

**True Fictions: The basis
of identity and contextual
reality in narrative
performativity**



This thesis is submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Art & Design.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisors Natalie Robertson and Ingrid Boberg at AUT for their input and help.

Thanks too are due to Susan Albrecht for all her editing.

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.

All artwork is my own and consists of untitled digital photographs made between
2008-2009.

Fear Brampton

Date

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Chapter 1 The story of the story

1.0 Introduction



My art practice and reading were closely intertwined in this project, with each informing the other in a continual process of reflective engagement. My work in toto reflects my own circumstances and situatedness re narrative and its role in human life, in forming identity, and what that means. What is produced therefore is a series of speculations and propositions derived from reading the relevant literature and relating to my own lived experience in order to achieve some clarity in the area for myself.

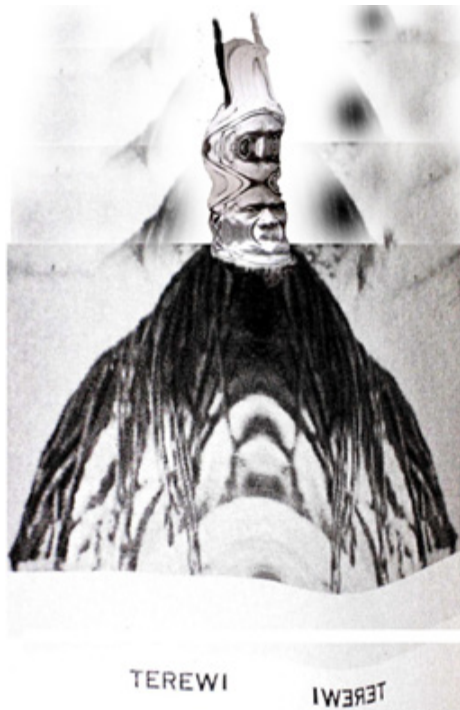
1.1 The abstract

True Fictions: The basis of identity and contextual reality in narrative performativity



The thesis project focuses on the narrative and uses identity as its subject matter. The narrative is examined through digitally manipulated imagery as a dynamic system of performative sense making implicated in both self-creation and reality creation. The fundamental role of narrative in creating self/identity and community/history, as embedding contexts, is considered. The role of various language and acts, community, disnarration, and the limits of systems are examined in relation to identity and issues of intelligibility, coherence, and ‘tellability’. The work which results from an examination of this area are semionautic emplotments of operally mediated events in a quasi-mimetic experiential evocation of real life, that is “true fictions”.

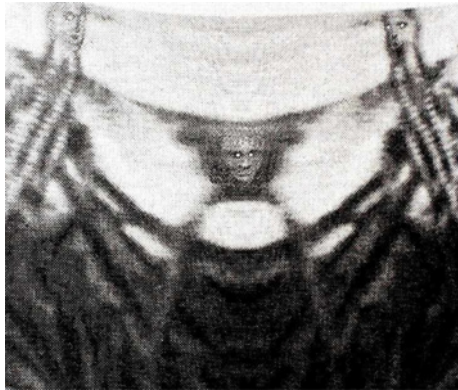
1.2 The context of practice



My work and practice derives from a prior interest in the photographic, the collage, the cinematic and the three dimensional. My interest in the photographic, cinematic and sculptural is based in an interest in the 'real' and 'iconic' in terms of a staging of 'realism'. My present practice uses digital montage and derives from my historic use of photocopy collage as a medium. This focus on a postproduction methodology also reflects an interest in the indexicality of the imagery used, especially as it opens up the groundedness of these in a larger domain of reference.

In actual practice I have used both my own photographic images and 'found' imagery from the public domain (or narratosphere) as narrative elements, which reflect identity as the narrative mediation of a self in relation to others. I have reflected the fictional and virtual narrative nature of the components of the narrative system such as self, identity and community, through an exaggeration of the visual elements that narrative naturalises as well as emphasising visual manipulations which persuade one of coherence and thus veracity. This fictional nature can be observed in: the selection of elements symbolising events rather than facts and their emplotting juxtaposition; visual hybridisations; visual distortions which reveal digital processes, as for example, use of over heightened colour; and a revelation of the images as composed of unaligned visual layers which in part reveal a history of manipulative (but not necessarily Machiavellian) making, thinking/feeling and a wider context from which component imagery is sourced, while simultaneously stacking's obscuration occludes, in part, what it seems to reveal.

Such an approach highlights the synthesising and collagable nature of narrative while the indexicality of component images reflects the paradoxical atemporal and temporal nature of emplotment. It also reveals history to be a dynamic iteration and reiteration of memory and identity.



The diversity of documents produced here also highlights the dynamic narrative complexity and fluidity of these supposedly fixed essences. These do not portray merely a complex identity base and an ambiguity of identification but a problem with terms and the assignment of meaning. In this a queering of post structuralist and social constructionist conceptualisation is apparent. New possibilities and some solutions to the socially/culturally and normatively problematic can be glimpsed if narratives' 'mountains' can be moved.

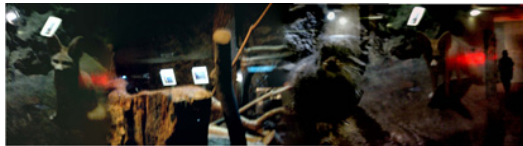
1.3 Literary context

My prior literary context eclectically references toi Maori, indigenous art, the portrait and figurative art, issues art (here related to indigenous and queer art), the surreal and fantastic in art as these are grounded in mythology, cosmology and science fiction. It is from these sources the project itself originates. Fundamental to its proposal was an interest in the aboriginal concept of 'The Dreaming' or 'the Dreamtime' and how in its broadest sense this might apply in the human world.

My interest in science fiction is pertinent here as a genre connected with social and cultural speculation. This genre considers the future in terms of the concerns of the present, from the likes of Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, John Wyndham, Ursula Le Guin, Octavia Butler and many others who consider either consequents and subsequents in terms of alternative pasts, presents and futures or the alien as it affects the discourse of self and other and possibility.

Science too is an important referent as is Peter Weibel's idea of endophysics as a science of the subjective. My personal interests which have some bearing on the project include anthropology, archaeology, the 'metaphysics' of quantum physics, theorisation of a multiverse, morphology, morphogenesis, ecology, genetics and evolution.

Artists who have influenced my practice

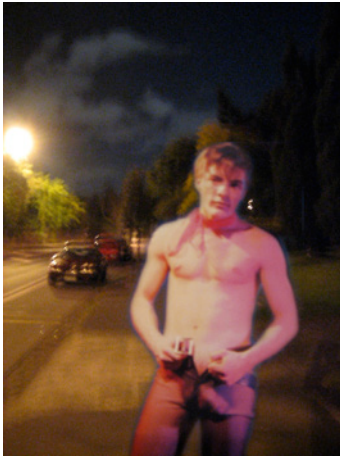


A number of gay, feminist, indigenous and non-Western artists and their works are references for my work; as they highlight, react to, grapple with and negotiate historic issues. These however form a background to my practice without being central in it. This is because my practice has been focused on who, what and how I am as best I can determine it from my own circumstances and experiences, as well as how others might understand it. Some examples of this background are outlined here.

Maureen Lander's *This is not a Kete* (1994) is a complex work which references the discourses of history and perceptions of the racial other, Westerners' abrogation of the right to designate and confer value to themselves as occurs with the designation of non-Western cultural practices as art or not art. Historically in terms of the distinct cultural lineages, this may arguably make sense, but Lander suggests contemporarily in terms of the broadening of the bounds of art and its cross-cultural assimilations under modernism and postmodernism particularly, this exclusion is no longer acceptable, especially with regard to developments relating to pluralism, multiculturalism and globalisation.

Lander also references Magritte and looks at the role of language in structuring difference and maintaining a political and evaluative status quo, and attacks in the process modernist universals. I would broaden this further to include Maori as practising 'endogenous colonialism' (Smiler and Mckee, 2007, p.93) in two ways; firstly in terms of heteronormative privileging and, secondly, in terms of the marginalising and condemnation of gay members of the community as culturally alienated.

In relation to my project, Lander's work is narrative in that it confronts, inspects, judges and rewrites historical discourse on the racial and cultural other. Her work references written discourse derived from Magritte on the plinth, as a conferrer of status and status as art, in regard to an object which is not of western origin but is categorised and constrained by Western percepts of its utilitarian nature without reference to context. In this process she simultaneously examines a variety of historical issues, such as the status of women's



cultural products and the naturalised differentiation of art from craft.

Lander's work is thus a narrative of past, present and future, in relation to cross-cultural differences, politics and judgments of merit and place. The narration is personal but disrupts historic discourses and argues and restructures the discourse within those terms. The narrativity is two-fold in that it lies in the historical events and outcomes and its agency in the present. The terms of the argument are compelling in that the ambiguities of cross-cultural referencing highlight ignorance if they are not understood thus undermining certain historic axiomatic beliefs about the Western self and racial other in the process. The narrator is here severally the artist, a people and position.

The narrative act is also of interest in terms of the presentation and 'tellability' of a work's ideological content. Lander's *This is not a Kete* was generated as a reply to Thierry de Duve's statement about art at the *Under Capricorn* symposium in Wellington in 1994. It is a performative work and constitutes a performative utterance which simultaneously declares an 'I am' and an 'I am not' while declaring 'you are not'. Lander's work thus served initially as a potential model for synthesis of the complex components of this project.

Robyn Kahukiwa's wahine toa, *Hineteiwaiwa te Whare* (1990) and the details *Tihei Mauri Ora!* and *Taniwha Wounded not Dead* and *Karu Hama, Kirirtea, Engari He Kakano Rangatira* (1994) are of particular interest because they articulate resistance and the promise of change. The latter work in particular touches upon issues of inclusiveness within Maoridom in terms of the conflict between contemporary politics and Barclay's 'core' cultural values regarding mixed race and/or cultural heritage, or can alternatively be seen as referencing issues of cultural authenticity of the same individuals from both Pakeha and Maori perspectives.

In terms of my project, Kahukiwa's work rebuilds and references a genealogy of historical events as a cross-cultural narrative and a collision of cosmologies. Her work also refer-



ences feminist observations of a historical tendency up to that point to write women out of history. In this respect Kahukiwa perhaps references a Western cultural bias imposed upon Maori. Kahukiwa's work relates to continuity and change, and to the recreation and/ or continuation of colonised 'minorities', cultural realities and cosmologies (Fusco, 1995). The position of colonised indigenes is similar to that of queer people, both being subaltern peoples with similar issues of recognition and survival. Often these have been cultures tenuously, covertly and/or dysfunctionally connected in 'community' or communities created by default through a categorical or taxonomic 'lumping' together.

Rene Magritte is a referent in terms of his interest in the arbitrary nature of signs, signification, the relationship of representation to reality, consciousness to unconsciousness, and the structuring of perception.

George Platt Lyne's personal work interests me in terms of its mythological references and shadowy anonymous imagery which constitute a cosmology for a queer community inhabiting society's interstices. Suggesting as they do stories hidden within stories, which reference alternate histories and histories within histories, hidden histories, lives, and identities. My interest in this particular form of a history (story) lies in how it is shaped by absence as much as by inclusion.

Jimmy Durham's *La Malinche* (1988-91) depicts the historical betrayer of Moctezuma. I find this work relevant because Durham inscribes it with a double narrative reading. A narrative of betrayed (she was given to Hernan Cortez by her people) as much as betrayer, the work highlights a moral ambiguity, as well as a complicity of individual, group and context.

Yasumasa Morimura's *Daughter of Art History* (1990) deals with Western cultural and



intellectual colonisation and the characterisation of the ‘other’. The ‘other’ is Morimura as non-Westerner and as the queered feminine ‘other’ to the West’s masculine heteronormative self.

At the same time Morimura’s portrayal as ‘other’ in its characterisation references ‘queer’ identity and queer culture in its broadest sense in its echoing of Duchamp via Morimura’s own portrayal of himself as Duchamp as Rose Selavy in *Doublannage* (1995). This cross articulation of the ‘other’ as queer, for me suggests that indigenous (Maori) and queer identity as (in Western terms) might occupy a contiguous space. In his performative photographic works Morimura performs his identity, within both Western and his own personal terms.

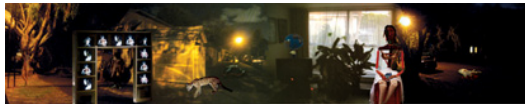
Frida Kahlo’s *The Love Embrace of the Universe, the Earth (Mexico), Diego, Me and Señor Xolotl* (1949) and *What the Water Gave Me* (1938) are of particular interest because they layout a personal history, narrative and sense of place firstly as a condensed layering of stories and contexts and secondly as a represented field-of-consciousness which evokes the constitutive elements of her identity and contributory events.

Many indigenous artists such as Jimmy Durham, James Luna, Armando Marino, Fred Wilson, Brett Graham and his *1492-1642* (1991) and its component works *Te Manu*, *Te Kakano*, *Te Puawaitanga I & II*, *Te Taenga*, *Te Matenga* and *Waka Tumanako* as well as *Matariki* (1994), Santiago Sierra, Coco Fusco, Guillermo Pena and Shane Cotton are also referents because their work resists the representations of the indigenous that Western historical discourse has sought to impose, and because they seek to reconstitute alternate world views and values; in the process reframing the Western mission, as China did of Rupert Murdoch’s attempt to gain media penetration in the country, as cultural colonisation.

A number of gay artists such as Robert Mapplethorpe, Pierre et Giles and George Bidgood to name a few have also been referents in their presentation of a gay experience, eye, and/or aesthetic, seen for instance in the eroticising of the male nude and a mannered exaggeration of colour.

Other referents are feminists such as Barbara Kruger who use art to expose the workings of discourses of power in order to subvert it.

The genres of reality television, mockumentary and docudrama as acknowledged performances of ‘reality’ or ‘real’ performances are also pertinent to the project.



1.4 Theoretical context

My practice, reading and reflection have tended to concur with my experience of self, history, performativity and narrative performativity. That is, identity, as narratively constituted in relation to others, is formed and realised through language, and attains coherence and intelligibility through narrative encasement in community and communal narratives (Gergen, 1998). While ‘art’ as document represents the ‘supplement’ (Auslander, 2006) to severally the performance of identity, the performance of indigeneity (Murray, 2008, p.6), and the performance of gender and queerness (Thiem, 2002); what it documents are cognitive connections made in the process of reflection and introspection as a ‘theatre of reiteration’ (Gade and Jerslev, 2005, p.11) and ‘imaginative remembering’ (Thiem, 2002, p.7) involved in both “performative realism’ (Gade and Jerslev, 2005) and performed reality.

‘True fictions: The Basis of Identity and Contextual Reality in Narrative Performativity’ concerns the narrative and narrative performativity as the focus of my project and practice. Identity is, however, the vehicle used to explore narrative’s primacy in human life.

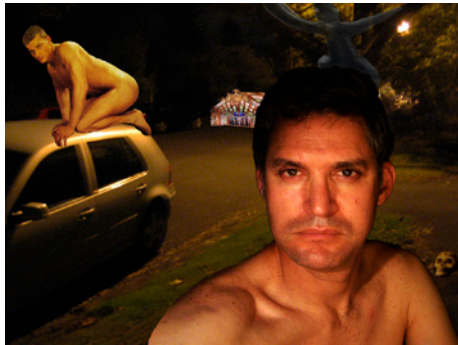


Pivotal to identity are the instantiating constitutive operations of doing/being as actions (and responsive reactions), language, social discourse, dynamic memory, and narrative agency. Identity, however, is associated with society, culture, and history as interrelated systems. Much of my research and practice has therefore been directed to examining ‘the story of the story’.

The project is based on an exploration of the narrative as, firstly, the primary ground or informer of human experience, communication, action and historical consciousness and, secondly, its relationship to reality and every day life. My focus within this is two-fold: that which lies upstream of the narrative or that lying behind the narrative, and that which lies downstream, that is, the uses, functions and creations of narrative. In respect to this, the project involves a consideration of narrativity, the narrative, the narrator, narration, and the narrative act in relation to identity within a performative context.

Ferdinand de Saussure, a structuralist, contends that identity is both formed by language as the constituter of the subject, and is regulated by language through the assignment of terms. Robert Scholes qualifies this by pointing out that language is not a prison, that the resistances of a real world make the symbolic semantic fields of language open and dynamic, firstly, by means of the senses, which individuate perception and, secondly, via the requirements of communication across these individual differences of understanding. Social constructionists argue further that all aspects of the social and cultural are constructed in community, including identity.

Contemporary thought emphasises the role of discourse in the creation of identity because social interactions negotiate and assign meaning, establish categories and paradigmatic models, and naturalise these through dialogic processes. Identity is established through identification within these available terms. The narrative has been recognised as a fundamental cognitive modality providing the forms for the organisation of perceptions as knowledge and its communication in discourse.



Indeed, if language is an instinctual rather than a cultural invention, as Stephen Pinker suggests, then I suggest so too is narrative, in that the very categories of words such as nouns and verbs, subjects and objects and their organisation syntactically as grammar derives narrative. Language it then follows is narrative and communication a narrative act. Narrative therefore constitutes and foregrounds human existence.

Narratives because they have a perspective are always political, and function as memetic propagators. Narratives are representations, and representations are narratives. They direct and do work. Identity is one such narrative form, and as a social and cultural handle facilitates the manipulation of that which it frames. Reality is the realm where things exist outside ourselves: contextual reality is where the resistances of things outside ourselves interface with our narratives.

Michel Foucault argues that what directs the narrative re identity are the workings of power and its institutionalisation socially, culturally and historically. Judith Butler suggests that identity is formed and regulated via performative iteration and reiteration in respect to a subjectivation of power. The nature of power in a given framework therefore determines the limits of intelligible representability. Such frameworks can however, change over time or be changed, not by countering their content but rather their strategically structuring operations.

What emerges variously from social constructionism's denial of cultural essentialisms, discourse analysis, and, poststructuralist beliefs is a view of identity (and self or, at least, formulations of self) as fiction. That is, identity as the product of discursive narratives is therefore always provisional and contingent.

Identity categories as they are formulated are thus cultural fictions or inventions the terms of which are standardised and naturalised by confusion of performative iterations of identity which are expressions of the realities they supposedly represent, when those iterations are in actuality constitutive (Jagose, 1996, p.84). Such a standardisation of terms ignores both the diversity between, within and beyond those categories (Murray, 2003, p.5).



Identity outside of these terms is rendered largely non-existent in large part by disnarration, thereby ameliorating any destabilising threat it might represent to the narrative formulations of the status quo. Subjectivity intervenes at this point.

Subjective narratives are representations of the difference between personal perceptions and historic ‘consensus’, and always potentially threaten categorical instability, as well as the authority of received representations. Contextual reality, as a communal consensus, is thus revealed as a narrative creation.

Identity, when naturalised as singular in nature (in the narrative languaging of community) attempts to collapse divergence into congruence, complexity into simplicity, ambiguity into coherence and communicative shorthand.

Antithetical constructions are nullified during this process. Awareness of the constructed nature of reality is thus minimised for the sake of order and stability, and any collateral damage is accepted for the sake of the greater good.

Contemporary thought, however, perceives identity differently. Poststructuralism depicts identity and self as processes and thus unfixed and multiple in nature. What is important then is not fixity but identity salience in establishing a coherent identity. However, when identity is multiple and spans several disparate communities, salience must be narratively negotiated in order for identity, beyond the terms of individual communities, to be perceived.

My interest in the narrative lies in its primacy in lived narrative, intersubjectivity and historical interactions as: a space for constructive engagement; as a tool for achieving communicative congruence; as an emplotted trajectory between signs as per Nicholas Bourriard’s definition of the artist as semionaut; as the former of a ‘semantic field’, a narratosphere if you will, from which reality is modelled and which we inhabit; as both shaper of and shaped by society and culture; as a social and cultural mapping tool cum navigational tool cum presuppositional performative tool for understanding the world and acting in it. In respect to the latter I have coined the word ‘narragation’, as a term for



navigation by narrative, through a piecing together of various narrative materials to form a constantly updated and, as needed, reconfigured working model for understanding variously self, other and contextual reality or more simply, the world.

I have also explored identity and the plurality of self, as constituted by various discourses in interaction as a semionautic narrative, a semiotic trajectory or narrative lineage, in order to show that self, identity and its contexts are interrelated texts that the discourse of others have helped to write.

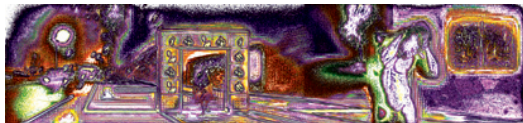
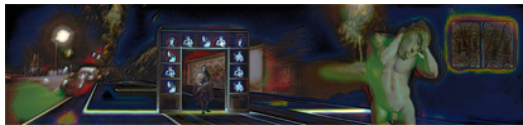
My practice focuses on the plasticity of narrative systems in regard to the 'subjective' freighting of facts as 'events' and their emplotment in a 'quasi-mimetic experiential evocation' (Audet, 2007, p.18) of real life. Revealing, life as we know it to be, not merely a series of actions but a trajectory of symbolic networking within a fluxing semantic field whereby self/identity and community/history are constituted by virtual, mental and emotional operations as much as external facts; or, put another way, self, other, and our shared reality are works of artifice, or condensations of narrative potentiality.

Thus self/identity, community and culture (also history and world views) are unfixed and what they represent has agency through narrative (despite the fact that constitutive events in a narrative generate and bind narrative), narrativity and narrator through interpretative and representational emplotment and/ or the tropes of a metahistory.

One consequence of a historical belief in the narrative and its representations being concerned solely with fiction is a blindness to its fundamental role in structuring human life and perceptions of the world. Another consequence is a diminished capacity for people to change outcomes by changing percepts or interpretants, which limits our ability to find solutions to issues in contemporary life.

Relevant to this is my focus on identity which seeks to layout and explore the issues relating to my own hyphenated, hybridised, creolised and cross-category identity in terms of its narrative formulation.

1.5 Identity

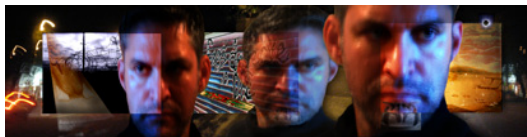


Maori and gay identity are at the focus of my project in terms of my own experience of these, as well as their broad historical encasement as identities. My identity as Maori has fluctuated over time in parallel with historically changing perceptions of Maoriness by both Maori and Pakeha in terms of variously, ‘blood’ fraction and the nature and expression of enculturation. Understandably, there are a number of ambivalences, ambiguities and conflicts which are a fundamental to my identity as gay and Maori as well as a gay Maori.

In this project Maoriness is performative, in the contexts ‘...of indigenous minority texts as “occasions” for the performance of indigeneity’ and ‘...“episodes” in the ongoing negotiation of contemporary indigenous minority identities’ (Murray, 2008, p.6). In terms of indigeneity as a gay Maori man, I am a minority within a minority and my performance of indigeneity is thus different to male Maori norms.

For Pakeha ‘...a suspicion exists that the forms of Maori culture that are claimed as authentic are actually constructions, that they designate not a genuine sense of tradition but rather a remembering of the past that is a misrepresentation of the contact era and the period of settlement, and that they always function in the service of a narrative that claims to be virtuous in the ways in which it operates in the contemporary’ (Murray, 2008, p.14). My sympathy for Pakeha uneasiness about this reconstitution is limited despite my also having a Pakeha heritage. In this respect I am partisan and identify with the ongoing project to ‘preserve’ and reconstitute Maori culture, values and identity in the face of colonisation and ‘persecution’ first by European and then Pakeha.

However, in this ‘reworking’ of the ‘ancient core values’ of Maori (the ‘indigenous’ in Barry Barclay’s terms) culture for new times and circumstances (Murray, 2008, p.17) there is also scope for change and improvement in terms of the lives of all Maori and not



just some. As Barry Barclay's '...idea of a Fourth Cinema is grounded in the idea that there is a shared experience of being indigenous' (Murray, 2008, p.16), so this reconstitution of Maoridom needs to take into account subcultural differences in this experience of indigeneity. Three relevant fields of interest have emerged in my own practice.

One interest involves journeys of intellectual and emotional retrospection which recreate multiple pasts (and thus multiple potential futures) whilst examining the formative ground against which 'self' has been created 'historically'. This involved a growing awareness of the inherent uncertainties arising from the shifting nature of the 'reality' the terms of my project reference because over time my viewing frames have changed with shifts in both 'identity salience' (Smiler, 2007, p.103) and position that 'position calling' (Monk, 2005, p.88) demands in the dialogic process. Compounding this has been an awareness over time of changes in the scope, nature and configuration of ignorance-awareness regarding self and factors external to the self. Corresponding to these changes are changes to the information, semantic and narrative fields by addition and loss and realignment of organisational axes from which representation can draw.

In addition there has been a growing awareness on my part of the dynamic nature of memory as revisory and configuring and the place of historicism and narration as an obscurer and skewing force, involving the individual and communal remaindering of that superfluous to the needs of any narrative. This constitutive outside, the disnarrated, consciousness's unconscious/ subconscious (Thiem, 2002, p.6) highlights any awareness as a sculpting as much from space (the disnarrated remainder) as matter (the narrated), by void as much as form. The dilemma of the incommensurate arises here because any certainties are matched elsewhere by uncertainty, which muddies the ground one examines. Order's narrative creation because its corollary is disnarration, therefore fictionalises, and disorders what 'is' (Thiem, 2002, p.6).

My second interest is the ephemeral and fictive nature of self and identity. That is, because retrospection, as an afterthought, and a momentary semantic configuration, is



ultimately unapproachable and, as a performance of self, viewable only in representative deeds. The products of my practice, ie the ‘artworks’, are thus documents recreating the performance of self both as individual documents and as a body of documents. This foregrounds ‘reality’ as problematic (see William Gibson’s ‘consensual mass hallucination’ in the novel *Neuromancer*). In this respect Morris Wolfe, (a media critic quoted in Mark Slouka’s *War of the World*) gets it only partly right when he says ‘It is easier and less costly to change the way people think about reality than it is to change reality’, because these are arguably synonymous.

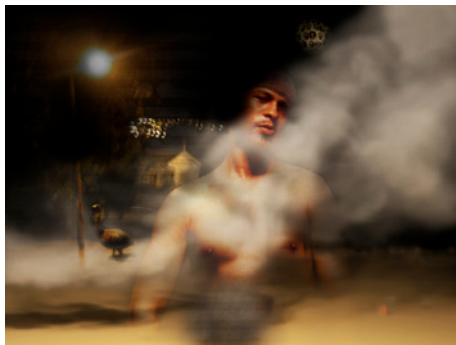
My third interest is the growing awareness of narrative as a system and an interest in narrative systems, of which identity is just one component.

1.6 Methodology

At this point my outcome is exhibition-oriented because the project has been until recently an evolving work, with my thinking and ideas being clarified by practice, reading, writing and reflection. In part, this outcome is driven by expediency but also because it lays out the project for inspection quickly and publicly and thus plays with the public-private tensions inherent in the subject matter of the project as well as in the viewing situation. Exhibition also appeals for its tangibility and groundedness, in that it produces a material product from a digital and virtual process. In this way it crosses over from an internal to an external, representing self for community and thus moves into an ambiguous area, one where the recording documents use the non-linear logic of art to chart my perceptions and analyses of variously self and identity as well as my historical situatedness as I have perceived it over time. These elements are examined either singly and/or in combination, and over time.

Initially I thought I would be portraying contributory narrative factors and points of narrativity as they created, impinged and affected my evolving sense of self and ‘place’



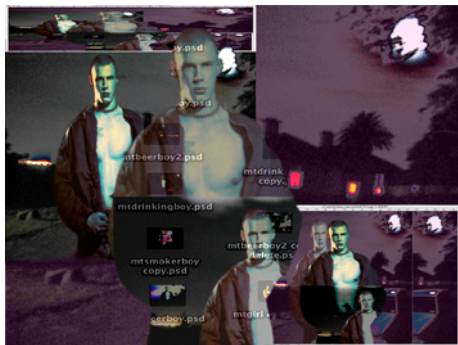
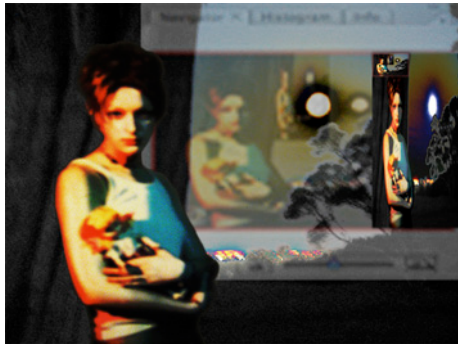
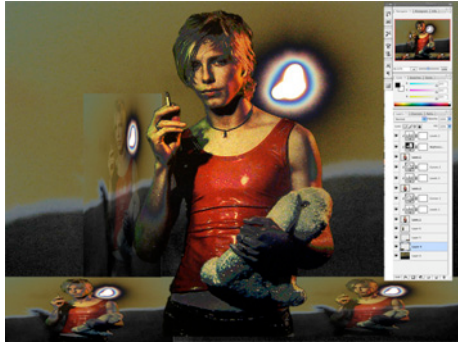


over time, leading causatively or osmotically to my present sense of self and identity. I found instead that my present sense of self, in this process of a close examination, and in relation to the past and historical discourse, kept shifting in the process of observation, thus changing my perceptions of the past and past events in terms of their significance or degree of significance. Consequently the direction of my project altered when I became more interested in the nature of self and the processes of self-formation and self-construction.

In both my practice and my reading I began to explore self in terms of personal narration, in the process I began to regard recounting as narrative 'reconsideration' and the act of narrating, as fundamental to, and transformative of self. I began to view the self of I, as a model of self. The self I started to understand did not exist in any particular moment's configuration of self, but rather existed in the system which embeds configuration. Self seemed more dispersed and tenuous than I had originally conceived it, as something existing in the interstices of events and discourse, signs and semantics. Identity seemed in this context to be less about the public face of self and more about its categorisation to serve social and cultural purposes.

My practice charts my meandering thinking over time in a visual form which alternates and combines linear critical inquiry, the non-linearity of the experiential and non-linear explorative logic guided by the contingencies of the visual and their translations into visual terms. I followed multiple paths some of which paralleled each other for a time, or recombined at some point or played out, thus limiting the scope of what I did, as well as shaping the project.

My visual practice draws on juxtaposition, metaphors, and analogy, because imagery and composition often attempt simultaneously to portray interiority and an exterior situatedness, and documents the narrative act as a performance of both self and identity in terms of its constituent parts. The reality in which these components are grounded is the narrative performances of larger social groupings that make self intelligible as identity, and



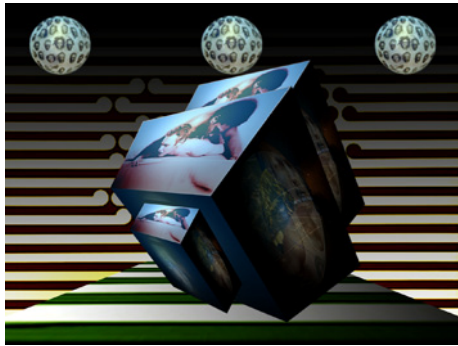
form the larger narrative, semiotic and semantic ground of self. Within the terms or limits of this larger constituting system, self is made more or less intelligible through the assignment of identity.

The artwork produced is therefore document, and my practice constitutes performative realism. That is, the documents produced capture my performance of self and identity through retrospective reconstitution. What is recorded is of course not ‘reality’ but *a reality* and thus a *real fiction* or *fictively real*, an interpretation post events, or a narration of the ‘facts’ filtered through the present and a lived subjectivity. Identity is present here through the document as a performance of memory and form-finding captured in the narrative act of making a ‘narrating’ representation which is thus a diegesis.

My approach to representation draws on a collage of imagery sourced and selected from published imagery and my own photography (the backdrop landscape was often in the earliest works my own and from my environment, as the ground of representation). The imagery chosen and used resonates with my experience of reality and perception of self consistent with the brief of this project. These visual raw materials were then manipulated and mixed and matched until a composition affects a resonance with my perceptions of lived experience. There is a strong component of instinct, intuition and a degree of automatism, along with a considered approach to the subject, its context and how these are linked. This approach, in seeking resonance, looks for some way of getting past the obvious ‘objective’ to an emotional perception of subject, its context and how these are linked experientially in configuration.

The project has been rich and rewarding because it has exposed many complexities, ambiguities, ambivalences, tensions, conflicts, new understandings and perceptions of the topic through its terms.

Identity is dispersed through the body of the work as a further unfolding rather than as a definitive statement or delineation of events. As a narrative, there is narrativity of a sort (perceived as my being and consciousness or, alternately, simply an endpoint, through



recursion, as in the self of the present seeking its origins¹), with both events (suggestive instances) and an endpoint (the delineation of self's narratively constitutive nature), which satisfy the conventions of narrative.

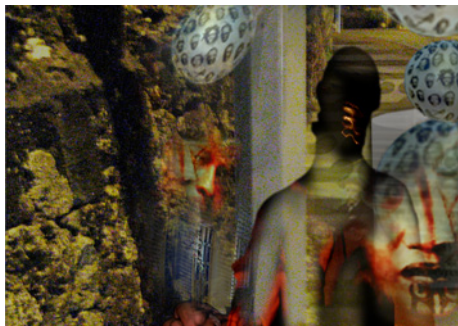
My approach therefore produces images, which can be taken singly or as a body of work, or as a series of series each following a line of subject matter, context or historical linkage. These individual paths intersect at certain points, cross-pollinate and evolve anew in tandem with my changing thoughts and perceptions, and different viewing frames. These different configurations of connection bring hitherto unconsidered aspects into view. The result has been an evolution in the perception of perception regarding the project's endeavour. Issues that initially seemed convergent and bounded became open-ended and always beyond reach and any final resolution. I have found historicism a skewing force in history which also applies to self as a history and also self within the encasement of history.

My practice has been important in helping me understand the operations of narrative and the hazy unfixedness of terms such as self, other and history. My practice has also highlighted the multiple natures of these operations and the fact that these entities relate to each other in complex and dynamic ways.

Both my practice and my reflections upon personal lived experience brought the concepts, issues and contexts derived from reading into sharp focus (and often ahead of the reading itself), in terms of the limits of an understanding with a rudimentary cross-disciplinary science of the subjective or endophysics (Weibel, 1996) regarding the problem of terms, a vocabulary, visualisation and modelling.

Reading of the literature also raised my suspicion that any understanding of self and identity was potentially limited by its social and cultural framing. As with any self-organising systems, such as self, identity, community and culture are characterised and limited by their axiomatic framing, in this context narrative framing. The capacities and potentiality

¹ This is the semiotic loop which Scholes sees in which narrative events when mappable back to real events indicates non-fiction rather than fictive narratives (Scholes, 1980, p.211)



of such systems being balanced against their limitations, exposes such systems to latent psychopathologies associated with assimilative inability without radical reformation of the system itself; which such systems tend to resist. This insight helped to reconfigure my perceptions beyond the individual in psychology, and to encompass the play of history, in terms of societies and cultures being prone to pathologies of narrative incommensurateness.

Much of my time has been spent in coming to an understanding and realisation of the terms of the project and an understanding through partial syntheses of what it encompasses and its significance in terms of representation.

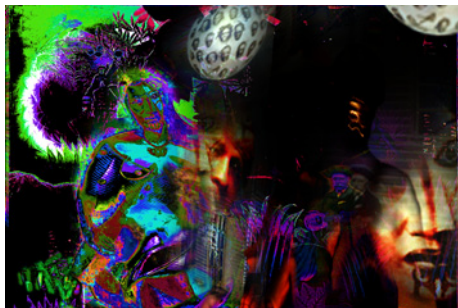
My methodology initially was experimental in that I proposed a hypothesis, drafted an outline of the project and with subsequent making and reading ‘tested’ the hypothesis. Initial making consisted of an experimental exploration of the terrain and a focused examination of the project components which led to tentative syntheses of the component threads, a few at a time, in varying combinations. Practice at the end was concerned with syntheses of all the components. My methodology during this process was reflectively based, with reading informing making, and these components working to drive practice forward in a dialogic and transformative way. There was also an intuitive component in this process which I view as an expression of tacit knowledge.

However, my practice has been based upon explorations, via narrative acts of narrativity involving a subjective examination of the grounds of the plurality of self and identity arising from internal and external discourses. My methodology might be considered performative because it produces documents which are performative utterances and serve in a supplementary way to reveal narrative performativity and constitute performance. Unlike Vito Acconci in his *Photo-piece* (1996) I do not make with a consciousness of performing (Auslander, 2006, p.4). Building on a prior practice of collage/assemblage and using realistic reproductive methods, such as mould making/casting and photocopying, my overall approach is however more accurately a bricoleur’s approach, combining the photographic

with digital construction.

The main aim of this project was to reveal the interpenetration and synonymous nature of narrative and reality. In my practice I have used visual imagery which combines the 'real' in a surreal way reminiscent of the 'imaginatively remembered' (Thiem, 2002, p.7).

The bricoleur's approach does not



“...mean that the use of multiple methods is a ‘pick and mix’ research strategy that mingles paradigms. The bricoleur works ‘between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms’ with an awareness of the research implications of those paradigms. The various methods chosen, adapted or invented are related, often forming a developmental set, which is coherent. By acknowledging that research takes place in the ‘real world’ – is complex and sometimes ‘messy’, open to change, interaction and development – the bricoleur uses:

... the tools of his or her methodological trade, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials are to hand ... If new tools have to be invented, or pieced together, then the researcher will do this. The choice of which tools to use, which research practices to employ, is not set in advance. The choice of research practices depends on the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on their context ... what is available in the context, and what the qualitative researchers can do in that setting.

The outcomes of the research can be seen as a ‘bricolage’ – an emergent construction:

The product of the bricoleur's labor is a bricolage, a complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researchers images, understandings, and interpretations of the world ...”

(Gray & Malins, 2004, p.74)

2.0 Narrative and its structuring operations

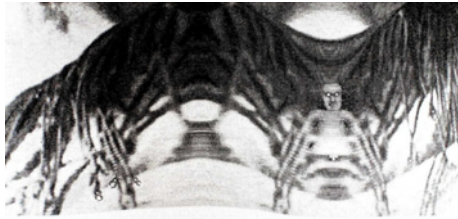


Project investigation began with a consideration of my subjective locatedness in terms of narrative, definition of terms, and developing an understanding of narrative's relationship with performativity in the context of identity. Later on, the investigation expanded to a consideration of my multiply situated identity, existing as it does across several communities and narrative formulations. My investigation then focused on the issues deriving from the above, namely disnarration, identity coherence and intelligibility, and representation in terms of the 'tellability' or 'storyability' of identity.

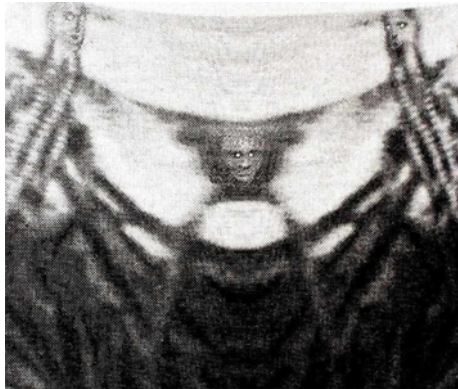
My initial practice used photographs of my environs as backdrops, as a ground for narrative. I placed against this various objects, figures, and historical elements to represent self/identity in the context of place or in relation to history. In this respect, the images were like 'snapshots' and suggested moments in a larger 'staging' of reality, out of, and beyond the frame. Representationally, the elements added against the photographic backdrop appear as projections, visions, illuminations, or spot-lit spectacles of self/identity for both self and the viewer.

I use night time scenes as backdrops for several reasons. Night I considered in terms of the day of self versus the day of identity, in terms of how it might represent my subjectivity. I also saw night as the alternate day of marginality. Night is also associated with the subconscious and unconscious, and can be seen as the domain of the repressed and oppressed both within self and within a society or culture. These personal associations make night the realm of being beyond subsistence and beyond the group's subjugation of the expansive self or identity.

From here I developed an interest in an extended staging, and the panorama as a means for staging several instances or representations of identity and history together, as an ex-



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tended narrative tableau. This process combined temporal and spatial layering as a composite of the objective and the subjective, that is, the real versus the experientially real. In this way I began to explore the genesis of story, emplotment and narration.

Later developments often abandoned the panoramic format while retaining the approach to image making it used. In this change of format spacing in a horizontal dimension is replaced with layering in depth.

My practice was initially less closely associated with theory and its application but it soon became apparent they were inseparable.

2.1 Narrativity: Event, operal event and experientiality

When researching terms and definitions, Rene Audet proved particularly useful in extending the discussion of narrative beyond the bounds of literature to include contemporary practices with implications for a consideration of narrative's terms. Audet defines the relevant terms very clearly, which facilitates their transposition beyond the literary to the cross-disciplinary field of narratology.

Audet redefines narrativity as '...the event is the pivotal moment around which the feeling of narrativity is built', that is the action with a potential for a story rather than as a vague feature of narrative configuration (Audet, 2007, p.30). However in terms of narratives of self, there is no single narrativity basis merely an infinite regression of earlier contributory effects. In terms of identity, gay identity has for me a narrative pivot, the events of self-recognition and 'outing' were simultaneous and abruptly altered my reality by initiating the recategorisation and relanguaging of the terms of self and identity. In terms of Maori identity, there was no such pivotal narrative event, beyond birth and parentage.

Audet argues that events construct subject but the opposite is also true because the distinguishing of events from facts (Audet, 2007, p.28) has a bearing on his definition of narrativity, so it could be said the self constructs both itself, and self in relation to others, and



that this is done by self in community.

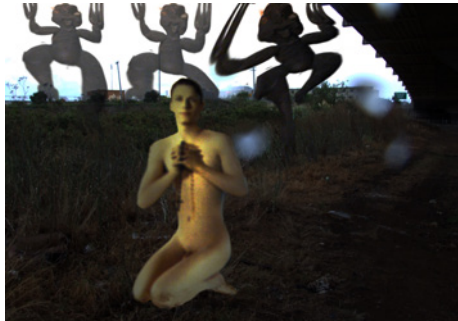
Audet frames the narrative event as a movement ‘...in the text’, of the subject (‘character’ in his terms) through a semantic field. Audet suggests that narrative events evidence virtuality in that ‘...the event is considered as what happened at the same time as what could not have happened’ (Audet, 2007, p.28). I would amend this statement to include the meaningfulness of ‘what might have happened’ where self is subject and events are the phenomena that form self or at least self-perception at any given moment. ‘Self’ then is simply as I see it and emerges as a working construct from the available semantic field rather than being a fixed causally determined endpoint.

Self as a perception is then potentially as diverse as the possible combinations of elements in the semantic field and so underscores the virtuality of any identity and by extension the plasticity of ‘reality’. Identity’s reliance on memory and a ‘connect-the-dots’ form of sense-making, as memories and views change, means there is no essential self, because self is subject to historicism, not necessarily because events change but because what is included or excluded (‘disnarrated’) in a narrative at a given moment may not be a constant. (Audet, 2007, p.30)

Self is the ‘flip side’ of identity, the former being allied to an experiential sense of interiority and the latter to both individuation and affiliations with others (self’s sense of identity) and the perceptions and categorisations of others. Identity is thus always at least doubled.

Audet notes that the mental narrative of the narrator renders action and plot as structuring principles within a narrative obsolete. Monika Fludernik ascribes ‘experientiality’ to such ‘works of interiority’ based upon ‘the quasi-mimetic evocation of ‘real-life’ experience’. In such works Audet comments that ‘the logic of narrative is often quite different from that of plot’ (Audet, 2007, p.18).

The self therefore also emerges as ambiguous and multiple. When Galen Strawson’s ideas about the role of cognitive operations, such as form-finding and pattern-finding, are taken



into account, together with ideas about the revisable nature of memory, and thus self, then the essential nature of a self becomes questionable (Strawson, 2004, pp. 441-445) and the ‘tellability’ of self becomes problematic. We find our lives to be as the writer V.S.Pritchett observes, ‘...beyond any tale that we happen to enact’ (Strawson, 2004, p.450). But that does not prevent us from attempting to narrate reality and who we are.

At best, self and identity are definable as a specific narrative ‘lineage’ derived from variously self, other and history through dialogue and discourse. Expanding on Nicholas Bourriaud’s definition of *semionaut*², self can be seen as a trajectory or lineage, and a system (the ‘dots’ and their joining potentialities). This system constitutes a semantic field, located within a larger historical and social/ cultural field, and beyond this, within ‘nature’ or ‘physical reality’, elements of which the self assimilates and is accordingly formed and measured. Making, based upon reflection and representation, exposes these operations.

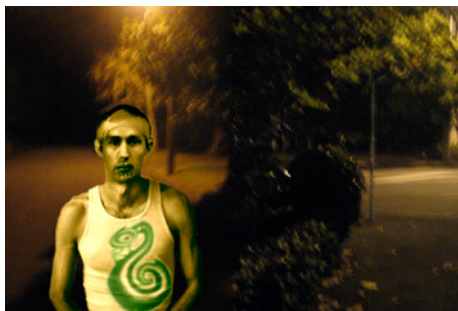
Audet distinguishes three types of event which give a narrative character to a work: an in-world event ; a discursive event; and an oporal event (the latter defined as ‘an event which is the result of a textual or artistic device’) (Audet, 2007, p.11). An oporal event may be seen as a definer of narrative and intrinsic to any art practice. In this context narratives of self and identity seem to comprise simultaneously all three event types, perhaps as a result of the dynamic perceptual and semantic operations of self and others (extant and historical) which frame and define self/identity from potentially moment to moment.

Self, other and history therefore could be seen as oporal devices enabling a viewer to perceive the subject in the narrative ‘...gesture that created it...emerging from nothing, it results from a manoeuvre that explains its presence’ (Audet, 2007, p.31).

2.2 The upstream and downstream of narratives

My focus on the narrative is two-fold comprising, firstly, that which lies upstream of the

² The contemporary artist is a *semionaut*, he invents trajectories between signs.

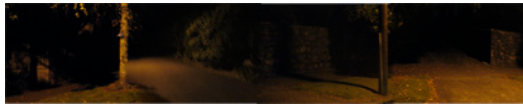


narrative, that is what lies behind the narrative and ‘...constitutes it, authorises it, provokes it, solicits it or allows it...these are the representations that direct the narrative’ (Audet, 2007, p.11). Secondly is what lies downstream, that is, the uses, functions, and creations of narrative which include world building; delineating and facilitating changes of state- implying action in a temporal sequence and the possibility of identification of a ‘network of aims, causal relations and motivations which assure the coherence of the plot’ (Audet, 2007, p.26). Much of my practice is concerned with identifying oporal devices with which to illuminate or facilitate these functions.

3.0 The theatre of truths

As my practice developed, I became interested in the performance of self involved in making as a part of my practice and in the nature of the work produced. This interest in the mediation of lived narrative through told narrative led to a consideration of the nature of self, self over time, the narrative qualities of existence both personally and generally, and the world view associated with these.

The link between narrative and both a personal and community world view (along with a supportive ‘cosmology’) underpins my interest in the role of narrative in ‘real’ world building and the necessary linking of individuals in community both communicatively and performatively. In this respect I make little distinction between fictitious worlds, the worlds of self and other and the ‘real’ world (and thus the cosmologies we inhabit) because these all arise from narrative systems. From this interest followed an investigation of the link between language and act, deed and interpretation, and their temporal, constituting and performative interconnection. Henry McDonald’s article *The Narrative act: Wittgenstein and Narratology* provided much initial clarification in respect to this.



3.1 Actions, interpretations and the incommensurate

McDonald's elaboration of the incommensurate as certain perceptual or conceptual framings that impose limits on the way we think and act and thus what we can see, know or do, highlighted the fundamental problem of 'meaning' being incommensurate with 'action'. This is because interpretation serves to freeze and change the value of action because certainty is incompatible with the fluidity living entails. My work must always therefore fail in meaning when I attempt to create or impart meaning, because it attempts to freeze that which fluxes and because 'the narrative act performs the activity of constituting that subject' (McDonald, 1994, p.4).

Self, other, community and culture are essentially constructs applied as causative explanations of particular phenomena. McDonald suggests further that the 'cognitive' and 'performative' are artificial distinctions because human language is basically a form of action and also because McDonald's 'narrative uncertainty principle' (McDonald, 1994, p.4) based on the incommensurate nature of meaning and action suggests we should '... view human action as constitutive of knowledge, rather than as a kind of knowledge' as the basis for '...what Kant called "the conditions of possibility" for knowledge' (McDonald, 1994, p.6) as a 'presuppositional logic' (McDonald, 1994, p.7). These observations supported the assumptions I held about downstream uses of narrative constructs and prompted me to reconsider the limits of my practice. In their initial form they did not lay out a portrayal of how I am narratively constituted- because self and identity are not fixed. It instead illuminated that I am so constituted within the limits meaning sets and further that I am constituted performatively through enactment of narrative's presuppositions.

3.2 The narrative act, narrators and belief

In light of the above 'the narrative act' is different from 'the narrative presence' because



the latter has no basis ‘...except in the narrative act and that act cannot carry within itself its own predetermined meanings and effects. Like a performative statement, it [the narrative act] requires a context, the cultural context of the reader, to gain meaning’ (McDonald, 1994, p.4) . This suggests that the performative is primary to communication, that meaning and intelligibility are what follow, and that perhaps Paul Ricoeur’s ‘remainder’ as synonymous with the disnarrated contributes to our actions without our awareness. To the extent that we can, we know ourselves through Marshall McLuhan’s ‘rear view mirror’.

McDonald argues that ‘The narrator may be regarded as a form of action that constitutes the conditions of possibility of the narrative’ (McDonald, 1994, p.7), observing that what ‘...we call the narrator is not a fixed entity capable of dictating a determinant meaning but is rather the discourse produced by the act of narrating, a discourse which makes meaning and cannot designate it. Whereas Foucault’s “author function” separates itself from the text in order to impose coherence on it and bring to a halt “the proliferation of discourse,” thereby assigning to “the literary” a non-performative status, the narrator is that proliferation or act performed’ (McDonald, 1994, p.8).

This observation explained the situation I often found myself in, whereby my practice over time was more revealing of the narrative constitution of self than were my formulations of this during the act of representation. Self, revealed itself through making as a shifting goal post because reflective representation could not contain the self it is purported to instantiate by that act. The self, making reiteratively revealed, was not a given; it was rather the working synthesis translated into other terms. Thus a representation of the narrative constitution of identity as performative is possible but only in general terms, given that every instance of narration is a renarration.

Wittgenstein argues that the ‘narrator’ is not a private, internal subject distinct from the more “external” forces of culture but rather the workings of the discourses of culture” (McDonald, 1994, p.9) which supported my own view of the relationship between narra-



tive and identity, and by extension, reality. McDonald also observes that ‘If the narrator is a form of action, we cannot privilege certain parts of the text as “representative” of the whole. Rather, we must observe the metonymic dispersal of the narrative presence along the entire course of the text’” (McDonald, 1994, p.8). This observation summarised my dilemma when attempting any relatively comprehensive representation of self and self in relation to its socially and historically formative and/or contextualising environment. That is, self cannot be represented in a single image and is more readily discerned in the multiplication of images because self is a dynamic process rather than a static object. However a single image with temporal traits may have narrative characteristics. For example Lynn Cohen’s photos of interior spaces invoke narrative through the nature and arraignment of its contents.

McDonald argues that ‘...the principle of narrative uncertainty’ is ‘founded on a recognition of human limitation’ and ‘the inevitably situated nature of our actions and the partiality of our perspectives’ (McDonald, 1994, p.11). He goes on to comment that “...what makes the fictional narrative act possible is a willingness to trust and treat as “reliable” the cultural forces that are its textual materials...trust for Wittgenstein is prior to understanding” but to ‘...make or perform a commitment to something’ is to ‘...undermine any universal basis for it’ (McDonald, 1994, p.10). These comments underscore the dilemma of cognitive operations whereby some axioms must be accepted to begin with. All this however is underpinned by faith in those axioms and it is difficult to rebuild foundations while one is standing upon them. To me, such a position suggests one is already in a situation of being narratively co-opted and incommensurately limited in one’s perceptions and judgements.

3.3 Performativity, narrative performativity and disnarration

From an interest in the nature and production of self in my practice I began to investigate



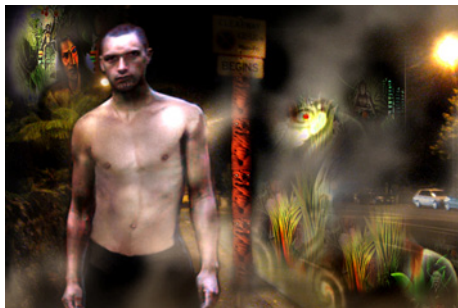
the relationship between self and the performative in relation to the narrative.

Annika Thiem's writing proved useful here, because it references and modifies Judith Butler's notions of identity as performative, elaborating the specifics of operation and its relation to the narrative. Thiem draws together several research and thinking threads in relation to narrative and performativity in a useful way. Specifically she considers the importance of Paul Ricoeur's theory of emplotment in relation to Judith Butler's notions of the (gendered and sexually oriented) self as performative. That is, self as rehearsed and somewhat scripted, is the product of iteration and reiteration, as formed through subjectivation by (social) power and constituted by doing via intentional agency. This accords with performance studies' ideas of performance requiring a witness (the social power). Again in different terms it is suggested we perform narratives and they perform us. Another way of considering this is that we are our performance, we are performatively constituted.

Thiem examines self-formation in this context. She considers intentional action in relation to self-concept, and as both future-oriented (via projection and openness) and past-oriented (by introspection). Self is thus presented as open-ended, indicating this it is instrumental in forming self rather than being the result of an autonomous environmentally determined process of imprinting, and unfolding interaction.

According to Thiem, self emerges from intentional action in relation to self-concept via a creative process and, through 'reflexive interiority' as a 'work of art' (Thiem, 2002, p.4) and in terms of my project and practice this is quite literally the case.

Thiem argues the elaboration of self-concept as emplotment, as sharing similarity with Aristotelean poetics, and as 'the organization of events ... that transforms individual occurrences into meaningful events by working them into the larger context of a plot that is constantly emerging as the events are being organized' (Thiem, 2002, p.4). This indicates to me a relationship between self (and reality) and narrative, and that narrative is both a raw material and a device, which can be used to visualise and model the shifting terrain



of contextual reality in a process of sense-making that also continually fashions self as ‘becoming’.

Ricoeur contends that the function of emplotment is to mediate ‘...[the] relationship between a lived experience where discordance rends concordance and an eminently verbal experience where concordance mends discordance’ (Thiem, 2002, p.5). This observation is pertinent to my project where both the verbal (the exegesis) and the visual (image-making) together act to mediate discordance. This delineates the therapeutic potential of narrative rewriting, as in narrative therapy. According to Thiem, Ricoeur saw the crafting of self-concept as ‘the poetic activity of mimesis’ not by copying real life but by creatively rendering it and thereby invoking Monica Fludermann’s ‘quasi-mimetic experiential evocation’. Where ‘plot is inscribed into the story ... through ascription of significance’ the connection between the events that infers coherence is narration (Thiem, 2002, p.5). Intelligibility, Thiem says, is conferred by a ‘...sense of an ending’ which is plausible and thus acceptable exposing emplotment as subject to norms and rules dealing with plausibility and acceptability. As Ricoeur asserts ‘...[t]he productive imagination is not only rule-governed, but it constitutes the generative matrix of rules’. Thiem equates this with Butler’s ‘subjectivation’, which is both regulatory and generative in regards to ‘the formation of the subject and the transformation and resignification of the norms and rules’ (Thiem, 2002, p.5). In Thiem’s opinion, Butler’s notion produces a ‘reconfiguration of the praxis; as the notion of “narrative performativity” which implies, the “meaning of the narrative constitutes praxis”’ (Thiem, 2002, p.6) through actualization as externalisation or, in McDonald/ Wittgenstein’s terms, language as action. In terms of this project, self becomes identity (as perceived by others) through narrative performativity and shaped further by environmental feed back.

Emplotment orients narrative self-constitution to the future because it entails imaginative anticipation as well as a sense of ‘the one who I was in the past’ which is similarly imaginary. Both orientations involve imaginative stagings and continuous restaging as events



proliferate and emplotment alters to assimilate things considered to be significant into an account of oneself (Thiem, 2002, p.6). Again performativity is implicated in the downstream role of narratives.

Thiem comments that ‘Subject formation in this regard is instituted by a triple-dialectic, the dialectic of the trajectories of the intrasubjective and intersubjective intertwined with the dialectic of the diachronic and synchronic³ and with the dialectic of unconscious and conscious’ (Thiem, 2002, p.6), that is self is formed in relation to others, narrative (which selectively edits material in and out of) discourse and the temporal through narrative performativity. The findings of scientific studies (Cell Press, 2006; Public Library of Science, 2008; Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 2008) are consistent Thiem’s observation showing that perception lags behind the events perceived, and that we synchronise with moving objects in our environment despite this because we perceptually project ahead and thus occupy simultaneously past, present and future in order to do so.

Ricoeur contends that emplotment delineates that included in the narration of self from the ‘disnarrated’ remainder (what is left out for intelligibility). Thus, narration is shown to be a fabrication because ‘that which is narrated and rendered coherent is determined by that which cannot be narrated and has to remain unconscious and beyond the scope of narratability as its constitutive outside’ (Thiem, 2002, p.6). This is problematic for representation of identity in terms of what is and is not to be included. Any such selections suffer from incompleteness in order to structure intelligibly an identity (as perceived at a particular moment). For this reason ‘this unstable self-concept is constantly disturbed by that which needs to be excluded from remembering. Remembering at its heart is forgetfulness’ (Thiem, 2002, p.7). It is this remaindered material that proponents of narrative therapy contend has the potential for psychopathology because it can disrupt the equilibrium of a narrative system unless neutralised by assimilative renarration and the attainment of a new equilibrium.

³ Diachronic here refers to the subject over time versus synchronic at a point in time



Therefore,

‘The subject, rather than being in charge of its story, emerges in being subjected to its story that enables the enunciation of the “I” in which the subject exceeds the occasion of its formation precisely through its limitation. The mode of existence thus never is one of consolidating self-certainty but one of attestation that accounts for the subject’s “coming too late” and “remaining preliminary” that casts the subject as one that is constantly unbecoming in its becoming.’ (Thiem, 2002, p.7)

This observation probably accounts for the elusive nature of self and the impossibility of any comprehensive representation of identity in my project and why self/identity emerge as *real fictions* in terms of representation.

Thiem establishes

‘...imaginative remembering as a constitutive concept in Judith Butler’s theory of subject formation so that the subjects emerging can be understood as emerging as agents capable of deliberate and intentional action while retaining the concept of performative subjectivation.’ (Thiem, 2002, p.7).

That is, narratives have agency both in forming a subject and presuppositionally by performative actions.

‘Imaginative remembering then is captured as a differential that constitutes human potentiality, rather than as a property inherent to a subject. The form of this human potentiality is that of always already being entangled in stories, but these stories are permanently only partially unfolded, and how they unfold in a given situation is never predeterminable. One inevitably is entangled in a plurality of stories in both directions of past and future, and neither past nor future is ever brought to the point of full closure’ (Thiem, 2002, p.7).

What emerges then is a view of self, identity and, by extension, others, as well as contextual reality as an ever changing and interacting virtual system which is both narratively and performatively constituted. In my practice, I tend to show self as multiple, emerging



from another self, or existing contemporaneously in many possible permutations within the infinitude of multiverse possibility, as bubble worlds inherent in the quantum foam, where each particular permutation represents instances in which an action has closed down the field of interpretation in the manner of Schrodinger's cat⁴.

At this stage of my practice I often depicted the self as faceless to represent its basis in an unknown, and ultimately unknowable, which often acts and responds without conscious cognition. Alternatively, I would depict 'self' with a screen capture T-shirt displaying the image in which it is placed being photo-shopped, as both an iterative and reiterative creation.

At this point I was aware of developing parallels between my art-making practice and the research findings and how these integrated. Philip Auslander made it clear that my practice was in fact a performance and that the works made were documents supplementary to this. Put another way, my works were in fact documents of instances of the narrative performance of self and, as such the works were performative utterances.

3.4 Performance, the supplementary document and the performative utterance

Over time I came to realise that my work took the form of documents resulting from

⁴ Schrödinger's thought experiment was intended as a discussion of the strange nature of quantum superpositions. Broadly stated, a quantum superposition is the combination of all the possible states of a system (for example, the possible positions of a subatomic particle). The Copenhagen interpretation implies that the superposition undergoes collapse into a definite state only at the exact moment of quantum measurement. To further illustrate the putative incompleteness of quantum mechanics, Schrödinger applied quantum mechanics to a living entity that may or may not be conscious. In Schrödinger's original thought experiment, he describes how one could, in principle, transform a superposition inside an atom to a large-scale superposition of a live and dead cat by coupling cat and atom with the help of a "diabolical mechanism". He proposed a scenario with a cat in a sealed box, wherein the cat's life or death was dependent on the state of a subatomic particle. According to Schrödinger, the Copenhagen interpretation implies that the cat remains both alive and dead until the box is opened.

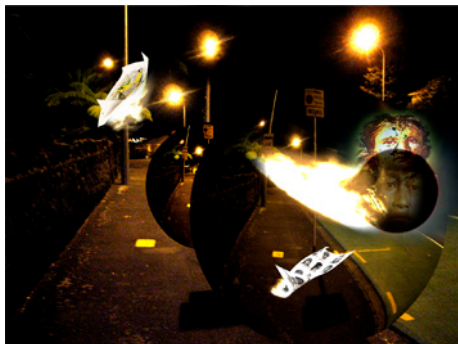
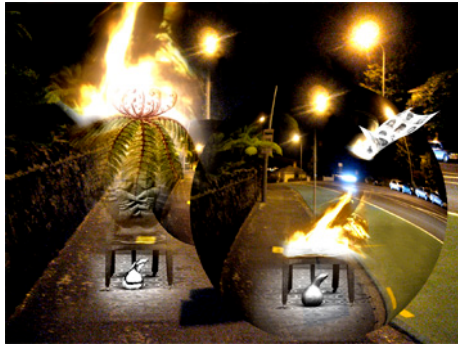
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schrödinger's_cat



reflection and a synthesis of elements from the semantic field of my life and understandings of these. Auslander helped me to perceive the document itself as a performative utterance, in that when the document accesses what it represents and creates or embodies what it represents, it performs a performance (Auslander, 2006, p.5). In my case the document performs a reality which is largely inaccessible, existing as it does in a largely undocumented past, where the means of establishing veracity through others is limited, and memory suspect as a dynamic process rather than a passive repository. Much of what my work frames as a reality is a projection of an interiority, or a subjectively configured re-reality. It is simultaneously veracity and fiction because it relates the self through reference to a past viewed through the eyes of the present to a present seen framed by that past. What is actually referenced therefore is ambiguous.

My work functions as a supplement to a performance of myself, as 'snapshots' of a self and identity understood and constructed in the process of their production. My work therefore documents and stages self as events performed for the self and the viewing audience. The past, the present, and my identity as Maori and gay is established as I enact it through making documents, which approach a reality rather than defining, containing, or representing reality. This is not surprising, given that the subject is so changeable and continually re-rendering itself as a series of shots of the now which capture only transient cognitive information architecture. A mutual interdependence is thus set up whereby it is possible to say that the performance is the supplement to the document, or that the performativity of narrative is indistinguishable from the lived reality supposedly producing it, that is the document instantiates the performance (particularly for those who did not witness the performance). Memory also, as a representational rendering, functions both to supplement and instantiate the life lived.

Reflection on Auslander's comments therefore clarifies that this project cannot represent identity definitively or consider comprehensively the narrative basis and constitution of my identity (or that of others) .



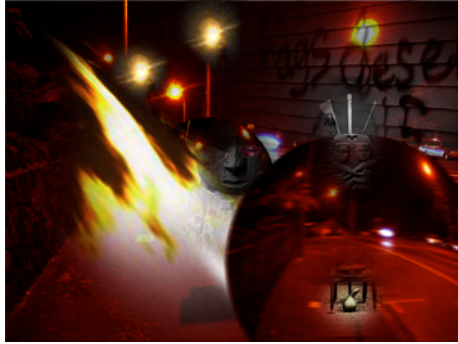
Annie Leibowitz (Leibovitz, 2006) has spoken of the impossibility of documenting the experience of dance, commenting that it is like trying to photograph the wind, and that any attempt photographs not the wind itself but its impact upon something else. Or, borrowing from Barry Barclay, all I would be producing is an ethnography of the ‘surface features’ of self (Murray, 2008, p.17). Wittgenstein would say the picture is incomplete, because the remainder to a narrative rendering is always missing from what is represented, and therefore the discordance which continually rends concordance. Thus, the remainder as the psychotherapeutic equivalent of an unassimilated has always a potential for psychopathology for individuals and, by extension, communities and cultures.

Social constructionists might also consider that the identity I represent is incomplete because it fails to encode the social and cultural environment as templates against which identity is formed via interaction and narration. This confirms what Henry McDonald led me to suspect from my making, that the narrative act lies primarily in story telling and this helps me articulate my practice, not as one which primarily documents a formative history and explains self, but as one which produces self in the process of introspection and documents only those discursive acts of narrative self creation.

In relation to my subject of identity as narratively constituted and narratively performative, my practice is confirmed as being concerned with the story of the story of self. Self-reflection and self-representation makes it clear that self/identity are elusive fictions and all one has are ephemeral constructions of these. As texts, these constructions are ambiguous to both viewer and maker. Perhaps this is part of the enigma one sees in Rene Magritte’s paintings.

3.5 Performing the real and reality effects

My reading on the performative made me realise that narrative performativity as the context of my practice is closely aligned to a performance studies, which is a new cross-dis-



disciplinary field of aesthetic and cultural engagement. Performance studies relate ideas and thinking about performance and performativity to real life actions as well as their reception and consideration. Several dichotomies are blurred, in the process, including those between ‘reality’ and ‘fiction’, ‘representation’ and ‘presentation’, ‘life’ and ‘art’, ‘true’ and ‘false’, ‘private’ and ‘public’, and ‘actual’ and ‘virtual’. (Gade & Jerslev, 2005, p.11) Performance studies relates to the subject of ‘doing’ (paramount is being seen to do- there may be no ‘doer’ behind the ‘deed’) and are underpinned by the concept that ‘to be is to perform, to act, to do – but also to conform’ (Gade & Jerslev, 2005, p.7) because witnessing brings one into touch with social and thus institutional relations. In this respect performance studies are consistent with the observations of Wittgenstein and Butler.

‘Perform or else’ is therefore essential because not performing amounts to not existing. In this context being is a response evoked as an emergent property of the system because it encompasses both self and other socially and performatively. To be, it seems then, is to perform for someone; doing and being are thus relational and associated with social dramas, rituals, psychological dramas, mental scripts and a view of the world as theatrical (Gade & Jerslev, 2005, p.8).

Performativity is a feature of many cultural phenomena including aesthetics, as a mode of discourse. It is therefore more a method or approach, like semiotics, ‘...as everything can be regarded as signs and symbolic elements in performative or representational acts. As a field it is preoccupied with the “real world” and interested in intervening there’ in test or play. Performativity is thus concerned with the status and nature of the ‘real’ and ‘real actions’ (Gade & Jerslev, 2005, p.10).

Roland Barthe’s identification of ‘reality effects’ which cause ‘the referential illusion’ through connotative reference rather than denotative likeness can be used together with techniques of citation and repetition to achieve a ‘theatre of reiteration’ (Gade & Jerslev, 2005, p.11). Realism or the reality effect is created for the viewer when the real and the referent merge during a mapping ‘recognition’ (Gade & Jerslev, 2005, p.11).



The human body, as a ‘potential instance of authenticity’ and bodily signs are often used to produce a ‘theatre of truth’ or ‘illusion of referentiality’. In this respect I have at times considered and grouped works under the title of *The Theatre of Identity* in an attempt to render moot what is real and what is fictitious, while challenging understandings of artworks and representations generally ‘as autonomous and clearly demarcated entities or ‘bodies’’ (Gade & Jerslev, 2005, p.11). Like many other artists I have used the body of the artist, observer, reader or participator as ‘the locus of a certain production of authenticity working to stress the reality of whatever takes place’.

Historically, photographic imagery shows an engagement with the ‘real’ and ‘truth’ and this engagement is fundamental to the project. Borrowing from performance studies the idea of the body as an authentic instant, or a reality effect, to make the imagery more real, I began to insert myself in the work rather than using a stand-in. Doing this emphasises issues of representability in this shift from the generic to the specific and personal, and positions identity in relation to particular places and histories and thus communities and environments of formation. It also shifts considerations of Maori identity from a generic base to one based more upon iwi, hapu, whanau and geographic affiliations. Similarly, a gay identity is shown to be generic in that it fails to take account of the diversity of positions encompassed within it. Different environmental, personal and experiential factors also come into play which create very different personal experiences of being ‘gay’ before contact with gay ‘community’.

These issues are evident in my work in various ways, from the occasional use of serpentine carving forms as an iwi identifier, to the use of close up to represent both the personal and ethnographically alienated. However, the moko kauwae I use to represent a gay Maori identity is a compromise in that it suggests an effeminate gay identity when placed on a man.

From an investigation of both the relationship between self, performance and narrative as well as an interest in documents of self as instances of the narrative performance of self, I



began to investigate the narrative and self-narrative in relation to others. This followed on from a recognition of self and identity as interfaces created in the between of beings, as figures made from a ground, having an existence and agency in the virtual dimensions of the flesh and the intersubjectivity and intertextuality of the group.

3.6 Identity and community

The social constructionist, Kenneth Gergen, indicates that, in the narrative and performative sense the self is situated instantively in relation to others and, by extension, to the discourses of community over time as a configuring matrix and contextualising scaffolding. Gergen links life to narrative without life in itself being a narrative. He explains how events appear to unfold in a narrative way, not because they are conceptualised or accounted for in any particular way, but because they are indexed in terms of a narrative fore structure. Life can therefore be seen as narrative in nature but not simply a narrative. Gergen suggests that life is realised in language and therefore in the narratives of social life, and, more broadly, in cultural life. Identity is a discursive achievement as such it is a social undertaking in which ‘the limits of our narrative traditions serve as the limits of our identity’ (Gergen, 1998, p.9).

Community is also created and realised through language, because communication generates and coheres group intelligibility. Communities generate narratives and in the process, a history that affirms and sustains community (Gergen, 1998, pp.13-14). This perspective is expanded further by Monk, who writes

‘From a narrative psychology orientation, human communities organise language into narratives that serve to make sense of our lives and the identities that we exhibit in the world...that human beings give expression to their lives, or even live their lives, through stories. Narratives are cultural products communicated in families, in schools, in religious institutions, through all forms of modern-day media,

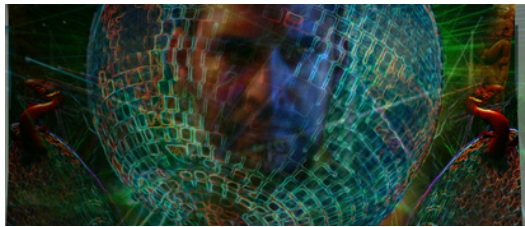


and directed to describe our “nature”, our value and worthwhileness. Narratives construct the social as they get told by someone(s) to some other(s). They are shared experiences which help people to define themselves as groups who share particular allegiances to a set of stories’ (Monk, 2005, p.84).

Each social history selects and incorporates ‘the facts’ sustaining its existence into a story that is intelligible within its own community. In this sense Gergen says there is no impartial history, no story transcending community, context, or discursive tradition. And, because conversations over time become increasingly remote from its indexed particulars, ‘objective’ truth becomes harder to determine. Thus ‘historical consciousness is inherently consciousness of narrative’ (Gergen, 1998, p.14) and echoing Wittgenstein, ‘the limits of our narrative serve as the limits of our identity’ (Gergen, 1998, p.9).

Gergen argues further that lived narratives are essential to the achievement of identity, commenting that emotional discourse gains its meaning not by virtue of its relationship to an inner world but through patterns of social/cultural relationship indexed as ‘emotional expressions ... properly viewed as social performances’. Therefore one is not ‘incited to action’ by emotions, but instead ‘does emotions, or participates in them’ (Gergen, 1998, p.10), which is consistent with existential thinking. Emotions constitute rather than impact social life and are circumscribed by or embedded within broader cultural patterns of relationship (Gergen, 1998, p.10). The emotional act is fundamentally a creation of a relationship, and more broadly, a creation of a particular cultural history (Gergen, 1998, p.11). Narrative discourse therefore functions thus both constantively (to portray the world), and performatively (what it achieves in the very act of expression) (Gergen, 1998, p.8). Historical accounts are only manifestly ‘about the past’. The significance of this past lies in its contribution to contemporary cultural life and the range of values which it instantiates (Gergen, 1998, p.15).

My practice involves a recreating of self in terms of its contexts, in an effort to achieve personal intelligibility. Gergen led me to understand some of the historical constraints that

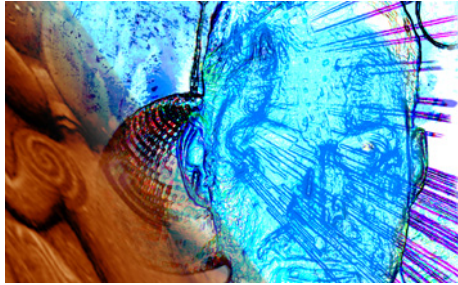


impede both the attainment of an intelligible identity and a moral identity which would be 'worthy and acceptable' in his terms (Gergen, 1998, p.17). He says that narratives of the self are the basis of the 'moral community' '...in terms of the mutual accountability generated by a community' and that 'narrative validity, then, strongly depends on others' affirmation' (Gergen, 1998, p.12). Moreover he goes on to say '...history and community are inextricably intertwined' and that '...individual identity is configured or implicated in historical narratives, so is the achievement of moral being sustained (or impeded) by historical accounts. For good or ill, we each live within and are constructed by particular historical narratives - of our people, culture, nation, region, family and so on' (Gergen, 1998, p.13). Further to this he argues

'the truth bearing capacity of history must be viewed as culturally circumscribed... we inherit...a range of literary and rhetorical devices for generating a sense of the real and objective...we inherit myriad traditions, each favoring different deployments of these devices...within these various traditions, one can "tell the truth"... however, these standards of veracity are community specific, and the extent to which they can be sustained depends on the continued capacity of the community to negotiate reality together' (Gergen, 1998, p.13).

In terms of my identity, the obvious difficulty is that multiple cultural histories, communities of intelligibility and measures of communal worth must be negotiated. Of course all cultures contain narratives facilitating change it is narrative's ability to reconfigure or negotiate canonicity in addition to its epistemic, rhetorical and subjunctive qualities which make an attempt possible at all (Stewart and Rappaport, 2005, pp.58-71).

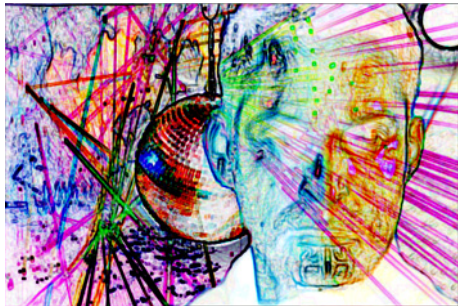
The alternative is to create or participate in a new community. Membership in multiple communities entails difficulties of intelligibility and representability for those who are not similarly situated. These difficulties are further compounded by ambiguities and ambivalences connected with issues of inclusivity and judgements of authenticity, coherence of axiomatic differences and quandaries of meaning; 'tellability' across conventions of be-



ing; and the languaging, communicability or ‘storyability’ of subjective experience which crosses communities. New communities have similar problems of explication for others. Aware of this, I sometimes use devices such as lack of focus, transparency and a visual ‘fogging’ to talk to issues of inclusivity, ambiguity, coherence and tellability.

From this point my research led me to consider the nature of narrative as a human fundamental, as a cognitive mode and as a system, and in consequence identity, community and all cosmologies as narrative systems.

4.0 Narrative cognition and self-organising systems



Emergent from my reading and reflection on personal identity as situated in multiple communities was a visualisation of the project’s component areas as resembling sets in their forms and interactions. Identity in context then becomes a consideration of not just narrative operations but also the system(s) from which it emerges and derives. Alfredo Ruiz’s discussion of narrative as a fundamental cognitive modality in *Narrative in Post-Rationalist Cognitive Therapy* was my starting point for addressing this issue. Ruiz discusses Humberto Maturana’s distinction between a narrative modality and a paradigmatic modality. The former being characterised by linear reasoning and the latter by systemic reasoning (Ruiz, 1997, p.1). In this context narratives and identity narratives make sense only within a system of reference or community of intelligibility.

I found useful Ruiz’s view of narrative thought as concerned with the particular and that abstraction arising from narrative via its use of nonlinear logic. The narrative modality reasons through analogy and metaphor, by evoking similarity, and is therefore more experientially based, whereas paradigmatic thought is rule finding that becomes abstract through universalisation or generalisation of concepts (Ruiz, 1997, p.1).

In terms of my project, there are elements of both narrative and paradigmatic modalities





with regard to the subjectivity of identity and the systemisation of principles of narrative identity formation and narratives of identity. The role of narrative in the social and cultural setting is that of a naturalising agent as well as definer and maintainer of norms (and hence as a subjectivising agent).

It seems to me that the narrative modality is a reasoning tool for the open-ended indeterminacies of the social world. Its workability is based upon shared commonalities such as a biological similarity and a compatibility of hardware and base software, for communication and the embedded situatedness of people as social animals.

Also useful was Ruiz's modelling of (personal) identity as a self-organising system which in a more general way holds true for narrative 'cognition'. This gave me an indication of how narratives might work as a configuring system and how each narrative system, such as self or a community, has its own unique characteristic capacities, limitations and responses. Such systems Maturana says are determined by their structures, which organise experiences of reality using basic principles but different starting points to configure variant unique systems (Ruiz, 1997, p.2).

Richard van Oort builds upon Ruiz's observations in discussing the possible evolutionary development of narrative thinking, how it operates and its value. Of particular value was the linking of Jerome Bruner's recognition of two human cognitive modalities, the paradigmatic and narrative, within a broader evolutionary framework as proposed by Terence Deacon using a hierarchy of cognition based on Charles Pierce's three categories of sign- the icon, index and symbol. In this model the narrative and language require a coeval origin. In Deacon's model of cognition, each level of cognition, each level of cognition builds upon and requires mastery of the one below it, and requires interpretation of increasingly more complex layers of reference (van Oort, 2001, p.2).

Van Oort proposes that 'iconic cognition utilizes iconic referencing where the iconic reference is equivalent to stimulus generalization (its referent). It is the default mode of representation, when we recognize one stimulus as similar to another' (van Oort, 2001,



p.2).

He goes on to say

‘The indexical builds on the iconic reference, in that the sign is associated in time or space with the referent but it does not share similarity, the referent is instead generalised & associated with an interpretive response’ (as with Pavlov’s dogs exhibition of Skinnerian Behaviourism or vervet monkeys warning calls) (van Oort, 2001, p.2).

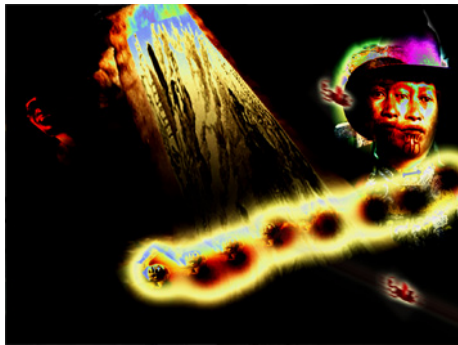
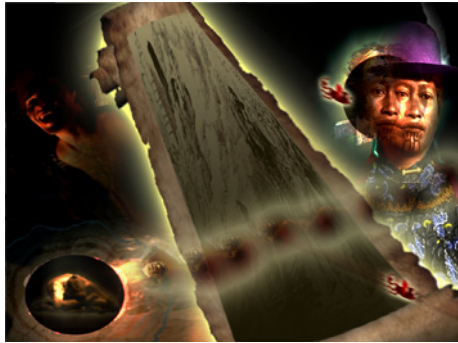
He comments further that

‘...symbolic cognition by shifting the interpretant’s focus from the horizontal reality of small spatial stories (as with indexical cognition such as ducking when a throwing gesture is directed ones way for instance) to the vertical reality of the blended space, the symbolic sign defers our decision to respond indexically’(van Oort, 2001, p.3).

Associated with this is the ‘evolution of elaborated language skills’. Van Oort expands yet further saying that ‘The symbolic reference is generated by the relationship between words and concepts rather than a direct connection to the referent. The symbolic is generalised within a network of signs which exist virtually’ (van Oort, 2001, p.3).

Symbolic reference occurs when an image, idea or story is mapped and projected from one context to a very different context. Symbolic projection requires the deferral of indexical reference, a shift from the immediacy of association of a sign with its worldly referent to a grasp of the sign as a projection of a signified such as identity, community and even the world itself that exists firstly in the fictive space of imagination rather than in the world.

This focus on the internal form of the sign, on the relationship between words, rather than the word and the object itself, is the hallmark, beyond representation, of the aesthetic response (van Oort, 2001, p.4). Thus an explanation and elaboration of the operations of Bourriaud’s semionautic trajectory is provided, as the cognitive connecting of signs via



‘movements’ (shifts) in a semantic field.

As I see it, the transposable mobility of signs and their plasticity of connectiveness through language, reflects both the virtuality of this process and the mutability of signs, achieved through their narrative framing and embedment. This translates into a mutability of sense and meaning which in turn affect judgments of coherence or incoherence (or ambiguity). The possible is constituted by the trajectory of the deferred. Self, other and contextual reality are reconstituted in such ways and narratives are accounts of this journey.

5.0 Autoethnographic narratives

In today’s globalised world, communities are being forced to adapt their terms of reference and their narratives, to accommodate the need for other communities to understand these well enough to be able to communicate meaningfully. As semantic fields become overlapped, communities are brought into greater congruence with each other. However, this process is creating category instability which could threaten the cohering narrative integrity of community and indeed its existence, given that its axioms and paradigms are, as Wittgenstein points out, founded ultimately in faith (McDonald, 1994, p.10). Other commentators including Robert Scholes, Gillian Swanson, Stewart and Rappaport, and Gerald Monk help explicate this process and the place of language and subjectivity in structuring our communications and perceptions.

5.1 Language and the attribution of meaning

Robert Scholes says that ‘For spoken language to exist, human sounds must be organized into a system of phonemic differences. If we assume that these differences have priority over perception, then we must accept that we are indeed in a “prison house of language” in which “our processes of signification, give a spurious order to chaos, creating selves

and worlds both bounded by language”” rather than there being “an order always already in place before we seek to shape it”” (Scholes, 1980, p.206).

Scholes however questions this prioritisation and

‘...whether the arbitrary nature of the “sound-image” means that the concept is non-referential. Because, although perceptions aren’t pure being “affected by the very languaging process that enables them” neither is language “to the extent that it deals with sensory data, it is contaminated by the resistances it encounters’ (Scholes, 1980, p.206).



Meaningful communication, Scholes contends, provides that resistance, commenting that the interactions of differentiation and the external resistances of the wider world as they shape language must then be accounted for in semiosis (Scholes, 1980, p.206). Thus, a language sign is never simply a sound-image linked to a single concept, but is ‘a semantic field of potential meanings’ governed by a social code and the subjective associations of both utterer and interpreter. Communication is achieved when there is sufficient correspondence between interpretants and interpreters.

This commonality is aided by the narrowing of the potential semantic field of the word resulting from its emplacement and situatedness within ‘a syntactic structure, in a discursive pattern, in a social situation, and in a referential context.’ Scholes argues that

‘...a verbal sign in language should be conceived of not in terms of a signifier/ signified relationship (as Saussure himself formulated it) but in terms of a sign/semantic field relationship: one sign with many potential meanings, some determinate, some indeterminate’ (Scholes, 1980, p.207)

The same too is true of other languaging systems which include the visual; all terms are thus temporally in flux and categories are unstable, so language can shift as narratives drift (a memetic shift akin to genetic drift in the biology of communities) and paradigms remade.

Scholes goes on to consider the crucial question: “Of what does the semantic field for any



given verbal sign consist?" He argues that the semantic field is not exclusively verbal '...that is, we carry with us as part of our interpretive equipment-indeed, as a part of language itself-an enormous amount of information that is not normally considered linguistic...that sensations and perceptions of all sorts are a part of our languaging equipment' (Scholes, 1980, p.207).

Just as visual language is 'contaminated' by verbal and other languaging systems. The prison of language and signification is thus undone, Scholes seems to imply, by subjectivity. He further suggests that in language

'Both metaphor and metonymy function as linguistic processes in the perpetual motion of any given language. In this function, they keep language open to life, preventing closure of the arbitrary system of symbols by continually altering the symbolic fields that surround each symbol with potential meanings' (Scholes, 1980, p.208).

This is achieved through firstly semantic shifts that '...depend upon what Aristotle called "an eye for resemblances"' or conceptual iconicity as a generator of metaphors and secondly metonymic indexing, a process of signification which is "based upon an existential contiguity, whether spatial, temporal, or causal" all of which facilitate communicative congruence' (Scholes, 1980, p.208).

5.2 Subjectivity, categorical instability and subjective narratives

Gillian Swanson suggests that subjectivity plays a vital role in facilitating the dynamism of identity discourses in relation to identity and community narratives. Swanson presents subjectivity as a destabiliser of signification through category instability. She says '...the concept of "categorical instability" signals the possibility that representations of subjectivity may challenge the intelligibility of apparently authoritative systems of cultural or sexual classification' (Swanson, 2000, p.189) because many '...representations have a



discernable function: the coalescence of images into stable forms which “reassure or reassert” in terms of dominant discourse’ (Swanson, 2000, p.190). She argues that the

‘...dialogic nature of discourse...works as a series of social interactions: as such it is always in process, interactive, subject to revision and contestation. To that extent, representations- however authoritative- hold within them the possibility of alternative knowledges, and...this may give rise to “categorical instability”’ (Swanson, 2000, p.190).

Swanson goes on to say that ‘...as a result of the perspectival nature of subjective perception, cultural narratives with the subjective at their centre came to be seen as problematic sources of knowledge about “the world” rather than ‘a self’ (Swanson, 2000, p.191) because unlike writing predicated upon the epic memory which presents the past as ‘...impersonal, immutable, unquestionable and absolute’, writing based upon the modern novel’s reconceptualisation of ‘...time, space, history and memory, and the sense of the present’ embeds a ‘...sense of a present, and the contemporary viewpoint, thereby incorporating open-endedness, perspectival relativity, indeterminacy, continuation.’ With this came ‘...a new kind of ‘problematicity...an eternal rethinking and re-evaluating’ deriving from the (multiple) perspective of the subject’ a form associated with the subjective narrative (Swanson, 2000, p.192).

However, in terms of an outcome, she comments:

‘...of the introduction of the subjective into representation ... the subjective itself becomes formed in the image of inconclusiveness and relativity’ and ‘...the concept of the ‘individual’, therefore, is characterized by a lack of wholeness and completeness, and thus a new instability, which renders it historical’ (Swanson, 2000, p.192).

Therefore subjectivity is ‘...that relative field of ‘knowledge’, incorporating difference as well as familiarity. As it takes on the relativity of historical knowledge, subjectivity (and those forms of narrative formed in its perspective) also becomes ongoing, inconclusive



and processual.’ However, she adds that ‘...the introduction of the subjective into narrative comes at some cost to the authority of such representations’ (Swanson, 2000, p.192).

Despite all this, the subjective in its potential to challenge commonly held perceptions, by effecting category instability, operates like an anti-narrative. It thus can open up community narratives and provide a wedge for change by means of dialogic processes.

5.3 Narratives, anti-narratives and narrative utility

Scholes makes it clear that an understanding of the iconic and indexical dimensions of language is important to understanding narrative and the difference between fictional and factual narratives. He says ‘Narration is a word that implicates its object in its meaning’ and that only ‘events’ with a temporal dimension can be narrated. He also mentions that ‘narrative events are the base of a narration’s text’ and that such events are set up as indexing ‘real’ events outside of the narration, which they symbolise. The narrative is then a “specific sort of collective sign”, a diegesis, the icon of a series of events. Narratives are always set in the past as narrations in creating or recreating events follow them’ (Scholes, 1980, p.209).

Elaborating further, Scholes observes: ‘A narration is always a sequencing of events by someone for somebody, if the telling acquires a particular syntactical shape such as beginning-middle-end or situation-transformation-situation and subject matter “which allows for or encourages the projection of human values upon this material” then “we are in the presence not merely of narrative but of story’ (Scholes, 1980, p.210).

In a story the components of the narrative are laid out in the following order: object (the sequence of events referred to); sign (the text in which it is told); and interpretant (the diegesis or ‘constructed sequence of events generated by a reading of the text’). Each of these components has its own temporal characteristics. Interpretation strives (as with my representation of identity) to recreate events, to complete ‘a semiotic circle’ and events



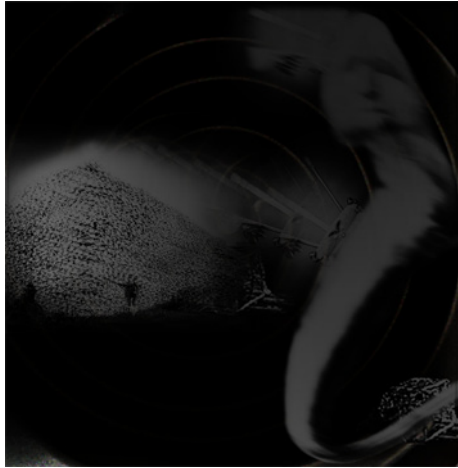
‘become humanised-saturated with meaning and value’ at the point of both entextualisation and interpretation (Scholes, 1980, p.210). Scholes says that a distinction between historical and fictional narratives can thus be made. While historical texts entextualise real events and are auditable by others regarding the veracity of accounting by way of extra-textual information, fictional events by contrast are created in the process of entextualisation, ‘the writer of fiction does not affirm the prior existence of his events, he only pretends to through a convention understood by all who share his culture’ (Scholes, 1980, p.211).

In respect to the project, the documents I produce fall somewhere between the historical and fictional, in that some elements are extra-textually based, whereas others, which relate to a lived subjectivity, must be taken on faith as valid for the subject.

‘The reader’s desire to order and to know are the sources of what Roland Barthes has called (in S/Z) the proairetic and hermeneutic codes in narrative. These codes, like all codes, are cultural; that is, they are the common property of all members of a cultural group. Or to invert the metaphor, all members of such a group are possessed by those codes. Our need for chronological and causal connection defines and limits all of us-helps to make us what we are’ (Scholes, 1980, p. 211).

Unfortunately we are for the most blind to this possession. Generally we do not understand that we (including me, you, us and everything else) are our narratives, or that they are ‘written in sand’.

Postmodernist anti-narratives, Scholes says, attempt to ‘frustrate our automatic application of these codes to all our event-texts.’ Anti-narratives are metafictional because they make us notice, beyond the construction of the diegesis, our habitual interpretive processes, thereby allowing us to see the codes as codes ‘rather than as aspects of human nature or the world’. Anti-narratives also critique and deconstruct in order to challenge and overcome the limitations on growth and vision the naturalisation of particular codes entails, as a ‘prelude to any improvement in the human situation’ (Scholes, 1980, p.212).



Narrativity and narrative processes are seen as problematical in this agenda but Scholes is not sanguine about the success of such a mission because he believes that narrative processes are ‘too deeply rooted in human physical and mental processes to be dispensed with by members of this species. We can and should be critical of narrative structuration, but I doubt if even the most devoted practitioner of anti-narrativity can do without it’ (Scholes, 1980, p.213).

For members of minority cultural groups, narratives of dominant cultural groups act to dismantle the narrative integrity of minority communities, thereby affecting coherence of identity for its members, because the dominant community calls into question the narratives of minority communities, resulting in destabilisation of their particular categories and codes. This is the threat that comes with cultural colonisation.

However this process may also work in reverse as an extension of Swanson’s argument about the effect of subjectivity on category stability. The subjectivity of subject (or ‘warring’ communities) in resisting acts of imposition- to present disruptive alternatives to the narrative of the dominant (or other) culture, and their foundational axioms and categories –potentially undermines and destabilises the dominant (or other) culture’s coherence and authority. Any unravelling of its narratives provides the wedge that ushers in change. This might explain in part the Maori ‘renaissance’ towards the end of the twentieth century. The threat to minority groups is of course greater. Members of minority communities and cannot

‘...“freely” author or reauthor their own narratives of community...but must negotiate, resist, manage, subvert, or appropriate from the existing repertoire of stories or genres through which people (and disease, sex, drugs, gender, “race”, health, safety) are represented...All persons have to do this, but in discussing marginalized and/or oppressed communities and problem-saturated identities, the repertoire tends to be more limited, less varied, and institutional constraints more overdetermined. Furthermore...communities not only have the task of self-authoring positive, meaning-

ful narratives for themselves, but also often of “disauthoring” or divesting themselves of dominant narratives about them’ (Stewart & Rappaport, 2005, p.59).

Dominant cultural narratives

‘...compete with, infect, and disqualify local knowledges. The effects of dominant cultural narratives can be identified in the way questions are predetermined, the null hypothesis already claimed, binarisms preset, and center and margins marked off; they circumscribe that which goes without saying and that which is unspeakable’ (Stewart & Rappaport, 2005, p.58).

What is true for Maori, Maori-Pakeha or gay people is amplified for those people who exist across groups.

The ‘extremities’ are ‘where exceptions or counter-effects are most observable, and where domination is confronted by the alienation it engenders (cf., bell hook’s “marginality as site of resistance”; 1990)’ (Stewart & Rappaport, p.58). A problem here too, is that ‘community- as concept and as experience – also presents a number of challenges. Not least of these is a difficulty of stable definition and the fluidity of changing experience’ (Stewart & Rappaport, 2005, p.70).

When one’s racial or cultural heritage is wholly or in part minoritised and/or one is also a member of a sexual minority, then one is subject to a second set of dominating cultural narratives. Place is determined by fit. If one is dually or multiply constituted as an identity, one may find oneself at the centre of a partisan tug-of-war, in a situation in which the power plays are exacerbated.

‘Many of us are aware of the complexities presented by the experience of inhabiting multiple communities, particularly when those community memberships and the identities implied by them are in one or more sense incompatible...the liminality they may experience both in gay communities and in their “cultural communities”’ means “there are few sites and little cultural space for creating and performing such “hyphenated identities,” and those that do exist may offer a restricted range of roles





and stories' (Stewart & Rappaport, 2005, p.70).

Subjective experience and personal identity may then reside in the narrative cracks, between or across communal and narrative domains. Narratives, however, offer

‘...a transcendence of the private/public and individual/social dichotomies that have been problematic for the conception and study of persons and culture and... in emphasizing intentional participating agents constrained by but negotiating a cultural canonicity and prefigured set of meanings... People are both constituted by and participants in constituting social meaning, including personal and community identities. Narratives are political negotiations. Their authoring and performance are always surrounded and defined by a multidimensional social and cultural context. They implicate communicative practices and codes, institutional structure, complex forms and presentations of agency, and the relations of power to knowledge. To employ the terms of Bakhtin and Gramsci, narratives of identity and community are social practices, “deployed across the institutionalized terrain of social formation because the genres through which such “authorship” takes place are institutionally bound”. Thus, identity and community narratives are never entirely the property or sole creation of a particular group of people because identity and community narratives are “populated- over populated” – with the intentions of others’ (Stewart & Rappaport, 2005, p.59).

The permeability of narratives is thus a force for communal or cultural dynamism. A dual or multiply constituted identity personifies that permeability. However colonisation complicates the scape of identity by its exacerbation of the political dimension.

The narrative in stressing agentivity, in delineating a plot and a perspective, in observing canonicity for coherence and viability in its epistemic and rhetorical dimensions and ‘sub-junctiveness’ permits an ‘openness to readings and interpretations’, which is ‘particularly useful for social negotiation and for managing apparently incommensurate experiences and interpretations’ (Stewart & Rappaport, 2005, p.58).



Thus, in terms of the representation of a combined mixed racial and alternative sexual identity, narrative, although it observes ‘canonality’ (‘that is, stories must observe certain rules or conventions, recognize and draw from, existing cultural forms or genres’), also provides the means to make the “noncanonical” –the unusual, the transgressive, paradoxical, or seemingly irrational- comprehensible the capacity to provide “a logic of illogic”, a rationale for the apparently irrational’ (Stewart & Rappaport, 2005, p.58). This provides a means to restructure and expand the field of possible identities.

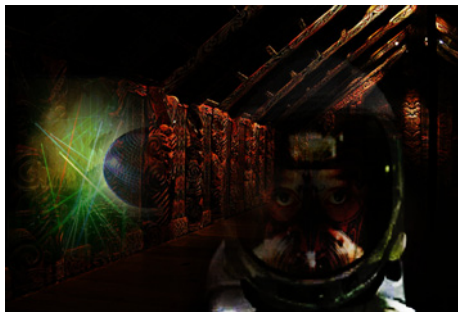
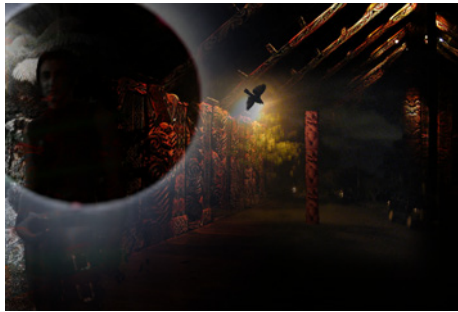
Importantly, Gerald Monk points out ‘The narrative metaphor establishes for us a semblance of stability and coherence, not fixed essences’ (Monk, 2005, p.84). Stewart and Rappaport also highlight the importance of communal narratives in implementing change (in relation to HIV). Because their narratives flexibility, expansiveness and subjunctiveness allow them to accommodate

‘...a social and political environment that is continually shifting and changing. Narrative communities allow for a certain permeability of boundaries, for the negotiation of simultaneous and often circumstantial membership in multiple communities and, importantly, for an authoring of shared community depending on the particular problem or experience at hand. In this regard, it is worth remembering that for many people their experience of community membership is primarily or only narrative in nature...’ (Stewart & Rappaport, 2005, p.71).

By extension, subjectivity must play a role in implementing change via the dialogic nature of discourse, either epistemic and rhetorical, in that it contests or countervails against disnarrating community narratives, and may effect an assimilative revision of a community narrative. Thus, subjectivity within a community is a source of communal dynamism.

Monk notes that discourses are

‘...shaped and constrained by the wider social structure on the one hand, and socially constitute the structure on the other. They are the domain in which what is regarded as normal, acceptable, right and truthful, and what is possible get con-



structured. They serve as clusters of meanings, recurrent assertions and understandings or interrelated sets of statements that circulate among a community. Discourses are the basis from which performative actions are made and are expressed in a variety of forms, including nonverbal communication, visual symbols and written or spoke words. In fact, discourses shape how we think, behave, talk and respond to each other and our experience of life' (Monk, 2005, p.87).

Discourse, he says, involves bringing participants into a relationship through 'position calling', and, that different positions can offer participants different degrees of entitlement which shape

'...the subsequent moves in the conversation. ... Positioning goes beyond mere words to a broader realm where socio-political actions shape what one is doing to another. This back and forth process results in the politics of mean making. Speaking is not just reporting on what is being thought, but becomes an action in the social world. As we engage in conversation with another, we act upon ourselves and others within our social context' (Monk, 2005, p.88).

In discourse, metonymic indexing is a process of signification, which is '...based upon an existential contiguity, whether spatial, temporal, or causal' (Scholl, 1980, p.208). This appears to put the subjective and experiential on the same footing as that which is received as 'real' through discourse. This opens up dialogue. Monk speaks of an awareness of choices arising from discourse through glimpses of other possibilities, and says that choices are therefore made '...from the outside in' (Monk, 2005, p.88).

Thus narrative may effect change through re-envisaging, implementing new understandings of self, other, community and the world- and how and what it is to be and act in it- and has done so for me in the course of this project. Narrative therefore is not just a communicative tool. It also performs the 'psychic surgery', this is fundamental to its downstream effects.

6.0 Fictions and factions

‘Identity is what you say you are according to what they say you can be.’

6.1 Position calling: Authenticity, alienation & connection

‘What is to become of the hybrid person who does not fit into one of society’s designated ethnic categories? This is the dilemma faced by people who are a part of and between, two distinct races. This inability to “fit” into society’s racial categorisations can result in difficulty determining dual status, responsibilities, and positions relative to both racial groups. Thus, the hybrid person is often forced to occupy an “in-between” position, or negotiate many “border-crossings”. This form of marginalisation often results in complex difficulties articulating an ethnic identity’ (Webber, 2008, p.23).

In discourse, dialogic processes bring participants into relationship through position calling. Some positions are privileged or more privileged hierarchically and normatively than others. This naturalisation of the familiar as the universal calls everything else into a position of relativity.

Smiler and McKee say ‘Possible identities in each world are also constrained by interpretations of “difference” assigned by others.’ Identity ‘is not a discovery; it is an achievement in an exchange of discursive economies. Some aspects of our identity are easier to achieve than others. Many are produced and assigned by the society we inhabit’ (Smiler, 2007, p.101).

It could be argued that some identities as a whole are easier to achieve than others and that which is non-normative is more prone to disnarration and must negotiate its place.



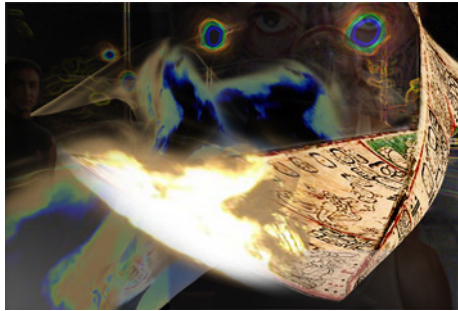
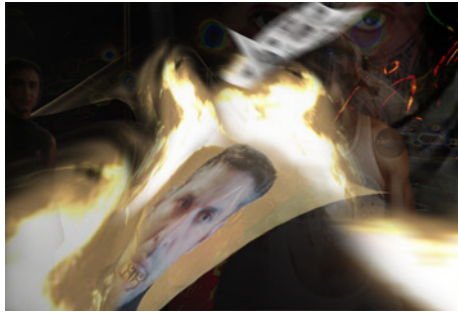


When identity is dually or multiply situated, a legitimate place in both or several groups must be negotiated because ‘...sometimes people interpret being in-between categories as being inauthentic’ (Scholl, 2001, p.154).

Authenticity suggests ‘actions/representations are true, universal, just without there being explicit criteria to assess these claims’ (Varney, 2001, p.89). Accusations or suspicions of inauthenticity can therefore be difficult to counter and promote alienation.

Ip Manying comments that people of mixed Maori heritage can be subject to demands to espouse a single loyalty, rejecting all others, in order to secure any sort of place at all within Maoridom. This has been my own experience, and often takes the form of an explicit demand stated in terms of ‘Are you for us or against us?’. Whether racial admixture leads to marginalisation depends on a host of personal attributes including physical features, ones’ ability to perform Maoriness and, more recently, possession of Te Reo. The alternative course of not choosing a single ‘loyalty’ can result in a ‘between’ position (as peripheral but not an outsider, as included but excluded, and in but out) or in simply being an outcast. Certainly the pressure to renounce my mother’s Scottish heritage (of which her father was proud) and my English father’s heritage in favour of a purely Maori identity now seems unreasonable, particularly when in viewed in relation to notions of whanaungatanga and whakapapa.

The first position of being ‘between’ means a lack of any cohesive identity, or integral cultural base, or even any basis for being constituted as a subculture within the cultural frameworks in which one might have been situated. While the second of exclusion any basis for a moral identity, as Kenneth Gergen defines it, requiring as it does concordance with communal narratives of what is ‘worthy and acceptable’ (Gergen, 1998, p.17). In both circumstances, one might become isolated in this ‘between’ or ‘outside space’ as a disnarrated remainder and constituting what I call ‘cultures of one’, requiring the invention or, more likely reinvention, individual by individual, of a context of or for one’s existence.



Bridging the divides of race and culture have become problems for all cultures, and remains the challenge for biculturalism and multiculturalism in a globalised world. A community's ability to narratively assimilate dual and multiply constituted identities is a test of this. In my experience, to embrace a dual heritage was to occupy 'no-man's land'. In the gay and straight worlds, Maoriness remains a complicating factor. One can be too Maori or too gay, or be gay or Maori in unacceptable ways in the gay world. Part-castes from my perspective, depending upon how Maori they present, might have chosen to either pass in one parent culture or affiliate with one of their parent cultures in order to escape the restrictions or norms of the other, or avoid the marginality of a 'between' existence.

In Maori society as I knew it, I was often peripheralised by my Pakeha appearance and a non-ideal and non-normative academic, rather than, physical or sports orientation. This lack of a common ground was isolating for me, and led to a perception by others that I was unsociable, which, in Maori terms, is an identity bind.

In Pakeha society my position has been more ambiguous. When I was younger, I was known by my Maori middle name, but had a Pakeha appearance (the luck of the genetic dice). My social status was therefore ambiguous, appearing to belong in Pakeha society but my name saying otherwise. Like Patrick in Smiler and McKee's study, I have rejected '...the notion of primacy between facets of identity that are nonnegotiable and equally important for social survival in various contexts' (Smiler and McKee, 2007, p.101).

My experience of 'a conflict' or 'stress from competing claims' is not unique. For example, deaf Maori have '...described how they were often expected by either hearing Maori or by Deaf to "choose" a primary affiliation as either Maori or as Deaf, in solidarity with the agenda of each group. But they felt that these two identity characteristics were not separable and that framing it as a matter of choice or priority misunderstood their position' (Smiler and McKee, 2007, p.101).

David Murray found that surveyed individuals felt uncertain of their Maori identity if



they had limited Maori cultural knowledge especially if they felt it might be perceived by other Maori as representing an alienation from Maori and thus inauthenticity (Murray, 2003, p.240). These individuals tended to refrain ‘...from making statements of primary identification, and instead felt that some elements of their complex identity were more central than others, according to context “ thus illustrating “identity salience”’ (Smiler and McKee, 2007, p.102).

Salience is an effective way of finding commonality with other people, achieving coherence in other’s terms and ‘getting along’. Such strategies of course may call for down-playing or supressing some aspects of one’s identity. Gay Maori have tended to find limited well circumscribed positions available to them in Maoridom, or more commonly found no position at all, because of lack of salience stemming from their non-heteronormative sexual identity. In the Maori community a gay Maori might even project a heterosexual image, while leading a very different private life.

In many non-Western cultures, such as traditional Indian and Asian communities, where family is paramount, the expectation is that the non-normative is confined to the private life (Kumashiro, 2001, p.6). This is also the default situation where there is no traditional behavioural template or there has been a colonial disruption of a tradition of other gender categories (some cultures acknowledge as many as five)⁵.

‘Gay’, is seen by many colonised peoples as an alien cultural construct and has been rejected ‘post-colonially’ (Kumashiro, 2001, p.6). However, this ignores the collateral damage done by disruption of tradition by colonisation, as well as the effects of cultural colonisation.

This damage is expressed in the marginalisation and outcast status ascribed to those who are unwilling ‘post-colonially’ to pass as heterosexual or are unable to pass (the result of a colonised lack of socialisation into now expected practices coupled with a newly colo-

⁵ These are man, woman, man with a vagina, woman with a penis and a transgendered gender.

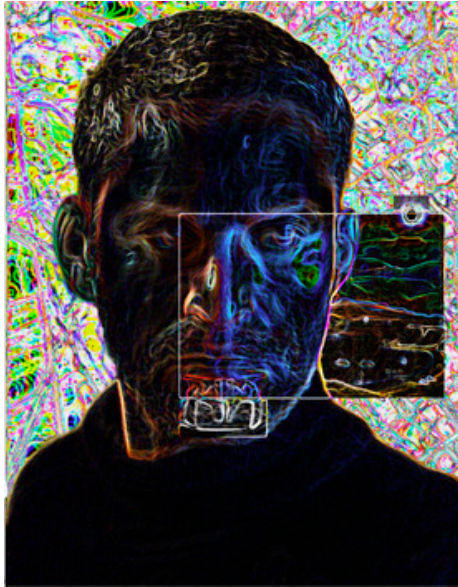


nised eye for the non-heteronormative) or be reintegrated into the culture (where the expanded traditional formulations of sexual identity categories have not been reinstituted). Thus, by default they may come to occupy ‘gay’ as an identity.

Many Maori regard a gay Maori identity with suspicion as a colonised position. There is a Maori perception that gay is a culturally specific Western and Pakeha identity category which is inauthentic and deserving of alienation. This is despite gay being ‘...not solely a white thing’ in that contemporary gay (and queer) culture and identity is founded on the actions of drag queens of various races at Stonewall, including Afro-American and Latino drag queens (Kumashiro, 2001, p.7).

Michel Foucault ‘...denaturalized dominant understandings of sexual identity. In emphasizing that sexuality is not an essentially personal attribute but an available cultural category’ (Jagose, 1996, p.79). In respect to attitudes to gay people there seems to be an understanding of this by all sides. Takatapui is one of the commoner contemporary terms for nonheteronormative Maori and ‘carries with it a strong statement about one’s sexual and cultural identification and attachment’ (Aspin, 2005, p.6). But as a term it is far from universally accepted or used within Maoridom or gay Maoridom (Murray, 2003, p.241). Takatapui foreshadows a possible reintegration of gay Maori back into Maori culture. However, despite its re-minting takatapui is not the identity label used by the majority of gay Maori, most still employ gay as an identifier, acceptance within Maoridom whether as takatapui or gay still remains an issue. Such redefinition smacks of an ‘endogenous colonialism’ (Smiler and McKee, 2007, p.93).

It has been noted that discourses of indigenous authenticity are a mechanism by which groups colonised by Euro-American powers may demonstrate cultural autonomy and by which oppressive assimilationist agendas can be resisted. However, in many instances these discourses paradoxically reproduce representations of difference developed by the colonizing societies in the first place. It may be that gay Maori have been rendered alienated and inauthentic in this way.



Maori have also associated a dual Maori-Pakeha identity with assimilation and the historical agenda of extinguishing Maori and Maori culture. Thus a dual identity has been treated suspiciously as a colonised position, one tainted by a perception that it is privileged by Pakeha connections and, in Maori terms co-opted and alienated. Therefore, people who are simultaneously gay and also embrace a dual heritage may be considered to be more alienated and inauthentic.

In my case, my identity as also part Pakeha, has often confounded this expectation, perhaps because Pakeha are dominant. In the past it has seemed to me that Maori was what happened to me and around me and through me, I was it, but it was not entirely me being so narrowly inclusive. This sense of not fitting within the bounds as formulated has not diminished with age, although the bounds have changed, I too have changed. It is only in recent times that I have felt that I could now fit within the bounds of a broader Maoridom than I knew when I was younger.

In Pakeha terms to be part Maori (unless one can and chooses to pass as something else) is to not be Pakeha, that is to be Maori rather than part European and therefore hegemonically something lesser. For many Maori, being part Maori (most if not all of us are in fact now only 'part' Maori) is acceptable only if one identifies as Maori first and foremost and fits Maori norms, otherwise one is not *really* Maori. This seems to me to be an attempt to eliminate what is seen to be the privileged 'middle' ground of admixture⁶. Cross-'cultural' positions are often treated by both parent cultures as lacking legitimacy and as suffering an alienated inauthenticity. Rather than having a footing in two groups, one ends up with no footing in either group. Genealogy can divide and split off as much as it can embrace. One can be nullified in effect by both parent cultures as the other's 'other'. In respect to this, no fixed position as a locus of identity emerges, as my attempt to analyse the positioning possibilities of a gay Maori-Pakeha in Aotearoa New Zealand reveals.

⁶ In this it echoes the very explicit call of Black Brazilians to those who are racially mixed to abandon their hegemonically lesser status and to politically ally in order to negotiate a change of status for all who fall outside of white Brazilian privilege (Spickard & Burroughs, pp.154-170).



As a racial intermediary (part-castes, mulatto, etc) to parent communities one represents:

1. Colonisation and its threats/realities or its inescapability, extinction
2. Inauthenticity and alienation
3. Inverse synergy, or less than its parts- miscegenation/contaminant of purity
4. The future and change, a possible stake for both in this as shared family
5. A politically alliable constituency

As a model

- a. Assimilating or invasive into one or the other
- b. A buffer or allied as social intermediary with one against the other (with the dominant culture in Brazil or South Africa historically), so peripheral to one and oppositional to the other
- c. Bridging both
- d. Abandoned between
- e. Peripheral to both

As an alternate sexual identity in Pakeha culture

1. Minority, abnormal, deviant, threat,
2. Politically alliable
3. A market demographic
4. Some social function as creative or source of new perspectives
5. Control group
6. Scapegoat (among the lowest of the low a legitimate target for social catharsis)

As a model

- a. Oppositional (like the racial other)

- b. And/or peripheral
- c. Or interstitial as mostly invisible

As a sexual practice in a minority culture (not my position)

- 1. Acceptable if identity conforms to cultural expressions of gender

As a model

- a. Contained within the minority parent culture
- b. Interstitial



As a sexual identity within a racial/ethnic minority

- 1. Represents colonisation and its threats/realities both racially and sexually, an expression of the feminisation of the 'other' or socially deviant other/ contamination
- 2. Lowest of the low hierarchically, potential outlet for group angers but family
- 3. Inauthentic and alienated

As a model

- a. A peripheral between to the minority parent culture but not a bridge
- b. Abandoned between as outcast constitutes an intermediary cultural domain

As a recognisably alternate sexual - mixed race identity

As above for the most part, lowest of the low hierarchically and hegemonically

As a model

- a. The periphery of the racially-mixed peripheral or possibly all in the same boat
- b. Abandoned between both
- c. Outcast to both (thus not between) constitutes a new cultural domain

In contrast, as an invisible alternate sexual and/or mixed race identity

As a model

Fits within one or both parent cultures

The fit being dependent upon the cast of features, one may pass as one of the parent races and be able to fit within that racial context or, if racially nondescript pass as a member of either race and fit within both races by choice. One may also either fit within the alternative sexuality framework in this context or pass oneself off as sexually normative.



The situatedness of the identity made up of Maori, Pakeha and a non-heteronormative sexuality is contingent on visibility and how one physically or culturally presents and also how one stands in relation to one's communities. One might pass, one might not pass, or choose not to pass in terms of both race and sexuality.

One might be fully or partially included, or excluded, or participative within one or both of one's racial communities or within the heterogeneous historical default community of queer people. One can therefore belong, be marginal, be between, be interstitial to some or all. Or one can occupy a 'third' space, or rather than this catch all, create a new identity domain altogether.

Such a variety of individual positions, which together do not match up, mean one is essentially unplaced, unsituated. The need for labels may then reflect a need to resist excessive fragmentation and self-incoherence. (Scholl, 2001, p.155)

Barry Barclay's concept of the 'Fourth Cinema' as indigenous cinema defines indigeneity ambiguously when discourse is repositioned in relation to those who combine Maori and Pakeha, or are gay Maori. While he delineates what references "surface features" as opposed to what constitutes indigeneity expressions of core values in film making, it is



suggested he also talks about inclusively recognising a diversity of different indigenous historical experiences in terms of ‘...a shared experience of being Indigenous’ (Murray, 2008, p.16).

How far this recognition extends in practice is not clear in regard to those with dual or gay identities. A whole series of questions emerge from the above suggestion. Should gradations of indigeneity to be instituted on the basis of blood fraction? Are these gradations in reference to intermediate cultural expressions and world-views? What latitude is given to those who identify as dually heritaged?

Is the issue one of embracing dual heritage, and of loyalty (and thus disloyalty?) to both? Or is it that loyalty is narrowly predicated in terms of what is acceptable variation away from a given cultural base? Is this an issue of purity? That is, of hybridisation (as fragmentation or contamination), and thus loss of ‘pure’ culture and core values? Is political unity the issue? Alienation would seem to reduce the politically alliable base somewhat. How then is treatment of gay Maori which reflects imposed colonial values alien to Maori values derived from whanaungatanga and whakapapa to be understood? Will greater latitude prevail in recognition of this? Can loyalty still be demanded on unilateral terms? How can such a stance be sustained in the face of the post-contact cultural reworkings and revisions of Maori culture?

6.2 Cultural invention

Cultural invention is an important consideration in relation to cultural and cross-cultural identity. This is primarily because contemporary culture and tradition are considered unstable realities, and as inventions ‘...designed to serve contemporary purposes’ or as Lindstrom put it ‘an attempt...to read the present in terms of the past by writing the past in terms of the present’ (Hanson, 1989, p.890).

Allan Hanson contends that changes in culture are negotiated narratively through a shift



in signs - a semiotic shift analogous to genetic drift (referring to ‘language as the DNA of culture’). Thus as a culture changes over time, so does its formulation of cultural identity, and what it does and does not encompass. He says further that ‘...when people invent their own traditions it is usually to legitimate or sanctify some current reality or aspiration’ (Hanson, 1989, p.890).

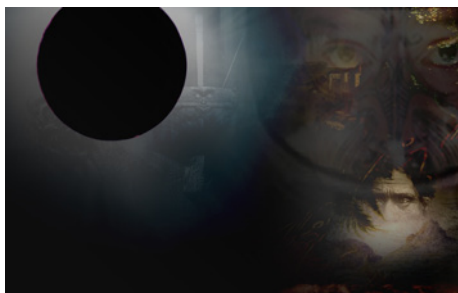
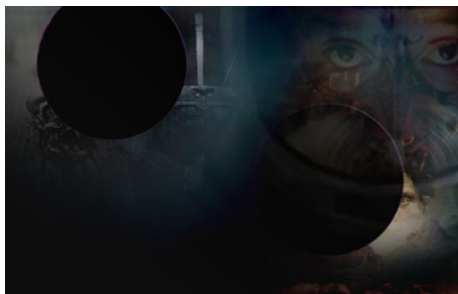
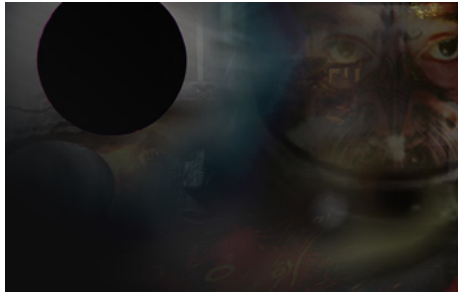
As examples of cultural invention, Hanson cites Maori’s claiming of ‘the cult of Io and the discovery and migration stories concerning Kupe, Toi, and the Great Fleet’ as their authentic heritage in order to ‘...bolster a sense of their own ethnic distinctiveness and value’ as a society which is ‘on a par with Pakehas’ and

‘...equally valid but distinct from Pakeha culture. To promote that image, it is necessary to stress the unique contribution that Maori culture has made to national life-different from but no less valuable than the Pakeha contribution’ (Hanson, 1989, p.894).

Maori culture was ‘...represented as the ideal counterbalance’ to Pakeha’s detached rationality lacking ‘passion and spontaneity’ which demonstrates a loss of the ‘appreciation for magic and the capacity for wonder or awe inspired by the unknown; Pakeha culture is out of step with nature’ because, according to Maori Marsden, Pakeha ‘abstract rational thought and empirical methods cannot grasp the concrete act of existing which is fragmentary, paradoxical and incomplete. The only way lies through a passionate, inward, subjective approach’ (Hanson, 1989, p.890).

This cultural reinvention informed the presentation of the traditional artworks in the *Te Maori* exhibition in the early 1980’s and was responsible for advancing perceptions of the worth of Maori and Maori culture both internationally and within New Zealand.

Quoting Handler and Linnekin, Hanson points out that ‘there is no essential, bounded tradition ... the ongoing reconstruction of tradition is a facet of all social life’. Hanson argues that ‘to entertain the notion of a historically fixed tradition is to affirm what Jacques Derrida calls the “metaphysics of presence” or “logocentrism” and that it has been “necessary



to replace the metaphysics of presence with a more fluid, decentered view.”” Because the centre Derrida says has

‘...no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This was the moment when ... in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse’ (Hanson, 1989, p.898).

Hanson argues that Maori cultural invention

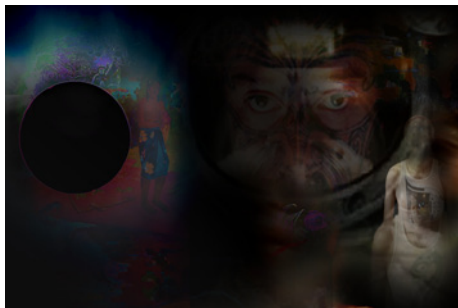
‘...represents not really a distortion of traditional Maori culture but one set of sign-substitutions in the play of signification that is itself the essence (if we may be allowed to use that word) of Maori culture... It follows from this that the analytic task is not to strip away the invented portions of culture as inauthentic, but to understand the process by which they acquire authenticity’ (Hanson, 1989, p.898).

Central to this argument is social reproduction as enabling ‘sign-substitution in a play of signification’, which is the source of cultural invention. Hanson considers invention of culture as part of the everyday activity of social reproduction which involves mimetic learning, embodying and transmission as part of ongoing interpersonal communication. This is consistent with the symbolic interactionist view that ‘...we construct our own and each other’s identities through our everyday encounters with each other in social interaction... social life is the product of social phenomena...human understandings are constructed through historical social practices’ (Monk, 2005, p.82)

Moreover, Hanson comments that,

‘...each person is teacher as well as learner in the process, because his or her behavior also serves as a model upon which still other people construct their behavior. No one bit of behavior can be said to have ultimate authenticity, to be the absolute and eternal “right way” of which all the others are representations. All of the bits of behavior are models: models of previous bits and models for subsequent ones.’

However Hanson goes on to say that there is



‘...something distinctive about culture invention. It is, after all, much too strong a phrase to use for every-day social reproduction. As a first approximation, it might be said that inventions are sign-substitutions that depart some considerable distance from those upon which they are modeled, that are selective, and that systematically manifest the intention to further some political or other agenda’
(Hanson, 1989, p.898).

In Hanson’s opinion

‘...anthropological invention belongs to a larger set of inventive sign-substitutions in contemporary Western social thought, represented by thinkers such as Derrida and described by Clifford as “a pervasive condition of off-centeredness in a world of distinct meaning systems, a state of being in culture while looking at culture, a form of personal and collective self-fashioning.” To acknowledge the presence of inventions in anthropology” misses “the point of the entire argument. It would assume the existence of some other form of discourse that trades in fixed rules and eternal verities-in short, that logocentrism reigns. To the contrary, the thesis of this essay is that invention is an ordinary event in the development of all discourse, which therefore never rests on a permanent foundation. From this point of view truth and knowledge stem-and always have stemmed-from inventions in the decen-tered play of sign-substitutions’ (Hanson, 1989, p.899).

The implications for Maori identity are firstly, that as formulated (at a given moment) identity is a play of signification which is politically driven and, secondly, that there is no fixed Maori reality, core values, essence or experience of Maoriness. Cultural identity is like a baton passing on, but it is the act of passing on which is important rather than what is being passed on. In this way Maori evolved from East Polynesians and will evolve into something else in the future. Maori and Maori identity, are thus both cultural inventions. The malleability and permeability of identity and community as social categories and constructs, and as both simultaneously nouns and verbs or objects and processes, underscores



the extent to which they are intertwined. Seismic shifts in a community's environmental context, will be experienced by that community, as disruptions to its cohering narrative systems. These shifts must be countered by assimilative reworking of those narratives if the community is to survive. When this happens identity in terms of that community must be reworked too.

Cultural invention, as a mechanism for valid reinvention of a culture's identity, to some extent renders moot any accusations of cultural alienation or inauthenticity directed at individuals when they depart from the group's normative experiences at a given moment. This is indeed the case for Maori which is in itself a construct that been distorted at a very fundamental level by colonisation.

Accusations of cultural alienation or inauthenticity may therefore be aimed at directing the rate of any change. The politics of difference are thus about controlling the effects of 'outside' influences.

Politics is disproportionately influenced by a 'persuasive' few, so the political aim is fundamentally directed at short-circuiting and shaping consensus. In this process of renegotiating boundaries important considerations are inevitably overlooked. Much of 'what I am' and 'what I represent' has been central to political contests both within and without Maoridom. Being in the position because I combine gay, Maori and Pakeha, I sometimes feel ill at ease at times although understanding and identifying with the ongoing project to preserve and reconstitute Maori culture and values, I wonder whether I will be written in or out of the evolving narrative.

Hanson says cultural inventions raise 'fundamental questions about the nature of cultural reality'. Every perspective on culture, as a construct, is an invention. Such constructs are inevitably partial and incommensurate with the larger reality, which results from the interactions and agreements of its members. These agreements are constantly being renegotiated, so culture as an entity is as unstable and multiply constituted as identity. Cultural changeability renders political essentialism in relation to the expression of identity sus-

pect.

6.3 Multiply situated identity



While ‘identity is about what you inherit but it’s also about the choices you make’ (Scholl, 2001, p.153) the dilemma is that ‘...the subject, rather than being in charge of its story, emerges in being subjected to its story’ (Thiem, 2002, p.7). Identity implies situatedness but presents difficulties when identity straddles different communities. Narratives and their interactions are fundamental to situatedness, so both shape and disorganise the terrains of identity, society, culture and history.

In contemporary academic literature, self and identity are no longer perceived as singular and essentialised. It has been suggested that the self or the ‘I’ has been used in the literature as a ‘device by which unified narratives and coherent commitments are created’ and that the ‘I’ is not an entity, ‘...although it can be portrayed as a singular viewpoint from which to view the world. The ‘I’ occupies a multiplicity of discursive positions from which to speak’ (Monk, 2005, p.81)⁷.

Hermans and Kempen regard the ‘I’ as a product of history, which has evolved from institutions and traditions. From this standpoint, ‘the self as a speaking voice is not an individual voice at all, but a collective voice carrying the collective stories people tell one another.’ (Monk, 2005, p.81). In regard to notions of self ‘the term “relational selves” is useful in describing the complexity of human identity’ (Monk, 2005, p.80). The self can also be seen as ‘simultaneously connected to a number of different identity discourses and resides within overlapping identities...In post-modern everyday life, as well as in post-modern science, one occupies a multiplicity of standpoints’ (Monk, 2005, p.81). Rather

⁷ Jacques Lacan, similarly, sees subjectivity as learnt rather than an essential property of the self. (Jagose, 1996, p.80)



than being singular in nature self and identity are now considered to be being multiply constituted.

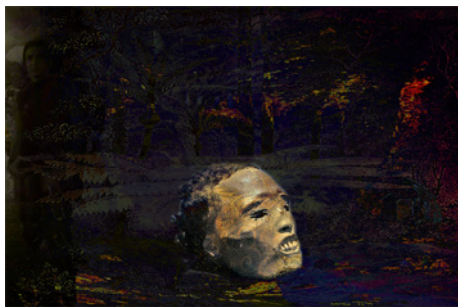
Such a model of identity is readily understood when it is framed within the discourses of a single cultural or narrative system and speaks a familiar tongue. Maori and Pakeha (unlike the Iwi and Europeans who first met) are often spoken of as constituting a binary as a result of colonisation and interaction, whereby they have come to 'share' a language and its system of narrative referents. As a result, non-heteronormative sexual identities were disnarrated historically as socially pathological until relatively recently by both cultures in this binary system.

Historically gay/queer culture developed as an interstitial 'culture' in hiding.

In this historic narrative framework a 'gay' Maori identity is affected by both hierarchic and hegemonic narrative framings of identity categories, forming in comparatively recent historical terms a minority within a minority and occupying by default the interstices of a gay interstitial 'culture'. I tend to represent this isolation of gay Maori by the figure as solitary or in other ways separated, perhaps reflecting my own identity which has been problematised by being both racially dually constituted and non-heteronormative. The moko tuhituhi also represents this separation. While a dual Maori-Pakeha identity is positioned between neither/nor, an alternative public sexual identity is marginalised in both communities.

While all identities are in actuality unfixed and processual, the majority are given a semblance of stability and coherence by narrative means. However some identities are less firmly grounded and relatively amorphous, in that they fall between the narrative 'cracks'. This is essentially the position I find myself in, and representing this is one of the challenges I face in representing my identity.

What emerges from a denial of cultural essentialisms, discourse analysis, and, post-structuralist beliefs; is a view of identity (and self or at least formulations of self) as the product of discursive narratives and, as such, as provisional and contingent. Foster and



Kinuthia have however identified several factors which ‘act in combination, to produce a fluid, dynamic, sense of identity in which one or more of the individual characteristics is selected, mediated, and drawn out in a response to particular situational, social or societal conditions’ (Smiler and McKee, 2007, p.96)⁸

The elements of my identity variously situate me in relationship (as salience and contingency dictate) to:

Western normativity and privilege

Pakeha New Zealander normativity and privilege

Maori normativity and privilege

Heteronormativity and privilege

Gay normativity and privilege (the irony of queers excluding those who are too queer (Kumashiro, 2001, p.10) or at times not queer enough)

This suggests to me that identity is situated in relation to a terrain rather than being simply assigned a place.

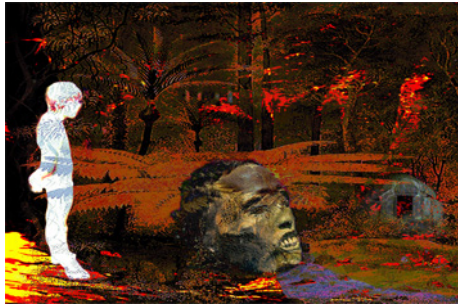
Smiler and McKee say identity is the construction or consequence of ‘a process of interaction between people, institutions and practices’. As such, identity may shift with context and time. Stryker and Burke suggest that ‘persons have as many identities as distinct networks within which they occupy positions and play roles’. Smiler and McKee similarly comment on people ‘achieving identity by taking on culturally recognised roles and

⁸ These factors are defined as:

situational conditions- ‘the physical locations in which the socialization takes place’;

Social conditions- ‘the social interactions and experiences of inclusion and exclusion, determining resultant affinities and identification with social groups’;

Societal conditions - ‘broad societal trends and patterns such as institutionalized discrimination and monoculturalism, stereotyping, socioeconomic status, and visibility of individual characteristics in popular culture, politics, and the economy. ‘



participating in meaningful social interaction' (Smiler and McKee, 2007, p.96). This view presents identity as an interface, handle, social convenience, and a working construct; rather than as a summation of the whole individual.

Monk takes an alternative view saying 'From a post-modern perspective, our identity is the product of our own interpretation and reconstruction of history as mediated through the cultural contexts to which we have access' (Monk, 2005, p.81). This view presents identity as an interface made by individuals to fit the demands of a society and culture. It is perceived according to its match with the expectations it sets up, for behaviour (Gergen, 1998, p.10). When the reality this interface represents becomes difficult to frame because of the limits of convention, and it uses what it can as best it can a mismatch occurs and identity becomes compromised. One might attempt to perform oneself as one is but this performance may be misread or rejected. Identity then fails to achieve coherence as self and becomes instead some generic 'other'. Moral identity is thus unachievable within the terms of community. Such a position might be represented by its failure to read, by utilising ambiguous referents and a limitation of reading and (as I have found in practice) through a presentation of partialities.

Monk arguably allows for the broadening of the matrix of identity formation to include the influence of technology and its mediation of popular culture as contributory to identity. Thus members of local cultures can be affiliated with global culture and thereby global identities are formed. Mine is one such expression (Riemenschneider, 2000/2001, pp. 139-160).

Such views of identity seem to me to be commensurate with each other, and indicate the complexities governing expressions and readings of identity as well as the gulf between representations and the realities they represent.

The social constructionists' contention that all knowledge is historically and culturally specific and that psychology would do well to 'extend its enquiries beyond the individual to the social, economic and political realms of life' also locates identity in relation to a ter-



rain on the basis that if one ‘cannot have direct access to understanding the nature of the world, our observation of what exists is what we perceive to exist’ (Monk, 2005, p.83). Understanding is therefore filtered through various historical, social, and cultural lenses. Identity when bound to its communities is therefore either constructed in relation to a terrain or emerges as distributed across this terrain rather than being separable and autonomous. This recalls McDonald’s observation ‘If the narrator is a form of action, we cannot privilege certain parts of the text as “representative” of the whole. Rather, we must observe the metonymic dispersal of the narrative presence along the entire course of the text’ (McDonald, 1994, p.8).

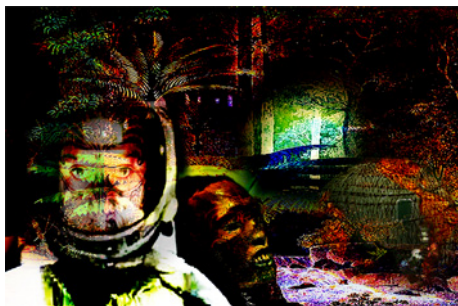
6.4 Hybridity

While situatedness and narratability emerge as key problems for amongst others non-normative, minority, hyphenated, dual or multiply creolised identities and hybrid identities, all of which have their own particular contexts and issues.

Hybrids have been described as ‘...having two voices, two languages, two consciousnesses,’ and being situated at the ‘...collision between differing points of view on the world’ as being like and unlike those they spring from and ‘...pregnant with potential for new world views’ and ‘...new visions for community’ (Webber, 2008, p.25).

Hybridity is also considered to constitute a third space which over time ‘...enables other positions to emerge’ (Webber, 2008, p.26). This third space Hommi Bhabba says ‘...displaces the histories that constitute it and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom...the process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation’ (Webber, 2008, p.27).

Hybrid positions therefore have a different interpretation of historic memory, and their institution of new narratives and narrative forms demonstrate the ‘impossibility of culture’s

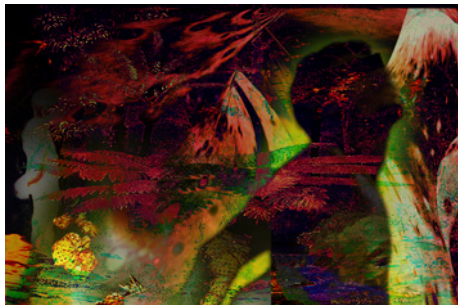
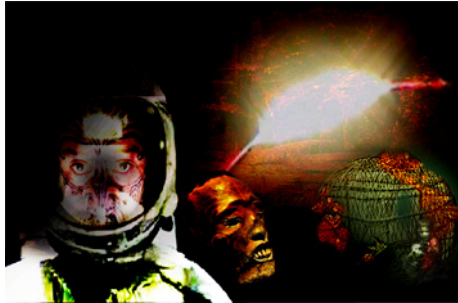


containedness' (Webber, 2008, p.25) .

Hybrid individuals in our multicultural communities, where mixing is inevitable, straddle different cultural terrains, so can translate, negotiate, and mediate between communities, as well as to attenuate extremes. In this way hybridity functions as an organising axis in such societies, presaging change and futurity. As Webber points out '...this third space is an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation and meaning is fluid and dynamic' (Webber, 2008, p.26).

All societies change, so all forms of culture can be seen as being in an ongoing state of hybridity. Bhabba comments that '...it is in the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference- that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated'. Rather than being exotic or anomalous, identities at the interstices reveal '...a more complex understanding of the ways we all negotiate the tensions between- and among the various strands of our identities' (Scholl, 2001, p.144). The '...new readings of social and cultural difference that result will not be truer, more complete or conclusive but they might '...create new lines of flight, fragments of other possibilities' and a 'tolerance for contradictions and ambiguity' (Scholl, 2001, p.160). Bhabba expands further, noting that the '...hybrid identity or subject-position emerges from the interweaving of elements' challenges the containability of culture and the 'validity and authenticity of any essentialist cultural identity' (Webber, 2008, p.31) and therefore a politics of exclusion and purity.

In *Walking the Space Between: Identity and Maori/Pakeha* Webber comments that '...we must negotiate not only difference *but* connection' (Webber, 2008, p.31)) and that most people choose an identity that best fits their sense of self; hybrid identity is therefore fluid, situational and self-determined. 'Hybridity speaks, in other words, to the paradox that identity categories can be simultaneously vitally important and inadequate or constraining' (Scholl, 2001, p.143). Similarly, Monk observes that '...building alternative narrative structures constitutes new and as yet unperformed stories in the community' (Monk, 2005,



p.86) and McDonald says ‘the narrative act performs the activity of constituting that subject’ (McDonald, 1994, p.4). Scholl meanwhile writes of narrative representing ‘...sites where the meanings didn’t line up tidily with each other...Consonant with poststructuralist suggestions, a perverse narrative of unfitting subjects would reject linear (re)production as its end by surrendering the project of creating clear causes and effects, abandoning the illusion of beginnings and ends’ (Scholl, 2001, p.160).

While narrative discourse functions both constantly (to portray the world), and performatively (what it achieves by expression), historical accounts are manifestly only ‘about the past’. The significance of this creation of this past lies in its contribution to contemporary cultural life and the range of values which it instantiates (Gergen, 1998, p.21).

Hybridity ‘...suggests a productive tension between our need to claim our social and cultural identities and the necessity for reaching beyond those positionings to negotiate new identities and expressions of community’ (Scholl, 2001, p.143).

7.0 Identity and representation

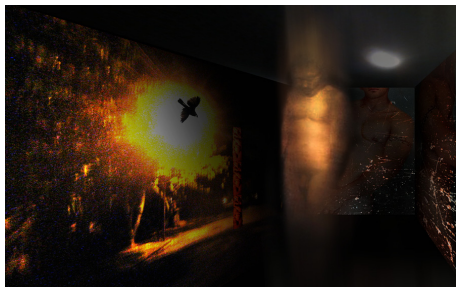
7.1 Problems of connection: Identity salience, coherence and moral identity

There are two key historical problems in the representation of a gay Maori-Pakeha cross-cultural identity. The first is the emphasis on essentialist fixed identities, which subjugate multiple subjectivities, in the interests of a unitary and adversarial political representation. This emphasis reinscribes Maori identity, in European terms, as normatively patriarchal, heterosexual and anti-intellectual, consistent with a ‘warrior race’ stereotype and effectively eliminates a ‘space between’ or ‘third space’ and therefore hybrid identities. The second is an historical, religious, medical and political disnarration of alternative gender and sexual expressions as being incompatible with a moral identity.

An identity bound to and distributed across these communities must always start from a position of salience. Salience is the initial bridger of difference. Salience is not identity recognised on an individual's terms. Nor does it convey or validate the totality of a multiple identity to others, because identity is only partially expressed as its facets rather than as a dynamic whole. Salience can position one not as 'between', but as moving from 'side to side' (Webber, 2005, p.27).

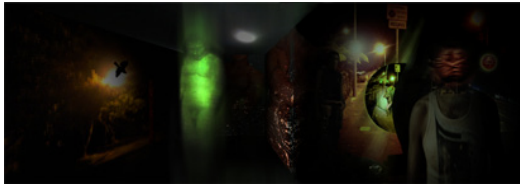


Salience is however the starting point for a productive negotiation of connection. A salient identity has coherence and intelligibility for others because it presents itself on the terms of others. However, it only presents parts of the whole terrain, which remains largely invisible (unless these others are similarly situated). As a basis for personal identity, salience implies that identity is ambiguously situated and incoherent. Salience presents identity as a terrain transected by divides, representable only as a melange or in a dismembered way.



Identity coherence is complicated by the diversity of 'pick and mix' selections that can occur when identity straddles several communities, and therefore draws from many incompatible values and discourses founded in very different cultural, political and economic (cosmological) paradigms. Some 'pick and mix' selections may embrace fundamental incompatibilities which, if they are unable to be relinquished or resolved may result in ego dissonance (Kirby, 2009, pp.22-35). This narrative conflict is destabilising and at the very least prevents the individual attaining a worthy and acceptable moral identity, in Gergen's terms (Gergen, 1998, p.17).

Identity may, however, not be so tightly bound to the terms of the communities with which it is associated. Swanson argues that categorical instability occurs when the coherence and limits of categories are challenged and Monk would suggest, that as it opens up discourse it enables one to glimpse other possibilities. Thus, straddling communities provides a certain remove from community and opens space for the proliferation of other measures and other identities which, in turn, facilitates a degree of autonomy. Salience



may be utilised by individuals in this situation, without salience being the basis of personal identity. Identity may then in its unknowingness to others be matched to some category, rendering it like ‘other’, and thus be ambiguous and not entirely coherent.

Part-castes as identities are problematic for both Pakeha society and Maori society. I have been at times narratively incommensurate with these cultures. Both cultures at different times, for different reasons, and using different means, have disnarrated or narrowly narrated part-caste identity to make it intelligible within their terms. Not surprisingly, my ability to attain a moral identity within the terms of these cultures, has been compromised by this ambiguity. The difficulty of articulating a dual identity when one has a foothold in two worlds is that there can be pressure to take a stand on one side of the cultural divide or the other. However I have found (as Judith Butler also notes that ‘...to prescribe an exclusive identification for a multiply constituted subject...is to enforce a reduction and a paralysis’ (Kumashiro, 2001, p.7)).

As to being also gay, while takatapui ‘reflects desire for the expression of a “silenced” sexual subjectivity’ its articulation is problematic. ‘Its origin in and engagement with already circulating discourses of “authentic indigeneity” and authentic “gay” identity’ within a modernising, colonial context (Murray, 2003, p.241) exacerbates the difficulties of achieving identity coherence and moral identity when ambiguity is multiplied.

For a dual Maori-Pakeha identity, four ‘healthy’ biracial identity outcomes are possible (Webber, 2008, p.83):

1. ‘Both feet in both groups’ ability to hold and merge multiple perspectives simultaneously (which to me implies openly embracing a dual heritage)
2. Identity salience (which to me implies embracing a dual heritage for oneself)
3. Claiming a multiracial central reference point
4. Creating a home-base in one racial identity and making forays into others



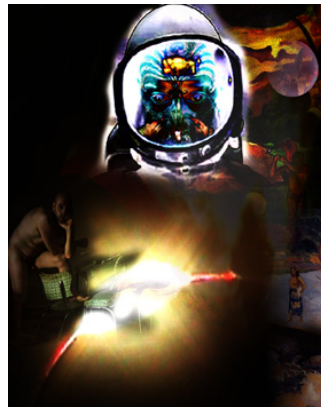
There are no such equivalents for a healthy dual identity that also encompass a non-heteronormative sexuality. In terms of negotiation of connection and inclusion, a non-normative sexuality as part of the identity mix proves usually a bridge too far. Indeed, such an identity is fraught with ambivalences and divisions arising from the dividedness of self and personal loyalties, from the guilts of betrayal and the outrage of betrayed, and from cultural incompatibilities, which require a ‘double-think’ ability to negotiate.

Changes in culture are negotiated narratively through a shift in signs and according to how identity, community, society, culture and history as narrative systems are indexed in relation to each other. These categories prescribe each other as they are configured and thus prescribe contextual reality. These categories can be seen in a larger perspective, as subsystems within a larger narrative system which, in turn exists within an even larger system of narratives as part of an ecology of narratives. As a metasystem the fluxing of parts reverberates through the whole system reconfiguring it in a way that is sometimes damping, sometimes sets up positive feedback, and sometimes sets up interference patterns. In such a system coherence of self and identity as well as the attainment of moral identity are prescribed in others’ terms.

Connection, coherence and moral identity may therefore be achieved in two ways- for oneself or via others. What is possible for oneself may not necessarily be possible for others and vice versa. The ideal situation is one in which coherence and moral identity is achieved for both oneself and others.

7.2 Issues of narratability and representation

The philosopher, Paul Ricoeur suggests ‘...that which is narrated and rendered coherent is determined by that which cannot be narrated and has to remain unconscious and beyond the scope of narratability as its constitutive outside’ (Thiem, 2002, p.6). In terms of a representation of personal identity, this is problematic because ‘self-concept is constantly dis-



turbed by that which needs to be excluded from remembering. Remembering at its heart is forgetfulness' (Thiem, 2002, p.7).

Remembering and forgetfulness affect all elements of this project from self through to other, society, culture, history and reality. All negotiate multiplicity, heterogeneity, fluidity and permeability. All elements, like identity, are as entities contingent, conditional, processual (in a state of both being and becoming), continually repositioning and always open to revision. Like identity, they are in motion, highly situated and sensitive to changing social and cultural dynamics.

The problem of narratability

Multiple subjectivities within and between communities complicate the narratability of identity as the number of recognised and/or possible sites of identity (or identity axes and intersection positionings) increase. Some identities are thus poorly understood, some misunderstood and some well understood. Some are well resourced narratively, some under-resourced and thus narratively constrained, and some suffer from disnarration and are relatively unnarratable. Some identities are more or less privileged than others depending on how and where they are positioned in relation to dominant, normative, minority or alternative discourses.

In terms of narratability, Monk writes 'It is assumed that people use language as a representational function where they gave expression to things that already exist in themselves. Language is not a bundle of labels, which we can choose from to describe our internal states. Language is a way of structuring our experience of ourselves in the world and producing meanings and concepts that in a sense makes us up. Language speaks us into existence' (Monk, 2005, p.84). In this context, art is languaging too.

Monk also argues that life gets organised around the narrative categories into which one fits (these include descriptive labels, as well as social and occupational roles), the mean-



ings of which ‘...contribute to varying degrees of coherence and incoherence, stability and chaos, confusion and clarity, doubt and uncertainty, hope and possibility’ (Monk, 2005, p.85).

The narratability of lived experience is therefore compromised, conceals as much as it reveals, and is as much fictive as factive. Language, performance, narrative and narrative performativity are not suns that light a landscape but lights that pick out and throw features within that landscape into momentary relief.

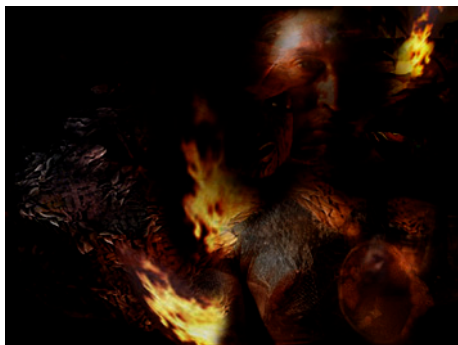
Narratives also structure and reconstruct, establishing by inference or by bringing into connection, and create the very realities they reveal. Quoting White & Epston, Monk suggests ‘the stories we employ determine our examination of the world, the questions we ask about events, and the realities we construct. Stories determine the very distinctions we pull from the world’ (Monk, 2005, p.85). Narratives, therefore, while serving to reduce confusion and complexity in our lives, draw certain subtleties to our attention but also, as Monk says ‘...constrain possibilities about what we see because of the influence of the story line’ (Monk, 2005, p.85).

Furthermore, narratability is affected by the nature of the material being narrated and by the nature of the medium of the narrative text. As Marshall McLuhan succinctly put it: ‘The medium is the message’, that is the repertoire of forms available, the vocabulary of signs in circulation and the receiving context. Coherence and intelligibility rely heavily on a communal short-hand, communal maps, and shared understandings.

However Monk comments further that

‘...there are lived experiences that are not fully encompassed by the dominant narrative structure. When lived experiences are amorphous, the experiences are not storyable. There is a lack of performative and narrative resources or vocabulary to produce alternative narrative structures that can compete or vie with dominant narratives’ (Monk, 2005, p.85).

The culturally specific narratives available can variously ‘...facilitate the smooth telling of

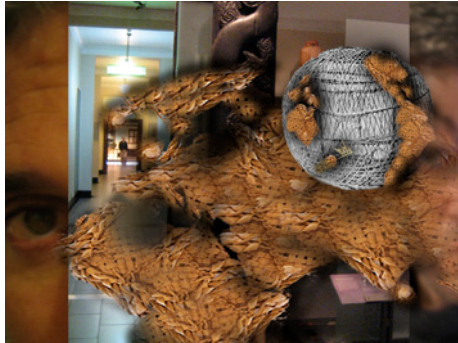


some lives and straitjacket, distort, or fracture others' (Varney, 2001, p.90)

Thus narratability issues associated with a mixed racial heritage are compounded further when a gay dimension is added to identity. The social closeting of the subject (even today) and the pariahdom often afforded gay people impacts the narratability of my identity. In the narrative sense my identity has been written out of community, for being neither intelligible nor moral in terms of Maori or Pakeha culture. Initially this was my perception too, and my personal life became focussed creating a narrative of viability in a culture of one. However over time, this focus has shifted to finding, adapting and/or creating narratives of a community to which I can belong and which allows me to achieve moral identity and, more latterly coherence and intelligibility.

In terms of my project, I have found it difficult to represent the division of loyalties arising from identification with multiple groups, or the estranged hybrid synthesis of elements that is my identity. Metaphors which might be used become even fewer when one considers the historical incompatibilities of gay, and Maori and Pakeha.

An example of this is the close-up. Indigenous film makers advocate minimal use of close-ups because it is a reminder of the over-intrusive camera of ethnographic cinema (Murray, 2008, p.23). However in my experience gay culture thrives on the close-up, perhaps because 'in the closet' ones only community is with the face in the mirror, that confirms one's humanity and one's reality. The popularity of the close-up in gay society perhaps also reflects a reaction to the social pressures keeping one in the closet, opting to pass as straight and keeping an important part of ones actuality invisible and unvalidated. Gay culture is also oriented to the camera as an imparter of what is often lacking, that is the affirmation and physical (and cultural) immortality associated with parenthood, which enables one to be an ancestor and to have descendants. To be gay is often to be denied continuity and participation in dynasty which is central to many narratives of family and history. One is peripheral if not absent in these terms. Gay 'narcissism' is perhaps a reflection of this transience and divorcement; the 'now' is for many the limits of being and pos-



sibility, and beyond the cults of celebrity and genius.

I personally favour the close-up but following discussion with tutors I came to realise I prefer my own face to be out of focus or shadowed, or in some other way indistinct, making me present but not focal. This may reflect at different times a cloaking defensiveness, a wish to focus on the discourse of the whole image, or even the common Maori trait of withdrawal from the camera. I try to have it several ways to bridge Maori and gay and Pakeha culture and represent the dispersal of my identity across these. There is a narcissism in what I do.

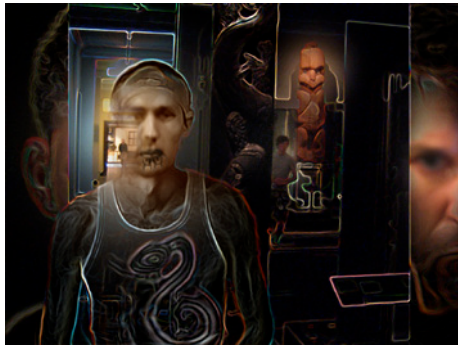
In terms of being gay and Maori

‘Takatāpui identity provides a mechanism for confronting the racism that Māori men encounter within gay communities. While this in itself does not diminish the amount of racism which is leveled at Māori men, it does provide strength to persevere and to claim one’s space within contemporary society.’ (Aspin, 2005, p.9). In this respect I have used the transgendered moko upon a part-caste face to enunciate visually the divides of my personal identity to visually and to claim visually a coherent cultural space for myself in that ‘...it binds us to the past as well as the future’ (Aspin, 2005, p.10). However the moko kauwae does not reference well who I am as a gay person.

In terms of my own narrative coherence, three identity issues emerge:

1. What is my internal sense of self and from what has it derived?
2. How and on what basis has identity been perceived by others?
3. How do I express some sense of my self to others?

The first question articulates self in relation to its situatedness and terrain, the second refers to self in relation to the presumed societal and cultural dynamics at play, and the third articulates the problem of representing the ensuing syntheses at this point in time.



Representation must therefore bridge these divides, allude to narrative conflicts and outcomes, and suggests that multiple identities intersect and interact, and exist in tension (Scholl, 2001, p.160). Clearly this is a ‘tall order’.

8.0 Towards an endpoint

8.1 Representation of the narrative performativity of identity

If the narratability of some experiences and identities becomes compromised, what are the implications for the narrative performativity of an identity? Performance of identity would be inconsistent and incoherent in others’ terms when these are the terms of convention, because the narratives that elucidate and cohere the performance are unknown. However, repetition may open up dialogue and change one’s performance of identity within the communities one inhabits, although in the larger community, of ‘society’, a critical mass of performers and time may be needed to achieve this.

Life, although it has narrative qualities is not in itself a narrative, but any representation of identity is indeed a narrative. Like self and community, identity is fluid and narratively unfixed, although the very act of narration fixes and freezes. Like a narrative, events in our lives are ordered (or emplotted) to make sense both temporally and causally. The connection between the events that infers coherence is narration. Representation is narration and functions performatively. Even a static image through the nature and arraignment of elements invokes narrative for the viewer. Thus, the representation may stand in for the performance, as the supplement which instantiates it. The opening up of dialogue, which performative repetition facilitates in terms of an assimilative understanding, creates coherence. Such performances and the narratives on which they are based succeed more readily when the identity they relate to is an expression of a subjectivity based within community.



When identity falls between or across several communities and/or narrative communities, the narratability of identity (and experience) in a coherent way may be afflicted by falling outside of community and perceived as not worth the effort to understand. Coherent narratability of identity may also be hampered because the very differently premised identity in terms of the scale of assimilative understanding required may make the effort necessary to understand it too difficult and daunting. In this case a certain semantic failure, afflicting coherence and intelligibility of its representations, is more likely.

In representing my own identity there is a problem of what to include and what to exclude. I have attempted to present the situational, social, and societal conditions which bound my identity. These include the bush as representing a rural childhood in a Maori community; the city; and the moko tuhituhi and eclipses to represent death, loss and isolation; and a host of images alluding to the politics of race, gender, and sexuality including a cubist Maori juxtaposed with images of chimps and Rousseau's noble savage jungle backdrops, colonial New Zealand paintings, Lisa Reihana *Native Portraits* (1997), Maureen Lander's *This is Not a Kete* (1994), Fred Wilson's *Atlas* (1995), Marino Armando's black man at an easel, Maori astronauts, Gordon Walters kowhaiwhai derived abstracts, hybrid animals, Maori carvings and whare whakairo, sexualised men, and a woven globe of the world.

However none of these selections is sufficiently complete to structure an identity (as its perceived at a particular moment) in an intelligible way. Annike Thiem contends that intelligibility is conferred by a 'sense of an ending' that is plausible and thus acceptable to others which exposes the operation of emplotment (or the plotting of events to create sense) as subject to norms and rules dealing with plausibility and acceptability (Thiem, 2002, p.5).

Thus, intelligibility and coherence derive from, firstly, the processes of community acting through individuals as they form/inform a sense of self which guides a public representation of identity and, secondly, through the fit with communal narratives of identity.



Monk says

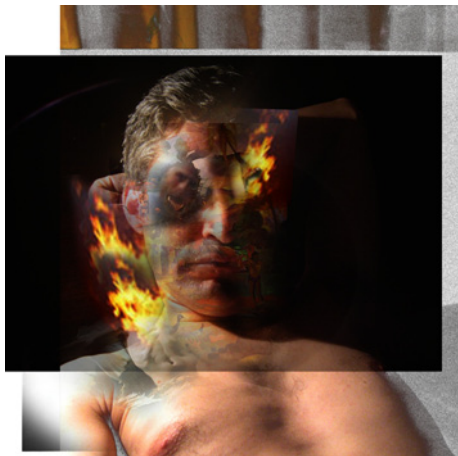
‘Building alternative narrative structures constitutes new and as yet unperformed stories in the community. ... The performance does not release a pre-existing meaning that lies dormant in the text... rather the performance itself is constitutive’ (Monk, 2005, p.86) .

However, these structures are not created in a social vacuum; they build upon, adapt, ‘mix-and-match’ and, in part, innovate from a pre-existent tool kit. When a community becomes familiarised with the narratives, a performance of identity is based upon, identity assumes intelligibility.

The problem of self-definition and fit is problematised when falling between or across several communities and narrative communities. This is of course not necessarily a unique issue: all communities experience this problem of translatability and relatability to others, but usually to a lesser extent within its midst. One is always grappling with this issue in the absence of a community of similarly situated individuals.

Identity is, however, not the sole focus of my project. In my practice the mass of images produced in the course of the project charts shifts in thinking and conceptualisations of self, identity, culture and history, both separately and as narrative systems indexed in relation to each other. As such, they are viewable in a larger perspective as subsystems within a larger and unique narrative system, which in turn exists within a larger system of narratives, as part of an ecology of narratives. But how could this be suggested? What form would this take in exhibition? Considering these questions provided a way forward, because individual images are visualisable as part of a system of indexically linked images. One could then either present an index or represent indexicality as systemic. These possibilities led me to investigate various options.

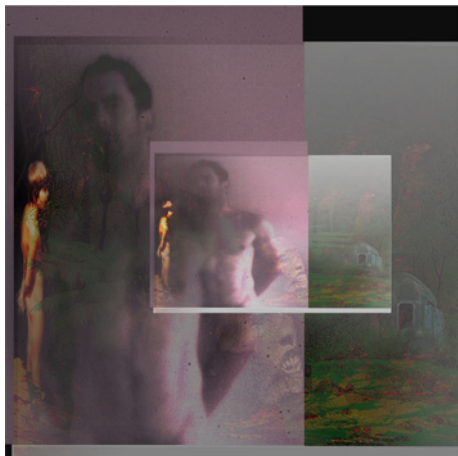
I considered using time codes within the image as relating to both history and its subjective variability while emphasising images as documents charting a history of thought bounded by the project. I also began exposing the layering of the photoshopping process,



achieved by enlarging the image canvas, which reveals a history and larger context at the same time as obscuring it. The singular document as a semiotic system is thus connected through multiplicity and multiplicity's referentiality to wider semantic systems, narrative systems and further layers of narration and referential relationship resulting in emphasis on coherence as a complex issue.

Next I attempted a didactic representation of the narrative system of self, identity, other, community and history. Placement of juxtaposed and overlapping images in a panoramic format was used to emphasise an expanded system of reference. I did not attempt to order these on the basis of causality and chronology (as I might have done with figures of myself at different ages), because I conceived of each image as its own endpoint. Such an arrangement reveals the narrative artifice representing the subjective and experiential. Such a view also presents identity seen in relation to self, others in community, and to a culture and history that is multi-temporal in its framing. It also reveals linearity to be an artifact of canonical narration, such that the ground then emerges as a figure and the figure as a ground.

Two possibilities rapidly surfaced. One option was to use the expanded canvas, which exposed layering or images in system, as a white space grounding an antinarrative styled exposure of 'narrative' coding. This emphasises the didactic and references the scientific in its diagrammatic and schematic visual qualities. This however reduces any sense of lived narrative, but does suggest clarity and the exophysics of science, as opposed to the black-box of endophysics (Weibel, 1996), as a science of the subjective, neither does it suggest the imprecision of probability and the complexity of 'chance'. It suggests the figure is detached from its ground and through illumination the ground is understood. Alternatively I could use the frame as a device to speak of the framing of images as reading frames. This approach highlights the issue of what is framed and is not framed, as well as the nature of the frame as an analogy of narrative. Revealing this artifice reveals the window a mirror.



What emerged in this project was a view of the self as apparition, with identity, community, culture and history as haunting, and the real as mirage and confabulated because the narrative always fictionalises. From this understanding followed a realisation that the representation of self/identity is one of unknowns as much as knowns, one of ambiguities and one of disnarration as much as clarity and narration. Scholl argues that new and/or complex hybrid identities require new vocabularies and new forms for their expression designed to disrupt easy, conclusive or essentialised understandings of identity narratives and social/cultural dynamics.⁹

Following on from this I took images which were didactic representations of the narrative system and converted these initially into rings as representations of the semiotic loops Scholes says historical narratives form in their mapping back to the real events they narrate. *A Lord of the Rings* or marriage referent is of course problematic with this form. However compositional alterations turn ring into font, both of which reveal and conceal different surfaces and the imagery upon it likewise. Thus any attempt at a reading must contend with this ambiguity.

Next, I warped didactic representations and reduced their opacity so they appeared like smoke or steam escaping off a heated terrain or fractured narrative strata at the subductive edge of metanarrative tectonic plates, one poised to ride up and over, the other to sink and melt- or steam rising from a crucible or bowl in echo of Shane Cotton's contained plants.

The achievability of my aim of representing the narrative constitution of identity, as well

⁹ These include:

- The creation of poetry, fiction and drama from research materials
- Juxtaposition of multiple and often contrasting voices
- The use of several genres within one text
- Interspersed weaving of stories and interpretation
- Hybrid, dissonant and partial forms and construction (Scholl, 2001, p.145)

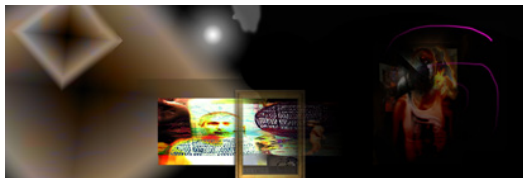
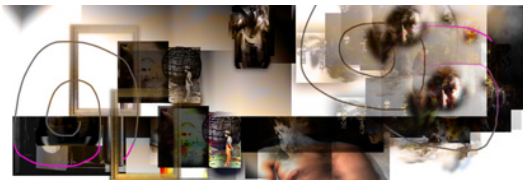


as its upstream and downstream is now considered. Narrative posits who we are as a representation, all the elements of which are fluxing over smaller or larger time scales. Identity is also political, it is the embodiment of spin internally, and intragroup and intergroup. Identity is therefore an ongoing construct in the wave front of creation in which all its contexts too are continually being narratively reworked. Any identity image fits these parameters, but a multitude of them make the concept clearer.

It is acknowledged that the parameters I set initially were perhaps not fine enough. The upstream, as Richard Dawkins, the author and biologist has put it in terms of genetic hereditary, is the river out of Eden. Downstream is the edge of human creation. Can I represent the narrative constitution of my identity? The answer is at once yes and no. I can represent indicatively that it is narratively constituted and how it is in the broadest sense but little more. Any authoritative representation of my identity is not possible, it being both incommensurate with subjectivity and that which it seeks to depict or frame. Problematic identities are less storyable or tellable, though acknowledgment of this problem argues that the available identity category limitations in the literature and larger world, in being now recognised are being reformulated as we rewrite our social and cultural narratives and redraw boundaries.

In respect to this, static media may be less satisfactory than moving image and new media for presenting what one can or might glimpse of identity through narrative texts. Although a static medium such as digital photography may perhaps emphasise the ambiguities more emphatically, it would seem to provide less opportunity for any coherence and intelligibility to emerge in its limitation to the visual exclusively.

If language is not a cultural invention but rather instinctual in humankind, as Stephen Pinker says, then so too must be narrative. The very categories of words such as nouns and verbs, subjects and objects and their organisation grammatically derive narrative. Communication it then follows is a narratively performative action. Narrative performativity therefore constitutes and foregrounds human existence. The structuring operations



intrinsic to narrative and narration, each affect clarity and ambiguity, but what light it throws does cast shadows.

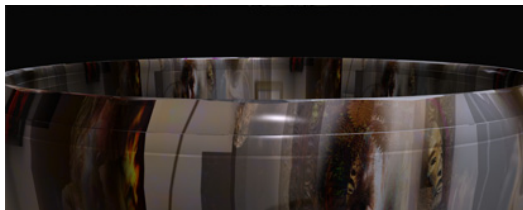
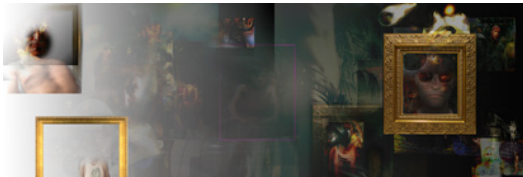
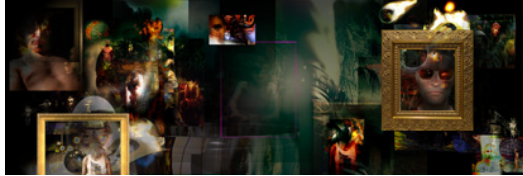
Narrative in always having a perspective is thus political, and narratives function as memetic propagators. Narratives are representations, and representations are narratives. They direct and do work. Identity is one such narrative form. As a social and cultural handle, it facilitates the manipulation of that which it frames. Reality is the realm where things exist outside ourselves, and contextual reality is where the resistances of things outside ourselves interface with our narratives and their performance.

In my final exhibition I arranged my final work on two walls. On one wall I placed two works, one a landscape of self as a dynamic narrative terrain and the other an image of self as narratively enigmatic compromising as it does knowns and unknowns. On the second wall I arranged images derived from larger narrative landscape works to hint ambiguously of the grounds and nature of self and identity. This second wall combines the approaches of the first wall and arranges the images which compose a narrative representation of self and identity in vertical pairs in a grid to suggest the presence of others and the ordering of contextual reality in relation to the more traditional self portrait.

It is an exhibition which reveals that the representation of self and identity is always compromised by flux, historicism and disnarration.

8.2 Conclusion

If consciousness can be likened to a form of dreaming with one's eyes wide open, then in social terms it is a type of lucid dreaming which is communicatively consensual and interacts with the real world, which we comprehend not directly but through its resistances. Like in dreams, aspects of the real world may impinge and be incorporated, as with cold weather or the sound of bells, albeit these are perceived and in consequently interpreted. In a similar way, even in the normal dream state one can interact with the real world as



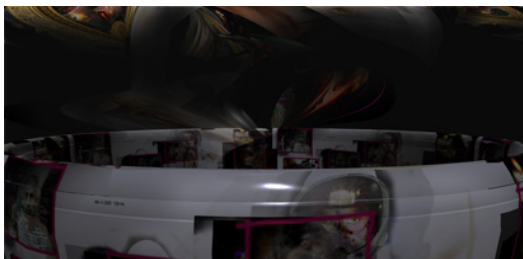
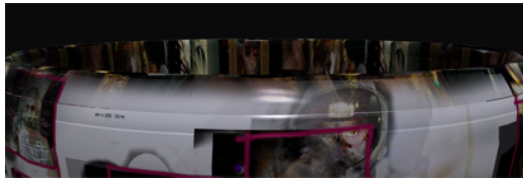
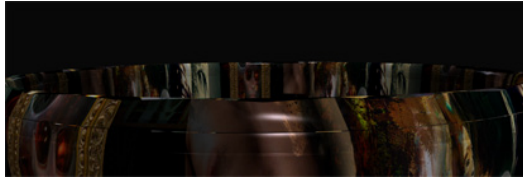
when sleepwalking, having sleepwalking conversations or driving.

However, the dreams of consciousness achieve a semblance of stability and coherence over time which only unusual events or extreme events undermine. Such events could include the overturning of experiential 'reality' by, for example war, depression or new social or cultural paradigms or when witnessing a dominant personality rewriting perceived reality for subordinate others, one glimpses the instability of consensual reality. One may wake up from the dream of consciousness, perhaps, but only in sleep, flights of fancy, day dreams or when lost in thought. Interestingly, whether awake or adream narrative paraphernalia remain. If the narratosphere is a medium which embeds, structures and constitutes human life, then it perhaps not surprising that one never awakes from it. The narratosphere consists of 'pre-existing social and cultural materials' (McDonald, 1994, p.9) which include, whole and partial narratives, and narrative elements, from which new narratives are woven, much like amino acids form the raw materials for RNA and DNA . Memes, whether single ideas or particular skills, might also be considered narratives, in that as representations or categorising representations they are condensations of invisibly narrating accounts as concepts they '...are embedded within broader narratives. They are not simply names for existing entities, but discursive creations requiring extensive narration'(Gergen, 1998, p.13).

Language and narrative structure meaning and help us make sense of the world, who we are and our place in it, these inform our acts and communications as performative actions as do the responses these invoke in return.

The multiply situated identity exhibits problems of communication as a well formed conventional narrative because its terms of reference, in being multiple, fall outside each component community's terms of reference as intelligible, such an identity is therefore performatively ambiguous.

Narrative emplotment in requiring an 'enormous suppression of description' (Gergen, 1998, p.6) also affects the 'intelligibility' and coherence and 'tellability' or 'storyability'



of a multiply situated identity. Portrayal of such an identity is therefore compromised. If plausibility is fundamental to the intelligibility of a narrative performance (Gergen, 1998, p.7), it must exhibit sufficient canonicity in terms of its structuring, delivery and its arenas of delivery in order to facilitate a communicative congruence of interpretants on which either a logic of illogic or non-linear logic might be built. Such a logic is based on the trajectory of a sign's or diegesis's deferral, as a 'play of sign substitutions' and comprises a semionautic trajectory linking signs. Identity as both a self organising and uniquely configured narrative system in its dynamic fluxing is one such narrative performance. Narrative it seems to me is a metalanguage with different forms and grammatical forms depending on whether it is spoken, written, visual or non-verbal and within these broad categories, there are the subcategories of, for example poetry, novels, television and painting. This conception of narrative suggests that unconventional identities can be narrated by means of other forms, invented forms, which in sedimenting in society over time can make hybrid identities as performances intelligible.

My project originated in an admiration for the sophistication represented by the Aboriginal concept of Dreaming as a dynamically embedding dream, and a consideration of its operational ubiquity in the world. Considering the web of connection encompassed by the project and narrative, it comes as no surprise that this project became a semiotic loop, mapping the end back to its beginnings and espousing Aboriginal observations that the Dreamtime is the quintessential human experience of reality. Self, identity, others and community are just dreamings within this greater Dream.

Science suggests that our brains selectively attend to the world. A large part of the brain is devoted to recognition which allows us to understand what we see. Professor Susan Greenfield a neuroscientist comments 'we may not know the exact brain process which gives rise to consciousness but we do know it must be produced by ordinary brain cells in other words it must arise directly from subconscious mental activity'. She argues that '... our brains are constantly distorting what we see. Using our imagination our brains take a



bold short cut. We guess what's out there from past experience rather than having to build up the information in our minds from scratch'. Further to this she says 'Every moment we open our eyes our brains are filling in a vast amount of additional information the brain doesn't just allow us to see what is out there, it actually invents much of it from stored information of previous times and experiences with the world to imagine what is out there' (Roberts, 2000).

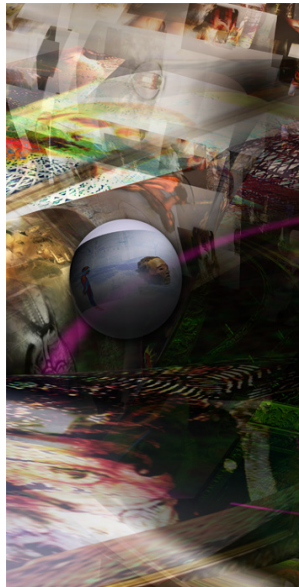
Professor Stephen Kosslyn Harvard University observes that this is '...a two-way sword on the one hand it makes it easier, you don't have to register every little thing which is out there, but on the other hand it's dangerous, you can see things- quote unquote see -that aren't really there' (Roberts, 2000).

Importantly in terms of the project's thesis that we build our reality, Greenfield comments '...our perception of the world is affected as much by what our brains expect to see as what is actually in front of us' (Roberts, 2000). For Professor Rudolfo Llinas of New York University 'seeing is just another form of dreaming'. He observes that '...basically the brain is a dream machine...dreaming and being awake are next of kin if they're not exactly the same thing' (Roberts, 2000).

Greenfield observes that 'Rudolfo believes that everything is running in reverse [to our expectations of how this process might operate] with the brain creating images that are then transformed into reality by the information coming in through the eyes' (Roberts, 2000). Llinas argues that 'it is the brain that generates reality, secretes its realities...reality is modulated it is limited by the senses'(Roberts, 2000).

Greenfield contends that 'Vision is not about simply soaking up the outside world instead its an active process which invents, ignores and distorts what's entering through the eye. What counts is what goes on inside our heads and what goes on there is completely personal its not so much that our visual system rebuilds the outside world, rather that we create from scratch our own private universe, our own reality' (Roberts, 2000).

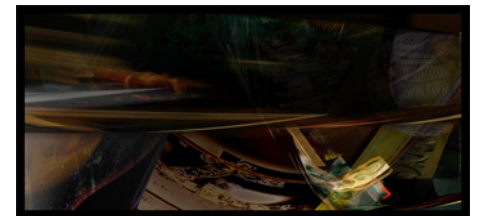
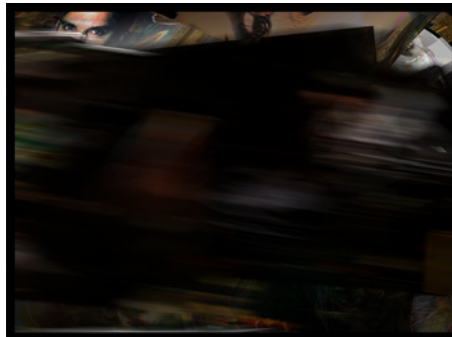
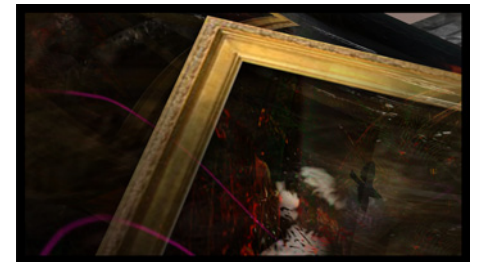
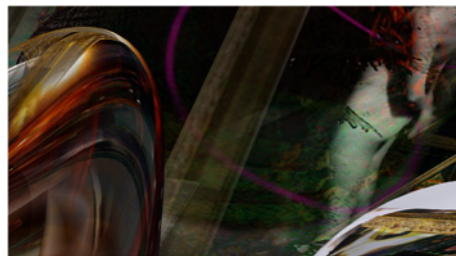
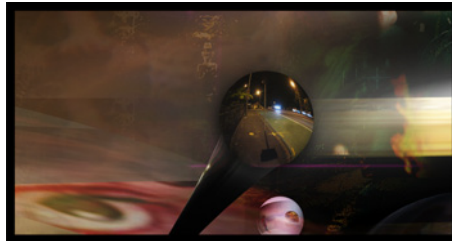
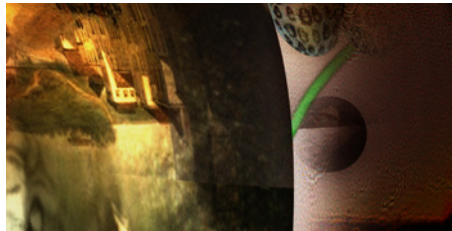
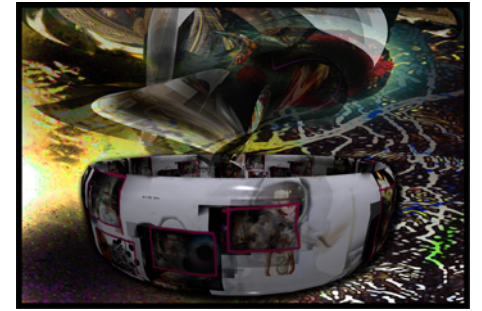
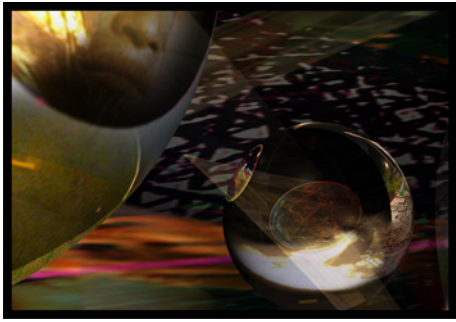
Of course as a social species we build reality together. Contextual reality is essentially

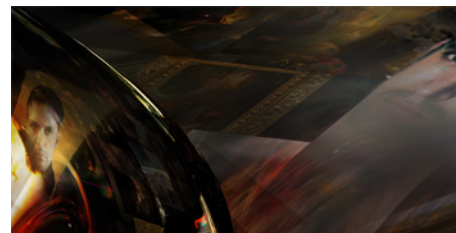
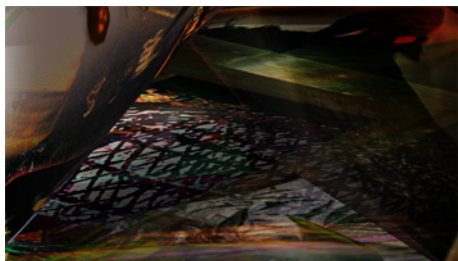


then a narrative creation arising from discourse, as such it is the basis of our actions in the world at both a conscious and subconscious presuppositional level. Narrative performativity then is an enactment of this fact.

My investigation of narrative's performativity in relation to identity though it has affinities with an anti-narrative agenda is more concerned with the observation that for the most part we dream and act out with our eyes 'wide shut'.

Narration is a narrative act, as we narrate our lives we perform our identities and consensually shape contextual reality. In that we are narratively and performatively constituted our narratives presuppositionally form our performances. The basis of identity and contextual reality is narrative performativity.





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