observed at first glance. That change reflected my introduction to and embrace of research and my developing critical mindset. My considerations in asking why things are the way they are, who wins and who does not, and how can something be improved, spilled into my everyday life and into my understandings and appreciation of art. Within those changes, my mother’s words have returned to ‘haunt me’. Now, I have come to realise that art is more than a visual aesthetic. Art is that, but art is also a medium of communication that

¹ By ‘counterfeit art’ Tolstoy (1904/2014) references art that is created in and subscribes to a predetermined canon/style, rather than emerging from the artist’s own mind and self-styled creation.

² Impressionist artwork was based on the tradition of painting outdoors or spontaneously “on the spot” and mostly included scenes and landscapes from everyday lives, whereas abstract art is a form of art that does not seek to reflect an accurate representation of visual reality but instead uses shapes, colours and forms to achieve its effects.

transcends, in my opinion, its aesthetic. With this in mind, I can look for a message within an artwork whose aesthetic is not to my taste.

Consequently, art figures in my realisations of reality and knowledge inasmuch as art helps me to understand my world and, like a conversation, it is inherently interactive. Additionally, art, for me, can take us places that transcend the image itself. My semiotic analysis and exploration of myth and archetype within *The Curry Bunch* support this very point. Encapsulating that and my considerations of art, Cassirer (as cited in C. L. Carter, 2015) proposed that “art offers a different perspective that differs from ordinary seeing as well as from the impoverished abstraction of science based on facts or purported natural laws” (p. 405). While Cassirer is helpful, I extend his thinking in practical ways that help me understand art. For me, art can be understood and appreciated by my considerations of the following questions: (a) What is the story and history of the work? (b) What was the idea behind the work, what is the artist trying to express? and (c) What are the hidden meanings and messages symbolically encoded in the artwork? Consequently, my understandings and appreciation of art has grown since my New Delhi Museum visit.

Conclusion

Tolstoy (1904/2014) proposed that our realisations and knowledge of art are grounded within art’s message and meaning for us. For Tolstoy (1904/2014) and Antonov and Chernyak, (2016), the intent of an artist’s work needs to infect its viewer. In this way, art represents a communion of thinking, a being and becoming whereby an artist ‘touches’ a viewer in profound and meaningful ways. That ethereal but shared artistic communication provides an interactive moment of knowledge and reality reflecting the essence of the social construction of reality thesis (P. L. Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) within in an artistic medium conveying shared reality, knowledge, and interaction. While I agree with Tolstoy (1904/2014) in many ways, I introduce something quite basic that contrasts and complements Tolstoy’s ‘depth’. My comparatively basic approach, as noted above, is grounded within the polarity inherent to the comments that I have made and heard others say when viewing art. Those basic statements include, ‘I love that painting,’ and, ‘oh my god that artwork is awful’. In that way, I liken the introduction of a piece of art to its viewer as being similar to meeting a new person. As Willis and Todorov (2006) found in their research, people made character judgements of others, based on facial

characteristics, in about one hundredth of a millisecond. Those judgements did not change when participants were given 'more time', but rather the participants' judgements were consolidated (Willis & Todorov, 2006). However, as I have come to realise, my understandings of art, while possibly starting off in a different place to Tolstoy's (1904/2014), are similar inasmuch as my views on understanding art have increased as I have grown older and, unlike Willis and Todorov's (2006) research participants, I take time to consider my opinion. However, like Tolstoy (1904/2014), I realise the infection of art and how the structures of the art world are simultaneously constricting and liberating constructs. With that knowledge, I hope that my semiotic reading of the two *Curry Bunch* images combines a healthy blend of theory and considerations of art common to non-theorists.

Chapter 2. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Introduction

In this chapter I present my theoretical and conceptual frameworks. My research adopts a constructionist positioning reflecting the theories of P. L. Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Mead (1934). Consequently, my dissertation incorporates the position that humankind constructs their world in order to understand it. Complementing that view, I suggest that its construction is reinforced by human interaction. On that basis, this chapter presents a discussion of the following topics: ontology and epistemology (Laverty, 2003), the social construction of reality thesis (P. L. Berger & Luckmann, 1966), and symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934). I present these positions within the consideration that my theoretical framework incorporates the theory supporting my 'view of the world,' and that my conceptual framework is my application of that theory to my research dissertation.

However, as I have come to understand my broad topic, within the notion of 'art,' I have come to realise that reality, knowledge, interaction, their meaning, and application are interconnected constructs not only within my dissertation but also my understanding of my own lived experience. Further, I have come to understand and appreciate that ideas about art simultaneously convey ways in which we understand constructs of reality and knowledge. For me, that process has occurred in very fulfilling ways. Within that growth and realisation, I have come to understand not only how art reflects wider theoretical constructs (ontology and epistemology) but I have also come to terms with understanding, in meaningful ways, these complex constructs, particularly ontology and epistemology.

However, in presenting this chapter, I prepare my canvas in a logical sequence. Firstly, I explain ontology and epistemology, the social construction of reality thesis (P. L. Berger & Luckmann, 1966), and symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) as my theoretical framework. Then, I expand upon those domains by applying them to my dissertation within my conceptual framework.

Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology

Etymologically, ontology denotes a “metaphysical science or study of being and the essence of things” (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.b, para. 1). B. Smith (2012) defined “ontology as a branch of philosophy, the science of what is, of the kinds and structures of objects, properties, events, processes and relations in every area of reality” (p. 47). Earlier, Davidson and Tolich (2003) explained that “ontology deals with what things exist in the “real world” (p. 24). Similarly, Lavery (2003) proposed that ontology references “the form and nature of reality and what can be known about it” (p. 26). Encapsulating that view, Bryman (2008) explained ontology as “a theory of the nature of social entities” (p. 696). In other words, ontology is a study of what constitutes reality: what we consider to be ‘real’ in our experience of life (Bryman, 2008; Lavery, 2003; Neill, 2018). In other words “ontology focuses on the nature and structure of things per se, independently of any further considerations, and even independently of their actual existence” (Guarino et al., 2009, para. 1).

Epistemology

As the Online Dictionary of Etymology (n.d.a) advises, epistemology derives from and reflects the:

theory of knowledge, 1856, coined by Scottish philosopher James F. Ferrier (1808-1864) from Greek episteme ‘knowledge, acquaintance with (something), skill, experience, from Ionic Greek epistasthai ‘know how to do, ‘understand,’ literally ‘overstand,’ from epi ‘over, near’ (see epi-) + histasthai ‘to stand,’ from PI root *sta- ‘to stand, make or be firm.’ The scientific (as opposed to philosophical) study of the roots and paths of knowledge is epistemics (1969). (para. 1)

Encapsulating these themes, Buchanan (2010) proposed that epistemology considered “the study or inquiry into the origin, possibility, and constitution of knowledge [and specifically] what does it mean to know something and by what means are we able to have knowledge?” (p. 153). For Lavery (2003), epistemology is questioning what reality is and how human beings come to know and understand their social world.

Ontology and Epistemology: Symbiotic Constructs

In understanding ontology and epistemology, it might be easy to rationalise a position that they are mutually exclusive constructs. However, that view is simplistic. As Neill

(2018) observed, ontology and epistemology reflect “the interdependent nature of knowledge” (p. 14) and reality. In other words, and as I have come to understand ontology and epistemology, they are symbiotic constructs. Therefore, ontology and epistemology are dynamically positioned and are fundamental to being and becoming within all socio-cultures (Neill, 2018). Consequently, and as Neill (2018) suggested, ontology and epistemology are frequently integrated into our everyday lives and interactions in almost unthinking ways. Therefore, it is not surprising to consider our use of ontology and epistemology as taken for granted.

Keeping these considerations in mind, understanding ontology and epistemology was essential for my recognition of how I, as a researcher, came to know and realise the world around me. Additionally, I extend those considerations to my readers who, through the language inherent to reading my work, realise knowledge and reality within my dissertation. These considerations open up ontology and epistemology to wider theoretical considerations. Those considerations include P. L. Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) social construction of reality thesis and Mead’s (1934) symbolic interactionism. These two theories aid our understandings and appreciation of knowledge and reality because they both emphasise human interaction.

The Social Construction of Reality Thesis

The social construction of reality thesis P. L. Berger and Luckmann (1966) proposes that human beings create their reality and world in order to understand it. In other words, the social construction of reality thesis accepts the subjective essence of society and the human experience. According P. L. Berger and Luckmann (1966), that constructed reality is “shared with others” (p. 72). Sharing denotes the interactivity inherent to being human. In addition, P. L. Berger and Luckmann (1966) emphasised that, within our constructed reality, “[e]veryday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men [sic] and [is] subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world” (p. 55). In other words, reality is viewed as multiple subjective realities by individuals based on their lived experience. For P. L. Berger and Luckmann (1966), our worldview, reality, and knowledge, are reinforced by our interactions with others.

That synthesis reinforces our ways of being and becoming, reality, and knowledge. Therefore, the social construction of reality thesis (P. L. Berger & Luckmann, 1966)

provides an essential reference point for researchers who consider research within a constructionist worldview.

Symbolic Interactionism

Mead's (1934) theory of symbolic interactionism emphasises the interaction between human beings. While the term 'symbolic interactionism' was coined by Herbert Blumer (1986), it is widely recognised as a synthesis of George Herbert Mead's (1934) seminal ideas representing the self and society. Mead (1934) credited people for being the primary drivers of socio-culture. Supporting this view, M. J. Carter and Fuller (2016) acknowledged that individuals were "agents, autonomous and essential to the development of their social environment" (p. 932). Mead's (1934) symbolic interactionism, as M. J. Carter and Fuller (2016) observed, reflects the formation and function of socio-culture through "repeated, meaningful interactions among individuals" (p. 932).

Consolidating symbolic interactionism, M. J. Carter and Fuller (2016) outlined its three core concepts:

- (1) human beings behave with regard to the meanings that things have for them,
- (2) certain meanings derived from and are reinforced by social interaction. Lastly,
- (3) social interaction comes from a combination of multiple lines of action and interactive communication. (para. 10)

Additionally, M. J. Carter and Fuller (2016) highlighted that, within the framework of symbolic interactionism, shared language and symbols were important factors influencing communication and interaction between people. Therefore, shared language and symbols are essential drivers of symbolic interaction. Consequently, symbolic interactionism exemplifies a dynamic process in which meanings are formed and reinforced through repeated interactions and socio-cultural communication with others.

Conceptual Understandings

In this section I combine my considerations of ontology (Bryman, 2008; Laverly, 2003; Neill, 2018), epistemology (Laverly, 2003), the social construction of reality (P. L. Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934). As I have come to realise them in writing my dissertation, and even though I have presented these theories as separate topics under separate headings, as I come to the end of my dissertation, I realise that these theories are interconnected. For example, and

reflecting my conceptual understandings, the social construction of reality thesis (P. L. Berger & Luckmann, 1966), in suggesting that people create their world in order to understand it, makes real, in Bahana's *Carolben Bradybhai* and *Mikebhai Bradybhai* the realities of the artist's world that he projects for public viewing, enjoyment and criticism. In that way his canvases convey knowledge and meaning and invite interaction. That interaction is congruent with Tolstoy's (1904/2014) notions of infection and communication within Bahana's work. In turn, that interaction reflects the essence of the emphasis on interaction in symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934). In this way, I am bringing ontology (Bryman, 2008; Lavery, 2003; Neill, 2018), epistemology (Lavery, 2003), the social construction of reality thesis (P. L. Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934) together in ways which not only explain how I view the world but also have later adapted and used within my application of Barthes' (1973) and Jung's (2014b) semiotic theory in my analysis of Bahana's work.

Chapter 3. Literature Review

In my literature review, I present an overview of pop art. Presenting pop art within this chapter is important for two key reasons. Firstly, Bepen Bahana (personal communication, July 10, 2020) classifies his work, *The Curry Bunch* within the pop art canon. Secondly, in considering pop art, my dissertation now narrows its art focus to reflect Bahana's canon.

Honnef (2004) proposed that the identifier of pop art was coined in 1958 by English art critic Lawrence Alloway. Later, as Kelly (1964) described, pop art incorporated an artist's use of fine art techniques within popular art sources including "movie stills, science fiction, advertisement[s], game boards, [and] heroes of mass media" (Kelly, 1964, p. 192). New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) (2006) described pop art as the creation of young British and American artists of the 1950s who were searching for inspiration and art resources within their immediate surroundings. Those artists created work that replicated, created, and sometimes incorporated everyday objects, consumer goods, media, and advertising imagery (MoMA, 2006). Selvin (2016) proposed that pop art reflected an artistic revolt against existing artistic conventions. Consequently, pop art is considered to be a post-war art movement that is identifiable through its use of the signs and symbols of consumerism, and popular images from advertising (McCarthy, 2000).

Pop art's emergence, according to Meibauer (2018), responded to the influential predominance of abstract art in post-war European and American art schools. Key to the early pop art movement/genre/canon was a group of artists within the Institute of Contemporary Art in London. They identified themselves as the Independent Group (IG) (Gersh-Nesic, 2019). The IG consisted of prominent artists including Lawrence Alloway, William Turnbull, Richard Hamilton, and John McHale (Rice, 2009). Formalising the pop art canon, as Gersh-Nesic (2019) observed, was Lawrence Alloway's published essay that claimed that British artist Richard Hamilton's 1956 collage *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Home So Different, So Appealing?* was the artwork that established pop art's legitimacy.

Figure 6: Richard Hamilton's (1956) *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Home So Different, So Appealing?*



Source: Tate Gallery (2004).

McCarthy (2000) explained that Hamilton's collage signified a consumer fantasy that offered a vivid escape from the mundane realities of post-war life in Great Britain. That ordinariness was contrasted by pop art which promoted themes and aspirations including popularity, transience, expendability, and as Shanes (2009) suggested "low cost, mass-produced, young, witty, sexy, gimmicky, glamorous, and big business" (Shanes, 2009, p. 18) themes.

However, those attributes are not the sole domain of pop art. As the literature notes (Shanes, 2009), pop art's attributes are to be found elsewhere, particularly within earlier artistic creations. Exemplifying that is Picasso's (1881-1973) *Guitar Sheet Music and Glass*, produced in 1912 (Shanes, 2009). That work depicts a café table with drinks, a newspaper, and a sheet of music. This image is a collage maximising different textural media. It reflects the later construction of Hamilton's (1922-2011) collage *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Home So Different, So Appealing?* The only difference between these works, in consideration of their use of mixed media sources, is that Picasso's work predates Hamilton's by 44 years. Additionally, and adding to the notion that the elements within pop art are 'not new' is the canon of Dada art. Trachtman (2006) positions Dada art as an "absurdist outlook [that] spread like a

pandemic [...] ‘a virgin microbe’ [...] there were outbreaks from Berlin to Paris, New York and even [in] Tokyo” (para. 6). Dadaist pioneer Michael Duchamp (1887-1968) proposed that anything ordinary could be elevated and considered to be a work of art simply because an artist decided to consider that object in that way (Maddox, 2019). Exemplifying that was Duchamp’s use of mass-produced, commercially available, and utilitarian objects as art.

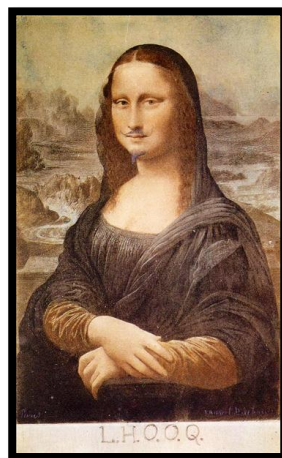
Figure 7: *Bicycle Wheel* by Marcel Duchamp (1951)



Source: MoMA (2016).

One of his best-known works is *Bicycle Wheel*. Shanes (2009) suggested that Duchamp’s approach to art automatically acted as a signifier of mass production. Reflecting that, and Duchamp’s link to Baudrillard’s (1981) simulacra, is his 1919 work *L.H.O.O.Q.*

Figure 8: Marcel Duchamp’s *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919)

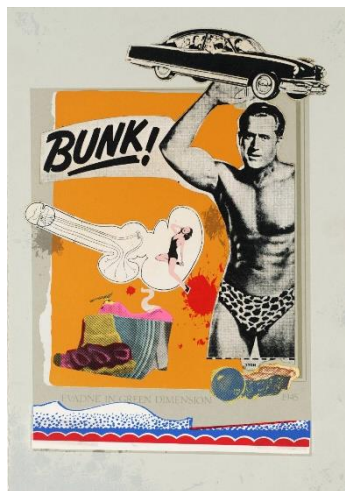


Source: Wikipedia (2020).

Duchamp's work *L.H.O.O.Q.*, featuring the *Mona Lisa* with a moustache and goatee, can be read as a resistance to the cult status of da Vinci, and as a questioning of the mystery of da Vinci's subject (Staatliches Museum Schwerin, 2019).

Duchamp's irreverent approach to the classical canon exemplified within *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919) particularly, and *The Bicycle Wheel* (1951), explain, as McCarthy (2000) noted, the link between Dadaism, surrealism, and the later emergence of what we know today as pop art. McCarthy (2000) observed that surrealist art was characterised by the displacement of objects and images from their original settings. However, as Hamilton (2013) recognised, Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005) provides a direct link between Dadaist art, surrealism and pop art, and the IG. As McCarthy (2000) explained, Paolozzi considered himself to be a surrealist who played 'visual games' by mixing images and subconsciousness in an attempt to create art for the time.

Figure 9: *Evadne In Green Dimension* by Eduardo Paolozzi (1972).



Source: Tate Gallery (n.d.d).

Although Paolozzi considered himself a surrealist, he was also a founding figure within British pop art history (Hamilton, 2013). Paolozzi's 45 *Bunk!* works produced in 1947, are considered to be the "prototypical works of pop art " (Stonard, 2018). Within the 45 *Bunk!* works, as Stonard (2018) highlighted, the *Evadne in Green Dimension* (refer Figure 9) presents a typical pop art pastiche of consumer goods, sex icons, and richly toned food advertisement.

Yet, despite the primogenitor pop art works of Picasso, Duchamp and Paolozzi, pop art's development and emergence is often associated with the cultural revolution in Britain and the United States of America during the late 1950s and the 1960s (Tate Gallery, n.d.c). Then, emergent pop artists attempted to "move away from the emphasis on personal feelings and personal symbolism that characterised abstract expressionism"³ (Tate Gallery, n.d.c, para. 7). In that way, it could be cynically suggested that the commercial and media emphasis within pop art contrasted yet predicted the rise and fall of the 1960s counterculture. Reflecting that is the 1960s mantra of "turn on, tune in, drop out" (Joshep, 2015, para. 2) soon dissipating into a commercial for-profit experience. Best exemplifying that was hippie and social activist Jerry Rubin. Rubin, a keen leader of the anti-Vietnam war movement, used social issues to create theatre that emphasised hippie-inspired activism. However, as the 1960s passed, Rubin embraced the 'capitalist cause'. He reinvented himself as a Wall Street stockbroker. As he noted, recognising his own metamorphosis, "I know that I can be more effective today wearing a suit and tie and working on Wall Street than I can be dancing outside the walls of power" ("The Three-Piece Jerry Rubin," 1980, para. 8).

Such mainstreaming notwithstanding, and recognising the earlier artists of pop art, two artists commonly associated with the pop art movement of the late 1950s, 1960s and 1970s are Andy Warhol (1928-1987) and Roy Fox Lichtenstein (1923-1997). Grudin (2017) described Andy Warhol as the archetypal pop artist. That archetype was expressed within work that incorporated distinctions and mergers between art, film, music, video, graphic design, and fashion. As Danto (2009) explained, Warhol's importance as an "American icon" (p. 10) of pop art was reflected in his use of vernacular objects, the items of everyday American life. Typifying that was Warhol's 1961 work *Campbell's Soup Cans* (refer Figure 10). As Jones (2019) observed, such images had potency because they maximised the visualisation of the banal. Reflecting that Warhol (as cited in Shanes, 2009) proposed that

we live in a supreme age of impersonally-crafted, mass-produced objects;
Secondly, those objects are usually only affordable because they are created in

³ "Abstract expressionism is the term applied to new forms of abstract art developed by American painters such as Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Willem de Kooning in the 1940s and 1950s" (Tate Gallery, n.d.a, para. 1).

enormous quantities, and lastly that the repetitiousness and replication of labour, production and marketing -are what makes and eventually sells them. (p. 41)

In those ways, Warhol extended Baudrillard's (1981) notions of simulacrum by maximising the potency of artistic reproduction.

Figure 10: *Campbell's Soup Cans* by Andy Warhol (1961)



Source: MoMA (2019).

Like Andy Warhol, American pop artist Roy Fox Lichtenstein (1923-1997) became a leading figure in the new art movement (Tate Gallery, n.d.c). Lichtenstein's style differed from Warhol's inasmuch as he reflected emotion through the use of stencil (MoMA, 2006). Inspired by the comic strip, Lichtenstein created accurate compositions incorporating parody in a tongue-in-cheek manner.

Those artists, and their conceptual thinking, have paved an artistic path for many other artists including Bephen Bahana.

Chapter 4. Methodology and Method

Introduction

This chapter presents my methodology and method. As I have come to understand it, methodology and method are two interconnected themes. As Given (2008) observed, it is within the combination of methodology and method that a framework and operational ‘tool-kit’ for a research output is created. However, I differentiate methodology from method within my consideration that methodology incorporates the theoretical methodology underpinning my research whereas my method reflects its operationalisation and application to and within my research. With that in mind, and to begin this chapter, I will begin my writing by presenting an overview of qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Liamputtong, 2013; Rogers, 2018) and then semiotic theory (Chandler, 2017; Curtin, 2006; Yakin & Totu, 2014). Then, I narrow that theoretical focus to my application of those themes to my research within my method. Consequently, this chapter comprises two complementary sections, methodology and its application within method.

Introducing Qualitative Inquiry

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), the term qualitative, within research, focuses on “the qualities of entities” as well as on “processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency” (p. 8). C. Jones et al. (2017) proposed that qualitative research reflected social science research inquiry that aimed to interpret “the meanings of human actions” (p. 276). In this way, qualitative research inquiry attempts to capture and understand the subjective perspectives of its research participants. Consequently, as Liamputtong (2013) observed, qualitative research inquiry relies on the words and narratives that research participants tell researchers who seek to discover the meaning in what those participants do in their everyday lives. Additionally, as Rogers (2018) observed, researchers are keen to know and understand what those actions mean to their participants.

Creswell and Poth (2016) emphasised the importance of qualitative inquiry within research that explores “silenced voices” (p. 45). They proposed that qualitative inquiry gives voice to ‘unheard’ voices. Consequently, they suggested that qualitative inquiry can empower and increase an awareness of those situations. In these ways,

particularly because of subjective positioning, a research participant's experiences cannot be as "easily measured" (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 45). Considering those attributes and how the denotative and connotative meanings within semiotics are social constructions, an overarching qualitative paradigm of semiotic theory provides an ideal combination with which I can semiotically explore and come to understand my two *Curry Bunch* images.

Introducing and Understanding Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of signs or the science of signs. Eco (1979) proposed that it applies to "everything that can be taken as signs" (p. 7). According to Curtin (2006), signs, within semiotics, often stand for "something else" (p. 51). That 'something else' extends our understandings and definitions of words and 'things' in interesting and socio-cultural ways. Yakin and Totu (2014) suggested that semiotics, as a study of signs, reflects how we come to know and understand our world within expressions of our ontological and epistemological position (refer Chapter 2, Theoretical and Conceptual Framework). Chandler (2017) defined semiotics as "meaningful phenomena" (p. 2) that include our consideration of words, images, and objects. As Yakin and Totu (2014) advised, the word 'semiotic' is derived from the Greek words '*semesion*' meaning signs, '*semionon*' denoting signifier, and '*semainomenon*' meaning signified (Yakin & Totu, 2014, p. 4). Consequently, understanding semiotics helps us to derive meaning and representation within both language and material items.

Ferdinand de Saussure (1875-1913) and Charles Sanders Pierce (1839-1914) are regarded as the founders of semiotics (Chandler, 2017). de Saussure's book, *Course in General Linguistics*, compiled from lecture material gathered by his students, is considered to be one of the most influential books on semiotics of the 20th century (A. A. Berger, 2014). de Saussure proposed that a sign was a unit of language that comprised two components: a *signifier* that reflected the appearance of the word; and *the signified* reflecting the word's meaning (de Saussure, 2011). In this way, and emphasising semiotics within linguistics, de Saussure realised semiotics as a dyadic construct. Later, Pierce extended de Saussure's dyadic positioning into a triadic one.

Pierce's model of semiotics varied from de Saussure's dyadic model because Pierce perceived semiotics in triadic ways. For Pierce, as Curtin (2006) noted, that triad

consisted of the sign, which stands for “something else” (p. 53), the interpretant, representing the mental image formed by individuals, reflecting the sign, and the “referent” (p. 53), the element for which sign stands.

A. A. Berger (2014) simplified Pierce’s perspectives with an example of a photograph of a house with flags and a smoking chimney. For Berger, the image is an icon signifying by its resemblance to what the photo captures. Within Berger’s interpretation, the cloud of smoke coming out of a house’s chimney is indexial because it signifies cause and effect. Within the image, the flags are symbolic because a person needs to know and understand what the flags signify. Consequently, the image is a communication conveying meaning. That meaning is ‘translated or interpreted’ by the viewer through language, which in the case of image exploration might well be internalised thinking and later verbalisation. Nonetheless, that thinking and interpretation relies on the language and knowledge available to the viewer. Within these considerations, language and interaction are key to understanding semiotics and align semiotics with P. L. Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) social construction of reality thesis and the emphasis on interaction of Mead’s (1934) symbolic interactionism.

Semiotic Considerations: Denotation and Connotation

Understanding Denotation

In simple terms, denotation is the literal meaning of the word found in a dictionary (Curtin, 2006). Cobley (2005) defined denotation as reflecting a word’s “pure meaning” devoid of any cultural influence (p. 178). In this way, as Chandler (2017) noted, a word’s denotative meaning is generally agreed upon, in formal ways, by the members of the culture within which the word is used and understood. Consequently, denotation within shared definition and use helps us to understand language in mostly unambiguous ways (Chiasson, 2001). Consequently, a word’s denotative meaning helps us to negotiate language and shared meaning in meaningful ways.

Exemplifying that is the word ‘cat’. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines a cat as “a carnivorous mammal (*Felis catus*) long domesticated as a pet and for catching rats and mice” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.d, para. 1). However, dictionary definitions vary and less formal ways of communicating add different meanings to the notion of cat. In the Urban Dictionary (2012), cats are “ninjas in fur suits with knives hidden in the paws”

(para. 2). The dynamic nature of the word 'cat', particularly its Urban Dictionary meanings, reflects semiotics' second level or order, connotation.

Understanding Connotation

Connotation, within semiotics, represents the contextual and the cultural meanings of a word (Martin & Ringham, 2000). For Chandler (2017), connotation reflects a sign's socio-cultural and personal associations. Those themes can also include a sign's ideological and emotional implications. For Eco (1979), those notions extend to include a sign's shared "social conventions" (p. 85). Consequently, connotation can be seen to represent semiotics' second level or order (Cobley, 2005) that takes the sign (which can be a word, an object, or thing) to a new level: a new signified. That new signified represents the starting point for semiotics' second level or order (Chandler, 2017, p. 124) Part of that level consists of notions of myth and archetype. It is at this point that semiotics is extended by the work of Barthes (1977) and Jung (2014).

Introducing Roland Barthes

Best exemplifying how Barthes extended the work of de Saussure and Pierce is his considerations of the cover image of a *Paris Match* magazine (refer Figure 11).

Figure 11: *Paris Match* Cover.



Source: Džanić (2013).

As Barthes (1973) recounted:

I am at the barber's, and a copy of *Paris-Match* is offered to me. On the cover, a young [African]⁴ in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the *meaning* of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this [African] in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (*a black soldier is giving the French salute*); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness). (p. 116)

According to Džanić (2013), Barthes' deconstruction of the Figure 11 image explores its layers of meaning in the following ways:

the signifier – is the physical image of the boy; the signified – is the literal reading of patriotism in terms of a loyal citizen saluting the flag, and the deeper mythological meaning of the entire sign, which becomes a reinforcement of French imperialism, by implying that French non-white citizens are satisfied in the Empire in question. (p. 841)

In these ways, Barthes (1973) extended the dyadic construct of de Saussure and added depth to Pierce's triadic relationship of semiotic theory and analysis within his emphasis on reading an image (Figure 11) by emphasising its connotative elements. Extending Barthes exemplar is the work of Allen (2003). Allen picked up on the key themes of Barthes in his description of a photo image of the Queen Mother's funeral. Barthes (1973) and Allen (2003) reflected how semiotic interpretation can be extended through the notion of myth's link to semiotics' connotative interpretation. As Allen (2003) observed in discussing the funeral image:

A newspaper picture of the crowds waiting to see the coffin of the Queens Mother is the first-order sign: signifier = the photographic images of crowds signified = the crowds that waited to see the Queens Mother lying down in state, sign = press reportage of topical event which we might gloss as 'large crowded have queued for hours to see the Queens Mother lying in state'. Mythologies raise the order to a second level, however turning that into a signifier for a new signified and thus a new sign: 'the unified, British public or public nation or the British people's love of (acceptance of) the monarchy'. (p. 43)

⁴ The original word has been replaced with more appropriate word as the original word N**** is considered to be a racial slur.

In these ways, Barthes (1973) and Allen (2003) introduced a new element into semiotics that Barthes referred to as ideology. Within Barthes' (1973) notion of ideology are myths and archetypes.

Understanding Myth

For Barthes, "myths are a dominant ideology of our time" (as cited in Chandler, 2017, p. 173). As Neill (2018) observed, myths emerge within the connotative dimensions of a sign. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.m), a myth is defined as "a classic tale of supposedly historical events that helps to reveal part of a people's world view or justify a custom, belief or natural phenomenon" (para. 2). Fiske (2010) explained that myths represent cultural narratives that clarify our understanding of the reality of nature and our being within it. In these ways, myths link to knowledge and the realities inherent in ontology and epistemology (refer Chapter 2, section on "Ontology and Epistemology").

For mythologist Joseph Campbell, myth was:

the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into the human cultural manifestations' religious philosophies, arts and the social form of primitive and historic man, prime discoverers in science and technology, the very dreams that blister steep boils up from basic magic rung of myth. (Okoro & Okoli, 2014, p. 86)

Campbell (1972) believed that myth plays an important role in justifying the existing social order, by providing general guidance through life that creates an appreciation for the fundamental mysteries of life. In that way, Campbell's (1972) considerations reflected Lévi-Strauss' (2013) position because Lévi-Strauss considered myth to be a method of communication that gives shared meanings to people which, instead of just the single elements, gives meaning to the structure or interrelations between life's components.

In *Mythologies*, Barthes (1973) proposed that myths were a broad and diffuse concept that condensed everything associated with the representation of people, places, and things into a single and understandable entity. In exploring the Figure 11 image, Barthes uses words like "Frenchness" and "Militariness" (p. 116) to indicate the 'presence' of myth within the image. For Barthes (1977), the concept of myth is a "second-order semiological system" or metalanguage that creates connotative mythological meanings (Barker, 2003, p. 79) by extending first order considerations,

within connotative meaning. Barthes (1973) opens up the construct of myth by suggesting that anything could be a myth if it includes meaning or messages (Neill, 2018). Consequently, Barthes' (1973) considerations of myth extend the connotative dimensions of semiotic analysis, thus enabling a wider investigation of the myth, the meaning, and the messages behind it. That scrutiny is extended within considerations of archetype.

Understanding Archetype

Carl Jung (1875-1961) introduced the concept of archetype within psychology. As Cherry (2020) explained, "archetypes are universal, inborn models of people, behaviours, or personalities that play a role in influencing human behaviour" (para. 1). The word archetype is derived from the Latin noun "*archetypum*, an adaptation of the Greek phrase *archétypon*, which in its adjective form is *archétypos*" (Braga, 2016, p. 221). The word *archetypum* is formed from the verb *archein* (beginning, origin) and the noun *typos* (model, form) (Braga, 2016, p. 221). In everyday use, archetype references "the original form" (Braga, 2016, p. 221). For Jung (1963):

The archetype is a psychic organ present in all of us. [...] The archetype is an element of our psychic structure and thus a vital and necessary component in our psychic economy. It represents or personifies certain instinctive data of the dark primitive psyche; the real, the invisible roots of consciousness. [...] There is no 'rational' substitute for the archetype any more than there is for the cerebellum or the kidneys. (pp. 109–110)

Jung linked archetype and myth to his assertion that humankind shared a collective unconsciousness (Braga, 2016). Jung (1963) regarded myth and considerations of archetype as being commonly shared, particularly within that unconsciousness. Further, Jung proposed that while each culture expressed myth and archetype in different ways, both notions were essentially pan-cultural constructs with more commonality than difference. Consequently, Jung (1963) found patterns in mythology, myth and literature from which he extracted a variety of symbolic forms, and characters with meanings that could be explained as different facets reflecting the human psyche (Stenudd, 2014). For Jung, as Sanatombi (2016) realised, in order to trace the history of our species, human beings relate to myth and myth formation, where myth is represented by images and patterns that surface in unconscious ways and appear as archetypal forms.

Merging Jung's considerations of myth into semiotics is Barthes' (1968) consideration of the link between myth and language. Barthes (1968) proposed that myth existed in a symbiotic relationship with language. For Barthes, within that relationship, myth not only aided our understandings of our world but also, consequent to the language available to us, could distort human perceptions and understandings. However, Barthes' (1968) considerations in that regard reflect the earlier notions of Sapir and Whorf (Hussain, 2012). They suggested that humankind is limited in our understanding of our world because of the language that is available to us to describe and understand it. Consequently, and with that consideration in mind, my exploration of *The Curry Bunch*, and the two images I have researched, will always be limited by the language available to me and to my readers.

Applying My Methodology: Qualitative Inquiry and Semiotics

To complete my dissertation, I have engaged in qualitative inquiry on multiple levels. Those levels include my interpretation of academic text, my own observations, and my semiotic analysis of the images of *Mikebhai Bradybhai* and *Carolben Bradybhai*. Because much of my research has relied on semiotics' theme of connotation, my own interpretation and cultural relevancies are important subjective and qualitative components of my overall research work. Part of that consideration has been my section of writing titled "Tolstoy and Me: What is Art?" (refer Chapter 2). Extending that analysis, Tolstoy (1904/2014) and the other key theorists I have drawn on in my dissertation have relied on qualitative paradigms to create their own theoretical positioning. In that way, my work can be read as a multi-levelled interpretation of previous multi-levelled interpretations.

Part of those levels of inquiry has been my use of denotation and my emphasis on connotation. While the former left limited scope for interpretation, the latter provided rich, rewarding, and deep research possibilities. Reflecting that was my use of Barthes' interpretation of the *Paris Match* magazine cover as my template to interpret the images of *Mikebhai Bradybhai* and *Carolben Bradybhai*. Like Barthes, I used my own cultural knowledge and understandings to realise the meanings inherent in both images.

Chapter 5. Findings

Exploring Notions of Curry

To understand *The Curry Bunch* requires an exploration of language. In considering the title of his work, *The Curry Bunch*, no word can be ignored in considering the painting's semiotic meaning. Within that in mind, this section explores the notion of curry by considering how the word 'curry' informs a deeper understanding and appreciation of Bahana's work. In that regard and considering *The Curry Bunch*, I propose that curry signifies more than "a dish composed of meat and vegetables, or just vegetables, in a sauce containing hot spices [...] usually eaten with rice and [...] one of the main dishes of India" (Collins Dictionary, n.d., para. 2). Exemplifying that is the Urban Dictionary (2019) where the word extensions of curry include ethnophaulic terms "curry nigger, [a pejorative term for] an ethnic from India" and "curry muncher [an] insult to a person who is Indian" (para. 1). In these ways, curry illuminates the politics of identity, distilled through food and ethnicity.

Yet belying those considerations is something deeper. As an Indian, residing in Aotearoa New Zealand, I perceive the word 'curry' to be a double-edged sword. That sword's duality is evidenced not only by my dictionary references but, more acutely for me, within my own lived experience of discrimination based on my ethnicity. However, while I am cognisant of that, a deeper interrogation of curry is required. For me, the explorations and interrogations touch upon curry's association with imperialism and colonisation within the Indian sub-continent, particularly by the English. As I have come to understand it, it is not a coincidence that the Urban Dictionary's (2019) pejorative definitions find favour within the power structures inherent in both colonialism and imperialism.

Colonialism, as defined by Giddens and Sutton (2017), is the "process through which Western nations established their rule in parts of the world far away from their home territories" (p. 1053). Often, as Spoonley (2020) observed, that 'establishment' displaced "existing people" [and] led to debates around indigeneity [...] and national identity" (p. 87). Consequently, and as Jary and Jary (2005) earlier observed, colonialism has been "closely associated with the development of racism" (p. 90). Aligned with colonialism is the construct of imperialism. Again, Jary and Jary (2005) reminded us of economic and political domination, which are the cornerstones of

colonialism and also constitute the construction of imperialism. As they suggested “some writers would claim that direct colonial rule is a necessary part of the definition of imperialism” (p. 292). In these ways, notions of colonialism and imperialism are synonymous with India and the notions of Empire espoused by the British in their settlement of and influence in India. Popular literature, particularly the work of E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* and its subsequent film by David Lean, captured those perspectives that Kuchta (2003) suggested “established and consolidated a regime of spatial divisions between coloniser and colonised” (p. 308). Even Forster noted the negative impacts of colonialism and imperialism in India. Commenting on the capital’s move from Calcutta to New Delhi, Forster metaphorically observed that “I am thankful to have seen the country before the new capital is built for [...] there are terrible rumours of tidying’s-up” (as cited in Kuchta, 2003, p. 311).

Curry and Metaphor

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.l), a metaphor “is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them” (para. 1). Metaphors are useful in semiotic analysis because as Aristotle noted “ordinary words convey only what we already know, it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something new” (Aristotle, 1974). Considering that, it is not surprising that the word ‘metaphor’ derives from the Greek work for transport or transfer.⁵ Consequently, as Kuusi et al. (2016) explained, a metaphor “creates new links between otherwise distinct conceptual domains” (p. 124). Therefore, metaphors encourage us to think about and consider things in new and innovative ways.

Food is widely used metaphorically. As Kunow (2003) suggested, “food has, of course, functioned as a representation: ethnographers and cultural studies have long been demonstrating how food not only feed but also organises us” (p. 115). Key to understanding foods use as a metaphor, Whitt (2011) argued that food is inherently rich in symbolism because of its centrality to life, a theme that Whitt (2011) linked back to ancient times. More recently, Morris (2010) proposed that food and its consumption metaphorically illuminated notions of ethnic and indigenous acceptability in Aotearoa New Zealand. As Morris (2010) revealed, indigenous Māori cuisine is absent from

⁵ From “the Greek *metaphora* a transfer” (Etymology Online, 2020, para. 1).

Aotearoa New Zealand's culinary landscape because Pākehā, as the dominant cultural identity, consider that Māori food lacks authenticity and is considered unpalatable. Similarly, and like Māori, Morris (2010) proposed that the food of Pacific Islanders of low income had low status consequent to the nexus of income and status. Additionally, outside of Aotearoa New Zealand, Morris (2010) also observed the rebranding of Iranian food in the United Kingdom as Middle Eastern food. That change, according to Harbottle (2004) and Morris (2010), reflected the distaste Britons held for the Islamic Republic of Iran, consequent to the 1979 revolution.

In these ways, food straddles and blurs the boundaries differentiating its denotative and connotative constructions. As Whitt (2011) summarised, food provides a language, both real and symbolic, within which we characterise “experiences, people, culture emotions and often abstract concepts that seem to be entirely unrelated to the food itself” (p. 9). Nonetheless, as Korthals (2008) stated, human beings not only need food for survival but also to experience the inherent link between us, our culture, and nature. Food symbolises the cycle of life in one form or another by mediating our notions of life and death, flourishing and decay, between power and disrespect, and between feeling good and feeling anxious.

Curry Colonialism and Imperialism

Considering the factors and constructs of imperialism and colonialism, this section extends those domains by exploring the impact of imperialism and colonialism within India. This is a large and controversial topic. Much of that scope sits outside the theme, timing, and word count of my dissertation. However, to narrow the focus and to concentrate my research within notions of ‘curry’, this section explores how themes of colonialism and imperialism have become manifest in the cultural appropriation of curry, particularly by the English. In that sense, I use curry metaphorically to illuminate something much larger: the British influence in India.

Curry is so popular in the United Kingdom that the English devote a week to celebrating its consumption and enjoyment (Metro, 2017). “Going for an Indian” or “having a curry” is almost as English as roast dinners (Gray, 2018, p. 1). In England, curry has been described as the nation’s favourite food, competing with British dishes, including bangers and mash and fish and chips (Lynn, 2019).

Reflecting that popularity, as Mukherjee (2018) observed, there are almost 12,000 curry houses in Britain that contribute more than £5 billion to the British economy (Mukherjee, 2018). England's relationship with curry reflects a taste for not only curry but also the legacy of British colonialism and imperialism in India.

Monroe (2005) proposed that curry dishes derive from regional variations of "*kari*", "*kadhi*", [and/or] "*karri*", (p. 24). *Kari* is a shortened version of the South Indian word *kaikarri*, meaning a "vegetable cooked in spices along with coconut milk" (Singh, 2005, para. 11). Civitello (2011) explained that curry as an inaccurate catch-all term that was spread by the British who "did not differentiate the spicy foods within India's diverse regional cuisines" (p. 267). Adding to that, curry also references commercial curry powder, which is a product of Western culture since most Indians grind their own spices depending on the meat or vegetable dishes they are preparing (Civitello, 2011) (refer Appendix A).

Over time, Gray (2018) suggested, the term 'curry' was modified and became a generic term for any stew-like food from the Indian subcontinent. Key to understanding the relationship between the English and Indian populations, within notions of colonialism and imperialism in India, is the construct of the raj. Curry is part of that understanding. Within the English raj, the curry was popularised by Queen Victoria and her fascination for India (Mukherjee, 2018). Queen Victoria loved Indian cuisine. Following Bourdieu's (1984) top-down model of taste, England's upper and middle classes copied her predilection and, soon, curry became an essential part of the British diet (Monroe, 2005). Curry's top-down position, within royal circles (Mukherjee, 2018), and the homes of the middle classes⁶ (Collingham, 2006) was enhanced in the 1960s when thousands of Indian and Pakistani immigrants came to work in the industrial cities of England (Hopley, 2020).

While the curry is firmly attached within the notion of "*Bhāratīyā*" or Indian cultural identity (Dimitrova, 2017), most of the curry houses that emerged during the 1960s in England were established by Bangladeshi ex-seamen (Collingham, 2006). That group tended to purchase English chippie cafés, that often had residual damage from the war bombings, and in them started Indian curry restaurants that catered for the late-

⁶ Collingham (2006) suggested that curry reflected a prominent symbol of British imperialism in India, and signified wealth and privilege for the British of the time, the ability to hire a cook from India and bring back the cook to England so they could have curry in their homeland.

night after-pub customers (Mukherjee, 2018). This led to the domination of the English curry market by Bangladeshi migrants continued until the early 1970s. However, by 1971, three-quarters of the 1,200 Indian restaurants in the United Kingdom were operated by Pakistanis. By the 1980s, that number had grown to over 3,000 Indian restaurants (Ray & Srinivas, 2012). Yet within understandings of what curry is, things have changed. For many residents of India, curry is about a generic term for any stew-like food from the Indian subcontinent. Yet within expressions of curry in England, dishes including chicken tikka, butter chicken, korma, vindaloo (Collingham, 2006), while named curries, have come to suit English tastes rather than existing as constructs of curry in India.

Ruthnum (2017) described “curry as a colonial endpoint where everything ended up in it and remains infinitely changeable, even as its complex colonial roots became a disguise as homeland authenticity” (p. 9). Kanjilal (2016) proposed that curry was a colonial term used to categorise a diverse country, yet that description was simultaneously reductive and factually inaccurate.

Exploring Bunch

Denotatively, Merriam-Webster (2020) defines a ‘bunch’ as a “protuberance, swelling [and] a number of things of the same kind” (para. 1). That definition, to my mind, evokes the image of a bunch of bananas or grapes. Others may envision, as the Danny Kaye (1951) tune promoted, “a lovely bunch of coconuts” (Lake, 2014). In these ways, the meaning of bunch infers collectivity, and/or a sameness. Consequently, ‘bunch’ might denote similar meaning to identity’s emphasis on sameness, yet within that sameness, difference. To return to my bunches of grapes and bananas, they are similar, one banana or grape is much the same as another, yet there are distinctions. Those differences could be colour, size, blemish, or placement within the bunch. Consequently, seeing and knowing what a banana or grape is does not infer, despite the popular notion to the contrary, that in seeing one grape or banana, you have ‘seen ‘em all’. Yet, ‘bunch’ conjures notions of security and belonging. Tightly packed bunches of grapes and bananas cushion and safeguard each other in ways that are similar to hens’ eggs protected by their cardboard supermarket cartons. Consequently, the multiplicity of meaning within bunch is exemplified by the expression ‘thanks a bunch’, and various other expressions of much the same positive emotional or, sometimes, sarcastically ironic tone.

However, 'bunch', as previously shown, can also be 'read' connotatively. A 'bunch of fives' may infer that a quick punch is coming your way. A bunch of unsavory people hanging out on a street corner may be an indicator that you would be wise to cross the road before encountering them. Contrasting that, the notion of a bunch of enthusiastic students, visiting an art gallery, holds quite a different and positive connotation. Similarly, a bunch of flowers may well symbolise a love interest or a mark of respect for a deceased person as well as the connotations included within those domains. In this way, the notion of 'bunch' holds a polarity within not only constructs of denotation and connotation but also positivity and negativity. Exemplifying that are considerations of a bunch of evil people and a bunch of kind people and a bunch of 'rednecks.' Those points notwithstanding, and as I have come to understand and appreciate it, a bunch can be considered as the recognition of the similarity between things that groups them together. Within that grouping, as my examples illustrate, is the difference. In considering and applying that thinking to *The Curry Bunch*, it is obvious that, while similar, each image is different, and those differences are magnified by the images' similarities. In this way, the interplay of denotation and connotation provides an ideal framework to extend my research into *The Curry Bunch* within constructs of myth and archetype.

Summarising The-Curry-Bunch

For Bepen Bahana *The Curry Bunch* creates a framework presenting a series of art works. For me, as a researcher, exploring *The Curry Bunch* has realised many of the underlying connotations of those words and emphasises in meaningful ways how they add new levels of meaning that reinforce Bahana's visual images. I discuss those meaningful ways later in this present Findings chapter, and also in Chapter 6, Discussion and Conclusion.

A Semiotic Analysis of Carolben Bradybhai and Mikebhai Bradybhai

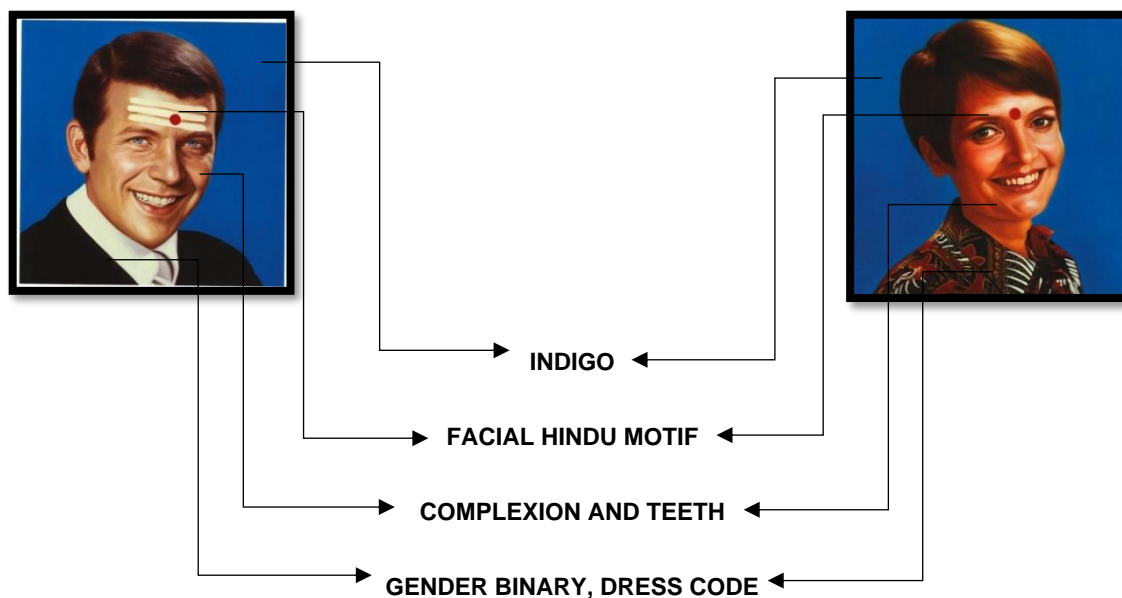
Introduction

In this section, I present my semiotic analysis of two of *The Curry Bunch's* eight images, Carolben Bradybhai and Mikebhai Bradybhai. In my semiotic exploration of those two images, I engage in their deconstruction, then extend my exploratory semiotic deconstruction into myth and archetype reconstruction. In this way, I extend my semiotic analysis by incorporating considerations of Barthes (1973), particularly

notions of ideology encapsulated within Jung's (1963) realisations of myth and archetype. Within my analysis, I consider the paintings, background, portraiture, and foreground. Key to my analysis is the exploration of Hindu cultural motifs on *Carolben Bradybhai* and *Mikebhai Bradybhai's* foreheads. In these ways, my deconstruction via semiotic analysis simultaneously considers notions of Western and Eastern socio-culture. Exemplifying that is the understanding of what *Bhai* and *Ben* mean. In Hindi, *Bhai* means brother, while *ben* means sister (Kumar, 2010). *Bhai* and *ben* are commonly used within Indian culture because it is considered disrespectful to address people by their given names directly (Devarhubli, 2012).

Figure 12: Mikebhai Bradybhai

Figure 13: Carolben Bradybhai



Source: Bahana (2013). Images reproduced with permission.

At first glance, four themes dominate these two images (refer to Figures 12 and 13). They include the commonality of background colour, gender binary, dress codes (including flawless complexion and teeth) and Hindu/Indian motifs. Consequently, I present a discussion of those domains cognisant of semiotic theory and within the sequence of research findings noted in Figures 12 and 13.

Background Colour: Indigo

The images of Carolben Bradybhai and Mikebhai Bradybhai share an indigo colour background. Denotatively, indigo, as defined by Merriam-Webster (n.d.) as “(1) a deep reddish-blue; (2) indigo plant; (3a) a blue vat dye obtained from plants (such as indigo plants); (3b) the principal colouring matter $C_{16}H_{10}N_2O_2$ of natural indigo usually synthesised as a blue powder with a coppery lustre” (para. 1).

Within the context of both images, the connotations of indigo are linked to the East India Company and the British Raj. For those institutions, indigo, extracted from the plant genus *Indigofera*, an indigenous Indian and Burmese plant (Fairbanks, 1994), represented a valuable commodity. That value was recognised as indigo sales in Europe created the notion of ‘blue gold’ (Kagti, 2015). Then, the pressure for indigo production on Indian farmers was so great that it was said that “no box of indigo was dispatched to England without being smeared in human blood” (McKinley, 2011, p. 7). Consequently, indigo came to signify rebellion, particularly in India within the *Nil Bidroho* (the Indigo Revolt). The *Nil Bidroho* recognised the widespread peasant uprisings in Bengal between 1839 and 1860 as acts of resistance against the rapacious indigo market demands. That resistance, as Chattopadhyay and Mamoon (2009) revealed, signified an early expression Indian nationalism. Yet, particularly within Hindu culture, indigo is synonymous with Neelkanth, who is also known as Lord Shiva, “The God with the Indigo Throat” (Arya, 2014, para. 3) (refer Figure 14). Lord Shiva is one of the most powerful Hindu Gods and is positioned within the Hindu Trinity, including Lords Vishnu and Brahma. As Cartwright (2018) noted, in Hindu mythology, Shiva collected venom in the palm of his hand and then drank the poison in order to prevent the world’s destruction. It is believed that the poison burned his throat, leaving a permanent indigo scar (Cartwright, 2018).

Figure 14: Lord Shiva NEELKANTH.



Source: News Track (2019).

Additionally, within Indian culture, indigo signifies the infinite. As Rajendran (2018) explained, representing Hindu gods using the colour indigo promotes their ‘form’ given that the notion of the gods themselves are formless. Similarly, indigo is associated with the *Ajna*, the “third eye chakra” (Sebastian, 2011, para. 1). The *Ajna* is situated in the centre of the forehead between the eyebrows (Houston, 2019). The *Ajna* is the sixth primary body *chakra*⁷ and is believed to be part of the brain that can be made more potent by meditation, yoga, and other spiritual activities (Dimitrova, 2017). However, India is not the only nation that considers the colour indigo to be important.

In many Western nations, indigo signifies wealth, power, and dignity (Elizabethan Era, 2020, para. 1). Exemplifying that, during the Elizabethan period, The Sumptuary Laws defined social status within dress code (Elizabethan Era, 2020). Then, it was stated, “none shall wear in his apparel any cloth of gold, silver, or tinsel; satin, silk, or cloth mixed with gold or silver, nor any sables; except earls and all of the superior degrees” (Encyclopedia.com, 2020, para. 1). However, within Sumptuary Law, as Alchin (2012) observed, the colour indigo was only allowed to be worn by royalty, nobility, and members of the governing council because indigo was then an expensive commodity.

In ancient Rome, indigo was worn by working-class people, while the wealthy wore white, black, red, or purple. The Virgin Mary was often painted in indigo colouration and, consequently, indigo held holy, modest, virtuous, and protective connotations. Today, and echoing the notions of ancient Rome, indigo often denotes the working

⁷ In Sanskrit, the term “chakra” means “disc” or “wheel” and refers to the energy centres of one’s body which resembles spinning energy, each corresponding to a certain nerve bundle and major organ (Stelter, 2020).

class through the identifier “blue-collar” (Tunstall, 2014, para. 3). Blue-collar, as Tunstall (2014) noted, references professions requiring skilled manual labour.

Gender Binary

In this section, I discuss the gender-related binaries within the images of Mikebhai Bradybhai and Carolben Bradybhai. Those images showcase a stereotypical American couple of the 1960s or early 1970s. This definition is easy to establish given their fashion sensibilities, and the definition and stereotype can be extended by noting that, within notions of European-ness, both portraits are of white middle-class people with traditional values reflecting “American Life” (University of Minnesota Libraries, 2010, para 10). Arguably, both images resonate the positivity of having achieved or the aspiration to achieve the “American dream” (Barone, 2020, para. 1) and the consumerist aspiration of the “American lifestyle” (Damm, 2008, para. 3). Yet beyond the ‘American-ness’ of both images is their blending with, and consequent connotation of, the cultural values and mores of Eastern culture.

Consequently, both images could be read as maximising Amero/Indian stereotypes. As Chakkarath (2010) explained, stereotypes are “preconceived or oversimplified generalisation[s] about an entire group of objects or people without regard for individual differences” (p. 18). In these ways, considering Indian culture, Shukla (2010) suggested that such stereotyping includes “holy cows, warring god and wandering ascetics” (para. 2). Hence the Hindu cultural motifs on the foreheads of both sitters is a representation of how western society might stereotypically view Indian culture and its people. Similarly, the Americanised ‘white faces’ of Mikebhai Bradybhai and Carolben Bradybhai promote the Western stereotype of “white privilege”⁸ (Addy, 2008, p. 10). Thus, the images of Mikebhai Bradybhai and Carolben Bradybhai hold mythical (Lévi-Strauss, 2013, p. 2) connotations aligned with being Aryan. Setting aside any Nazi connotations⁹ within the construct of Aryan, according to Rajadhyaksha (2011) the word ‘Aryan’ or ‘Arya’ appears to be the oldest word known to Indo-Europeans. As Kanvas (2015) reminded us, the word ‘Arya’ means “civilised, [or] noble” in Sanskrit (para. 4). The term was first used as a self-identifier by migratory groups from Central

⁸ The set of social and economic advantages that white people have by virtue of their race in a culture characterised by racial inequality (Merriam-Webster, n.d.n, para. 1).

⁹ Nazism is founded on far-rightness, nationalism, and Aryanism. The Nazis believe in a “pure race,” which eventually led to a vision (and an attempt at the reality) of the genocide of the “enemies” of the Aryan race, known as the “Final Solution” (Bronstein, 2019, para. 1).

Asia who were later known as Indo-Iranians (people who settled in the Iranian Plateau) and, after that, the term was also applied to “Indo-Aryans” (people who migrated to the northern part of India) (Mark, 2020, para. 1).

Later, the word ‘Aryan’ became synonymous with ethnicity, particularly with light-skinned Caucasians. That association occurred, as Mark (2020) observed, after some Europeans scholars misinterpreted Vedic text during the 18th and 19th centuries. Over time, the Aryans in India created the “varnas” or the caste system. The caste system includes the *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudras* (Kanvas, 2015). Initially, Indian communities were segregated into Aryans and non-Aryans groups. Later, around 500-200 BC, Indian society was divided into four *Varnas* (Kanvas, 2015, para. 26). The varnas (or castes) included: *The Brahmins* (Aryan priests, scholars, and philosophers); *Kshatriyas* (Aryan rulers and warriors); *Vaishyas* (Aryan farmers, traders) and, lastly, the *Shudras* (non-Aryan workers, peasants, servants, and other castes) (The Saylor Foundation, 2019). The caste system contributed to privilege via the hierarchy of the upper castes over the lower castes. That hierarchy was strengthened during the British Raj because the Raj only promoted upper caste Hindus to senior administrative positions (T. Jones, 2017).

Consequently, the images of Mikebhai Bradybhai and Carolben Bradybhai can be seen and ‘read’ as straddling caste, language, ethnicity, and socio-culture in ways that promote their imagery status as “demi-God[s]” (Poudel, 2019, p. 119). In these ways, these images embody myths that support Indian socio-culture, Americanisation, and colonial/imperial imperatives and the globalised influence of media in contemporary life. However, within considerations of Indian culture, those myths are reflected in the archetypes of Ram and Sita.

The Hindu deities of Ram and Sita, respectively represent an ideal man and an ideal wife (Sameer, 2010). Sita and Carolben Bradybhai symbolise modern women who share the same anxieties, responsibilities, and burdens that women have endured over time. In this way, Carolben Bradybhai is the contemporary manifestation of Sita. In the Hindi cultural imagination, Sita is portrayed as the quintessential prototype of “womanhood — [enduring] silent pain and long-lasting patience like that of the earth itself mak[ing] her the touchstone of morality” (Tripathy, 2017, p. 46).

Facial Hindu Motifs

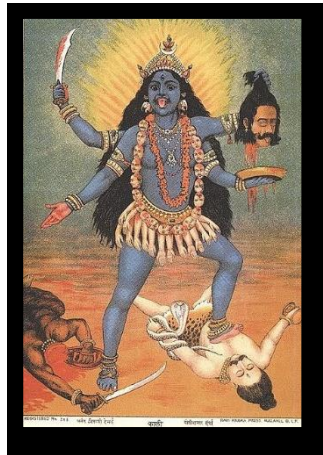
The Hindu motifs on Mikebhai Bradybhai and Carolben Bradybhai hold deep and meaningful religious relevance. Religion plays a crucial role in Indian socio-culture and reflects the lore of India's various religions, cults, and their rites, practises, beliefs, and faith-based philosophies. Yet the two images reflect a mash-up or cross over of Indian and Western cultures. The traditional Hindu motifs on the forehead of Mikebhai Bradybhai and Carolben Bradybhai are known as *bindi* (Jha, 2018) (the red dot on Carolben's forehead) and the *tripundra* (Chatterjee, 2001) (the three lines and the circular dot) on Mikebhai's forehead.

The word *bindi* derives from the Sanskrit word "*bindu*" or "drop". The *bindis* are placed between the eyebrows. There, they symbolically represent the "third eye" (Antony, 2010, para. 2). The placement of a *bindi* between the eyes is important. According to Indian sages, the area between the eyebrows is the place of latent wisdom (Dokras, 2020). This area is known by different names, including the *Ajna chakra*, the spiritual eye/the third eye (Dokras, 2020). A *bindi* is also an auspicious symbol of marriage and reinforces the social status and sanctity of a married woman in Indian socio-culture (Dokras, 2020). Additionally, the *bindi* reflects a wife's role as being dutiful to her husband, particularly as someone who is "willing to sacrifice her ambitions and aspirations for the sake of her husband and family" (Antony, 2010, para. 25). In that way, the *bindi* can also be linked to archetype within considerations of 'mother' and the Hindu goddess Kali. Consequently, Carolben Bradybhai clearly represents notions of a mother archetype that reflects not only pan-cultural mother archetype ideals, but specifically Amero-Indian mother archetypes. In this way, as Jung (2014a) realised, the mother archetype embodies notions of a natural carer, a sympathetic person, a symbol of fertility, wisdom, and nurture.

Carolben Bradybhai's link to Kali is clear within its duality. That duality, as Jung (2014a) identified, places Kali as the "loving and the terrible mother" (p. 16), and the "unconventional mother" who "destroys as well as makes" and "takes as well as gives life" (Sugirtharajah, 2002, para. 15). Extending these dualities, Kali, despite her terrifying appearance, symbolises "impossible beauty" and "mother" (Dalmiya, 2000, para. 3). Consequently, the image of Carolben Bradybhai mediates the liminal space

between conventional Indian women, with traditional beliefs, and liberated American women.

Figure 15: Goddess Kali



Source: Raja Ravi Varma (1906).

The Hindu motif on Mikebhai's forehead is known as the *tripundra* (Chatterjee, 2001). The *tripundra* is an important symbol among the *Shaivite* or the followers of Lord Shiva. The *tripundra* consists of three horizontal lines and a red dot drawn on the centre of the forehead. In Hindu mythology, the *tripundra* actualises *pranava* or life by recognising three actions of God – creation, sustenance, and destruction (Chatterjee, 2001). The *tripundra* also symbolically represents the holy trinity of the Gods “Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva” (respectively, the creator, the keeper, and the destroyer) (Chatterjee, 2001, p. 61). Additionally, the three lines of the *tripundra* symbolises “*Kriya Shakti*” (the power of work), “*Ichha Shakti*” (will power) and “*Janana Shakti*” (the power of knowledge) (Chatterjee, 2001, p. 61).

Mikebhai Bradybhai reflects the warrior archetype. In Hindu mythology, the king archetype is the most significant of the male archetypes. Brett (2012) described the king archetype as the combination of the other three masculine archetypes – the warrior, magician, and the lover. That positioning places the king archetype within his absolute, godlike potential (Brett, 2012). That positioning alerts us to Dowden's (2002) observation that “mythology is by and large a man's mythology, describing a world from a man's point of view. Women are seldom considered in isolation from men they seldom have scope for action on their initiative” (p. 115). Consequently, myths impact

notions of gender and gender equity by often reinforcing male dominance (Tripathy, 2017).

Portrait Dress Codes

Mikebhai Bradybhai is wearing a white dress shirt, a black sweater and a grey necktie in a 'look' best described as business/casual. Merriam-Webster (n.d.c) defines the business casual look as "a style of dressing for white-collar employees that is less formal than traditional business attire" (para. 2). Here the connotations are clear: Mikebhai represents a stereotypical white-collar American man. As Hayes (2019) explained, a white-collar worker belongs to a class of workers known for their higher than average pay gleaned from engaging in highly skilled jobs. White-collar employees historically connote the "shirt and tie" set, characterised by office employment and management, and not "getting their hands dirty" (Hayes, 2019, para. 2). Mikebhai Bradybhai's white dress shirt can be traced back to the Victorian era. Then, it was considered to be a symbol of wealth, class distinction, authoritarianism and uniformity (Brough, 2014). Additionally, during the 19th century, men who wore decorative clothes rather than utilitarian clothes were considered to be less masculine (Brough, 2014). Therefore, an unornamented white dress shirt becomes synonymous with proper moral masculine conduct. Implicit within that austerity was the idea that a man could be trusted and was business-like (Brough, 2014). That concept is reinforced by his tie which also symbolises male sexuality, establishment, power, and financial success during 1970s (Šakić, 2007).

White and its binary opposite colour, black, also hold religious connotations. According to Marcel (2013), a priest wears black so that they can be distinguished as a symbol of Jesus. Additionally, a priest connotes religious obedience, whereby the collar metaphorically represents a yoke, subtly reminding the priest that he is bound to Christ as "a slave of the one who never calls us slaves, but friends — obedient to him and the successors of his Apostles" (Hoerner, 2019, para. 6). In these ways, considering Mikebhai's white shirt and black sweater, he aligns with the Merriam-Webster (n.d.f) definition of a conformist: "a person who behaves in accordance with prevailing standards or customs and typically dislikes or avoids unconventional behaviour" (para. 2).

By contrast, Carolben's, dress code includes a dress shirt promoting feminist ideals. Given that *The Brady Bunch* was popular during the 1970s, the time of feminism's second wave, Carolben's shirt reflects that time with its collar and buttons (Webb, 2020). Consequently, with her shorter hair, and her choice of shirt, Carolben is a representation of a transcendent woman aspiring toward post-modernity; and yet, unlike Mikebhai, she is acknowledging tradition and an ethnic minority within the patterning of her shirt. Similarly, and again unlike Mikebhai, Carolben head is tilted left. This posture supports the connotation of feminist change and alternatives to the status quo of the 1970s. Despite Carolben's family orientation, she is metaphorically looking for alternatives in the same way that Kali connotes the duality of a "loving and a terrible mother" (Purrington, 2020, para.16). Further, despite Carolben's conventional role as a mother, the image also reflects a part of her that is unconventional and liberated.

'Fair' Complexions and Teeth

Given *The Brady Bunch* is a Hollywood creation, it is hardly surprising that both Carolben and Mikebhai Bradybhai present the 'healthy glow' of sunny California. Carolben's complexion is more sun-tinged than Mikebhai's, a situation not congruent with her comparative lack of wrinkles. Clearly, Mikebhai has more worries if facial wrinkles are their measure. Equally, both Mikebhai and Carolben have great teeth, another marker of American and Californian distinction. While those characteristics help define the American-ness of both images, their Indian connotations are deeper. As Beatty (2018) observed, Indian society commonly believes that skin colour reflects positive and negative attributes. Beatty (2018) suggested that fair skin is associated with virtues, whereas a dark skin is associated with negativity. India's obsession with fair skin is deep-rooted and common (Beatty, 2018). Its pervasiveness includes religion (see below).

Carolben depicts a warm undertone complexion, reflecting that of the goddess Kali, despite Kali's image in Figure 15. Pattaniak (2009) explained that black and white have symbolic meanings in Hindu mythology, and that mystical colour codes have played a significant role in the perception of complexion and colour bias in India. Kali, in Hindu mythology, "is the dark one, who is wild — so wild that she unbinds her hair, dances naked, copulates in public and drinks blood" (Pattaniak, 2009, para. 3). However, in

Hindu society, Kali is depicted with clothes, ornament, and lighter skin tone. Then she is known as Bhadra Kali or Modest Kali (Pattaniak, 2009). Carolben reflects that duality.

Figure 16: Krishna.



Source: Nikihl (2016).

Krishna, as the embodiment of Vishnu, embodies a similar duality. In Sanskrit, Krishna (refer Figure 16) literally means black (Nikihl, 2016). Despite that, images of Krishna (refer Figures 17 and 18) are commonly portrayed with either a whitish/pink or pale blue complexion (Pattaniak, 2009). Those images are popular on posters and calendar art (Nikihl, 2016). As Nikihl (2016) observed, the light skin tone of Krishna has come to dominate Indian socio-culture because that socio-culture places a high value on being light-skinned. Consequently, it was “just a matter of time before God himself was whitewashed” (Nikihl, 2016, para. 18).

Figure 17: Fair-Skinned Krishna.



Source: Nikihl (2016).

Figure 18: Blue-Tinged Krishna.



Source: Nikihl (2016).

In these ways, skin colour can be linked to caste as a means of distinction and for some discrimination within considerations of colourism. Merriam-Webster (n.d.e) defines 'colourism' as "prejudice or discrimination especially within a racial or ethnic group favouring people with lighter skin over those with darker skin" (para. 1). In India, that consideration is an important one because, as Mishra (2015) observed, "India as a conglomeration of different race and culture[s], which consist of varied degree[s] of colour, facial features [that are] based of the geographical area where they belong" (p. 725). Given that, and the potency of the Raj and its legacy in India, it could be suggested that the blend of Indian symbols on American faces reflects notions of whiteness, white privilege, and the desire of many Indians to have a whiter skin tone. Fanon (2008) provided some illumination on this point, suggesting that the creation of identity is a specific discourse and self-organisation that is dependent on image. Consequently, as Fanon (2008) suggested, colonised identities see their own image through the eyes of their colonisers. It is under these conditions that colonised peoples copy western dominating cultures and begin to create ambiguous hybridised identities (Fanon, 2008).

Figure 19: Kali



Source: Rumma (2019).

Figure 20: Kali



Source: Hindu Cosmos (2016).

Summary of Research Findings

From my findings and exploration of two of *The Curry Bunch* images, I have distilled five distinct themes within my Findings Chapter. These themes include considerations of indigo, gender binary, Hindu facial motifs, portrait dress code, and fair complexions and teeth. These elements appealed to me because, within my semiotic analysis, they stood out as signs that could be readily read and extended into myth and archetype. Within these extensions, I have emphasised Indian myths and archetypes. Again, because of my own ethnicity that was an appealing option as, like the images themselves, their interpretation is a multifaceted consideration that straddles multiple ethnicities and belief systems. However, it must be remembered that, as Jung (2014b) realised, the constructs of archetypes, despite their cultural expression, are pan-culturally similar. As Jung (1959) realised “There are forms or images of a collective nature which occur practically all over the earth as constituents of myths and at the same time, as individual products of unconscious” (Holbrook, 2012, p. 122).

I outline the five themes of my findings in Table 2 below. That Table provides the basis for the following chapter, the Discussion and Conclusion, which completes my dissertation.

Table 2: Summary of Research Findings

Construct	Denotation	Connotation	Myth	Archetype
Indigo	A deep reddish blue colour extracted from the indigo plant, <i>Indigofera</i> .	British Raj; ‘blue gold’; resistance movement <i>Nil Bidroho</i> . Providing form to formless Gods. Wealth and power; class difference.	Saving the world by ingesting poison.	Lord Shiva: “The God with the Indigo Throat” (Arya, 2014, para. 3).
Gender Binary	Stereotypical images of a man and a woman of American/Caucasian heritage circa 1970s, adorned with Indian cultural symbols, but in Western dress.	Aryan connotations compounded by high caste symbols (<i>Brahmin</i>).	Manifestations of contemporary colonialism and imperialism promoted via media (television and art).	Ram and Sita.
Hindu Motifs	Motifs represent meaning in the Hindu belief system: the <i>bindi</i> and the <i>tripundra</i> . The <i>bindi</i> denotes the place of women in Indian socio-culture.	<i>Bindi</i> connotes the third eye/wisdom.	The duality within goodness and bad. Kali as the “loving and the terrible mother” (Jung, 2014a, p. 16).	Kali/mother archetype.
	The <i>tripundra</i> signifies followers of Lord Shiva.	Three parallel lines connote creation,		Warrior/King archetype.

		sustenance and destruction and a holy trinity of Gods: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.	Combining my themes of a warrior, magician, and the lover.	
Dress Codes	Business/casual. White-collar male American image.	Connotations of honesty/reliability and religion/conformity. Looking right implies a 'rightist' political view.	Conservative patriarchal positioning.	Ram/Warrior/King archetypes.
	Socio-temporal dress sense reflecting changing times.	Feminist and ethnic connotations. Looking left implies a 'leftist' political view.	Socio-temporal change, recognition of minorities and "sites of struggle" (Neill,2018,p.45).	The duality of Kali and the 'modern woman' reflecting Sita.
Fair Complexions and Teeth	All American imagery adorned with Indian/Hindu motifs.	Healthy. Emphasising 'whiteness' (face and teeth)	Supporting the myth that light skin is preferable to dark skin.	Krishna/Vishnu: it was "just a matter of time before God himself was whitewashed (Nikihl, 2016, para. 18).

Chapter 6. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter concludes my dissertation by presenting my discussion and conclusion. The purpose of a discussion section, in a dissertation, is to evaluate and identify the importance of the research findings in light of what is already understood about the topic. Additionally, a discussion section clarifies any new understandings or observations that have arisen as a result of the research (Jacob, 2012). With that in mind, in this chapter, I directly address and answer my research questions based on my semiotic analysis of Bepin Bahana's *The Curry Bunch*. To do that, I consider the themes from my findings that I presented in Table 2: Summary of Research Findings, at the end of the previous chapter.

In my discussion section, I not only illuminate my considerations of denotation, connotation, myth, and archetype but also respond to my research questions in more in-depth and meaningful ways. Consequently, within my discussion, and rounding out my emphasis on Indian myth and archetype, is my realisation that Bahana's use of American imagery (*The Brady Bunch*), within his *Curry Bunch*, particularly within the images of *Carolben Bradybhai* and *Mikebhai Bradybhai*, subverts notions of the British influence in India (via the Raj) and creates an actant metaphor for both Indian independence and aspiration toward the American dream. For me, that realisation opens up the interpretation of Mikebhai and Carolben's images within more liberal considerations. While these considerations are explored in the following sections, I make the point that, in producing the images of Mikebhai and Carolben, Bahana has created new ways of viewing and understanding the nature of being and becoming Indian, not only for Westerners but for Indians too. These connotations, within Bahana's work, reflect considerations of the American Dream, a construct bypassing the oppressive nature of English culture and its influence in India, particularly the influence of the Raj.

Consequently, Bahana's work, as he realised it, reflects the definition and 'intentions' of the pop art genre. Bahana's images promote an artistic revolt against the traditional conventions in literal and metaphorical ways. Bahana has created, within both images, new realities promoting new ways of thinking. As a result, Bahana's work challenges existing ontologies and epistemologies by presenting alternate realities promoted within his images.

However, before engaging in my discussion, it would be prudent to remind my readers of my research questions. My primary research question asked:

- In what ways is *The Curry Bunch* a metaphorical illumination of Indian culture?

Underpinning that question were my two supporting questions:

- What themes, myths, and archetypes does a semiotic analysis of *The Curry Bunch* reveal?
- How might *The Curry Bunch* incorporate a future view of being and becoming Indian?

Discussion of Findings

In presenting my discussion section, I adhere to the same topic headings that I identified within my findings chapter (refer Chapter 5). However, to facilitate a deeper discussion, I have merged Dress Code, and Fair Complexion and Teeth (refer Table 2), into the discussion section heading “Gender Binary”. Those consolidations condense my discussion.

Indigo

The colour indigo dominates both images as colour and within spatial considerations. Indigo holds clear links to India and the British Raj. For the East India Company, indigo denoted and connotated the notion of ‘blue gold’ (Kagti, 2015, para. 2). That popularity reflected the trade in indigo with European countries. However, that trade was mired in exploitation. Overtime, indigo came to signify Indian resistance within the *Nil Bidroho* rebellion (Chattopadhyay & Mamoon, 2009). Exemplifying the idea that indigo was simultaneously a ‘golden’ commodity and an item of exploitation were considerations that “no box of indigo was dispatched to England without being smeared in human blood” (McKinley, 2011, p. 7). More recently, indigo holds an association with “blue-collar” workers (Tunstall, 2014) and “the working class” (Fashionologia Historiana, 2018) (refer Chapter 5). In the images of *Carolben Bradybhai* and *Mikebhai Bradybhai*, Bahana recognises the potency, meaning and connotations of indigo. Interestingly, he juxtaposes those concepts against the ‘whiteness’ of *The Brady Bunch*.

That juxtaposition metaphorically represents the contemporary realisation of indigo’s darker history, inasmuch as the background in the portraits of Mikebhai and Carolben

literally remind us of the background of indigo's exploitation by the 'white' Raj and other 'foreign' indigo traders in India. Consequently, the two portraits can be seen as being 'layered'. Considering this, indigo constitutes the portraits' first layer, their backgrounds. The images of Mikebhai and Carolben constitute the mid-ground. The forehead Indian motifs constitute the foreground of the image. In these ways, the images can be read as representing a multi-layered history of white colonialism and its associated exploitation of the Indian people and the products of India, particularly indigo.

Building upon this understanding are the connotations of indigo in considerations of Barthes' (1957) notions of myth and Jung's (2014b) considerations of archetype. I found that indigo held mythical associations, particularly within Shiva's saving of the world by holding poison in his now indigo-coloured throat (Cartwright, 2018). These associations are bound together within the idea that indigo represents the "infinite" or the textual "form" (Rajendran, 2018) of God. These considerations transcend Eastern and Western ideologies that link "the god with indigo throat", or "The Neelkanth", Lord Shiva (Arya, 2014, para. 3), and his saving of the world from destruction by drinking poison, to Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. That connection links the belief systems of India and Christian nations. Additionally, indigo is associated with the Virgin Mary (refer Chapter 5), signifying constructs of holiness, nobility, protection and virtuous (Alchin, 2012). This places indigo as symbolically sharing considerations of God as the protector within Eastern and Western constructs. In these ways, Bahana's images of Mikebhai and Carolben reflect Tolstoy's (1904/2014) considerations that positive moral messages are conveyed within an artwork. As Tolstoy (1904/2014) realised, art provides a vector of enlightenment toward God and, therefore, a medium of communication. Within my dissertation, and from my perspective, those communications occurred on multiple levels. Those levels included considerations of visuality, denotation, connotation, myth, and archetype.

Gender Binary (Including Dress Code and Complexion)

Bahana's portraits of Mikebhai and Carolben draw our attention to a gender binary of male and female. That binary contrasts Healthline's (2020) observation that there are 64 terms that describe gender identity and its expression. Male and female are but two distinctions. Because of skin colour, the images of Mikebhai and Carolben hold not

only an American but an Aryan connotation (refer to Chapter 5). These associations blend into considerations that within Indian culture, lighter skin is preferred to darker skin tones (refer to Chapter 5). In turn, these factors evoke considerations of class and caste constructs in an understanding of Indian culture (refer Chapter 5) and the influence of the British Raj (refer Chapter 5) within Indian socio-culture.

Notwithstanding these points, Mikebhai and Carolben reinforce notions of the contemporary gender binary of male and female within their display of clothing and hairstyles. As noted, Mikebhai is conservatively dressed in male attire. His appearance reflects a “white collar” (Hayes, 2019, para. 2) American man. Key to that ‘look’ is Mikebhai’s white shirt that not only signifies masculinity (Brough, 2014), and uniformity (Brough, 2014) but also evokes Victorian-era considerations of wealth, class and authoritarianism (Brough, 2014). Additionally, the combination of his white shirt and black over-jersey promote considerations of a puritan image reinforced by his overall conservatism and look to the right. Those considerations reflect Mikebhai as a “conformist” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.f) (refer to Chapter 5). In these ways, Mikebhai’s portrait positions him as an authority figure supporting my later suggestion that Mikebhai’s image signifies a new form of global imperialism, American imperialism.

Reinforcing those considerations, Mikebhai’s head is positioned looking to the right. His hair is cut short, reflecting, and reinforcing his masculinity. His face shows some wrinkling, something contrasting Carolben’s comparatively smooth complexion. The white faces on both images (albeit that Carolben shows a healthy sun-tanned face), given the Hindu motifs, reflect Bahana’s recognition that within Indian culture light skin is a preference, a consideration congruent to Nikhil’s (2016) observation that even the (Indian) Gods have been “whitewashed” (Nikihl, 2016, para. 26). This notion is supported by Fanon (2008), who proposed that colonised identities see themselves through the eyes of their colonisers, a construct not dissimilar to Scheff’s (2003), and the Cooley/Goffman “looking glass self”¹⁰ (p. 2). It is under these conditions that

¹⁰ This is the idea that our identities and self are reflectively formed not only by the opinions of others but also by our interactions with them. This aligns the looking glass self with Mead’s (1934) symbolic interactionism (Jary & Jary, 2005). Charles Cooley coined the idea “looking glass self” and is an accepted part of modern psychology and symbolic interaction. Ervin Goffman was a symbolic interactionist who followed and explored the looking glass self in detail (Scheff, 2005, p. 147).

colonised people copy dominating western cultures and begin the process of creating hybridised identities (Fanon, 2008).

Mikebhai's portrait is dominated by a tricolour: red, white, and blue. Those elements provoke some further discussion. I propose that the tricolour is shorthand for new imperialism, American imperialism, and that Mikebhai's right-facing posture thinly veils the conservative yet forceful nature of a conservative American Republicanism. Reinforcing that, and considering notions of binary opposition, as I have come to observe and understand it, Mikebhai's half-smile is a metaphorical representation of the drawing of the eagle on the American dollar bill. In one clawed foot, the eagle holds thirteen laurel leaves (Campbell & Moyers, 1988), a signifier of honour and peace (Ancient Symbols, 2020). In its other foot, the eagle holds thirteen arrows, a symbol potentialising war (Campbell & Moyers, 1988). Yet, unlike Mikebhai, the eagle on the American dollar bill looks left toward the laurel. The eagle's left-facing gaze signifies the nation's preference for peace, but also displays it has the option of war (Campbell & Moyers, 1988). In similar ways, Mikebhai's smile can be read as a mixture of welcome, tempered with reserve. Applied to wider considerations of *The Curry Bunch*, this positions the portrait of Mikebhai as a metaphor denoting the potentialities of being and becoming Indian, albeit through an outward lens of American-ness. Consequently, within the *Curry Bunch*, the notions of the Raj, exemplified within my discussion of indigo, are replaced with an American imperial worldview. Subtly underpinning that is the way in which, via media, *The Brady Bunch* has infiltrated the everyday lives of its audience, not only in America but globally. That concept is supported by Dickie's (1969) construct of the "candidacy of appreciation" (Dickie, 1969, p. 245) in as much as *The Curry Bunch* imagery is legitimated and elevated as 'art' by considerations of its multimedia and television presence. In contrast to that figure, Carolben's collar and dress code promotes feminist ideals through her choice of a shirt, with its collar and buttons (Webb, 2020), rather than a domestic 'uniform'. That choice aligns with feminism's second wave in the 1970s, when *The Brady Bunch* was a popular sitcom.

Consequently, with her shorter hair, and her shirt, Carolben represents a transcendent woman aspiring toward post-modernity, yet, unlike Mikebhai, acknowledging tradition and (ethnic) minority status in the patterning of her shirt. Unlike Mikebhai, Carolben is looking left. This posture supports the connotation of feminist change and

alternatives to the status quo of the 1970s; despite Carolben's family orientation, she is metaphorically looking for other options and links with Kali's duality (refer Chapter 5). Jung (2014a) identified Kali as "terrible and a loving mother" (p. 16). Within these considerations, Carolben reflects a pan-cultural/Amero-Indian mother archetype (refer Chapter 5) who embodies the notion of natural carer, a sympathetic person, a symbol of fertility, wisdom, and nurture. Despite her frightening look, Kali is associated with portraying "impossible beauty and mother" characteristics (Dalmiya, 2000, p.126). Within these considerations, Bahana's artwork of Carolben incorporates the duality within contemporary Indian women who aspire to live a liberated life, albeit depicted within Western media. These considerations illuminate the unspoken colour bias within the Indian sub-continent. As Beatty (2018) observed, the Indian obsession with fair skin is prevalent in the presentational appearance of Indian Gods. Bahana's artwork promotes deeper considerations that ask why Indian Gods are presented in those ways.

Hindu Motifs

Hindu motifs provide another binary supporting my previous considerations of gender in Bahana's two images. Carolben's *bindi* (Jha, 2018) and Mikebhai's *tripundra* (Chatterjee, 2001) add another level of meaning and semiotic 'reading' of Bahana's work. That reading may be considered in two ways. I suggest that Western viewers might well recognise *The Brady Bunch* mother and father before they consider and recognise the Hindu motifs. Conversely, Indian portrait viewers might well recognise the Hindu motifs, and then as a secondary recognition, *The Brady Bunch* mother and father images. In these ways, the two images reflect and extend Tolstoy's (1904/2014) consideration of art as a shared "infection" (p. 99). For Tolstoy (1904/2014), infection is reflected when the artist and the viewer share in the same emotions and feelings, like nostalgia, that an artwork might promote (Antonov & Chernyak, 2016). These feelings and experiences within *The Curry Bunch* are promoted and reinforced for two distinct audiences within their considerations of *The Brady Bunch*, the *bindi* (Jha, 2018) and *tripundra* (Chatterjee, 2001). However, that is not to say that viewers may not view *The Curry Bunch* in holistic ways, but to recognise that people often look for the familiar to then negotiate the unfamiliar. In these ways, the faces and the Hindu motifs facilitate

considerations of Fanon's (2008) considerations of hybridised identities (refer Chapter 5).

Within contemporary culture, and as I have come to understand Bahana's work, the *bindi* and *tripundra* signify, in much the same way that indigo does, that change has occurred and is ongoing. Within Indian culture, the *bindi* signifies the mother archetype that embodies qualities of caring, sympathy/empathy, fertility and wisdom (Antony, 2010). However, when placed on Carolben, and considering my section on Gender Binary (above, particularly my comments on Carolben), the *bindi* takes on new meaning. That new meaning, considering the comparatively liberated life of Carol, in *The Brady Bunch*, signifies a liberated prospect for Indian women. Yet that liberation could be tempered by considerations of a new form of cultural identity 'restriction': the influence of the new imperialism impacting Indian and global culture: American imperialism.

Despite that concern, the portraits of Mikebhai and Carolben not only suggest the emergence of hybridised identities (Fanon, 2008) but, within that emergence, the recognition of the hitherto "silenced voices" (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 45) of Indian women in contemporary Indian society. In these ways, Bahana provides and recognises a vector of change by using Mikebhai and Carolben imagery to project potential change and equity, particularly for Indian women. However, that change, it could be argued is tempered by Mikebhai's conservative appearance, and propensity to look toward the conservatism and gendered status quo of the 'right'.

With these points noted, the images of Mikebhai and Carolben can also be considered within constructs of cultural appropriation. Cuncic (2020) defines cultural appropriation as "the use of objects or elements of a non-dominant culture in a way that doesn't respect their original meaning, give credit to their source, or reinforces stereotypes or contributes to oppression" (para. 1). Within that definition, cultural appropriation needs to be considered not as Bahana's appropriation but, in my opinion, that of the image's viewer. Supporting that I suggest that an unknowing viewer might consider it appropriate to wear a *bindi*, simply because it was seen by them on Carolben. Reflecting that possibility, the *bindi* has become a Westernised fashion accessory. Non-Indians are commonly seen wearing *bindis* at music festivals like Coachella. Their

bindis are placed on faces, backs, navel's, or noses. These positions, as Antony (2010) observed "unknowingly breach the conventional discursive structures that situate this object within the framework of faith, religion, and culture" (para. 3).

Supporting these considerations is how the portraits of Mikebhai and Carolben link to myth and archetype. Kali, as revealed in Carolben's image, is, as Jung (2014a) identified, an unconventional and binary characterised mother archetype. As he noted, Kali is "the loving and the terrible mother" (p. 16). Consequently, I suggest that Kali meditates the liminal space of change for Indian women that I understand is evidenced in Bahana's work. Reinforcing that, Mikebhai archetypically signifies the holy trinity of three gods "Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva" (Chatterjee, 2001). That grouping symbolically represents "creation, sustenance and destruction" (Chatterjee, 2001). In these ways and in consideration of the binaries inherent to each archetype, the combination of the Mikebhai and Carolben images reflects domains of conflict and congruence that, for me, denote the struggle of men and women within Indian, American, and global socio-cultures. Those considerations challenge Dowden's (2002) suggestion that "mythology is by large a man's mythology, describing a world from a man's perspective where women are seldom considered in isolation from men, they seldom have scope for action on the initiative" (p. 115). Consequently, my semiotic reading of Bahana's work recognises that it challenges history and the existing order of things within not only Indian and American contexts, but also within wider global considerations.

Discussing the Implications of My Theoretical Framework and Methodology

I positioned my research within a qualitative paradigm in considering Bepen Bahana's two Curry Bunch images, Mikebhai and Carolben. That base was complemented by my wider consideration and analysis of those images using a semiotic analysis influenced by Barthes (1973), and Jung (2014). My analysis not only considered that art was a social construction but within that construction, art helps people to understand the world around them. In these ways, I liken art to language. As I have found out, art, like language is a tool for communication. Further, I came to understand that communication in terms of Tolstoy's (1904/2014) considerations on art. Art constitutes language, because like verbal communication, art promotes response. Like language, art is inherently interactive. That interaction brought to my attention how art 'fits' within considerations of P. L. Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social

construction of reality thesis, and Mead's (1934) symbolic interactionism. Those links were, for me, a natural theoretical and practical progression.

Consequently, in exploring Bepen Bahana's two Curry Bunch images, I have merged my own considerations of art and Indian culture with those of key theorists. In that process, I not only came to understand the importance of theory within research and its link to our wider ontologies and epistemologies via reality and knowledge but, through that process, I found out something about my own identity, knowledge, and realities as an international Indian student studying in Aotearoa New Zealand. That 'something' addressed how my own Indian culture has come to influence Western thinking and, in the case of myth and archetype, parallel it.

Answering My Research Questions

In concluding my research, I answer my research questions. That process identifies my contribution to research. That contribution is complemented by the section below outlining my research limitations and suggestions for future research.

My research questions included:

- In what ways is *The Curry Bunch* a metaphorical illumination of Indian culture?

Underpinning that question are my two supporting questions:

- What themes, myths, and archetypes does a semiotic analysis of *The Curry Bunch* reveal?
- How might *The Curry Bunch* incorporate a future view of being and becoming Indian?

I respond to those questions as follows.

In What Ways is The Curry Bunch a Metaphorical Illumination of Indian Culture?

Bahana's *The Curry Bunch* is a multi-layered metaphor. I analysed that metaphor within my exploration of the artworks three 'layers'. Those 'layers' included the background, the mid-ground-portrait, and the foreground motifs (refer to Figures 12 and 13). My analysis and findings suggest that the images of Mikebhai and Carolben are:

- metaphors of Indian resistance to English colonial rule (the Raj);

- metaphors for aspirational change, particularly for Indian women;
- metaphors of globalised influence, particularly the dominance of media communications (television);
- metaphors of feminist influence in Western countries (refer also to the second bullet point, above);
- metaphoric representations of American imperialism, in as much as both images literally ‘take on’ the motifs of Indian culture;
- metaphoric representations of American imperialism and conservatism;
- metaphoric representations of people via food: *The Curry Bunch*;
- metaphors of independence and interdependence (a married couple), and the signifiers of the independence and interdependence of nations (albeit within imperial/colonial considerations);
- metaphors for Indian and the Westerns cultures and emergent “hybrid identity” (Fanon, 2018) and socio-cultural change;
- portraits reflecting the power dynamics between men and women that in turn reflect a power dynamic between countries and socio-cultures; and
- metaphors promoting considerations of myth and archetype with pan-cultural considerations.

What Themes, Myths, and Archetypes Does a Semiotic Analysis of The Curry Bunch Reveal?

Within my analysis, I combined the positions of Barthes (1973) and Jung (2014b). These theorists were compatible choices because Barthian semiotics incorporates concepts of myth and archetype that can, in turn, be traced to the thinking and theories of Jung (2014). Additionally, I referenced Indian myth and archetype. While that choice may, at first glance appear mono-cultural, it should be remembered that Jung (2014) proposed that while myth and archetype hold cultural signification, the essences of both myth and archetype are pan-cultural.

- Via the indigo background, the images reveal Shiva or Neelkanth as the myth and archetype.
- The images also reveal the gender binary and how it manifests contemporary colonialism and imperialism promoted via media.

- The gender binary also highlights archetypical considerations of the Indian deities Ram and Sita.
- The Hindu forehead motifs denote the duality of Kali as well as a representation of the liminal space denoting a traditional India woman and a liberated American woman.
- The *tripundra* is a mythical representation of the King; a combination of the warrior, magician, and the lover.
- Dress codes reveal Mikebhai's patriarchal position yet Carolben's openness to change.
- Fair complexions and white teeth project considerations of colourism and the Indian preference for lighter skin tone and the "whitewashed" (Nikhil, 2016, para. 18) Gods.

How Might The Curry Bunch Incorporate a Future View of Being and Becoming Indian?

In blending considerations of Indian history, within contemporary television imagery (the *Brady Bunch's* parents) Bepen Bahana's portraits potentialise future considerations. Consequently:

- Carolben's image may be an early representation of the current #MeToo¹¹ movement through its association with 1970s Western feminism.
- The history of Indian domination by England may be replaced with a larger threat, the domination of the United States of America.
- Being Indian is perceived as being part of something bigger: Western culture, particularly American culture.
- Women, (via Carolben looking left) offer an alternative perspective to Indian identity, one contrasting the 'rightist view' of Mikebhai.
- Cultural and ethnic acceptabilities are created in the minds of others: our identity is realised and reflected us within the views of others (Cooley and Goffman's looking glass self (Scheff, 2003)).

In answering my research questions, I have come to understand that my analysis of Mikebhai and Carolben's images reflect the history and contemporary themes

¹¹ The #MeToo slogan was first coined in 2006 as a way to encourage women who had experienced sexual harassment by letting them know that they weren't alone—that other women had the same experience they had (Gordon, 2020).

impacting the being and becoming Indian. Specifically, I note and, in some cases, reiterate the important influences of the following themes permeating Bahana's work:

- The British Raj: and Indian resistance to colonialism and imperialism.
- American imperialism or the influence of American culture through media on Indian culture.
- The existence of gender binaries and how they create stereotypes and limitations in considerations and constructions of gender.
- The positive influence of feminism in Eastern culture, albeit transposed within Bahana's adapted *Brady Bunch* imagery.
- Art can facilitate cultural and ethnic acceptance in the minds of others, through their understanding and awareness of ethnic symbols that may not reflect their own cultures.

How is my Topic Relevant to Gastronomy?

Food is without a doubt, the most basic human requirement. Nonetheless, as French semiologist Roland Barthes argued (as cited in Jurado, 2016), food is profoundly structured, involving substances, practices, habits, and techniques of preparation and consumption that are part of a system of distinctive significations. As discussed in Chapter 5, "food has, of course, functioned as a representation: ethnographers and cultural studies have long been demonstrating how food not only feed[s] but also organises us" (Kunow, 2003, p. 115).

Reflecting that, my research used 'curry' as a metaphoric language to explore Bahana's work and to understand and interpret the multiple layers of meaning within the Indian Identity. In that way my research reflects, through its exploration of art, how the "nourishment of man" (sic) (Brillat-Savarin, 1825/1970, p. 52) can be realised within the messages and aesthetics of art, as well as food and beverage. In that way my research opens up gastronomy to a wider view that promotes the suggestion of gastronomies interdisciplinary focus.

Research Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While my research has focussed its attention on only two images within Bahana's series *The Curry Bunch*, specifically Mikebhai and Carolben, I draw my readers' attention to the limitations of my research within their analysis and discussion. Additionally, I present my recommendations for future research in this domain.

Research Limitations

- My research only explored the images of Mikebhai and Carolben. While those explorations illuminated meaningful data, research exploring all images in Bahana's *Curry Bunch* collection may have facilitated deeper research that explored the interrelations between his nine *Curry Bunch* images as well as the themes within my research.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted my research. The pandemic impacted my ability to access library materials and to meet face to face with my supervisor. Additionally, and like many others in New Zealand, COVID-19 has negatively impacted my mental health simply because of the constant threat the pandemic presented.
- Asking Bepen Bahana's opinion of my analysis was not part of my dissertation. That noted, and considering the theory of art, asking the artist is not something that art viewers often have the option to do themselves. Rather, and considering Tolstoy (1904/2014), arts "infection" (Antonov & Chernyak, 2016, p. 99) and its communication is usually performed at distance. Nonetheless, the artist's views of my dissertation, and indeed his *Curry Bunch* work, are both considerations for future research.
- My research emphasised Eastern myth and archetypes, rather than Western myths and archetypes. While that may be a limitation for some, for me emphasising Eastern myth and archetype presented an opportunity to expose my readers to something 'new', rather than constructs that they may already be familiar with.
- My final research limitation reflects considerations of time and word-count. Within a dissertation, the upper word-count limit is 30,000 words. Those words need to create research depth for the topic. Consequently, my ability to explore

the wider issues that my dissertation exposed has been limited (refer “Future Research Recommendations”, below).

Future Research Recommendations

- A more comprehensive understanding could be obtained from analysing the entire *The Curry Bunch* series. That research might expand upon and or contradict the findings of this research dissertation.
- Research could be conducted to explore Bepen Bahana’s thoughts and considerations in creating *The Curry Bunch*. Those views could be compared to this dissertation, and/or be a standalone research enquiry.
- Research could be conducted with *The Curry Bunch* using Western myth and archetype.
- *The Curry Bunch* could be researched from the viewpoint of art gallery visitors, soliciting their interpretations of the work/s.
- Research could be conducted to explore how Auckland’s Indian community perceives *The Curry Bunch*.
- Research could consider how images like *The Curry Bunch* are metaphors for the acceptance of Indians living in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- *The Curry Bunch* could be explored within an alternative artistic theoretical framework that opposes the views of Tolstoy (1904/2014).

Closing Comments

Undertaking my research dissertation has been a journey that has made me realise several ‘things’. Obviously, Bahana’s work was my primary focus. Yet, within my analysis of that work have come several realisations. My first realisation has been that theory and ‘real life’ are not divorced constructs but rather a ‘happily married couple’. Consequently, I have realised how life informs theory and how theory informs life. Those realisations have, for me, deepened as my research journey progressed. Within my research journey and beyond, I have come to understand the social construction of reality thesis (P. L. Berger & Luckmann, 1966), symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934), the impact of myth and archetype within considerations of Barthes (1973), and Jung (2014). Within those considerations and the blending of ‘real life’ and theory, I have realised a new outlook toward art and its ability to convey messages that extend beyond art’s aesthetic.

Additionally, throughout my dissertation, I have mentioned notions of 'white skin' and 'brown skin' as identifiers and signifiers. Here, I want to make the point that a certain discomfort surrounded my use of those words. Using those words promoted feelings of guilt for me. That guilt was grounded in the connotations that words like 'white', 'brown' and 'black' evoked. Within language is power. I make the point that my word use provided identifiers, not my reinforcement of hierarchies of power based on skin colour within these identifiers. Nonetheless, I am very conscious of those connotations. That awareness and my attention to it, within considerations of art, seems to me a good way to end my dissertation. Lévi-Strauss (1962) said that food must nourish people's collective minds, their systems of values, beliefs, and traditions, to be considered suitable for their stomachs, and mindful of this comment I propose that art, like food, is good to think with!

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Appendix

Type	Garam masala	Rogan Josh	Vindaloo	Panch Phoron	Balti
<i>Region/Country</i>	<i>Central India</i>	<i>North India</i>	<i>Southwest India</i>	<i>North East India</i>	<i>Pakistan</i>
Carom Seed					
Star Anise					
Bay Leaf					
Cardamom					
Clove					
Coriander					
Cumin					
Fennel					
Fenugreek					
Garlic					
Ginger					
Nigella					
Mustard seed					
Paprika					
Pepper Black					
Pepper Cayenne					
Saffron					
Turmeric					

Source: Adapted from Civitello (2011).