



pigment of the imagination

the essay film as a navigation of liminality

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for the Master of Art & Design

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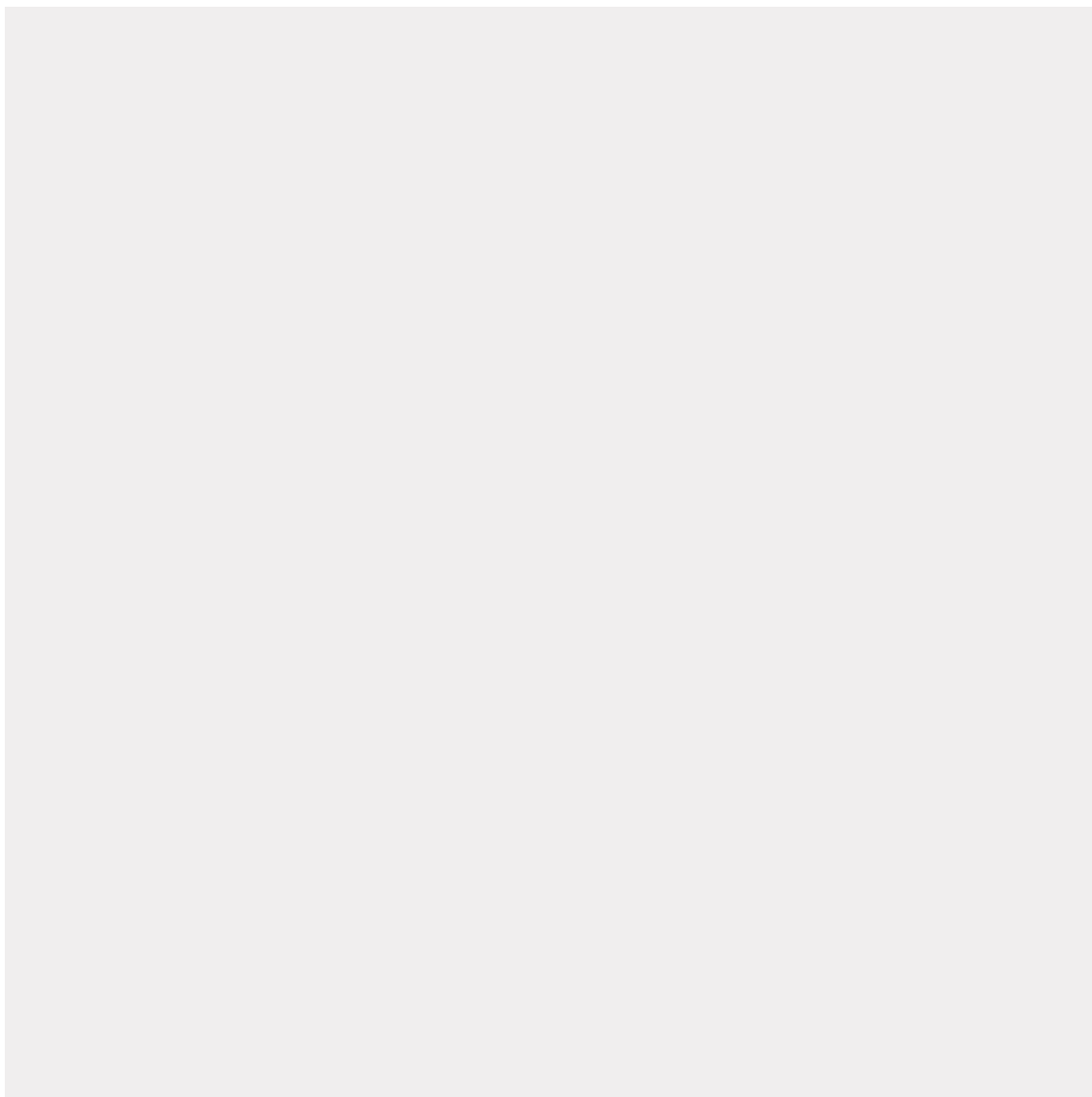
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All images contained in this exegesis are in the private collections of  
Peter A Charman, Joan M Ellis - Deighton and Trudy A Carle [Charman Love]

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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 nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements'.

.....  
October 8th 2012

intellectual property rights

The film-maker asserts the intellectual and moral copyright of the creative work *Pigment of the Imagination* contained in this thesis. All rights of the owner of the work are reserved. The screening contained in all its formats is protected by copyright. Any manner of exhibition, and any diffusion, copying, resetting, or editing, constitutes an infringement of copyright unless previously written consent of the copyright owner thereto has been obtained.

acknowledgements

e mihi ki te iwi. no ratau tenei korero

*acknowledge the people. this story is theirs*

I am Maori in that I think collectively and generationally, so I can't rush these acknowledgements. I arrived here because of people, otherwise there would be no story to tell and no thesis.

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Arohanui



Pete A Charman  
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Caroline Charman  
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Alex Randall-Cutler  
Luke A P Carle  
Samuel J Charman  
Elizabeth (Lilli) G A Carle  
Rebecca J Charman  
Oliver J H Carle  
Callum Charman



Figure 1:1 (Carle, T. 2012) Waikato, NZ. June 2012. Recording the world that my thinking passed through became a form of reflective commentary.

#### abstract

This creative, practice-led project considers the potential of essay film to negotiate a complex whanau narrative. It explores the intricate pathway of a family born and raised between two cultures who must navigate the space between. By definition this in-between or liminal space is transitional; a space to be traversed. However, the project, in unpacking and synthesising narratives, proposes the liminal as a place in which one might rightfully stand. Thus the 'half-caste' might be of both worlds but exist, fully resolved, within a third space.



Figure 1:2 (Carle, T. 2012) King Country, NZ. June 2012. Using visual metaphors of travel I composed fragments of stories across time into a subjective reflection of identity.

## introduction

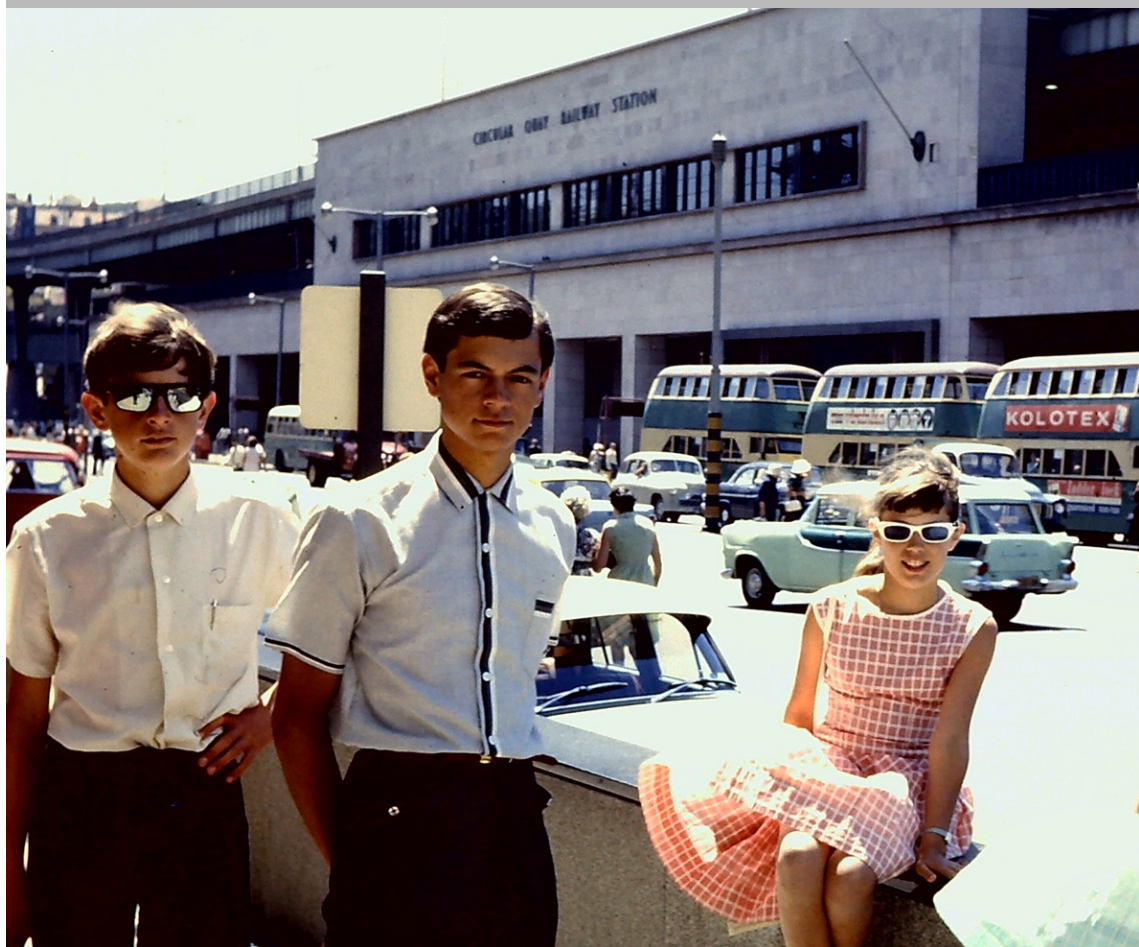
*Pigment of the Imagination* is an essay film that uses moving images, still photographs, text and sound to creatively synthesise meaningful family narratives. It traces reflections across three generations. Using visual metaphors of travel it documents and composes these fragments into a subjective reflection of identity. In explaining and contextualising the project, this exegesis is divided into four chapters.

The first chapter positions myself as the researcher. Essay film is largely autobiographic. In this work, my family's stories contextualise my narrative and personal perspective. By positioning myself in relation to this inquiry, I establish a context for the investigation and offer a brief recounting of memories that illustrate the project's significance. Such an introduction also serves to explain the rhetorical position I take in the work.

The second chapter provides a review of the contextual knowledge relating to the inquiry. It considers contributions from the fields of essay film and theory relating to liminality, as it relates to racial hybridity (half-caste).

The third chapter discusses the reflexive research design constructed for the explication of the project. It explains how heuristics (as a system of inquiry) served the generation of ideas and refinements to the creative outcome of this project. In this regard I discuss reflexivity, collaboration, self search, immersion, ethical considerations and narrative inquiry.

The fourth chapter considers critical ideas that have impacted on the structure (form) and narrative (content) of the project. I then reflect on essay film's capacity to communicate complex, subjective ideas in diverse ways. The chapter concludes with a discussion of relevant conceptualisations of liminal space as it relates to the half-caste.







## chapter 1

positioning the researcher

I was born and raised between two cultures. My father is English and disembarked in New Zealand at the end of World War 2. My mother is Maori,<sup>1</sup> but like many who were jostled along in the urban drift last century, she was culturally displaced for most of her life. My father's lack of knowledge of Maori culture and my mother's ambivalence towards it meant that by default my three siblings and I were raised as Pakeha. We attended Pakeha<sup>2</sup> schools, engaged in Pakeha extra-curricular classes and lived in a Pakeha neighbourhood. We are full blood siblings but there is a broad variance in our skin tone and appearance and this unique racial mix in a singular close-knit family, affected how we managed our diversity and sought to navigate individual pathways through ambiguous cultural spaces.

In the years before starting school, the need to identify myself as Maori or Pakeha did not arise. However when I was five years old, there was an incident at a school bus stop when an adolescent Pakeha boy walked up and spat directly into my face. He called me

<sup>1</sup> Of Te Atiawa and Ngati Kahungunu descent and whakapapas back to Parihaka and Waikawa marae.

<sup>2</sup> (Maori – English translation) non-indigenous caucasian New Zealander.

a “bloody hori”<sup>3</sup> and stepped closer with every repeat of the jibe. As a little girl I was scared and shaken but mainly I was confused. I knew there were phrases that sometimes drifted around the periphery of our family; “dirty bloody Maori’s, dumb Maoris, bludgers, useless ...” I know now they were not aimed directly at us but such things accumulate in a child’s memory.

In the absence of any English relatives, weekends were often spent with my mother’s family who all lived in close proximity to one another, but across town. This meant we always visited them, going from home to home, playing with each group of cousins over a single day. I have memories of visiting family on marae<sup>4</sup> during summer holidays, where I heard te reo<sup>5</sup> spoken, learned poi<sup>6</sup> and how to cook corn on the cob and boil eggs in the hot pools surrounding the wharenuī<sup>7</sup>.

My mysterious English family materialised around special family events as fragmented,

<sup>3</sup> (Maori – English translation) derogatory term for a Maori person

<sup>4</sup> (Maori – English translation) meeting place

<sup>5</sup> (Maori – English translation) the language

<sup>6</sup> (Maori – English translation) small tethered spherical weights used as percussion instruments in Maori performance

<sup>7</sup> (Maori – English translation) communal house





Figure 2:2 (Charman, P. c.1963) Wellington. Photograph taken by my father of the family huddled around a tape recorder. Here we are listening to messages from our English relatives (who we had never met). Family film footage, slides and photographs such as this traveled back and forth between New Zealand and England as embellishments to sporadic phone calls.

heavily accented voices that reverberated down a crackling telephone wire. It was a surreal experience greeting an invisible grandfather and waiting interminable seconds for his response to arrive on the end of the phone. At Christmas an oversized parcel would arrive in the post. It was wrapped in brown paper, bound with string, and festooned with exotic stamps. Inside, each of our gifts was carefully named in the handwriting of an unknown aunt.

In this world of dichotomies, I lived out my childhood. Once I started school, visiting mum's family became less frequent. My sister and I were enrolled in private convent schools, and our worlds revolved around ballet classes, music, elocution lessons and sporting activities. When I turned twelve, I went permanently to boarding school. I was the only Maori girl in the convent until my sister and one other half-caste Maori girl arrived a year later. Our world was Pakeha and in it we did not recognize that we were Maori.

It was not until I was 18 and went nursing that I began to make tenuous connections when Maori patients, identifying me as the only

Maori nurse on duty, would request that I care for them. Initially I resented this as I did not want to identify myself as Maori but eventually I began to see it was a privilege. This was the beginning of an acceptance of the unique place I held in the world.

However, years later, as attitudes became more inclusive and the Maori renaissance moved into full swing, I began to experience another kind of exclusivity. Some Maori in my workplace and in academia began to tell me I was not Maori enough. My poor knowledge of te reo and the lack of depth in my understanding of tikanga<sup>8</sup> disqualified me.

Suddenly I was back in a familiar liminal space.

I had developed a sense of existing in two worlds and yet in neither. I felt like I was standing in a doorway looking out, searching for a piece of solid ground that would not shift beneath me.

<sup>8</sup> (Maori – English translation) pertains to customs and traditions

Despite this convoluted cultural journey, my three children all grew into adults proud of their mixed ethnicity and whakapapa <sup>9</sup>. My father's passion for film making and my mother's skill as a creative writer have inspired this project and their legacy of films and books have enabled me to piece a story together.

I accept now that I may belong in two worlds, and in the space that divides them. I know the love of my family and this project has been an attempt, through a journey over time and across continents, to understand the nature of past decisions made and spaces occupied.

The experiences that make up the essay film at the core of this thesis may be subjective, but they are not unique. For many New Zealanders born between worlds, there are questions.

This project does not seek to answer these, but rather, to offer an understanding.

<sup>9</sup> (Maori – English translation) lineage



Figure 2:3 (Carle, T. 2012) Trudy Charman and Chris Parker (nee Lewis). Mt. Victoria, Wellington. Chest Hospital. On duty as second year nurses caring for patients with tuberculosis. Predominantly Maori patients.





## chapter 2

review of literature

This chapter reviews knowledge impacting upon, or contextualising the project. In this regard, it considers:

*theories of the liminal*  
*essay film (as a media form)*  
*essay film practitioners*  
*narrative structure*  
*archive material relating to the project*

*theories of the liminal*

Liminal space may be understood as a transitional, potentially isolated space where the structure may be temporarily disrupted before being reconstructed. This concept has been discussed and developed by a number of writers including Eaton & Smelt (2007), Miller (2004), Turner (1967) and Van Gennep (1909).

Although each theorist develops the idea in unique ways, there is a common understanding that liminality refers to a space between, normally one that is traversed as an individual moves from one state to another.

In this project liminal space is explored in relation to racial hybridity (half-caste) <sup>10</sup> and

cultural identity. Accordingly, of use to the project has been the writing of Bhabha (1994) Webber <sup>11</sup> (2008), Meredith (2004), and Katz (1996). All of these writers offer useful considerations of changes in traditional binary framings of ethnicity that encompass notions of a third and permanent in-between space.

*essay film (as a media form)*

Essay film is a comparatively malleable media form that incorporates narrative and subjectivity. It has developed a complex history of definition and theorising since its initial framing in Alexandre Astruc's *The Birth of the New Avant Garde: La caméra-stylo* (1948).

Considerations and attempts to define the essay film have been developed by subsequent writers including Burch (1981) who considered it in the context of non-fiction film,

<sup>10</sup> I use this derogatory, anachronistic term to describe a person of mixed Maori and Pakeha ethnicity. In using the word I am proposing a reclaiming of the idea without its negative connotations.

<sup>11</sup> Melissa Webber (2008) refers to this liminal space as in-betweenness and Homi K. Bhabha who wrote extensively on racial hybridity describes it as the Third Space (1994).

and Gianetti (1975), Rosenbaum (1998), and Lopate (1998) who attempted to refine descriptions of the genre.

More recently, Thompson (2005) has argued that essay film meditates on a theme instead of a plot. Rascaroli (2009) has discussed its cognate forms; the diary, travelogue, notebook and self-portrait, as cinema in the first person. She also usefully considers the genre in terms of transgression and protean form.

In 2011 Corrigan built on this idea and also drew attention to the genre's unique balance "*between abstracted and exaggerated representation of the self (in image and language) and an experiential world encountered and acquired through the discourse of thinking out loud*". (p.21)

essay film practitioners

Although there are a number of significant filmmakers who have worked with (and developed) the essay film<sup>12</sup>, the creative work in this thesis is inspired primarily by the work of

two significant practitioners; Agnes Varda and her film, *The Gleaners and I* (2000) and Ross McElwee, specifically his work, *Bright Leaves* (2003).

In *The Gleaners and I*, we encounter a form of self-narrative that passes through considerations of morality, ethics, love, death, survival, religion and culture. The work suggests a certain stream of consciousness that serves to present an abstract but profound consideration of a social idea (*gleaning*).

In *Bright Leaves*, McElwee wraps a story of tobacco growing and addictions around his family's associations with the tobacco industry and their subsequent ventures into medical practice. He artfully blends the banal and the profound, layering his narrative, without explicit judgment, while leaving important ideas to linger.

<sup>12</sup> Significant among these are Nicholas Roeg, *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976); Morgan Spurlock, *Supersize Me*, A film of Epic proportions (2004); Quentin Tarantino, *Pulp Fiction* (1994) Dziga Vertov, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929); Agnes Varda, *The Gleaners and I* (2000), *Beaches of Agnes* (2008).



narrative structure in film

Essay film has a protean structure and is highly experimental but is not without convention. While it may not always be chronologically linear, broad ideas surrounding narrative organisation are of use to the project because they have enabled a mapping of certain emphases within these films. More importantly, they have been helpful in designing the subtle structure, arcs and rhythms within *Pigment of the Imagination*.

In 1863, the novelist and playwright Gustav Freytag developed an analysis of dramatic structure based on five-act Greek and Shakespearean plays. His pyramid model has been usefully applied (sometimes in an adjusted manner) to a range of narratives in diverse media forms. In many essay films we can discern this pyramid <sup>13</sup> embedded in the way the thematic journey rises and falls to and from action and emphasis.

<sup>13</sup> Freytag's Pyramid is a narrative structure model that divides drama into five sequential stages that include exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and dénouement.

However, essay films are often not chronologically linear and do not always culminate in the classical dénouement he identifies.

In the 1960's Tzvetan Todorov developed a common structure for all narratives (including film). Although less demarcated than Freytag's analysis, he still suggested that a story move along a continuum from equilibrium, moments of disruption (disequilibrium), to resolution (culmination), in a renewed state of peace and harmony that ends chaos. In adapting Todorov's model, the American screenwriter Syd Fields suggests that a film narrative is divided into three sections (acts). These are set-up, confrontation and resolution. He argues that 'plot-points' within these are employed to move action along and provide interest.

These conventional analyses of narrative structure are of interest to this work because in essay film (as in certain fictional cinema) <sup>14</sup> they are often disrupted.

This idea will be discussed more fully in chapter three (methodology) of the exegesis.



<sup>14</sup> Historically Godard's *Week End* (1968), and Andy Warhol's *Chelsea Girls* (1966), may be seen as replacing conventional, linear structures with seemingly random chronologies. Their work precedes a diverse body of cinema that has challenged the chronological phases of Freytag's pyramid.

These films include Fellini's *La Strada* (1954), *La Dolce Vita* (1960), *8½* (1963) and *Satyricon* (1969). Non-linear approaches can also be seen in the work of Nicolas Roeg; *Performance* (1968), *Don't Look Now* (1973) and *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976).

On a more experimental level we encounter disruptions to Freytag's model in many of the films of Chris Marker and Agnès Varda. More recently Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line* (1998), David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive*. (2001), and Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000) have treated narrative in non-linear ways, although many of these narratives may be seen as structurally aligned to Todorov's generic template.

archive material relating to the project

Not all knowledge exists in written form. In this project I have accessed and utilised a significant amount of primary data sourced from family archives. This material exists in diverse forms including 8mm and 16mm film recordings, 35mm slides, and 120mm and 35mm black & white and colour photographs.



Figure 3:2 (Carle, T. 2012) Peter Charman. My father's love of film making means we now have documents recording our growing up in 1950s, 60s and 70s. This footage has been crucial to the construction of the essay film and to my recollections of childhood.



Figure 3:3 (Carle, T. 2012) Wellington. My sister Deborah's 6th birthday. This screenshot of archival footage taken by my father is indicative of incidents my parents recorded while the family was growing up.



Figure 3:4 (Carle, T. 2012) Trudy and Deborah Charman. Family vacation. Bondi Beach, Sydney c.1965



Figure 3:5 (Carle, T. 2012) Zenda Parkinson, Peter Charman, Joan Myra Love and a friend. Mum and Dad's wedding. c. 1950

#### film footage

For this project all film footage was commercially digitised. Segments depicting family celebrations and interactions are employed in the project as a way of providing historical evidence and stylistic resonance to the narrative.<sup>15</sup>

#### slides

The 35mm Kodak slides are from my father's private collection. In order to retain colour as true to the time as possible (and because the original slides were in excellent condition) no treatments have been applied.

#### photographs

Photographic images appearing in the project span sixty five years and are in the private collections of my family.

<sup>15</sup> This footage includes recordings of classic New Zealand summer holidays throughout the 1950's and 60's and documentation of our teenage years in the 1970's.



Figure 3:6 (Carle, T. 2012) Marae, Rotorua. Viewing some of the archival footage deepened my understanding of how culturally displaced we were as a hybrid Maori family.

conclusion

The Writing Centre of the University of North Carolina says: “a *literature review* refers to any collection of materials on a topic” (para.3).

This definition is a development of much traditional thinking regarding scholarly reviews of knowledge, that generally confine considerations to secondary (normally written) data.

Although this review briefly outlines literature relating to theories of the liminal, the essay film, and relevant discourse surrounding narrative structure, it also draws attention to significant cinematic texts and image-based archive material relating to the project. This is important because a practice-led thesis is often a negotiation between what exists as secondary data, what is archived as primary material, and what is yet to be brought into existence.

In bringing any coherent corpus of work into existence, one must consider critical ideas that give it internal cohesion. Thus, it is useful at this point, to consider in more depth those ideas that underpin the project.





Figure 3:7 (Carle, T. 2012) Pauhatanui estuary, Wellington. June 2012. This essay film is multifaceted both narratively, and in terms of the mediums it employs. When filming I chased light everywhere. This image reminded me of how crucial it was to remain connected to the central ideas.







## chapter 3

### methodology

the road south

It was cold and growing dark and the road south was wet. With sluggish resolve the windscreen wipers arched back and forth across the window pushing against the driving rain. It was snug inside the car and from the CD player Annie Lennox, only just audible, sang "*A Thousand Beautiful Things*". On the dashboard the camera was strapped in place with gaffer tape and rode rigid, on a journey with me into the unknown. I was driving to see family, now scattered across the country, all of whom had fragments that somehow might become part of an essay of images and sound. In the days before leaving I had been reading about heuristics as a form of inquiry and as the night and the quiet closed in, it suddenly seemed very real.

During these solitary road trips my car became the space where the chatter of my urban life ceased. I had time to think, and I began to reacquaint myself with the questions.

There was no road map for this territory, but I knew why I was journeying and sensed for the first time that methodology might integrate into research and into being.

The researcher and the researched were related.



Figure 4:2 (Carle, T. 2012) King Country. June, 2012. My car became the quiet space where I began to reflect on what methodologies I might use that would become the critical framework for the film.

## introduction

The methodological approach employed in this project, while fundamentally a heuristic form of inquiry, has employed elements of autobiographic, auto-ethnographic and narrative inquiry.

Ellis & Bochner (2000) describe an autoethnographic inquiry as a personal narrative that explores a person's life in a cultural context. Autoethnography is a useful methodological process because this research seeks to create a subjective self-narrative, formatted as an essay film.

Narrative Inquiry is another qualitative research methodology that conversely explores a research topic or theme that explores the way people create meaning of their lives from stories.

Clandinin & Connelly (2000), suggest narrative inquiry provides an understanding of "*narrative as both phenomena under study and method of study*" (p.3). Thus, in this project I record the way my whanau has come to understand/ recall their racial hybridity. They tell their own stories, and as they resonate with mine, I

become the storyteller utilising the medium of essay film to visually and aurally bring cohesion and contextual meaning to a family story and hence to my own.

Although autoethnography and narrative inquiry constitute elements of the research design, its overall framework may be considered as heuristic in nature.

## defining a heuristic inquiry

Heuristic comes from the Greek word *heuriskein*, meaning to discover or find. A word from the same root as heuristics is *eureka* used by the Greek mathematician Archimedes on discovering the principle of volume displacement in water.

Characteristics of a heuristic inquiry include a reliance on intuition, a willingness to experiment, and an embarking on a journey of discovery. Heuristic inquiries enable one to discover knowledge and understanding in unstable, nebulous and protean environments.

Moustakas (1965) says: "*Learning that proceeds heuristically has a path of it's own. It is self directed, self motivated and open*

*to spontaneous shift. It defies the shackles of convention and tradition ... It pushes beyond the known, the expected, or the merely possible. Without the restraining leash of formal hypotheses, and free from external methodological processes that limit awareness or channel it, the one who searches heuristically may draw upon the perceptual powers afforded by direct experience". (p.17)*

Although a number of writers like Kleining & Witt (2000), Polanyi (1945), Hubka & Eder (1996) and Douglass & Moustakas (1985) suggest stages or rules for optimising discovery in a heuristic inquiry, their approaches differ. This is because heuristics is subjectively driven. An inquiry conducted on its tenets can vary depending on both the researcher and what is being researched. Prefacing the role of heuristics in this project I would first like to consider some generic features.

features of an heuristic inquiry  
subjectively positioned

Heuristics is a qualitative form of research that positions the researcher at the core of the inquiry. Douglass & Moustakas (1985)

suggest that: *"in its purest form, heuristics is a passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem solving, an effort to know the essence of some aspect of life through the internal pathways of the self". (p. 63).*

Thus, heuristics empowers the intuitive and the subjective.

question driven

Rather than being negotiated through formulae, heuristics is activated by insightful and responsive questioning. To work effectively, questioning must remain pertinent and perceptive. Kleining & Witt (2000) suggest that at any given time in the inquiry the researcher must remain anchored to the question. By insightful questioning, they suggest the researcher may discern patterns, homologies and resonances in the accumulating data. The success of this process may be measured by the richness of the result, its cohesive patterns and inter-subject validity.

employment of tacit knowing

A heuristic inquiry is often activated by tacit knowing. Polanyi (1967) describes tacit knowing when he says, *"we can know more than we can tell ... we know a person's face and can recognise it among a thousand and yet we usually cannot tell how we recognize a face we know"*. (p.4)

Polanyi suggests that when we interact with our world all knowledge seen and perceived is stored in a matrix of the unconscious and is not discarded. When we activate a heuristic inquiry this knowledge can be sourced and drawn into the inquiry, adding meaning and perspective to existing knowledge.

Polanyi & Prosch (1975) say, *"Perception has this inexhaustible profundity because what we perceive is tacitly understood by us to be an aspect of reality and aspects of reality are tacitly believed to be clues to boundless undisclosed and perhaps yet unthinkable experiences"*. (p.188)

Tacit knowing allows the individual to make informed although not always explainable decisions. The researcher senses the

way forward based on accumulated and transferable knowledge. As a consequence, the research inquiry develops an intuitive 'sense' of what is right.

Ings (2010) notes, *"often the researcher is able to intuitively connect fragments, and identify relationships. Through this they are often able to plumb unusual depths of understanding and meaning. Because they are essentially communicators, some... designers can use this depth of understanding as the substrate upon which sophisticatedly articulate texts are generated. By using heuristics they are able to generate more than a synthesis of the evident; they are able to draw on original insights and highly creative, autobiographically generated connections"*. (p.229)

flexibility

A heuristic inquiry allows for high levels of flexibility and reflexivity. This is because it is driven by questions rather than formulae. To be effective it must be open to change.



Figure 4:3 (Carle, T 2012) Wellington, June 2012. These are the windows in the dining hall of my old boarding school. The building had been closed for two months when I took this photograph. Behind the decay was an unsettling reminder of the almost exclusively Pakeha nature of my education.



As a consequence a heuristic inquiry is rarely linear; at times it can be very complex and multi-layered. Kleining & Witt (2000) note; *“in heuristics inquiries the topic of research is preliminary and may change during the research process. It is only fully known after being successfully explored. The topic may be overlapped by another one or turn out as part of a different problem or just disappear”*. (p.2)

They advise that if this occurs the researcher should regard the instability as a positive sign, but *“continue the research under new headings despite institutional and planning problems that may arise”* (ibid.). Thus, these writers emphasise the need to locate and be aware of the question or questions that are driving the research. Heuristics is not disorganised. It is flexible. If the researcher fails to organise her thinking she can risk the inquiry losing its way or drowning under waves of disconnected data.

#### application of a heuristic inquiry

When I embarked on this project, I was initially guided by Moustakas' heuristic phases described under six broad headings; Initial Engagement, Immersion, Incubation,

Illumination, Explication and Creative Synthesis. However, as the project progressed I realised that the inquiry had developed distinct phases of its own. These I will explain under the following headings; Identify, Engage, Immerse, and Disengage.

#### phases of the inquiry for *Pigment of the Imagination*

##### *identify*

This phase considered the question in a broad sense and within this I thought about both the 'worth' of the question and its focus. I wanted to discuss tensions surrounding how I framed my ethnicity. Drawing upon my personal experience, and a sense of what might make a useful contribution as a filmicly framed, creative/scholarly inquiry, I hoped to add something to an often binary debate. I was seeking a question that might help me approach an authentic personal inquiry but also contribute artistically to understanding. I realised that an autobiographic inquiry could not claim transferability, but it might contribute a distinctive point of view.



### *engage*

In this phase a focused engagement with the question first occurred. Here I took the question “*Where is my turangawaewae?*” to the centre of my experience. The question was processed in this phase as internal and reflective. I considered all the material that though fragmented was connected in some way. I remembered some of it wholly and others in part but undaunted by not having a complete picture at this stage I asked the question of each fragment and began sifting out irrelevant material that did not relate to the question. All the while, however, I remained tentative and open to possibility.

### *immerse*

Although the engage phase was internal, during this next phase I began to live the inquiry. This is not hyperbole. I ate, slept, worked, talked and lived the question. This immersive process Moustakas (1990) describes as: “*Spontaneous self-dialogue, self searching and pursuing intuitive clues or hunches*”. (p.28)

By elevating the question to such a position in my life, I became attuned to new discoveries, feelings, impressions and perspectives.

Negotiating a research path through a largely unstable terrain that relied heavily on intuition, initially felt chaotic, but as that intuition became validated (through the accumulation of new and meaningful insight), I gradually became more secure in the process.

During this phase, considerations of the question began to open up fresh perspectives that revitalised and strengthened the inquiry. In this time of intense concentration on the question, I became open and alert to the possibility of meaning in even the most ordinary encounters with people. I gathered data. Unusual connections and circumstances occurred and were taken inwards as considerations: landscapes that passed by me on the road, the splatter of rain on a windscreen, listening to music, reading a book or poem, chance encounters with strangers during shoots, people to whom I was connected in some past time and/or place. My question and the stories accumulating around it attracted other stories.

The following incident is indicative of this ...



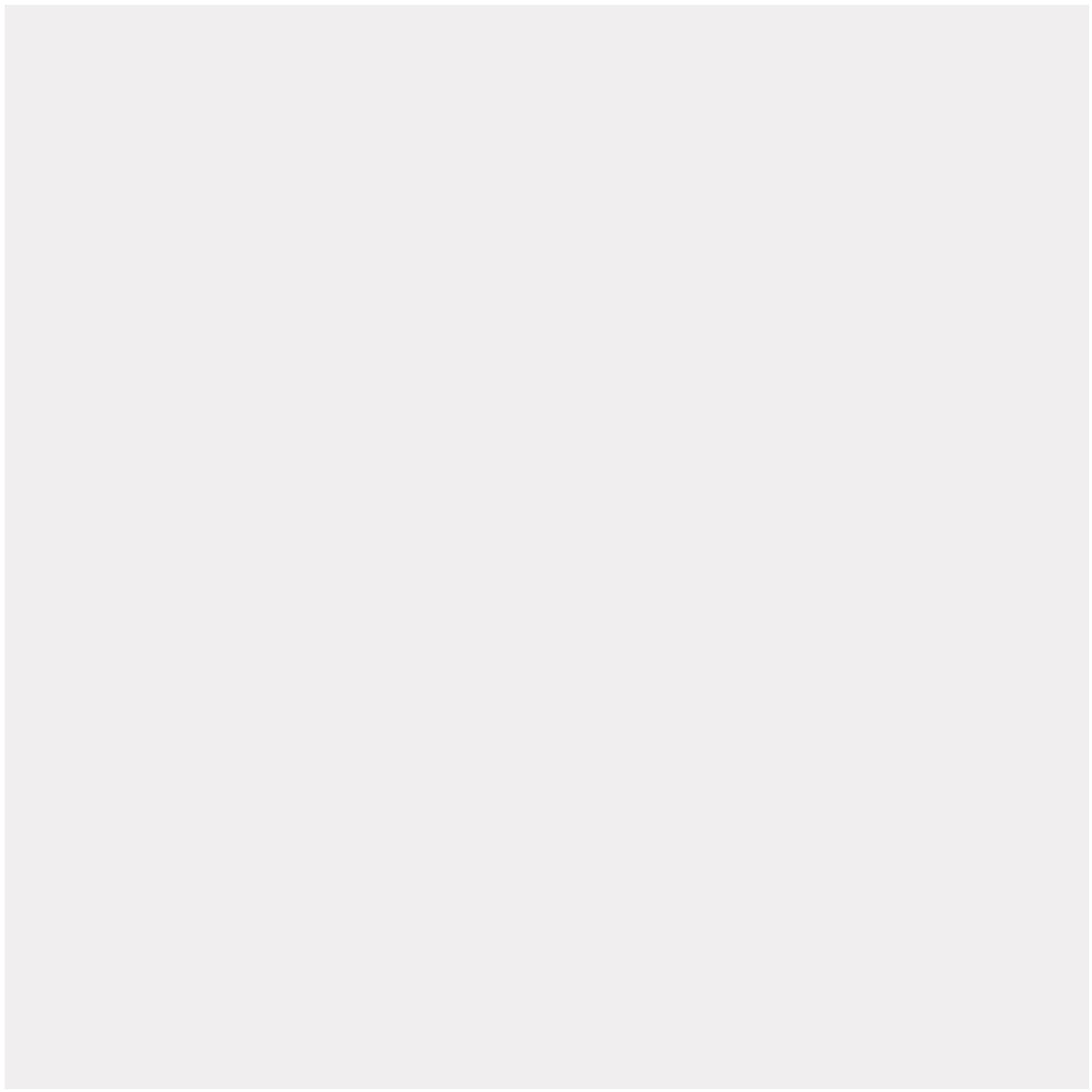
Figure 4:4 (Carle, T. 2012) King Country, NZ, June 2012. Taken from my car. In this essay film I meander through landscapes (physical and metaphorical), making coherence from fragments. Horizons are unclear, there is only a road (theme) pursued without a map that leads me to a place of resolution.

rugby, racing and race relations

I hadn't been in Te Kuiti since I was a kid but the batteries on the camera had ground to a halt right on the edge of town. I had just enough time to run out of the rain and into the warmth of the local library. The people here were friendly... rural. I had the system down pat by now, electric board into the mains ... click... laptop plugged in ...click... camera and phone chargers in ... click. Then while it's all charging I type into my journal or answer emails.

Normally, by this time my process is interrupted by the appearance of a local drawing up alongside me. This time it was a Pakeha woman who slid into a seat a discrete distance away. She smiled and asked where I'd travelled from? What was I doing? Why the cameras? Was I a film-maker? So many questions and yet there was not one shred of mistrust in her enquiry. She was merely curious. I am a curiosity.

I only ever disclose a snippet about the project in the first few minutes of these encounters. I am always intrigued to see how interested people really are and accordingly, on each of these occasions, the project unpacks itself guided by instinct in response to my new friend's questioning.



*"I'm Maori"* she blurts out. I look surprised. *"Yeah, all my siblings are brown as eh .. but I fell out white ... like this ..."* She pulls her sleeves up feeling the need to match, with conclusive evidence, the colour of her face. I nod affirmingly and without words communicate that I can see she is white but I believe she is Maori, brown on the inside so to speak. *"I'm Kiri Te Kanawa's cousin .."* she volunteers. I nod in respectful acknowledgement of Kiri's name. I'm not a big fan of Kiri but still, I am impressed that a girl so white has a beautiful Maori surname. I fleetingly wished I had a Maori surname, as though I deserved it because... well, I was brown.

And then into our stories we plunge. Back and forth, back and forth. An hour later it's getting dark and I'm worried. I'm supposed to be in Arapuni by now, and I have a very bad sense of direction in the daylight, let alone on an unfamiliar country road in the dark. Everything is charged and repacked. Kiri's cousin and my stories have embraced each other and I have met Zachary Lloyd Te Kananwa, her pride and joy. He is 11 and her only child and... he has a pakeha father and a white mother and is as brown as you can get. Browner than me. She asks me to take a picture of them and they both giggle at it in the screen. I hug her as I say goodbye, and bend down to hug Zachary Lloyd Te Kananwa.

I am done and into the night I go.

The question and I are back on the road again, both a little adjusted but still intact.



Figure 4:5 (Carle, T 2012) Te Kuiti. June, 2012. The Te Kawana family. Shelter from the rain and warm friendly locals adds richness to the narrative and adjusts perspective.

In this immersion phase I conducted my interviews and collected stories. Although the stories of non-whanau members do not appear in the essay film (they were not the subject of the inquiry) they have profoundly impacted on the spirit of the work. At times when I have felt worried that such a topic may be either irrelevant or controversial they have reminded me of the ubiquitous nature of the racial hybrid in New Zealand, and how little has been profiled in a largely binary discourse.

While the stories I conducted with members of my whanau <sup>16</sup> may be seen as a form of narrative inquiry, they were also a way for me, through reflection on the stories of others, to create meaning in my own life. The process was immersive, and I recognised that the

<sup>16</sup> Kristine Day, March 2012; Lindsay Charman Love, March 2012; Laurence, Rebecca and Caroline Charman March 2012; Peter Charman, May 2012; Joan Ellis-Deighton, June 2012; Maata Wharehoka, June 2012; Luke Carle, June 2012; Elizabeth (Lilli) Carle, June 2012; At the time of writing i have threee additional interviews to conduct, all in the United Kingdom: Deborah Randall-Cutler, September 2012; Joseph Randall-Cutler, September 2012; and Samuel Charman, September 2012.

project's integrity could be measured against the quality of my self-searching and self-reflection. Through the sharing of memories and artefacts, I was able to engage in a process of meaning-making that was exposed through the essay film.<sup>17</sup>

As data built, I asked myself again and again. *"Might this help me to communicate in an essay film where my turangawaewae <sup>18</sup> is located?"*

Constantly, although touched by shared stories, gifted film footage, and encounters with worlds in which I had lived as a child, I had to sense connections. The data was rich, but it was its relationships (concords and homologies) that would eventually establish its place in relation to my work.

So, when I use the term immersive, it is not entirely in the manner of Moustakas. For me it was an approach to accumulating data through both internal and external experience. I was on the road; I dwelt in the landscape of

<sup>17</sup> Thus, narrative inquiry is less concerned with interview stories but rather with what meaning might be made from these.

<sup>18</sup> (Maori – English translation) meaning having a place to stand or "a place to put your feet"



the self and the question. I travelled between destinations, but also between possibilities. I met people and their stories flowed into a pool of consideration. I collected old film and photographs and they triggered more questions and memories.

The question and the self became inseparable. Moustakas (1990) says, *“Once the question is discovered and clarified ... everything in life becomes crystallized around the question. The Immersion process enables the researcher to come to be on intimate terms with the question ... living and growing in understanding of it ...* (p.28)

While immersed in a world of a travelling question, the validation of intuition became real and I learned to trust my sense of possibility. I learned not to be afraid of the unexpected but to keep always asking myself the same focusing research question: *“Where is my turangawaewae?”*

While the immersive phase of this inquiry may be seen as protean, it is not chaotic. Rather its flexibility enabled me to gather much richer

data than I would have initially anticipated. Ultimately this phase would define the project's richness and authenticity.

#### *disengage*

This was the final phase in the inquiry. Although in this phase I was focused on the question and the accumulated data, the emphasis of the inquiry shifted outwards and a sense of detachment took place. I observed that although outwardly nothing appeared to have changed in the world, a great deal had changed in how I viewed and approached the inquiry. In the disengagement phase, I reviewed explicit data but also filtered it through my internal sense of what I felt was 'right'. This was different to an emotional feeling. It was an intuitive sense of knowing. The quality of this knowing was liberating. It functioned without judgment or whakama<sup>19</sup> to expose irregularities in my thinking and at times to shift entire paradigms of thought.

<sup>19</sup> (Maori – English translation) shame, sense of shame

I digitised all of the information I had (realising that it was possible that there might be gaps). Sound, music, interviews, filmed road footage, and archive material were selected, grouped and regrouped. There were many voices and although the digital environment also became a form of immersive world where I dwelt within an emerging essay film, the facilities I required in this phase of the research were more critical and tied to explicit data.

In this phase I began to design the work as a conscious orchestration of elements. I thought about rhythm, pace, order, tone and emphasis. I considered the relationship between voices of the present and records of the past. While these things were played out across editing software they were the resonance of my story.

I sensed my way forward.

Douglass and Moustakas (1985) say in this process: *"The challenge is to examine all the collected data in creative combinations and recombinations, sifting and sorting, moving rhythmically in and out of appearance, looking, listening carefully for the meanings*

*within meanings, attempting to identify the overarching qualities that adhere in the data. This is a quest for synthesis through realization of what lies most undeniably at the heart of all that has been discovered". (p.52)*



Figure 4:6 (Carle, T. 2012) AUT Art & Design Sound Studio, August 2012. As I worked in post production, sound, music, interviews, filmed road footage and archive material became part of a new form of engagement. Here I was layering and mixing elements to bring cohesion to the final film. This image shows me working with sound engineer Vivek Gabriel.

#### conclusion

The research design for this project may be broadly understood as a heuristic inquiry. Although this was an autobiographically focused project that drew on the stories of whanau, its realisation occurred through a process of careful questioning of both myself and emerging data.

When I began reading about heuristics, it was as though what I was reading was familiar. I recognised its principles and quickly understood them, although up until this time I had never heard of the term. When trying to explain heuristics to a friend she asked: *“Does it affirm something?”* I thought on this but the word affirm implied a conscious cementing of the established. However, heuristic inquiry supports the intuitive, the subjective and the pursuit of that which is just out of reach.

Although professionally I predispose to science and have been immersed in a practice of orthodox medicine and health, (with its emphasis on the explicit and logical) in reality I am often guided by my sensing and questioning.

In nursing (while establishing the therapeutic relationship with a patient) as in creative practice, there is sometimes no road map and no formula. Heuristic inquiry acknowledged and provided a deliberate way in which I might activate a sense of intuitive knowing. Beyond this project, it has been a transformative discovery.

Research inquiries are often as much about data gathering and synthesis as they are about authenticity. My project has been transformative and its realisation has negotiated family histories and personalities. I have had to face myself and what I know will be an audience who doesn't know me. Although the project was awarded ethics approval<sup>20</sup>, its navigation has gone well beyond information and transparency.

The questions I have asked of myself and my family are not easy ones, nor are some of the memories they call back to the surface. I have had a responsibility to both the research and the love and respect I have for my family.

<sup>20</sup> Ethics approval for the project was gained 16<sup>th</sup> March 2012 and AUTECH 12/42

I am reminded in the light of this of something Reason & Rowan wrote in 1981:

*"Thousands of researchers down the years have started projects they really believed in, and which embodied ideas they really cared about. But too often these projects got pared down and chopped about and falsified in the process of getting approval.... It doesn't have to be this way. Research doesn't have to be another brick in the wall. If we want to know about people, we have to encourage them to be who they are, and to resist all attempts to make them, or ourselves, into something we are not " . (p.23)*

This chapter has not sought to massage my research process into a seamless fit with existing structures of heuristic inquiries. It has instead tried to tell an unstable but transformative story. This has been a transformation of a project, and a transformation of myself.

Having discussed the research design of the thesis, it is useful now to consider some significant ideas underpinning the inquiry.





## chapter 4

critical framework

#### introduction

A practice-led thesis is a complex undertaking involving the layering of multiple mediums into a cohesive whole. Although *Pigment of the Imagination* may be viewed through a range of lenses, this chapter discusses two primary ideas impacting on the work's design. These include the nature of essay film as a media form and racial hybridity as a liminal phenomenon.

#### defining the essay film

A number of writers and film critics, including Louis Gianetti (1975), Paul Arthur (2003) and Nora Alter (1966), suggest that defining essay film is a challenge. Alter insists that essay film, *"is not a genre as it strives to be beyond formal, conceptual and social constraint. Like heresy in the literary essay, the essay film disrespects traditional boundaries, is transgressive both structurally and conceptually, is self-reflective and self-reflexive"*. (p.171)

In *The Personal Camera* Rascaroli (2009) compares the transgressive and protean characteristics of the literary essay with that of the essay film. She notes that the essay film

may be identified by *"it's reflectiveness and it's subjectivity"*. (p.22)

She describes it as: *"a hybrid form which crosses boundaries and rests somewhere in-between fiction and non-fiction cinema" (ibid.) and that, in the least restrictive form (in relation to formal documentary), essay film can be seen as "belonging to a liminal (but ever more relevant) zone of film making..."*. (p. 3)

Aldous Huxley (1956) describes the literary essay as *"moving among three poles"* (p.300) these are the subjective, objective and abstract.<sup>1</sup> He notes that most essayists will *"be best in the neighbourhood of one, and at most, two poles"*. (Corrigan, p.14)

Corrigan, in applying Huxley's idea to essay film, suggests that rather than these "poles" having demarcations they might more usefully be seen as *"interactive and intersecting registers"* engaging with personal experience, public expression and a thinking process that moves towards a unique merger. He describes essay film as a media form of *"productive inventiveness"*, arguing that it *"uses*

<sup>1</sup> Huxley's three poles model includes the personal (subjective, autobiographical), objective (factual, concrete, particular) and abstract (universal).



*practices that undo and redo film form, visual perspectives, public geographies and notions of truth and judgment, all within the complexity of experience". (2011, p.14)*

Drawing from these descriptions, analysing a range of essay films, and considering approaches applied in the making of my own work, three features emerge that warrant further discussion.<sup>2</sup>

subjectivity

It seems conclusive even amongst those critics most opposed to the essay film form that such films are subjective inquiries. Although claims of solipsism/narcissism are sometimes leveled at essay film (Arthur, 2003, Koresky, 2009), practitioners rarely see it in this light. Varda says, *"I am always very precisely implicated in my films, not through narcissism but through honesty in my approach"*. (Cinema Papers, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> In addition to the features I discuss here, Thompson (2005) suggests essay films are also recognisable by their flexibility in narrative form and modes of address; their self-reflexivity; their self-criticality, and their ability to incorporate different genres, tones and themes (including biography, autobiography, history, culture, poetry, fiction, criticism, photographs, drawings, and cinema).

In her seminal essay film *The Gleaners and I* (2000), she is positioned subjectively within the narrative. She speaks to us, and the film unfurls through her 'exposed' thinking. She and her camera travel, documenting the lives of ordinary people doing ordinary tasks.

As she travels and records encounters, her dexterity and sensitivity as a director draw out conversations around consumerism and waste, ecology, art, mental health, community and altruism. The resulting ideas and stories are subtly and subjectively applied to her film. Varda allows her intuition to lead her. Her essay is part autobiography and part contemplation. In it a compendium of thoughts and encounters are brought together in a pertinent addressing of a single theme (*gleaning*).

The exposed presence of the director in the film (sometimes within the frame) is a significant feature of essay film. Ten Brink (1999) suggests that this *"presence in the essay film results in the cinematic 'text' becoming the 'reflective text' - the mediating medium between the film maker and the spectator"* (p.1).<sup>3</sup>

structure

Essay film has a distinctive approach to structure. A classic Hollywood film is normally constructed on a traditional, three-act model, and approaches narrative in a linear way. Marker (2011) notes that with this form of cinema, introducing the main characters in Act 1 establishes the emotional needs and material goals of the protagonist.

This first act will normally close with a complicating event and usually occurs in the first twenty to twenty-five minutes of the film. In an effort to meet the needs of the protagonist, Act 2 elaborates (spins) the plot and further complicates a precipitating event. This forces the character into having to make choices and moves the narrative in a new and unexpected direction. These changes culminate in Act 3, which follows the altered needs of the character. Scenes normally become shorter and faster paced as the narrative action builds towards a climax. In the last fifteen minutes some form of closure (dénouement) will be attained. As this approaches, action falls and the narrative resolves. This structure in

Hollywood cinema may be likened to Freytag's (1863) model of narrative in live theatre.

While essay film incorporates a determination of events (chronology), it does not generally adhere to classic models such as Freytag's. Instead it often nests stories inside stories that cycle around themes progressively moving forward. Unlike classic Hollywood cinema, there is rarely formal dénouement. In fact essay film often leaves an audience in an unexpected place. Structurally, its in-between narratives are of more importance than its final outcomes.

Although essay film may be narratively complex, when its in-between fragments are viewed as stories inside stories it can normally be mapped onto Todorov's narrative schema. Here narrative cycles through equilibrium to disruption or disequilibrium and back to equilibrium. However, this process might occur multiple times inside an essay film.

thematically driven

Essay film is flexible but orderly. It approaches its content thematically rather than dramatically. Understanding and enjoying

<sup>3</sup> Examples of this are evident in much of Varda's work and also in McElwee's *Sherman's March* (1986) and *Bright Leaves* (2003).

the richness of the media form often requires a shift in thinking because its emphasis on a running theme, rather than a linear story, means that it rarely seeks to resolve a conflict.

Thompson (2005) argues that an essay film is a meditation on a theme that is used as a substitution for a formal plot. He says: *“what the previous generation of documentary filmmakers took as their “subject”, a passive subject as compared to the “active” fictional subject, film essayists can now take as their theme in which the subject is a particular development or an interpretation of that theme, and one which has a determining influence upon the form of the film”*. (para.9) The theme he says, *“thereby becomes extremely active in that the cinematic essay is often a meditation on ideas in conflict and these conflicts actually suggest the form that the film might take”* (ibid.)

Within this meditation, film essayists often adopt a reflective approach to their work. Being thematically driven, their essay films are often both interior and exterior journeys through the self and the environment of an idea.

this project as an essay form

*Pigment of the Imagination* is a subjective, thematic essay film where I am the central inquirer. It tells the story of a half-caste (racial hybrid) Maori girl growing up in a bi-cultural family. As an adult, I embark on a road trip in search of identity. My goal is to gather the stories of my ethnically diverse family. The film has a core narrative but no formal, dramatic structure. Instead I allow intuition to lead me on a serendipitous, personal journey.

Travelling on the road between destinations to conduct interviews operates as a visual metaphor for liminality. Physical in-between spaces, (landscapes and skylines) provide opportunities to consider shared, personal (subjective) narratives related by my whānau and their considerations of their own racial hybridity. Thus the essay film as a *“hybrid medium”* (Rascaroli, 2009, p. 21) becomes a device for considering my own and my family's experiences of the ethnically liminal.

In this film, I might be in Wellington with a fragment of a story in which I become immersed once I take to the road. A stop off in a small town and an unexpected connection might yield another fragment.

This process of travelling, gathering, immersing, self-reflecting and re-engaging with the question is demanding but as I physically, emotionally and intellectually engage with it, the nature of the inquiry is increasingly made explicit. In typical essay film form, my story is a gathering of stories that ultimately become a new story of personal transformation. Through it I am realigned. The stories of my whanau <sup>4</sup> and the journeys I make to connect them lead me to reconsider a liminal space I no longer need to defend.

At the end of my travelling I find myself in relation to many recollections and attitudes. I stand in an old place that is rediscovered

<sup>4</sup> These stories are both interviews and fragments of old film footage.

and newly understood. The situation is best described by my racially hybrid friend William Keung who said to me:

*“Trude, since we met on that seemingly chance occasion at the beginning of the year you have come such a long way. Now you can be at peace with yourself. It doesn’t matter what others say, not Maori or Pakeha. This place in which you’ve ended up you no longer need to defend”.* (Personal communication, August, 2012)

#### racial hybridity and the liminal

The theme that *Pigment of the Imagination* explores is that of the liminal hybrid. In contemplating my half-caste identity, the essay film becomes an excursion through liminal spaces (both of identity and of physical/metaphorical transition).

#### liminity

Liminity <sup>5</sup> has been described as a temporary, barely perceptible space through which an individual might transition (Turner, 1969). Van Gennep <sup>6</sup> developed the concept of liminity

<sup>5</sup> From the Latin word meaning “threshold”.

<sup>6</sup> Arnold Van Gennep was an anthropologist who developed the concept of liminality in relation to cultural rites of passage in small communities.



Figure 5:2 (Carle, T. 2012) Mount Taranaki, New Plymouth. The Parihaka marae sits at the base of the mountain and its imagery and meaning is firmly embedded in the in-between space with me.

as a three phase structure, consisting of a period of separation (pre-liminal) transition (liminal) and re-incorporation (post liminal). He applied his model primarily to rites of passage in small communities. Turner (1967) explored Van Gennep's ideas, but the body of his work focused on the liminal (transitional) phase. He referred to this space as "betwixt and between". He says, "*Liminality* (also referred to as liminty) *may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural assertions, but as in some sense the source of them all, and, more than that, as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise*". (1967, p. 97)

Turner's exploration of the concept of liminal space as more than a transition phase, and his broadening of its contextual use, set a precedent for its appearance today in art (Westerveld, 2011), culture (Turner, 1969) medicine (Little, 1998) and in certain postmodern theology. (Rohr, 2002)

#### liminity and racial hybridity

The term racial hybridity may be seen as a development of the concept of liminity. It is

used by Homi Bhabha (1994) to describe those born of mixed ethnicity. Born to Indian parents, he is not strictly hybrid, but an education in English schools provided insight into the peculiar cultural interface that confronts the racial hybrid. His research explores possibilities that might integrate racial hybridity, cultural identity and liminal space. He speaks of the cultural hybrid as one who is able to occupy a space that is meaningful and where terms might be negotiated, seen as representing the hybrid and even renamed.

He notes, "*The importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original movements from which the third emerges; rather hybridity is the third space which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it and sets up new structures...*". (p. 211)

In her book *Walking the Space Between* Webber (2008), like Bhabha, seeks a redefining of this cultural liminal space, so that it might be conceived as more than just reflective. She frames it instead as a space of self determination that might blur limitations

of existing boundaries and establish new categories of cultural identity for the hybrid.

Defining this third or in-between space as meaningful realigns perspectives and helps to address a sense of needing to defend an ambiguous and uncertain cultural position for the racial hybrid. In this regard it may be seen as nominating a valid turangawaewae.

racial hybridity and the half-caste  
Bhabha's racial hybrid may be related to the disparaging term half-caste<sup>7</sup> that was in use in New Zealand in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century and was part of the nomenclature of my formative years.

Half-caste is derived from the term caste that comes from the Latin *castus*, meaning pure. Meredith (2001) notes the term half-caste replaced earlier terms like Anglo-New Zealander and the Maori phrases *Utu Pihikete* and *Huipaiana*.

Like Meredith, in my work I adopt the term half-caste to describe one who is positive about their *"identity and who has embodied the*

*crossing of boundaries, acknowledging both biology and the social/cultural implications"*. (p.2)

Both Meredith and MacDonald (1975) claim the term, not as: *"an arithmetic measure of genetic material nor a description of descent but (as a claim) to affiliation in two cultures... a claim to being bicultural"* (Meredith *ibid.*)

I believe that Meredith's reclaiming of the term half-caste *"in defiance of those who might seek to reduce me to one or another"* is a useful decision. I am not saying I accept this with ease. I identify with Webber (2008) when she says:

*"I am often seen to be an approachable Maori academic for non-Maori but as a sell out (not Maori enough) by students on a Maori pathway. I seem to be forever walking the path of in between-ness. I am told how wonderful it must be to be able to walk confidently in two worlds but the reality is I walk with trepidation in both. I am constantly searching for a niche that is acceptable to be my kind of Maori, "a Maori by my own definition". (p.5 )*

<sup>7</sup> Young (1975) notes other terms across various cultures for the same phenomenon including half-breed, mulatto, octoroon, métis and chabine.

There is a distinctive struggle for the one who is half-caste in appearance and raised among siblings who are not. The writings of Turner, Bhabha and Meredith inspire us to inhabit renegotiated liminal spaces that accept the half-caste's cultural ambiguity and become, as Webber says *"a Maori by my own definition"*. (2008, p.12)

The origins of the ambiguity one feels as a half-caste, Meredith (2001) suggests, result from colonisation. He claims that it was through the categorisation of race that colonisation *"was theoretically focused, represented and justified"* (p.1). This, he suggests, lead to a fabricated bipolar model *"of us/them, coloniser/colonised"* (ibid.). Yet he notes, *"paradoxically it was also through racial relations that much cultural interaction was practiced"*. (ibid.)

My role as a negotiator of spaces between is nothing new. Indeed Meredith records numerous instances of the half-caste operating not only as a distinct cultural phenomenon, but also as one that (because of its hybridity) was able to cross boundaries that constrained Maori and Pakeha binaries in New Zealand.

Half-castes, he notes, were often mediators, intermediaries and negotiators towards reconciliation.

Young (1995) says that half-castes were the subject of a *'double logic'* of Victorian Racial theory: *"which both enforced and policed the lines between whites and non-whites but at the same time focused fetishily on the contacts between them"*. (pp. 180-181)

In this regard, the half-caste formed a distinctive profile in New Zealand's history. We existed in a space between but were acknowledged and active as cultural mediators.

liminity, style & structure in *Pigment of the Imagination*

If we consider the origins of the word mediator (stemming from mediari meaning to intervene, but also from L. medius meaning to be in the middle) we may see the half-caste as one who negotiates from a place between. In my essay film this position is evidenced in specific decisions taken to the design of the work.



*In Pigment of the Imagination* I cross boundaries moving between the voices of my relatives, historical recordings of family and the physical spaces where they live or once lived.

#### The metaphor of the road

The road may be seen as a liminal space. It is a connection between locations, but also a location in itself. The road trips I took while making this film traversed the North Island of New Zealand, but also crossed to Australia and the United Kingdom. Normally I traveled alone in my car with my camera and ideas. I was neither in one place nor another, yet always somehow positioned. As such I mediated commonalities and differences. I existed within and recorded the physical nature of my journey through the binaries of night and day, sun and rain, urban streets and country back roads.

This articulation of the liminal may be related to Meredith's (2001) description of being half-caste: *"...shrouding the seams of identity the half-caste has the advantage of moving between both cultures with the ability to translate and mediate commonality and differences in a dynamic of exchange and inclusion"*. (p. 19)



Figure 5:3 (Carle, T. 2012) Leprosy Hospital. Pokhara, Nepal. April 1997. A corridor linking, and starkly contrasting, life on the streets of Pokhara and a back garden filled with flowers, vegetables, oxen and birds on the other, captures the nature of liminal space.

Thus, in *Pigment of the Imagination* we see metaphors of the journey played out in the reoccurring iconography of the road. This recording is not of a road trip but rather the contemplation of betweenness and search.

finding identity as a cultural being

Often the notion of one who inhabits a space between is that the position must embody a form of irresolution. Meredith (2001) says, *"In recent times I have sought to explore questions of identity for Maori, Pakeha and those who find themselves positioned 'in-between'. A recurring response to my exploration by many is that somehow I have a problem with my identity, an identity crisis, and that I am not quite sure who I am"*. (pp.1-2)

Resolving my cultural identity as a racial hybrid has taken a long time. In *Pigment of the Imagination*, my friend Maata, a kuia from Parihaka who I interviewed said:

*"it takes a long time for Maori girls raised Pakeha to find their space. It doesn't happen in 2 years or 3 years. It takes a long time".<sup>8</sup>*

<sup>8</sup> Personal Communication August 2012  
Conversations with Maata provided additional perspectives on culturally displaced Maori.



Figure 5:4 (Carle, T. 2012) Parihaka marae, New Plymouth. June 2012. Visiting Parihaka marae and engaging in conversations with Maata Wharehoka, a kuia from Parihaka, have contributed to perspective around this project.

As a child, in my family, it was love not culture that was the glue, and the same amount was lavished on the brown looking children as the white ones. This is what preserved us until we were adults. At that point we had to begin thinking through a socially constructed position.

This project fuses seen and unseen fragments into a whole. The essay film will screen for a while on gallery and kitchen walls. Eventually, it may be archived and gather dust (just like my Dad's films)<sup>9</sup>. In time my children may dig it out. They will add their own narratives to mine, fill in the gaps of my edits in their stories and talk these issues through with their own children.

In this way the essay will continue ..

<sup>9</sup> Almost inadvertently, my father's films highlight our family's ethnic and cultural diversity. Pigment of the Imagination may be seen as an extension of this. The film will remind my children of the importance of pursuing authentic lives in self-determined spaces. It will show one ancestor's reflections on her liminity. It may show that if you submit yourself to a difficult question, remain open to the unexpected, and pursue the authentic then you could find yourself in the spaces of your dreams.





Figure 5:5 (Carle, T. 2012) Getting the sounds down. Auckland, August 2012. In *Pigment of the Imagination* my youngest son Oliver has written and recorded tracks and done covers. Sound has been critical in creating seamless transitions from one fragment of the narrative to the next.

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Figure 5:6 (Carle, T. 2012) Mojacar, Southern Spain, 2012. A heuristic approach to this essay film enabled what Polanyi refers to as "possibilities". My research ended in Spain where members of my English family and 14 of us from New Zealand gathered for the wedding of the eldest grandchild, my nephew Joseph.