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'The Assault on Mount B: understanding the role of story in self-delusion in our personal histories.'

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ABSTRACT

This research consists of a creative writing component, a novel, accompanied by an exegesis. *The Assault on Mount B* examines consciousness through an experimental exploration in creative writing. It uses synchronous but disjunctive multi-tracking, genre-bending forking pathways across multiple literary modes, avenues of comprehension, delusion, and memory and a blank canvas denouement. It interrogate states of delusion in everyday life and asks how and why human beings create revisionist meaning out of their lived experience by creating patterns of story and attempts to provide insights into the inevitable relationship that story has to our perception of reality. It adopts a framework of multiple simultaneous narratives within a protagonist and explores the necessary incompleteness and resulting inevitable compromise in interpreting reality and the construction of the self. It explores these in both theme and in physical form with different voices, temporality and open text by setting up the relationship between two contemporaneous narrative layers within one person and a third layer being a collection of myths legends and fables written in a modern context representing both the protagonist's underlying conscience and forms of rationalisation for his actions. Its research design is such that the reader is invited to make an inquiry into the three separate narratives exploring the distinction between what appears to have happened in the main character's life and the different contemporaneous narratives which are constructed continuously within him but are not necessarily open to his conscious mind, ultimately suggesting that all of these perceptions and therefore the conscious self are versions of invented story. It examines the concept that we are an amalgam of such narratives, in effect Mary Shelley's Frankenstein's monster.

The exegesis results from a continuous cycle of action and reflection during the construction of the creative work. Engagement with the critical literature relating to the allows reflection upon and adaptation of the creative work, while performing the creative work sparks more questions to be interrogated in terms of theory. The exegesis is therefore based on the same body of research that informs the CW exploring external or literary or cultural topics related at least implicitly to the CW. This dialogical movement comprises the methodology underlying the composition of both parts of my PhD.

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CREATIVE WORK - "*The Assault on Mount B.*"

The Creative Work follows (pages are separately numbered.)

EXEGESIS

Introduction

> Man – let me offer you a definition – is the storytelling animal. Wherever he goes he wants to leave behind not a chaotic wake, not an empty space, but the comforting marker buoys and trail signs of stories. He has to keep on making them up. As long as there's a story, it's alright. Even in his last moments, it's said, in the split second of a fatal fall – or when he's about to drown – he sees, passing rapidly before him, the story of his life. *Waterland* (Swift, 1983)

The PhD research consists of a creative writing work, a novel, (hereinafter "CW") accompanied by a critical/reflexive component (an exegesis).

The Assault on Mount B examines consciousness through an experimental exploration in creative writing. It uses synchronous but disjunctive multi-tracking, genre-bending forking pathways across multiple literary modes, avenues of comprehension, delusion, and memory and a blank canvas denouement. It interrogate states of delusion in everyday life and asks how and why human beings create revisionist meaning out of their lived experience by creating patterns of story and attempts to provide insights into the inevitable relationship that story has to our perception of reality. It adopts a framework of multiple simultaneous narratives within a protagonist and explores the necessary incompleteness and resulting inevitable compromise in interpreting reality and the construction of the self. It explores these in both theme and in physical form with different voices, temporality and open text by setting up the relationship between two contemporaneous narrative layers within one person and a third layer being a collection of myths legends and fables written in a modern context representing both the protagonist's underlying conscience and forms of rationalisation for his actions. Its research design is such that the reader is invited to make an inquiry into the three separate narratives exploring the distinction between what appears to have happened in the main character's life and the different contemporaneous narratives which are constructed continuously within him but are not necessarily open to his conscious mind, ultimately suggesting that all of these perceptions and therefore the conscious self are versions of

invented story. It examines the concept that we are an amalgam of such narratives, in effect Mary Shelley's Frankenstein's monster.

The exegesis locates itself within a discussion of both creative writing and the scientific literature concerned with consciousness, story and delusion. It intertwines discussion concerning notions of reality, consciousness and on self-delusion centring around:

- my own life experience
- my creative writing practices
- the nature and prevalence of story
- myth and legend, allegory and parable
- clinical and non-clinical delusion, self-deception, and confabulation
- natural delusion and the inaccurate nature of all we think and perceive
- delusion depicted in creative writing
- the conscious and unconscious
- archetype
- the nature of consciousness and self in terms of story
- forms and structures of sequential and non-sequential physical layers of story
- reader-response
- the unreliable narrators and authors
- the structure of the thesis

I define story for the purposes of this discussion as being an explanation of meaning for two or more pieces of data in terms of cause and effect within a narrative of the history of the self, either datum A causing datum B or datum A's likely relationship(s) with datum B, in each case within some wider context.

The questions of why we love story and what is its nature have always interested me. People not only seem to have an almost insatiable desire for reading or watching stories created by others but also to tell their own - as recollections, as self-rationalisations, as plans and possibilities for the future. As Graham Swift in

his novel *Waterland* effectively posited in the paragraph cited at the beginning of this introduction, story defines humans; they are built that way:

I started with writing initially with different people's viewpoints of the same events. What began to interest me instead arose from my readings in physics, biology and psychology: that is, the possibly different viewpoints that might be taken by only one person.

Humans tell stories not only to others but to themselves. Those stories can be called fiction or non-fiction. Deciding the extent to which a story is fiction or non-fiction can sometimes be a complex matter when looked at in terms of truth or reality (however those might be defined.). The teller might understand any one element of a story to be fiction or believe it to be non-fiction and in that belief be, logically at least, either right or wrong or, in either case, at odds with the teller's intention. The receiver of the story may have either of those beliefs and likewise may be logically right or wrong. The teller may believe the receiver to have one or other belief about the story and be either right or wrong about that. Similarly the receiver may understand the teller to believe the story or not, and again be either right or wrong. The receiver can be oneself and (perhaps at first thought paradoxically) have a different belief to the teller, also oneself, and all these things can change over time, as can be seen in the discussions of confabulation and self-deception below.

Human perceptions of the world are hampered by the limited sensory input available to them. Human consciousness may be made up of different strands. Both of these are discussed in the section "The concept of self as an amalgam of stories".

The CW in this case asks these questions:

- What if within the mind there are simultaneously a multitude of stories all being performed, none of which quite mirror reality – how might they look?
- What if only one of these (or rather a particular sequence of them) are somehow selected as available to the conscious mind at any one time as representing the self's understanding of reality?

- What if that selection was changed over the lifetime of the individual through disease or injury?
- What might it then tell us about the conscious self when the 'correct' selection system was put back into place?

In the CW I explore the present, the day-to-day detail of the protagonist's (Richard) life, actions, and motivations from birth to death, and the broader landscape, in the narrative layers currently being discussed. I show them as being both incomplete and inaccurate by virtue of the limits of both memory and perception, and introduce clinical delusions and treatments to better analyse the possible parts of consciousness.

The specific events of *The Assault on Mount B* and how they are narrated are underpinned by my wider concern with how humans experience the world, lead storied lives and narrate stories of those lives. Its form is an experimental prose novel that traces the history and relationships of Richard particularly with his mother, wife Emily, daughter Amy, friend Christopher, his half-brother Simon, and most of all, his father Edward.

I explore, in a fictional context, the different meanings Richard, consciously and unconsciously, constructs out of what has apparently occurred. I hypothesise that different forms of stories are constructed continuously within him but are not necessarily open to his conscious mind.

To represent the plethora of stories at any one time in one mind, I wished to put more than one point of view forward from the same individual (though I could not hope to do more than model this in an oversimplified way). My CW is therefore in four parts and is a construct of three physical layers of narrative in all but the final of the 67 chapters.

The Assault on Mount B is therefore an experimental exploration with different voices, temporality and an open text of the relationship between two contemporaneous long and continuous narrative layers and a third layer being a collection of myths legends and fables. All these layers occur in the mind of one person. Its research design sets up the circumstances where the reader is invited

to tease out from the three separate narratives a fourth layer unique to each reader, effectively an inquiry as to what the unstated narrative might be for that reader, a staged fictional situation reminiscent of the "narrative inquiry" research process (as for example described by Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

The physical design of the creative work posed some difficulties. I wanted to provide the consistency of flow of the narrative without interruption and yet also include the close physical relationship of each other thread. Every layer therefore appears on every page. Every layer appears on every page. Each flows uninterrupted in the physical position it holds on each page so that if the reader so desires s/he can read uninterrupted across a single layer from page to page. I examine other creative writing in which multiple threads have been used in the section "The use of physical layers in other creative work" below and the logistics involved in production are discussed in the section "Logistics of writing in three layers" below.

It was important to me that the work be as rich as possible, both because that allows for the greatest possibility of unconscious serendipitous story complexity and because it appeals to me aesthetically. The key underlying features of the CW can be summarised as follows:

> a. I wanted to investigate non-clinical delusion i.e. the idea of everyday thinking in that normal mind always is, to some extent, being deluded. As with the split-brain experiments I discuss below under the confabulation section looking at a deficit model sometimes helps to gain perspective on the normal. I decided that my main character Richard would suffer from delusions pursuing the same reasoning.
>
> b. One narrative by an unreliable narrator represented initially as the conscious self by use of the first person.
>
> c. A second parallel, initially unconscious alternative unreliable narrative, engaging at first in the third person.
>
> d. A collection of self-contained stories, all discreet enough to be stand-alone though they are bound to both of the other narrative layers in the context of this CW, and which represent the conscience

and rationalisations for actions. These 'sub-conscious' stories are told in a style evocative of myths and legends, short stories.

   e. The novel is held together by an unwritten fourth narrative strand – the three written layers all containing enough obvious unreliability to signpost the uncertain fourth unifying sub-textual narrative element which must be constructed uniquely by each reader.

   f. Ambiguous strong and often dream-like imagery representing unconscious influences even in the two continuous layers, with unexplained obscure, nonsensical, magical, surreal or irrational/absurd elements in the form of toy landscape and toy characters with elements of the following:

      i.   quantum mechanics-like entanglement of characters and objects

      ii. free will versus determinism and effectively random actions

   g. Story within story

   h. Personification of concepts as indications of the protagonist's conscience

   i.   A setting that is described but not named. It is not identifiable with certainty as any particular part of the world in most cases – again encouraging recognition of human condition rather than locational (differing from much of current New Zealand fiction where setting is valorised.)

   j.   Humour

   k. The eventual merging of the different narratives into one amalgam the 'self' which nevertheless contains unconscious elements.

The four parts are representative of two ideas: the protagonist's changing mental state and sense of self over four periods of time each relating to a dofferent period of his delusions and treatments, and a biblical progression.

Thus in Part One (by far the largest part), Richard is in a mentally unstable state. In Part Two he is in therapy and some beneficial changes have occurred. In Part

Three he is in a further stage of treatment and in Part Four in what most would regard as a normal state in which it appears both that the narrative layers have merged into just one and yet at the same time continue to exist as continuing, indicated for the reader by the use of slightly different fonts.

The second way of regarding the four parts is alluded to in the names of the first three, an allusion to a religious perspective of the progression of Richard's self, as Richard sees it. These two ways of looking at the different parts are discussed further below in looking at each part separately.

I have found that in order to discuss the CW, it has been necessary to approach the order of topics in what may seem to be a somewhat less than ideal way. The difficulty is, I need to describe a very complex arrangement of the layers, chapters and parts but at the same time describe the reason for those different elements and how I see them. Each element has a legitimate claim to be considered before the other elements. After many attempts I have fixed upon what follows as a compromise between these approaches. Serendipitously in this way, this exegesis mirrors the CW in its chicken-or-egg-first possibilities of reading.

In Part One the first person narration has a meta-fictional voice, in that it suggests awareness that the reader is meant by the narrator to be aware he or she is reading a journal meant to be read by others. The third layer is in the third person and slightly more biographical. All three layers are primarily diegetic in that there is a narrator telling the story, but the first person is used only in one layer at any one point in the work, the other two being in the third person. There is one form of exception to this rule – the personification of abstract concepts such as Democracy in the middle layer, are also in the first person, a device which I found after experimentation to give more immediacy and connection to the conscious self which is in some ways the nature of a speaking conscience. I wanted those particular stories to be indicative of a more clearly heard conscience.

The narrator is an indicator of different parts of the 'self' whereas something mimetic would lack this flavour. An entirely mimetic layer would have assisted as a yardstick of the reality as perceived by an entirely objective observer. I mostly abandoned that idea early on because it in turn begs the question of what that

observer is observing in fact and also would have meant one of the 'self' layers would have been removed or an entirely new fourth structured layer introduced which adds seriously to the complexity of both reading and writing experience, both of which are already arguably more difficult than a traditional format.

I deal in more detail with Part One first, discussing the first and third layers and then memory, sensory input, and delusion. A discussion of the middle layer of Part One together with myth and allegory (which relate specifically to that section) follows. Then I turn to the idea of multiple synchronous narratives before looking at Parts Two, Three and Four which then require less detail. Then I go to how a reader might approach the construction of meaning from an ergodic work such as this. Finally I look at precedents (or rather the lack of them) for this precise physical style of writing and how they were built in practice.

Part One – the two continuing narrative layers ("The assault on Mount B" and "The map of the veneer")

> The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the objects it loves. (Jung, 1971)

I will discuss these two layers together.

At the beginning of each part is an image page. I introduced these for two reasons.

First, I wanted to create as marked a differentiation between the parts as possible, physically drawing attention to those divisions to give a distinct impression of change. Second, the images each bear a relationship to the part it introduces. Thus, the image for Part One is a newspaper clipping that sets up a birth notice that morphs into a death notice.

Part One is *Bereishit to Trei Asar*. The reader is introduced to Richard as a child, adolescent and man. He is scared of and hates his father and at the same time desires the wealth and power that his father has. He marries and divorces, has a child, Amy, to whom he does not relate well (reflecting precisely the lack of

attention he had from his own father). His best friend dies. In the bottom third person narrative layer he takes over his father's company; in the top layer overturns his country's dictator, the Child-God, representing his father. He grows increasingly mentally ill and by the end of Part One in the third person bottom layer he is in hospital, undergoing both chemical and shock treatment, whilst in the top layer is in prison being tortured. It is somewhere in this state that he is writing his first person journal.

The story in the top layer is that of the life of Richard, who presents the narrative as a first person journal written in what he describes as a prison. His birth, aspects of his childhood and young adulthood lead to his running from his domineering father, Edward.

This layer represents Richard's deluded memories or the memories he is deliberately misleading us about as an unreliable narrator. We have known no way of knowing which. Either delusion has come from depression or psychosis kindled by traumatic events such as the death of Page, his very good friend for whose death Richard feels responsible, or Richard for reasons of his own feels that he wishes to tell us that this is what occurred.

He portrays himself as a soldier who enlists in his father's army, his father being in this narrative a dictator in the political sense. His desire is to obtain access to the fine house on Mount B his father owns (unknown to the rest of the family) where his father's mistress is installed with her husband and Edward's illegitimate son. Richard divorces, eventually overthrows his father and then takes on similar characteristics. He then rationalises his approach as valid and moral by his own standards by reflecting upon the Rule of Law. In this state he denies his own weaknesses in dealing with his family when he runs way, suggesting strongly that he is deliberately responsible for the premeditated murder of his friend Christopher Page, and in general finds strong personal reasons justifying the things that happened to him or that he does albeit in the context of an overall guilty attitude. He is balancing his justifications with an overall vilification of himself. He thus becomes the same monster that he sees his father as.

The concept I was representing was that our conscious self has both and incomplete and sometimes inaccurate memory of events in our lives, and an incomplete and sometimes inaccurate perception of our world from which such memories are made. In the face of imperfect recall, description, and self-explanation of even of the very recent past, the apparent need to ascribe cause and effect, and even where the significance of and consequences of that memory are very serious, questions arise in each of our lives not only regarding what in fact happened and what we believe we recall thinking happened, but the meanings we make from what we believe we recall. A very minor part in *Vivienne's Blog* exploring this idea was substantially reworked into what became the bottom layer in a chapter in the current work, "The phase transitions of Richard" (at p.183).

Looking at clinical delusion is a good way to start examining and defining this sort of illusion of a complete and accurate reality, what I will call 'natural delusion'. This has led to its inclusion as an integral part in the main character of the CW. I therefore wrote Richard's state particularly in layer one ("The assault on Mount B") as being clinically deluded. In the third layer ("The taste of veneer") he is also at times clearly clinically deluded but this was intended to be an examination of a less severe case and one that became in need of treatment at a later state of his life.

In his conscious narrative Richard is eventually caught and tried for war crimes and finds himself in a prison. He is tortured with electrical equipment at the end of Part One.

The story in the third or bottom layer is an alternative, and at this stage unconscious, story of Richard written in the third person. This relates to the same time period and experience as the story in the top layer but includes a different approach to the same or similar events. This story is also that of an unreliable narrator. He suffers from memory lapse, from rationalisations and clinical delusions. The delusions are not quite as other-worldly as the top layer.

Edward is equally as domineering and Richard also flees home as a young adult. He returns and eventually finds himself with a job in his father's business empire.

He comes to his father's attention and given an executive position. Again his desire is to obtain access to the house on Mount B is for the same reasons as in the top layer; that is, he feels it is his birth right because he should have had that privileged position which was in fact being enjoyed and by the illegitimate half-brother, Simon, as a more senior executive who still resides in the house on Mount B.

Richard secretly buys a controlling interest in Edward's business and supplants him as Managing Director, using the vast secret resources he has acquired from his maternal grandfather. Richard had asked Page to take his place on a business trip. It is on that business trip that Page is killed in a train accident. Had Richard been the one to be on the train that day, the accident still would have happened but it is extremely unlikely that Richard himself would have died.

His life progressively becomes more tortured when his both grandfather and Christopher Page die and as he becomes divorced from his wife. Richard seems to blame himself for Page's death and goes on to a bed depressive state which leads to his hospitalisation (in the first layer, he had portrayed that guilt by describing the accident as a deliberate killing that Richard engineered in order to both rid himself of Page and to wreck a piece of state property, i.e. the train, for reasons of his own).

Richard is portrayed as suffering from clinical delusion. He ends up not in a prison but a mental hospital where he undergoes not electrical torture but electroshock therapy. The exploration of clinical delusion, as well as of inaccurate memory and perception, of the ordinary rationalisations he gives himself and the existence of a supposed subconscious self (here represented by the middle layer – "Suburban myths and legends") forms the substance of the first 66 chapters, all of which have the three separate but related narrative layers.

In the sections following I discuss natural delusions – that is, the incorrect understanding that we understand all of reality and that we remember accurately. Next I look at some attempts at a general definition of clinical delusion, then at certain types of clinical delusion I have touched upon in my CW which can be regarded as clinical delusions.

Finally I look at the use of delusion as a theme in other creative writing, before discussing the middle layer ("Suburban myths and legends").

Natural delusion

I will discuss the three factors of natural delusion I have focussed on in the CW first (incompleteness, inaccuracy, and change to memories; inability to completely record all possible sensory data; rationalisation, cognitive dissonance and self-delusion) and then turn to the clinical delusions Richard is written as suffering from.

1. **The incompleteness of, inaccuracy of, and change to, memories**

   'Like all great travellers, said Essper, 'I have seen more than I remember, and remember more than I have seen.' - *Vivian Grey* (Disraeli, 1968)

   'Sometimes, the things that are most real only happen in one's imagination, Oscar,' [Marina says to Oscar]. 'We only remember what never really happened.' - *Marina* (Ruiz Zafón, 2013, p.100)

Memory, it seems, is more than somewhat fickle.

Proust famously saw memory as something strange and faulty - *In search of lost time* (Proust, 1992). An early researcher, Sir Frederic Bartlett, showed scientifically in 1932 that all memories are not exact copies of past events but are reconstructed stories (Bartlett, 1995). The expert on the science of memory Elizabeth Loftus had sets of witnesses watch a video recording of a car accident. They were then asked the leading question "Did the white car jump the red light?" and they answered correctly that there was no white car. Several weeks later the same sets of people were asked the same question. They were more likely to answer this time that the white car jumped the red light. It appears that the mention of the white car in the original question became one of the bits of their memory of the original experienced event and they wove that into an incorrect reconstruction (Loftus, 1975). Similarly when subjects were falsely told they were lost in a shopping mall as children they gave vivid recollections of it though it was a fictitious event (Loftus, 1999). Half the adults shown photos of a hot air balloon in which the images were falsified to show them present as children then gave

vivid descriptions of the memories of such a ride (Wade, Garry, Rea, & Lindsay, 2002).

Emotion bears an important relationship to memory (Bower, 1992). Very highly emotionally charged memories ('associative memories') tend to be strong and clear (Brown & Kulik, 1977) lending support to the idea that emotional score is important to sensing a memory as part of the conscious self. Aristotle in *Politics* (Aristotle, 2013) referred to the important role of pain or pleasure or other emotions in learning.

There are examples both of strong emotions hindering memory of details and others of enhancing memory of details in eye-witness testimony of even very horrific crimes in legal cases with high emotional impact (Schooler & Eich, 2000). And yet many witnesses are certain of the truth of their recollection (Buckout, 1976; Fradella, 2006; Wells, 1995). Some will become certain in recollection, even after initial uncertainty or after accepting post-event misinformation (Fradella, 2006, p.9). Even without intervention basic errors can lead to confusion between bystanders and perpetrators in the retrieval phase of memory (Fradella, 2006, p. 10).

This phenomenon has long been recognised by accepted by law courts. Indeed, my motivation for this research initially grew out of my experiences as a lawyer and a teacher. In particular over the last thirty years as a litigation lawyer. I have developed a keen interest in observation and reflection on, memory, learning, perception and consciousness, and their relationships with story. The classic modern description is found in a judgment of the American jurist Justice Felix Frankfurter in 1927 in *The Case of Sacco v Vanzetti 30*, quoted in the United States Supreme Court in the more famous case of *United States v Wade* (United States Supreme Court, 1967):

> 'What is the worth of identification testimony even when uncontradicted? The identification of strangers is proverbially untrustworthy. The hazards of such testimony are established by a formidable number of instances in the records of English and American trials. These instances are recent – not due to the brutalities of ancient criminal procedures.'

The middle layer stories include instances of the a judgment of Richard by his own conscience (in those accounts given by so called eye-witnesses "Trial Witness No. 122 Grand Treasurer" (p.153), "Trial Witness No. 15 Brothers" (p. 175), "Trial Witness No. 19 Revolution"(p. 128), "Trial Witness No. 87 Democracy" (p. 142)). And those stories in the middle layer dealing with laws for the wretched are testimony given by Richard to his conscience of events as he would like others to see them, as a court might see them in his divorce, and ultimately as he would prefer to have experienced them or interpreted them in the case of the account from his suggestion of Emily's point of view ("Laws for the wretched - pertaining to lust" (p. 94), "Laws for the wretched - pertaining to marriages" (p. 102), "Laws for the wretched - pertaining to Richards" (p. 110)).

Concomitantly, when I started this project another form of confabulation fascinated me. That is the confabulation that appears to occur in normal people without diagnosed schizophrenia, dementia, or physical brain irregularity.

No matter how much people try to be accurate in memory and in reporting what they understand to have happened, there are obviously elements of incompleteness and fabrication in those tellings, when they are deliberately seeking to craft and summarize, entertain, or perhaps embroider for reputation. But it also seems that even when people try to be complete and honest the memory they have of what they wish to communicate, and the communication itself must be at least a summary and somewhat limited or elaborated version of events as they occurred. All the more so when judgments and assumptions, speculation, and ascription of motives to others to which we cannot possibly have direct access are included. All historical tellings, then, might be regarded therefore as possibly inaccurate versions of an event.

Humans construct the story. They will then believe some version of it despite its risks of fundamental incompleteness or inaccuracy. In the decisions then as to what and how to communicate it; how to reconstruct the intended report in language suitable for external communication, it is questionable as to whether it is even further removed from a story of reality.

Assuming the storyteller is trying to be complete and accurate, people perhaps come to believe the story as it is constructed and reconstructed internally and then again in external communication. The story teller may be conscious of all of this or only a part or none at all – that does not change the point, no more than if we might be conscious that a photograph cannot capture all of the contexts of action, visual environment in and out of the frame, and un-obtainable factors such as temperature and socio-emotional state of those portrayed as well as the photographer.

Both story tellers and receivers of the story are aware, at least sometimes, that they are all imperfectly rational subjects, often uncertain of objective truth. Experience consists of a matrix of irrational, contingent, chance happenings in amongst the rational and planned. Perception of it constantly shifts. Depending on a complicated calculus of factors such as the circumstances, the receiver's prior experience of the story teller's accuracy, the manner in which it is told, and the consequences of it being incorrect, the receiver may reserve a degree of scepticism or disbelief. Receivers of the story may believe it to one extent or other but may also have doubts. Likely veracity may be judged. The receivers of the story might have a different understanding of the interpretation of the language used to that intended by the story teller, making their own judgements of veracity, ascriptions of motive, assumptions or speculations, or their own versions of what they genuinely believe to be a more accurate version. If this in turn is fed back to the original story teller, this might even change the way the original story teller remembers or understands the event.

If story tellers cannot entirely believe themselves, then they certainly cannot entirely believe others. Nevertheless, they commonly act upon the stories relayed to them, and those they create for ourselves, as though true, presumably because they have no option but to do so and life demands decisions based on the stories.

The tendency to inaccuracy in memory and reasoning in all things real interests me because of the analogy with fictional entertainment of all sorts, for which the receivers knowingly and eagerly "barter", as Roland Barthes had it (Barthes, 2002, p.89), their time and also their disbelief. The question is raised as to why people are not only willing but eager to do so when their experience of wrongly

suspending disbelief in real life can be a distressing experience. Why is it that they actively seek out a rehearsal of delusion when they choose to be entertained by fiction? Is it just that people are driven by a desire to rehearse, risk-free, experiences of delusion that empower them better to deal with "real life" through increased experience with uncertainty and story? I was interested in further interrogating the legacy of modernity, and a metaphysics of representation espousing a stable subject conditioned by certainty.

Perhaps most surprising of all is the research on a similar line to Bartlett that shows that when we recall a memory, that act destroys that memory. The act of remembering creates an entirely new memory to replace it (Miller & Matzel, 2000). In other words people cannot even access the memory we have reconstructed after it has been reconstructed. Ina foreshadowing of this finding Freud called the process of reconsolidation, the representation of memories constantly being altered, 'Nachtraglichkeit,' and it has been the subject of research in relation to the neural basis of memory in recent years (Lehrer, 2007).

The exploration of these ideas is a constant theme of these two narrative layers. It is most obvious in two areas of the CW: first, I have Richard repeating descriptions of certain events in his life but with subtle and not so subtle differences creeping in. For example, his memories of fearing the hag. At first this hag is remembered as having been in the cellar (p. 15), then later a shack on the property, then in the upper bedroom, then in the town. The hag and prophetess are eventually remembered as combined (p.102). The prophetess is now apparently remembered as an incarnation of Miriam, Richard's mother (p. 153). The hag influences the future through the "prophecies" given by Miriam/the prophetess, depending on the narrative layer. Similarly Richard says at various times that he only spoke at a certain age – this age varies constantly both within each layer and between them. The latter example is the second area where this reconstructed memory emerges simply through the existence of contradictions between the bottom and top layers of narrative. The alterations in the memories are in accord with the needs of the particular narrator at the particular point in the narrative. This shows the mind spinning its memories slightly in order to accommodate its preferred narrative. As the protagonist in *The ingenious gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha* said:

> Too much sanity may be madness. And maddest of all, to see life as it is and not as it should be. (de Cervantes Saavedra, 2003)

In the CW the top and bottom layers present a plethora of mis-remembered events. The reader is invited to select those he or she prefers or thinks most likely, a decision which may shift and change as more of the narratives unfold, or indeed, never be settled as to which if any are true.

2. The inability to completely record all possible sensory data

> If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well-wadded with stupidity. *Middlemarch* (Eliot, 1998)

There is a huge amount of data in the world. We only perceive with our unaided senses a fraction of any of the information available in any sensory arena.

Consider just the data physically taken in by the eyes. Humans only see a fraction of the range of electromagnetic spectrum (Starr, 2005). They do not see into the ultraviolet range as do birds (Cuthill, 1997) nor in the infra-red to the extent that snakes do, for example (Palczewskaa et al, 2014). And even in that range of light accessible to the human eyes much of that cannot be resolved with the unaided eye – a telescope or binoculars brings dots into galaxies and planets, ships and recognisable faces. There is even a difference between males and females as to colour perception and movement (Abramov et al, 2012). When eyes move from one spot to another, as we do several times a second (saccadic movement) and they move rapidly voluntarily as a person changes what is to be looked at. During such movement, very little information is gained of the view passed over - this may add up to about two hours' worth of time each day. Humans blink approximately 10.6 times a minute at rest which is approximately 10,000 times during a waking day (Holland & Tarlow, 1975) Blink duration is about 100-150 milliseconds (Evinger, Manning, & Sibony, 1991) which means a further 15-30 minutes of visual input is lost each day in blinking. At a more gross scale, we do not see what is behind us or, if we do, we don't see what is in front. We do not see above our bodies or below without sacrificing the front and the opposite. Our

peripheral vision does not see colour. We do not see even the usual part of the world when we are reading.

All the other senses are similarly highly limited to some degree. The exact numbers involved in this do not matter so much as the concept that all of these things add up to a very incomplete picture of the world.

Perhaps that does not matter much of the time but that lack can sometimes deceive in crucial matters. People may die if they fail to see the snakes in the grass, the lions in the bushes, the dengue-ridden mosquitos on their skin or the typhoid bacteria in their water. They avoid things that smell 'bad' often because they are in fact bad for their health. Hydrogen sulphide is a very poisonous gas that smells of rotten eggs, a smell most avoid. But in large quantities the sense of smell is quickly dulled by it, and poisoning can then occur from something no longer perceived.

When one turns to consider the temporal elements of life, matters become even more interesting. Because light and sound and odours all take time to reach the sensory organs from their sources (however quickly) and because signals from those sensors once triggered then take time to deliver signals to the brain (Ertekin, Ertiken, & Karcioglu, 1975), and for the brain to analyse and then assemble reactions, awareness is only ever of what has already happened. That is, people do not experience the precise present, only the very recent past, in a similar way that a view of a star 10 million light years away is a view not of the present but of the star as it was ten million years ago.

Humans suffer generally from an inability to see large numbers of things as discrete units, particularly in a short space of time. They tend to think in patterns, the real-life embodiment of a picture being worth a thousand words. They can see (to an extent) and remember (to an extent) the overall picture. Patterns are wonderfully summarising surrogates, a way of seeing, remembering, analysing information without the detail of the information itself. Take fire for example. Unless there is a reason to focus particularly on them we do not easily see the individual many changing flames inherent in it. Even then, in terms of memory a person is unlikely to be able to recall all stages of the waxing and waning of even

one individual flame within the overall fire. And the detailed makeup of that flame in terms of glowing particles cannot be seen with the naked eye because they are both too fast and too small.

Humans miss a lot simply because they are asleep for approximately eight hours of every twenty-four and dream for several of those. When awake, a lot of attention is given to one thing at a time. So some period of time is sometimes given to recall, predicting what will be said or done, to recursion/rewriting of what 'should' have been said. Time is often spent engaged in fiction delivered by all sorts of media and in telling personal histories to others that are necessarily summarised and sometimes gilded.

A person's sense of reality taken from perceptions of the natural world and stories from the memory can be either incomplete or inaccurate, slightly different 9though often overlapping) concepts. That understanding of reality therefore might be called illusory, if it is thought to be complete and accurate and representing an entire reality. If so, it could be said purely from a logical point of view, the normal state of all consciousness is to that extent an illusion and therefore there is delusion of a type.

There is a large element of being unable to tell the complete "truth" because of our inability to perceive it. The interpretation of sensory input will differ from individual to individual and within the same individual temporally. It depends on what other sensory input and memories and associations are present in the mind at the time the explanation is arrived at. So to a child the sky might be blue because he believes honestly and with no objective reason not to so believe what he has been told, that God simply painted it that colour. A different child or the same child at a different age might believe that it is because it is a reflection of the colour of the sea. Who is to say whether either explanation is in fact correct when the children then lack the scientific theoretical background to see all of the physical input that there is to be had, and lack all of the possible contrary future explanations that may await them? Both explanations of these children, then, are in a way conditional. The difference between them is that as the children change over time somehow the first one might begin to both rank the second explanation more highly because he have had more theoretical input and possibly scientific

experimentation and what these tell him are more recent and somehow more believable than what he might have thought at the time of the first explanation. That second explanation in turn might be replaced by an understanding that it is to do with light interacting with the atmosphere. The first, older, less scientifically informed, first explanation is still in the mind somewhere. It can be recognised if specifically referenced. But perhaps it is now regarded as having a lower score of plausibility for recognition as conscious belief. But perhaps it should be regarded as still conditional even now because the understanding of the science behind it is always subject to the possibility of change.

There is therefore initial inaccuracy and/or incompleteness of perception (as discussed above), then a drift away of details and evolution of memories as they are retrieved, reconstructed, performed and re-stored.

Thinking about these aspects more deeply, I explored these concepts (of sensory and temporal incompleteness and inaccuracy in the CW with Richard coming to a realisation of them. In this instance it becomes a further kindling event for his increased mental instability (see "The phase transitions of Richard" p. 183).

3. Rationalisation, cognitive dissonance and self-delusion

Going further, it is not just one type of fictional representation of the nature of memory and perception that I explore in these narratives, but also forms of self-delusion and both conscious and unconscious rationalisation.

The future is a matter of prediction. Of telling ourselves a range of stories about what might happen. Predictions are made as to what could possibly happen. These are acts of imagination, of story-telling. Having made such attempts to estimate desirable and undesirable futures (or a range of stories) people take action to achieve or avoid certain of them.

When faced with several apparent facts humans seem driven to construct a narrative that allows the conceit of a perfect understanding of the unknown factual matrix. The trail is worked out from the breadcrumbs. A woman may meet a friend in the street dressed in singlet, shorts and running shoes who is sweating and panting. She may conclude he has been running, prepared by dressing in that

way, and has been running for long enough to build that degree of physiological reaction. If she knows that he lives two kilometres away and is facing away from his home, then she might conclude that here is a man who chose to exercise by running from his home on some circuit that led him here. They talk briefly and she agrees to meet him at a bar in one hour's time. Then a prediction as opposed to a deduction about the past: she might predict he will continue the circuit and will on arriving home shower and dress in different clothing before meeting her. That speculation is something that will be tested as it is a prediction of the future.

In the above scenario her communication of these thoughts to him to get confirmation would not only be probably pointless (except perhaps as to the prediction of his future behaviour) but could can itself only be a summary and distortion of those thoughts due to the strictures not only of language but the perception and interpretation of that language by others. What she is therefore telling herself is in part a story which may or not be true in all particulars. We are unable in that sense to be anything but unreliable narrators to ourselves, whether trying to tell the 'truth' or not.

Humans also tend at some time or other to suffer from the illusion of knowledge: that is, a belief of being possessed of a command of knowledge when the subject in fact has only a superficial understanding of what is going on at a deeper level and that "the accuracy of their forecasts increases with more information" (Montier, 2010).

Next, it appears that people consciously manipulate their personas deliberately in order to enhance their image not only in others' eyes but in their own (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). The Internet as a whole and social networking in particular might be regarded as an interesting model of the way in which the whole brain and identity could behave. It is a constantly evolving jumble of snippets of discourse. Entering a social media service, a person immediately has a profile that appears to others in a certain way which may or not be perceived the same way by all concerned in its manufacture or reading. That can be manipulated deliberately to suggest a particular persona. It can evolve is such a way in response to circumstances so that a non-deliberate but inaccurate persona is displayed.

There is also unconscious rationalisation. This is shown for example in a study in which teas and jams were given to subjects who chose those they preferred. The preferred products were then switched unbeknownst to the subjects. They were asked, with the new product in front of them, to say why they preferred that product. Only a third of the switches were detected by the shoppers (Hall, Johansson, Tarning, Sikström, & Deutgen, 2010).

It is probably within most people's experience that if something undesirable occurs or one misses out on what one desires, there is a period of a form of grieving. But at the final stage of that there can be a rationalisation in the acceptance of the position. Either one takes the view that that is simply the way fate has left it or, more interestingly to me, the rationalisation is made that one did not in fact desire the other outcome. This cognitive dissonance might be a conscious rationalisation with awareness in the 'self' that it is such. This suggests in turn that there is an awareness that the 'self' is somehow not trying so much to fool itself but give it an alternative narrative that it would rather listen to, Freud's 'defence mechanism' (Freud, 1937).

Each of these elements appear throughout the CW. Richard is constantly rationalising and re-crafting his self-image or the image he narrates. He makes assumptions about the actions and motives of others.

Clinical delusion

   4. **Personal Clinical delusion**

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* defines Delusional Disorder as a Psychotic Disorder, that is:

> A false belief based on incorrect inference about external reality that is firmly sustained despite what almost everybody else believes and despite what constitutes incontrovertible and obvious proof or evidence to the contrary. The belief is not one ordinarily accepted by other members of the person's culture or subculture. (Jaspers, 1997, p.297).

Karl Jaspers defined a delusional belief as one which is held with certainty (with absolute conviction) and incorrigibility (not changeable by compelling counterargument or impossibility or proof to the contrary) or falsity of content (implausible, bizarre or patently untrue) (1997, p.95). He went on to divide delusional belief into the categories of the bizarre and non-bizarre, mood dependent or neutral, and various sub-categories such as erotomanic, grandiose, jealous, persecutory, somatic, and mixed.

The above is an unsatisfactory definition for my purposes. What if there is no proof to the contrary? Can it not therefore still be a delusion? What if there is proof to the contrary which is believed by almost everyone else but is correctly found lacking by the subject, a general belief in geocentricity as against heliocentricity in Renaissance Europe, for example? What if it has a simply neutral effect on the subject in terms of any action taken or consequence? For there to be something to treat does there not have to be a source of distress for the subject and/or others, a question implicit in *American psycho* (Ellis, 1991)? And how does this definition leave us in terms of non-clinical delusions? Jasper appeared unhappy with his own definition and referred to the necessity that there be a resulting change in the personality. But why should change or temporality be a necessary factor? Foucault, by contrast, foregrounded the difficulty in trying to distinguish delusional states from everyday folly and foolishness. He pointed to the difficulty of establishing a natural transcendent 'truth' when discourse is reflective of the body of knowledge, and contemporaneous disciplinary practices, and their histories, at a point in time and place: such definitions are a consequence of cultural constructions. The distinctions between folly and reason are used, he said, as a way of excluding the voices of the 'mad' from such discourse (Foucault, 2009, p.33).

Psychiatrists describe "non-clinical delusions" as those that are not so severe as to warrant labelling "clinical." A somewhat pragmatic distinction rather than fundamentally defining it in juxtaposition all other states seems to me useful for a decision on whether to treat the condition. One study for example asks whether psychotic symptoms are present in the general population and finds (referring to studies by Van Os, Hanssen, Bijl, & Ravelli (2000) and by Verdoux, Maurice-Tison, Gay, Van Os, Salamon, & Bourgeois (1998) that:

> When one considers subjects whose manifest symptoms are not sufficiently severe to lead to a categorical diagnosis of schizophrenia or of personality disorder, psychotic experiences are not exceptional in the general population […] These results are consistent with the principle that psychotic symptoms, notably hallucinations, are significantly more prevalent in the general adult population than psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia.

And concludes:

> We suggest in this article that it is possible to consider psychosis as a dimension of the human experience, which, when reaches a certain degree or when meets internal or external circumstances (for example, genetic, stress, cultural, and meta-cognitive), can put on the clothes of a psychiatric disease and comes to find a place in the DSM-IV wardrobe. For schizophrenia, the challenge is even more complex because of diagnostic heterogeneity as well as the fact that some features of schizophrenia are negative or cognitive. Moreover, this is a multifactorial, neurodevelopmental disease that shares features with a multitude of the other categories: obsessive–compulsive disorder, anxiety, depression, antisocial behaviour, mania, and so on. (Stip & Letourneau, 2009)

This also reinforces the label 'clinical delusion' as a point on a continuum. In the CW I have chosen a clinical delusion - a psychosis, anxiety, and depression, each by itself severe enough to demand electroshock treatment. This allowed me to explore the result of that treatment and what normality may in fact consist of.

Debate continues over the definitional question, with some commentators locating delusion-like states between the everyday and the clinical, thus problematising assumptions regarding the categorical nature of mental disease and illness.

5. Mass psychoses – or transpersonal delusions

The notion of mass psychoses or transpersonal delusions – those held by a society at large, or at least elements within it – recalls historical examples that relate not just to individuals but entire communities or nations. The most notorious example is the Aryan supremacy in National Socialism with its "pseudo-scientific biological-eugenicist underpinnings" as the historian Neil Gregor put it, cited by Bernard-Donals (2004). A related national delusion is referred to in the recent film *Sarah's key* (Paquet-Brenner, 2010) a dramatic fiction based around the Vel'd'hiv incident where Vichy's Commissariat for Jewish Affairs in 1942 rounded up and

delivered 7,000 Jews to concentration camps. That history that has until recently been washed out of French cultural memory (Callil, 2006; Wieviorka, 1994). A similar instance of cultural amnesia is evident in the taboo in Belgium regarding discussion of the colonisation of the 'Belgian Congo'. As Antoon van den Braembussche put it:

> […] King Leopold's colonial adventure – his systematic exploitation of the Congo – relied on slave labor on a massive scale, which even provoked at the time a worldwide protest movement, is still unknown to the average Belgian citizen. More telling and surprising still is the complete silence about the atrocities. Millions of lives were taken, which probably makes the Congolese Holocaust one of the most forgotten mass killings of modern times. This dark episode of Belgian history has been wiped out of collective memory. (van den Braembussche, 2002, p. 43).

In such examples delusion is deliberately generated and imposed on the populace – though perhaps they close their eyes knowingly in some cases, in which case collusion also takes place. But a motivating intelligence is not necessary. An example of the latter is a group of people all misinterpreting one phenomenon as another – a weather balloon or the planet Venus as an alien spacecraft.

I allude to this sort of delusion in the CW but only to the extent that populations under the control of a dictatorship often arrive there through this sort of mass belief. I mention it here only because it was a frame through which my story started to develop in the top layer according to its narrator ("The assault on Mount B") but I have not much developed it in turn (though I would like to in the future).

6. Confabulation

I define 'confabulation' here as the 'fabricated, distorted or misinterpreted, memories stated to be held, without knowledge by the maker of the inaccuracy' (Redmount, 1959). It is not so much a world-view delusion or one that depends on a particular false idea but just occurs as a quickly constructed false story-response to a query. In clinical confabulation there is a physical cause in the brain. Further, the inventions can be at odds entirely with facts that the confabulator ought to know and yet there is no knowledge on the confabulator's part of its falsity, that the speculative parts are not actual memories. The causes

can be associated with brain chemistry rather than strict structure, such as in certain schizophrenic conditions, or it can be because of dementia or brain injuries. Some are caused by damage to either the corpus callosum or the frontal lobes or in the cases/some other area of the brain.

It is most strikingly illustrated in the famous so called 'split-brain' patients. In 1962 Gazzaniga and others carried out experiments with patients whose corpus callosum connecting left and right hemispheres of the brain had been partially or fully severed, either by accident or through surgery (to relieve the symptoms of epilepsy for example). In the original experiment the subject was shown a snow scene only in the left field of vision and a chicken's foot only in the right field (each eye informing a separate hemisphere of the brain):

> Each hemisphere was shown four small pictures, one of which related to a larger picture also presented to that hemisphere. The patient had to choose the most appropriate small picture. The right hemisphere - that is, the left hand - correctly picked the shovel for the snowstorm; the right hand, controlled by the left hemisphere, correctly picked the chicken to go with the bird's foot. Then we asked the patient why the left hand - or right hemisphere - was pointing to the shovel. Because only the left hemisphere retains the ability to talk, it answered. But because it could not know why the right hemisphere was doing what it was doing, it made up a story about what it could see – namely, the chicken. It said the right hemisphere chose the shovel to clean out a chicken shit. […]
>
> We then asked the left hemisphere – the only one that can talk – why the left hand was pointing to the object. It really did not know, because the decision to point to the card was made in the right hemisphere. Yet, quick as a flash, it made up an explanation. (Gazzaniga, 1998)

If confabulation is something that happens as a result of some physical cause, then one would expect these injuries to be more or less in the same part of the brain. But different parts and functions of the brain are being affected in dementias and in the various different injuries experienced, and similar confabulation still results (Stuss, Alexander, Lieberman, & Levine, H., 1978

If it is true that what is being affected in clinical confabulation is indeed a releasing of or damage to the control of non-clinical confabulation, that might pre-suppose confabulation in all normal brains. One has to wonder whether the confabulation itself is not something that happens to the brain in the sense that it is grafted on

to it but rather to some mechanisms controlling already existing confabulation. If so, perhaps there is some mechanism to interpret that, filter, and choose a path which is accepted as "normal" or at least functional.

Strictly defined confabulation was a lens I looked through in order to work through to the CW as it is now and to give me some ground to speculate with the idea of multiple synchronous stories within one brain. I did include some of what is technically regarded as confabulation in the CW. It is difficult to portray when the protagonist is also presented as suffering under clinical grandiose delusion; indeed the end result seems the same. I allude to it most obviously when both Richard and Peter Page briefly see a bus shelter (which we suspect is real) rather than something else within their respective irrealities in that top layer, and again in Richard's ambiguous view of the office building in "The war below" (CW, p. 128).

I decided to write as though Richard was thinking about the past with all the faults that implies, the present with all the incompleteness that implies, the future with all the uncertainties that implies, and therefore as confabulating to a large degree.

7. Self-deception

> What we are to our inward vision, and what man appears to be *sub specie aeternitatis*, can only be expressed by way of myth. Myth is more individual and expresses life more precisely than does science... Thus it is that I have now undertaken, in my eighty-third year, to tell my personal myth. I can only make direct statements, only 'tell stories.' Whether or not the stories are 'true' is not the problem. The only question is whether what I tell is my fable, my truth. (Jung, 1989)

Self-deception is similar to, but differs from, confabulation. There are a number of definitional problems with this term but for these purposes I define self-deception as preferring one explanation or narrative over another when the evidence for it is weak compared to the discarded narrative. The subject ought to be, and is, aware that this is happening but nevertheless persists in the desired belief: "I will commit today to spend money I do not have as I 'know' I am going to be win Lotto tomorrow." The emotional charge of desire appears to be what is fuelling the deception.

An example which I explored in my MCW novel was the way in which the protagonist seemed to fill in gaps in her genealogy by choosing to believe unsubstantiated familial claims of links to historical celebrity. Perhaps doing something like this confers a feeling of social superiority - a form of self-deception (in the sense that the subject is aware of evidence for the contrary view which should outweigh this but chooses to disregard this by denying its validity to him or her self) or ordinary deception (where the subject knows of the deceit but chooses to mislead another person) or both. A tendency to ceaselessly revise the past through flawed reconstructions and our subsequent rationalisations is also present throughout the CW, in Richard's recollections and revisionings.

Self-deception involves the deliberate choosing of one explanation over a more likely one, creating a type of cognitive dissonance. But what if this choice is an unknowing one? If it is based on the best evidence available to a mind, mixed with the memories used to create associations, then it is not confabulatory because there is no objective reason to come to any other explanation. There is perhaps no reason to disbelief this explanation in the sense of there being contrary evidence. What if there is self-deception on that point but in fact the less likely state preferred is the correct one? And what if the real state is neither of those options? Probability of an event occurring is not of course determinative of its occurrence or not.

In my CW, the top layer narrator shows such cognitive dissonance in a number of places to justify his actions in his story. That narrator is either unconsciously or consciously using such a mechanism to explain the problems in his more ordinary life (for example the death of Christopher Page, "End of Page", p.175). It is not just defence of his image that cognitive dissonance allows for but also the converse by taking on responsibility for events in fact outside the subject's control.

Representations of delusion in other creative writing

In relation to deliberate storytelling/fictions Jakobson tells of the phrase used by storytellers in western Spain. Instead of the familiar 'Once upon a time' they would say 'It was and it was not so' (1967).On reflection Jakobson's phrase might

equally well be applied to the representations of remembered truth of all people who are not clinically deluded.

The family and work become the obvious prime sites for interrogation of these kinds of fictions in the novel In terms of both the interpersonal relations that go on within those arenas. In work and family life, we tend to deal with others as though their histories and stories represent an objective and certain knowing.

However, some works more consciously target delusion as a theme or major subject. There are innumerable examples of the portrayal of mental illness in all creative media.

There are those works in which other fictional worlds are deliberately created and then imposed on the protagonist, leading to a confusion and choice between, and acceptance or not of, two or more alternate realities. Examples include Charles Dodson's *Alice in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1974). George MacDonald's *Lilith* (MacDonald, 2008), C.S. Lewis's *The chronicles of Narnia* (Lewis, 2001), Madeleine L'Engle's *A wrinkle in time* (L'Engle, 2007) or much of all science fiction including that portrayed in some films e.g. *Brazil* (Gilliam, 1985), *Inception* (Nolan, 2010), *Total recall* (Verhoeven, 1990), and *The matrix* (Wachowski & Wachowski, 2001).

There is in the narrative a purpose in this world-foisting that again is external to the character (the arguable exception being *Alice in Wonderland* where the character is possibly dreaming a world). The protagonist usually becomes aware that there are now two worlds and has to choose between them. These types of imposed or foisted worlds differ from my focus in several ways. First they involve an external construction that the character has to simply accept. I am interested instead in the world(s) the character creates for him or her self. In my work there is no necessary understanding of that though Richard (the protagonist) does at one point as he slips further into a psychotic state.

I first started exploring the ways in which, and reasons why, humans create coexistent, alternate and sometimes contradictory stories to represent their realities in writing one of my Master of Creative Writing novels, now published

(under a pseudonym) as *Vivienne's blog* (Leaton, 2014). There the protagonist Vivienne had slipped so far into thinking in alternative realities that she was clinically delusional. Through the use of a fantastical familial history, truths were falsely represented by her as dreams, and knowing lies related as histories she told her son and her ex-partner. Rationality and irrationality were bundled together in a sympathetic though essentially bad character who abducted her own child under the impression it was someone else's, destroyed a property she believed to be her ancestral home, and then apparently destroyed herself. But, because her memories and understandings were a mixture of the real and the invented, she remained able to function in society and apply complex skills to her job, just as many people in our society do.

Next, in these types of stories the choices are often between a large society seen as evil rejected in favour of a smaller community of 'those in the know,' rather than two morally equal or morally unidentifiable worlds. There is a sense in *Total Recall, Inception* and *Brazil* of ambiguity about which is the ultimate reality at the end. *The Truman Show* delusion is a portrayal of a type of persecutory/grandiose delusion in which patients believe their lives are staged plays or reality television shows, but in that case, it seems, correctly (Weir, 1999).

An early example of a representation of cognitive dissonance in literature comes from antiquity is Aesop's fable of "The fox and the grapes":

> An hungry Fox with fierce attack
> Sprang on a Vine, but tumbled back,
> Nor could attain the point in view,
> So near the sky the bunches grew.
> As he went off, "They're scurvy stuff,"
> Says he, "and not half ripe enough--
> And I've more rev'rence for my tripes
> Than to torment them with the gripes."
> For those this tale is very pat
> Who lessen what they can't come at. (Aesop, 1947)

In works dealing with deluded characters *per se*, Shakespeare's King Lear, Hamlet and (arguably) Lady Macbeth all suffered grief or ambition that led to mental illness. Charlotte Bronte's Mrs Rochester in *Jane Eyre* (Brontë, 2000) and Charles Dickens' Miss Havisham in *Great expectations* (Dickens, 2012) also had

mentally disturbed characters. But in all these works - even where the triggering event is obvious such as the murder of Duncan or jilting by a lover - the illness is more described than explained (much as is a character's physicality). The emphasis understandably is on the existence of a deluded character for the purposes of his or her effect on plot rather than the converse or the on delusion itself.

Some works, as with the trio of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's in *Yellow wallpaper (Gilman & Lane, 1980)*, Sylvia Plath with *The bell jar* (Plath, 1971) and Janet Frame with *Faces in the water* (Frame, 1980), speak semi-autobiographically and with issues that relate as much to the failures of the contemporaneous psychiatric practices and gender biases as to any close examination of clinical delusion causes or structures, but do focus on the delusion more closely – the plot is very much a vehicle for this.

Those three novels just mentioned were celebrated for their authenticity. There are other works describing mental illness that have been criticised for trivialising or misinforming the public. In the three cases referred to next this was all the more so because the novel in each case was turned into a film. Ian McEwan's *Enduring love* (McEwan, 1997) dealt with de Clerambault's syndrome (obsessive love) and included in the text an apparent medical case history on which the book claimed to have been based. This was an invention - a fictional part of the novel - by McEwan (the report writer's name used was even an anagram of McEwan's), something not picked up on by the early critics. There is nothing inherently wrong in this fictional device but it drew criticism because it was said to trivialise a serious issue. Earlier was *The strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stephenson (Stevenson, 1998) which was said to suggest that somehow the there is a conscious choice to turn on or off different personalities and indeed psychosis. And between them in time is *American psycho* (Ellis, 1991) which depicted a man who, outwardly successful, was in the grip of a violent psychosis. Interestingly it is not clear by the end of that novel whether this violence is a delusion itself or is real. On the other hand *One flew over the cuckoo's nest* (Kesey, 1973) received more praise than criticism because it humanised and de-demonised the patients; however even so it still receives criticism for its depiction

of violence and sexuality however, mostly in the arena of parents complaints about it being chosen as a teaching text in schools.

In *Human traces* Sebastian Faulks focuses on the late Victorian era treatment of schizophrenia - or madness as it was then called. The book follows the lives of two psychiatrist friends, one British and one French, in the period of WWI at a time when scientists had just started to unravel the workings of the mind using scientific methods (Faulks, 2005). According to the Times Literary Supplement Faulks said in an interview with the BBC:

> My aim as a novelist is, by examining these themes, to see what they can tell us about all of humanity and the way in which all our minds work in sickness and in health (Currie, 2011).

There are also those works that are loosely based on biography such as the film about the schizophrenic mathematician John Nash, *A Beautiful Mind* (Howard 2011). Based on the biography by Sylvia Nasar (1998), the focus however is on Nash as an historical individual in a context rather than the illness itself.

Will Self in *Umbrella* (2013) explored mental illness and played with the definition of it as well as drug induced altered states. Umbrella is set in a mental hospital in London in 1971 and describes a patient who contracted an illness at the time of WW1. Self also adopted an innovative writing style, a form of free flowing text. There are no chapters and few paragraph breaks. The unity of time is broken, with interruptions from different time periods. It is for me very interesting in its attempt to document thought processes.

The classic enunciation of the narrator-as-deluded or as deluding is that of the 'unreliable narrator'. Broadly, I divide the unreliable narrator into two types: that of the narrator who consciously seeks to delude the reader, perhaps as an excuse for actions (as Vivienne did in part in my MCW novel), and another kind who appears not to realise s/he is unreliable though it is clear to readers that this is so (again, Vivienne in part fitted this categorisation as might the protagonist in *American psycho*).

In order to classify unreliable narrations it is possible to identify types and list them. William Riggan looked at first-person narrators (Riggan, 1981). He identified types, a few of which are: the Pícaro, an exaggerator; the mentally ill Madman (as is Richard in the top layer); the text-playful Clown; the naive and usually young Naif; the Liar is knowingly dishonest for often reputational reasons (as is the cousin in the middle layer CW story "Change of employment", p. 32). Another way in which to classify them might be as per the classification of the deluded. In other words concentrating instead on the narrator's awareness (or lack thereof) of falsity.

In the recent *Dark angel* Sally Beauman draws an unreliable narrator who not only deliberately tells falsehoods in journals and verbally, but is self-deluded as well (Beauman, 1990). A more recent example of the deliberately unreliable narrator is Gillian Flynn's *Gone girl* (2012). The physical format is again interesting. There are alternate chapters, from the first person point of view. First the husband and then the wife (he in the form of a contemporaneous narrative and she in the form of a found diary). On my first reading I initially got the impression that they are both reliable narrators. Then that the husband, who started to admit lies, is unreliable and has killed his missing wife. Then it is revealed by the wife in her narrative diary form that she is still alive, that it is she who is and has been the deliberately unreliable narrator. The way this is hidden initially shows that the implied author (to the extent to which the classification is valid) is also unreliable here.

The second approach (i.e. the narrator is apparently unaware of his or her unreliability) applies to Paul Torday's *The irresistible inheritance of Wilberforce* (2008). The protagonist Wilberforce is the first person narrator who describes four years in his life, which form four parts to the book. Unusually, the chronology is reversed. It is only through noting the differences in his reporting style and the events related in each succeeding part that I came to realise that he is indeed a unreliable narrator. By the "end" of the book he is shown to be a deluded alcoholic, whose progression has gradually been revealed to us by showing the back story to each part. This interesting method of writing was recently examined in the article "Backwards" (Seymour Chatman, 2013).

Self-deception is at the heart of many works of unreliable narration. For example, Dostoevsky in *Notes from the underground*:

> Every man has reminiscences which he would not tell to everyone but only his friends. He has other matters in his mind which he would not reveal even to his friends, but only to himself and that in secret. But there are things which a man is afraid to tell even to himself, and every decent man has a number of such things stored away in his mind (1992, at p27).

and in *The Brothers Karamazov* where, amongst other examples, Zosima says to Fyodor Pavolich:

> Above all, do not lie to yourself. A man who lies to himself and listens to his own lie comes to a point where he does not discern any truth either in himself or anywhere around him, and thus falls into disrespect towards himself and others. Not respecting anyone, he ceases to love, and having no love, he gives himself up to passions and coarse pleasures, in order to occupy and amuse himself, and in his vices reaches complete beastiality [*sic*], and it all comes from lying continually to others and to himself. A man who lies to himself is often the first to take offense. It sometimes feels very good to take offense, doesn't it? And surely he knows that no one has offended him, and that he himself has invented the offense and told lies just for the beauty of it, that he has exaggerated for the sake of effect, that he has picked on a word and made a mountain out of a pea- he knows all of that, and still he is the first to take offense, he likes feeling offended, it gives him great pleasure, and thus he reaches the point of real hostility... (2002, p.44).

Self-deception is an interesting concept. How can one deceive oneself? One way in which it is possible to see this is by refining the concept so that the contradictory beliefs are not held at the same time. It is more intuitive to accept that A knows of the falsity of X but wants it to be true so much, acts as though it were and eventually forgets that it is false. That allows the possibility that A is aware simultaneously of the falsity of X and the desire or intention to forget that knowledge. Temporally, this awareness erodes until it is gone and self-deception truly has occurred. That is one interpretation of Dostoyevsky's texts.

It is for me more often in poetry rather than prose that I get to the sense of efficient imagery, deep meaning, and the often plot-less fragmentary nature of the underlying layers of the mind. In each of the two recent works of poetic prose *Eeeee eee eeee* by Tao Lin (the title emulating the voice of a dolphin) (Lin, 2007) and Ken Baumann's *Solip* (Baumann, 2013) there is a sort of half-way house,

kind of stream of consciousness. In the former, it is almost a stream of dream, which suggests several narratives going on in the narrator at any one time, some of them from the subconscious. In *Solip* there is a deeper use still of language as a form of exploration into the psyche. Both books have elements that remind me of *The age of wire and string* (Marcus, 2007) but like that book, there is only one voice in evidence, albeit influenced by or drawn from the usually hidden layers of the subconscious. This differs from my CW where there are multiple simultaneous voices.

While there are many writers whose work I admire, I am not trying to emulate any particular one or group of them. Nor is it easy to say my work participates in a single genre (though I accept, following Derrida (1992), that no "genre" is closed or pure and that the work must participate in at least one).

One novel that is closer in its treatment of an unreliable narration and mysterious delusion to my sense of what I wished to achieve is William Golding's *Pincher Martin: the two deaths of Christopher Martin* (2002). This is a mysterious novel in which the reality being portrayed is slippery and irresolvable. The anti-hero, Martin, is the sole survivor of a shipwreck. He wakes in darkness, submerged, before nearly drowning after being thrown into the side of a rock islet. He must climb to avoid waves. He barely survives thirst and extreme sunburn. He looks over his bitter selfish past and the complexities and simplicities of being human. But the ending suggests either that Martin has lost his sanity and believes himself to have drowned instead of reaching the rock or that he did drown and the rock episode is either a form of last moment delusion, or an allegory of purgatory.

A set of two other stories have also been influential in my approach to this CW. The first is Kafka's short story "Description of a struggle" (1971a) and the second is the *Amber* series of ten novels by Roger Zelazny (1970-1991). In each work the characters are able to will changes to bits of reality as they travel on their landscape. In the former this is accomplished, for example, by changes in weather in the terrain across which the protagonist walks. In the *Amber* novels the characters eventually generate such a series of changes that they 'arrive' at a 'true' location, Amber – true in the sense of the Platonic ideal forms from which all material things are said to be copies. It is the converse of what I have described

as the "world-foisting" stories. The lead immortal characters believe they are the only 'true' family and that all mortals are effectively not real. A sort of Platonic ideal family. Their dynasty suffers from constant internal war underpinned by a myth of family deliberately created by the characters in which the reader is inculcated.

These two works resonate with me in that they have an overt landscape which is subject to journey and because the characters are able to change that landscape to suit what they believe their reality either is or should be. These elements speak of people dissatisfied with the actual and always striving to create a better reality. In my novel Richard is doing this through delusion. It is a mixture of a world he is inventing and one that another part of his self is foisting on his consciousness.

A further set of influential stories is typified by the works of Ben Marcus: *The age of wire and string* (Marcus, 2007), *Notable American Women* (Marcus, 2002) and *The Flame Alphabet* (Marcus, 2012). These are in one sense collections of first person short fables and in another sense novels. There is an obvious corollary for me in the deployment of interlinked vignettes to achieve a greater narrative pattern and effect. But of equal interest are the bizarre physical and anthropological landscapes presented in these works and others such as *Motorman* (Ohle, 2004). Each describes a strange world with different physics and language use – not in the sense of science fiction or traditional fantasy worlds but as completely different ways of seeing the world.

David Vann's *Legend of a suicide* (2010), on the other hand, does deal with such privately constructed related stories. These look at a series of events related to the narrator's father's suicide. The form of each of the six stories varies – some are mythic in style and one is long enough to qualify as a novella. The story is told in a relatively tight timeframe, with two richly rendered characters – father and son – and engages with the factors that lead to a death and subsequent responses to it. It is in part autobiographical. "The events", as Vann puts it in the acknowledgements section "are based on truth but the stories are fictitious."

My work differs in that it is not autobiographical, deals with more than one issue, has a larger character cast with many more separate stories, and covers the

much longer range of the entire life of Richard and is therefore more closely a bildungsroman work than Vann's.

In summary I have not been able to find any creative writing that deals with multiple story synchronous delusion either in the sense or the physical format that I have adopted.

Settings for the top and bottom layer narratives

The setting for each narrative differs. The top and third layers are set in imagined places that have both a slightly European and somewhat African flavour, which I have left deliberately vague. They are different in that the dictates of the context of each requires a different landscape. So a street in the city in the bottom layer becomes a ridge on a hill in a war field in the first – though sometimes there is a ghost of his consciousness from the bottom layer where Richard is a businessman. other landscape visible to the narrators, as for example when Richard the soldier sees a bus shelter – an object incongruous in that story and which seems to have leaked across layers.

Characters

I am aware of the list-like nature of the following. While it could have been placed in an appendix, it is an integral part of the explanation of the work and so it appears here. In the top and bottom layers of narrative:

Edward Jamieson.
Richard's father is very loosely modelled on Edward IV who was usurped by Richard III. Edward IV was Richard III's brother, not his father, but I liked the idea of that family as a vehicle representing a usurpation first in his business role or, in the delusive state of Richard, in his role of the country's dictator. Edward also plays the unstated part of the Pharoah of Egypt. It will not be at all obvious to readers but I had in mind the surname 'Jamieson' underlining Richard's Jewish lineage in both parents (James being a Hebrew name meaning 'supplant') and also to both Papa

Edward's and Edward's irrational rejection or ignorance of that lineage and an anti-semitic background.

Miriam.

Richard's mother. Miriam (the Hebrew form of Mary) means 'bitterness'. I wanted this CW to be set in a series of books which reflected part of the Jewish and Christian holy texts to show a change of Richard towards the present. Richard's mother is Jewish although this is not expressly stated. Richard himself is therefore Jewish by lineage, but Christian by upbringing – reflected in the naming of Part One as opposed to the subsequent parts. In *Exodus* Miriam was a prophet (Exodus, 15:20) whose earliest prophecy was that her mother was going to give birth to a son (Moshe/Moses) who would free the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage. In the Christian Bible Jesus's mother was Mary. Jesus was resurrected just as Richard is in Part Three.

Karl Friedrichs.

Richard's maternal grandfather. Karl means 'strong man, free man.' Friedrichs means 'peaceful ruler.' He represents the solidity in Richard's life. Hard working, successful, generous. I have given him a hunchback inspired by Richard III but admit its fictionality by removing it in Richard's eyes. The hunch is a figment of the imagination of Papa Edward, and represents an irrational anti-semitism.

Emily.

Richard's wife. The meaning of her name is 'industrious' 'striving' and 'hard working'. She is the force that continues to get Richard all of the help that he needs despite the way he has treated her.

Christopher Page.

'Christopher' is believed to have carried the Christ-child across a river, whilst 'Page' means youthful assistant. Here he plays the role of Richard's faithful friend and assistant.

Simon Thornton.

This is Richard's half-brother. All but Richard, Edward and Simon's mother are unaware of this relationship. That Richard knows is a secret he keeps to himself. Simon means 'he has heard' and relates to Richard's knowledge rather than Simon's. 'Thornton' is a topographic surname, given because a family lived close to a topographical feature such as a hill. In this case I had in mind his family's home on Mount B, that place Richard is obsessed with occupying, the thorn in his side. Richard sees Simon as the focus of his father's love and material generosity. His envy of both spur him on in his ambition to replace Simon.

The characters in the top and bottom layers, other than the protagonist, Richard, are all deliberately made fairly flat. It is a reflection of Richard's take on them, both in his damaged state (including some narcissism) and the idea that in perception we cannot see past the image of the person. For the reader both an indication of a touch of solipsism perhaps in Richard's worldview and a reminder that irrespective of that, isolation in one's own mind remains fundamentally true. The exceptions to this flatness only come out when Emily, Richard's father, or Christopher Page are talking to Richard of being concerned as to his state of mind.

Turning now to the religious progression structure of Parts One and Two (as Richard may have seen it) Part One's name, Bereishit is the term used in the Hebrew Bible for Genesis, the first books of Moses. Trei Asar refers to those twelve prophets whose books end up as the last section (at least in the Christian Bible) of the Christian Old Testament. This part represents very loosely the very long period of the Judaic tradition when there was a vengeful God, one who spoke directly to the prophets, a time of false gods and idols, of prophets and of exodus, of banishment to the wilderness, a time of wars and violence and the pronouncement of laws. It is supposed in this CW to evoke a sense of a heavily patriarchal family, a powerful father, a powerful grandfather, the battle between good and evil, of jealousy and revenge, of sacrifice and of the wars of a nation and between father and son, David and Goliath figures. Part One also represents the idea of Jung's archetypes as racial memories within all of us. The Old

Testament does have the sense of the mists of time and of heroic and epic struggles, fights, and journeys.

Further, though, I have in mind that YHWH is said to be the God not of images and idols but of words. Such a God is, if the stories are to be taken on face value, the unseen author rather than the represented narrator, an aspect that is interesting in terms of authorial presence in fiction. The Old Testament is the book of narratives, of histories, revised and redacted. The five books of Moses has been thought by some scholars to have four (or even more) distinct narrative threads in its superficially single layer of text: the Yahwist, Elohist, Deuteronimis, and the Priestly source or J, E, P and D (Friedman, 2005); with Bloom and Rosenberg going so far as to argue in *The book of J* that the author of J was a literary artist who did not intend the work to be a religious text (Bloom & Rosenberg, 1990).

Part Two is named *Resurrection*. It represents the apparent beginning of the end of the old deluded Richard and the resurrection of the (for want of a better phrase) less deluded Richard. We begin to see at this point the trinity of his self.

Part One – the middle layer ("Suburban myths and legends")

> A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the 'personal unconscious'. But this personal layer rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the 'collective unconscious'. I have chosen the term 'collective' because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. (Jung 1968)

> We must now turn to the question of how the existence of archetypes can be proved. Since archetypes are supposed to produce certain psychic forms, we must discuss how and where one can get hold of the material demonstrating these forms. The main source, then, is dreams, which have the advantage of being involuntary, spontaneous products of nature not falsified by any conscious purpose. By questioning the individual one can ascertain which of the motifs appearing in the dream are known to him... Consequently, we must look for motifs which could not possibly be known to the dreamer and yet behave functionally of the archetype known from historical sources. (Jung, 1968a)

Between the two narrative layers is the second/middle layer. This is a series of short stories, one per chapter. Each relates to an aspect of the story theme of the other two layers in that chapter. The top and bottom layers share a character list throughout the work whilst the middle layer has unique characters in every chapter. Variously the contents of the middle layer stories are mythic or personalised concepts. The three "Laws of the wretched" chapters (CW pp.94, 108, 110) attempt to place Richard and his understanding of Emily's perception in the context of social pressures while in the throes of emotional turmoil caused by divorce and guilt. In those stories and the others that involve so-called 'witnesses' (pp.128-153, 175) these are conceptual personalisations of ideas of values playing on Richard's mind or imagined victims of his apparent war crimes.

The middle layer stories are the voice of the other, the dreamer, or the personalisation of concepts that speak to Richard's unconscious; as the accusatory third party voice of his conscience directed at either the top or bottom layer narrator or both. Here I tried to portray the kind of voice that comes to us in our dreams, our daydreams, or somehow underlies a day-to-day experience. It is not believed in that it remains unscrutinised in most cases as we go through life but nevertheless has some influence. It is perhaps the voice of archetypes Jung thought these to be inborn and common to all humans. It is also the voice of spirit; it is the voice of unreason. It is the voice of Richard's unconscious trying to give us a story. It is perhaps also the voice some listen to as creative writers.

A style evocative of myth or fairy tale in the middle layer of stories highlights the sense of delusion and the understanding that there is meaning in these beyond the literal. I experimented early with relating the third person stories in a form much closer to the manner of the third layer, but as is perhaps to be expected I found the resulting vignettes lacked the stylistic distance to make them seem like the stories of others that Richard has merely recorded.

I also wished to explore the way in which allegory works in crafting text. If my stories of Richard and his family are understood to have unwritten sub-text then I needed to be able to understand what signals there are in the words that might point to the existence of that. I found this stylistic approach accomplished this best for me.

Below I analyse the middle layer stories in terms of archetype, plot type and the allegorical message in these for Richard from his own subconscious, as well as their place within the other two narrative layers. I give an indication of the reasons why certain names have been chosen.

There are seven plot types to be found in story, it is sometimes claimed, notably by Christopher Booker (Booker, 2004). As a plot device I consciously fleshed these out for some of the stories. I chose the names of my characters with many things in mind. It should be noted however that with neither plot nor archetypes have I had discrete expositions of each of their forms primarily in mind. It is the blurring of the archetypes and plots, the unique set of stories that is the mind of Richard, that is for me the interesting part of that sort of analysis and this occurs throughout the whole of the novel:

> *Perfection*
>> Archetype: The creator. Atê is the mother figure. In Greek mythology she was the spirit of delusion, infatuation, blind folly, reckless impulse and action and led men to ruin. Seth, the father figure here, is the Egyptian god of chaos. Their child with its feet of clay is a mixture of them both. This chapter is the first in the layer dealing with the archetype-level stories in the unconscious. I have taken these two characters from the pantheons of two different classical cultures to represent the mixing of myth, disparate ideas, reason, and unreason that all goes on in our minds. They are married and in a time with the feel of the near-present. They live on or near the mythical Norse dark underground mountains of Niðafjöll, representing the unseen underground of our thoughts. The message to Richard is for him to understand that we are all born flawed with feet of clay and made with delusion and unreason, and of parents who are similarly formed.

> *Making Friends*
>> Archetype: The lover. In Jewish tradition the golem was a being moulded from lifeless dust. It follows on from the first chapter in this layer, Perfection, and indicates to us Richard's feeling that to his

father he is a construct, an imitation of a man, a Pinocchio, and so that is how he also sees other people – Emily, for example. He is finding out at this age that he is able to manipulate people into them seeing and believing what he wants them to – and himself as well.

Change of Employment

Archetype: The jester. The giant has no name and nor does anyone else in this story except as analogues of Richard. The giant and his cousin are both different aspects of Richard. The giant is Richard as a rejected son and his cousin is Richard as jester, the manipulative opportunist. The message here is not a particularly virtuous one – it is reminding Richard that he is greedy and ambitious, dishonest and manipulative.

The Garden

Archetype: The explorer. Father Sky and Mother Earth represent Richard's parents. Father Sky has another wife however, away from the sight of Richard and his mother. Richard as the unnamed son escapes, explores and discovers the existence not only of this other wife but also of a half-brother, who in his real life is Simon Thornton.

The Glassblower

Archetypes: The orphan and the magician. Carceriere; the name is the Italian for 'jailor'. This story was inspired by the real situation on the Venetian island of Murano where, at least by the fourteenth century, the glassblowers plied their trade but were not supposed ever to leave the island in case they revealed the secrets of the lucrative craft. This story reflects Richard's fears that he will not be able to escape what he has been born into, or his character and what he is becoming: there is no turning back to a more innocent self.

The Hero

Archetype: The sage. A quest story. The hero here is not the archetypical Hero but rather Richard in a representation where he

is trying to run from home, to divest himself of his emotional memories, and to find a goal where he is a completely new man. This of course does not work and he returns to himself and his starting place as all of those memories cling to him – he cannot run from himself. His father, the War God, gave him his lead on this but knows what the end result will be.

A Bear

Archetype: The ruler. A tragedy. The bear has no name. This is a story of Richard's maternal grandfather. A man who worked solidly, did everything right, and made a fortune. But he comes to the resting end of his life and finds no meaning. He commits suicide. This is one of the triggering events for Richard's mental issues, another being the accidental death of Christopher Page. Life is a treadmill, is cruel and success is illusory at the point of death.

The North Wind of Ambition

Archetype: The rebel. Yvla. This name is an invention. Yvla, the North Wind, represents Richard's guilt about the life of his daughter, Amy, a rebellious teenager. The two parent winds, Richard and Emily, are estranged from each other and from her. Rebellion is an inescapable part of life for Amy just as much as it was for him. It is part of human nature to need to break away in order to become adult.

Laws for the Wretched - Pertaining to Lust

This is the first of the law stories. These represent the circumstances we find ourselves in that appear to limit and rule our actions. Here, Richard is excusing himself by claiming that he is forced to be as he is by his nature; a young man who chases girls and becomes an adulterous husband.

Laws for the Wretched - Pertaining to Marriages

This is how Richard perceives Emily to be thinking during the separation and divorce – his being limited by her misunderstanding,

in his eyes, of him and her false sense of justice, relying on the courts processes and weakly collapsing rather than standing up and acting as he thinks she should.

Laws for the Wretched - Pertaining to Richards

Here is Richard painting himself again as misunderstood by one and all, excusing again his actions by suggesting it is effectively an inescapable law of his nature, and then once again reflecting on how unfair Emily is being to him in all things. Taking advantage of unfair laws that circumscribe his actions, particularly in relation to the matrimonial property, by wrapping them up in rules he doesn't want to obey. He is careful to keep his grandfather-given Cruncho-Flakes shares out of this equation.

The Apes of Carnavale

A comedy. There are humans and apes in this story, none of whom are named. The story points out the difference of point of view that people have of one another and of different and conflicting parts of their own psyches. The apes might be said to represent the unconscious explanations of things and the humans the self. But then the point of view switches and it is the other way around. Which is the master and which the pet? The conscious self or the unconscious selves? They continue to live, age after age, each with limited and errant views of the other. But nevertheless, that is what Carnivale (i.e. the self) is: a place of contradictions. It still works somehow.

Trial Witness No. 19 Revolution

This is the first personalisation of a pure concept, that of revolution. It is representative of the rationalisation and the justification that Richard has for his actions. By referring to past revolutions he suggests that change is the natural order, that the resistance of authority is necessary as well as the breaking of rules. Who ultimately is to say and judge that he is wrong in his actions?

Trial Witness No. 87 Democracy

The second personalisation is of democracy. In his first person account he is again trying to excuse himself for his actions in taking over from a dictator (in his third person account, the managing director) and thereafter failing to restore the democracy he was advocating in opposition to that dictator's governance. He becomes his father, the dictator/managing director and acts in the same way. In his narcissism he explains this away to himself in this story.

Trial Witness No. 122 Grand Treasurer

Pierre Salmon was an historical figure, the secretary of the psychotic king, Charles VI of France. Pierre Salmon in this story takes on the attributes that Charles VI in his delusions ascribed to himself – that he was made of glass. The treasury built up by Charles V had been systematically squandered by the dukes while Charles VI was young or incapacitated. Fritjof is the Norse name meaning 'thief of peace.' It is apposite because now Richard is facing the fact of his dishonesty with money. This time he is not able to excuse himself but is scared that he will be found out. Here he takes the role of Grenville. Historically, George Grenville was the Prime Minister of Great Britain and before that was known as the Treasurer of the Navy. His monarch was George III who was famously mad and lost the American colonies. Their relationship was full of tensions and Grenville was dismissed. Here Grenville/Richard is the honest auditor put under pressure by the others to remain silent, to hide the truth about the thefts, just as a part of Richard recognises his own dishonesty.

Spiders

Archetype: The hero. An Overcoming the Monster story. Esau means 'hairy' and in the biblical stories about him was, with his brother, a hunter. Canowicakte is another spider, a web-less jumping hunter. The name is native American and means 'forest hunter'. Here, Richard as Esau the spider is pitted against Canowicakte the hunter who represents his father. Esau is not the

hunter that Canowicakte is but, finding out that he is in fact descended through violence from Canowicakte he takes the unique gift given to him by his maternal line and takes over from Canowicakte at the prompting of the other forest creatures. Only Richard/Esau turns out to be just as great a menace, even though his methods of hunting are different. The forest peoples have traded one hunter for another.

Trial Witness No. 15 Brothers

The final witness story is that of the two brothers who are victims of Richard's greed and ambition. Andrew means 'manly and brave' whilst Pascal is a Hebrew name meaning 'born on passover' a time of sacrifice. Again the motivation for the story in the unconscious in guilt and Richard is fearful that the effects of his sins will be revealed at any minute. In this case the victims are portrayed as murdered at the behest of a racial cleansing such as Richard may have ordered in his delusory dictator's role. In the business sense they represent those whose jobs he has destroyed or businesses that have fallen to his ruthless business practices. They are underground, buried beneath, waiting unseen but will one day suddenly emerge.

Crow Times

Archetype: The caregiver. Richard is now in the grip of a very bad episode. He is now the Acolyte, required to undertake ritualistic tasks he does not understand. He is isolated in his area. He is visited by people he does not understand – The Raven, the Hunter, and the caretakers of the sun and moon. The Raven in Western tradition symbolises ill omen and death, and the soul of the damned. The Hunter represents the being that keeps at bay the forces of chaos in the form of the wild animals at the edge of society. Nothing in this place is normal. Other people, apart from these two beings and two caretakers, seem not to exist. The tasks (representing the daily tasks identified that Richard has trouble with in his current debilitated state). They seem senseless and yet he understands he

is to undertake them. There is menace within the Raven and the Hunter and the place itself but it is ill-defined. The very workings of his universe, his sun and his moon, the laws of light and reflection, are breaking down and yet he is still required to carry on and the daily ways around him are echoed in the mundanity of the conversation of the couple who bring him the sun and moon to maintain which is in the circumstances all the more bizarre.

The Traveller

Archetype: The hero. A voyage and return story. The traveller is named Enki. Enki is the name of the God who created the world (though there were greater Gods who made him). In one story he is in a desert, Dilmun, and brings it to life with fresh water. He is portrayed here as creating the world, resting and then travelling around the desert, creating people and other beings just by his presence. These are representative of the poor state Richard is now in. He is in a cocoon of madness, and incarcerated in a hospital or prison depending on which narrative is read. In this middle layer as Enki he is able to travel in a sense the world he has created but ultimately remains trapped in the cocoon of his own making.

Cooking Quark Soup with Strange Lightning

Here Richard is in the throes of shock and immediately post-shock unconsciousness. The lightning is the shock itself, it is the fire promised by the prophetess. The quantum soup is representative of the large amount of data in his mind but it is in a scrambled soup-state. The middle layer of this chapter is the only one that makes sense. It is Richard trapped inside his own mind; the unconscious is still switched on somehow after the electroshock therapy because all of his memories are still there somewhere. But he is unable to order them in his conscious self. In the swamp he has no points of reference in this confused post-shock initial state. The top and bottom layers of his narrative are formed from the same words exactly as this middle layer but they in an order that make no sense. It is from this state that he will emerge in the next chapters as a

conscious being again. The closest he comes to this in this layer however is the incident at the end in which he recognises that at least there is one other self.

The Tree

Archetype: The innocent. A rebirth story. Richard is the Prince. He is trapped in the hospital. He is persuaded to take his anti-psychotic medication and sedatives in order to help him through this period of heavy readjustment after the shock treatment itself. Eventually he is weaned off that regime and what seems to be his reality (i.e. Richard as businessman rather than dictator) is restored. Note that at this stage his first person top layer and third person bottom layer have swapped points of view and his conscious self is now the businessman rather than the dictator.

Charm Quarks

More shock therapy. But this time the confusion is different. The top layer is a list of words as in the quantum soup episode, but they are clearly related to one another – albeit in a strange, inexplicable way - and related to his memories as well as each other and the immediate reality of his presence in the hospital. The middle layer is a reference to Jung and to Emily Dickinson's poem about death and almost but not quite sensible – this represents the death of the fractured personality and the rise that is to come in the melded integrated self that occurs in the final chapter to come, *Endgame*.

Endgame

Archetype: The ruler. Here is the coagulated golem that is the self. Richard has reached his desires and finds them wanting. This reaches an end through the agency of another isolated being who desires a similar thing, material gain and status. But this self is made up of bits of the other selves which are now still exist but firmly underground in this 'cured' version of Richard. The traces of this are seen in the slightly different fonts used here. The single self is an illusion.

I turn now to a discussion of myths and legends and then allegory before a section on the settings.

8. Myths and legends

In terms of human society, story plays an extremely important part. If the same story is accepted as truth by many parts of that society then that becomes the received understanding of that society. It can bind the society together in a common goal. It can therefore be political in its usage as well as upholding a moral imperative. Such stories once instilled are, it seems to me, inherently conservative. Stories that seek to change those rules are inherently revolutionary. The object of the revolutionary story is to get other people to accept it until it becomes the norm for that society, the conservative story.

New myths seem not to arise except when dealing with very specific subject matter, urban myths and conspiracy theories for example. They are almost singular fables relating to one person or group in one time. Historical myths dealing with large issues, cosmogonies and theogonies that seem to involve us all, may seem to be beyond subjectivity, and to have taken on a life beyond each individual. It may be that this comes from a single wellspring somewhere buried deep in our hardware, the Jungian archetype idea. It may instead be that they simply emerge from common fundamental human existence and are recognised between people as representing the same underlying subjective needs for explanation. Perhaps our forbears recognised the similarity of explanations for these things and somehow agreed on promulgated forms, leaving it unnecessary or unpalatable to create our individual own myths relating to them. Religions may at times have been a convenient way to standardise these common understandings by chance or design. But humans still seem to retain the desire to mythologise our experiences, the desire to create liveable and individual fables for each to explain the subjective world experiences and urges to themselves and to others. Those will be necessarily more unique and varied than the ones dealing with those large issues common to more than one individual or a small group.

Historical myths are usually defined as explaining natural and supernatural phenomena while legends are tales told to prove a point about character and to

create role models. Historical myths are set in a non-specified, misty past. We tend to see historical myths and legends (as opposed to modern myths and urban legends or conspiracy theories for example) now as stories that are certainly false. 'Legend' refers to tales with semi-mythical events that nonetheless centre on human rather than divine players. Fairy tales can be defined as stories in which magic, if referenced, must be taken seriously (Tolkien, 2008). Some of these evolved from what were once expressions of belief about reality, attempts to explain the natural and supernatural worlds. They would also have been taken by the receivers when first available as attempts at truth even if by the time they were told, the tellers themselves no longer believed them. We see this in our own society as children are taught tales by adults (e.g. Father Christmas and the Tooth Fairy) and then come to disbelieve them as new knowledge replaces the only explanations available to them until then: the stories themselves.

I wished to invoke the style of historical myths and legends. I see historical myth and legend and fairy tales as very primal. Perhaps because we are taught them when very young they have a large effect on our first understandings of the world and of society. They are an easily built explanation without too much logic and experience required for understanding. Jungians believe that they reflect some deeper archetypal unconscious. Whatever their source I think that they always exist within us, ready to feed our story need at any time. Hence they appear in the CW. The deployment of these modes there is designed to highlight the difference between personal history as understood by the story-teller – even when the reader may suspect it is revisionist - and the histories of others whose accounts pose even more questions as to our ability to disentangle "truth" and "fiction."

All this is not to say that there are no longer current myths and legends accepted as truth. While only a subset, wide-spread belief in urban legends, in pseudo-science, conspiracy theories, attribution of evil motives to some and of sainthood to others such as sports heroes and celebrities are obvious examples. Some might also point to religions – the fact that they all differ suggests that all but one (and perhaps not even that) are misguided.

A modern form of these types of story-telling is found in fantasy genre novels but more closely in the works of Kelly Link such as *Stranger things happen* (2001) and *Magic for beginners* (2006), Karen Russell's *St. Lucy's Home for Girls Raised by Wolves* (2006) and the work of Neil Gaiman e.g. *Smoke and mirrors* (2005) and *Fragile things* (2006). Amongst more recent works, a New Zealand example is a book of short stories by Tina Makereti, *Once Upon a Time in Aotearoa* (2010). This is a collection of thirteen stories of gods and humans written in a mythical mode. This differs from my work which is not as clearly located in New Zealand, and whilst there is a superficial similarity in that there are new myth-forms in both works, my stories are closely linked and are focussed on delusion rather than alternative creation myths as such. Makereti's stories are also presented as though experienced by the wider culture, whereas mine are focussed on the private constructs of an individual.

9. Allegory

I use the term 'allegory' here to mean a prose narrative deliberately used by the author to incorporate a particular sub-narrative (as opposed to the allegory that can be said to arise in all fiction or writing). Allegory is perhaps a more sophisticated expression of story than myth or legend in terms of its use of contemporaneous language. On the other hand because of this language use it could be said to express relative ideas rather than fundamental primary ideas from the dawn of a culture and therefore be somewhat weaker (see e.g. Emmett 2009). Be that as it may, both have at their hearts a similar didactic goal. It has been created for pedagogical reasons to teach virtues and vices since classical times. Fables were often used where the abstractions were personified as animals with an epigram at the end that spells out the lesson expressly. An example is *The Fox and the crow* in *Aesop's fables*, used as a warning against listening to flattery. Allegory was directed towards abstractions. This practice was criticised by Plato using Socrates in his *Republic* (1955) to talk of the necessity of avoiding allegory in stories about the gods, claiming that children are unable to distinguish between allegory and realism. Socrates advocated that only realism should be used to teach (advice largely and thankfully ignored ever since).

From that time forward (and in mediaeval and renaissance times in particular) deliberate allegory has been used for religious reasons. Personification of abstractions was often used to this purpose - characters represented concepts or ideas such as Death or Anger. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's progress* (1965) teaches through a long narrative virtues of specific evils and encourages the reader to follow a morally correct path. The protagonist, Christian, progresses towards the Celestial City and his trials along the way represent the narrative plot. He meets various personified abstract characters such as Faithful and Giant Despair. In this work places are also allegories for abstractions, the Valley of the Shadow of Death and Vanity Fair for example. Allegory was used to similar pedagogical purpose in primary religious texts in parables. So for example the Bible's *New Testament* has Jesus delivering moral principles in an almost identical way to a fable except as stories narrated as though true in the parables such as *The good Samaritan* (Luke 10:25-37) and *The budding fig tree* (Luke 21:29-33). Similarly in the *Qur'an* and the *Lotus sutra* of Buddha there are parables.

It seems to me that to be accessed as the author intends (putting to one side whether that intention can precisely match the reader's response) this level requires three things in traditional allegory:

- that there be pre-existing knowledge held by the reader of an abstraction, real event or fiction, all outside of the literal narrative, and
- that there be recognition by the reader that there is a sub-narrative, and
- that there be recognition by the reader that the sub-narrative references the subject matter of that pre-existing knowledge.

Northrop Frye held that not only was all literary criticism allegorical but that all allegory was on a continuum. He referred to this continuum as including at one extreme the obvious 'naive allegory' referential of publicly shared ideas (e.g. a political cartoon) and at the other 'paradox' (modernist and post-modernist poems which are privately, self-referential and seem to refuse allegory). In the latter case Hamilton, citing Northrop Frye, says the allegorical reference is private so that

there is no recognition on the part of the reader outside the privileged circle with knowledge of the private subject matter (1990).

One difference between fable and parable is that the former tends not to be literally believable while we may not be sure whether the parable is supposed to be an accurate reflection of an historical event or a realistic fiction, though we know the parable is told for a pedagogical purpose. Whether a literal or allegorical reading or both are correct at the same time has been the subject of centuries of debate and scholarship. Danté, for example, maintained that in the allegory of theologians, there were four different levels of allegory: the literal, allegorical, moral, and spiritual meanings. These, he said, make the *Bible* and his own work *La commedia*, 'polysemous' because they have multiple simultaneous meanings. In *The inferno* Dante, in a lovely piece of included narrative statement of authorial intention, places of allegory by referring to the veil of the literal and signifying to the reader that he or she should look deeper for a real meaning (Sinclair, 1948): "Ye that are of good understanding, note the teaching that is hidden under the veil of the strange verses" (Dante, 2002).

In the historical or political allegory in which plot and character to one extent or another allegorise (signify) historical people and events. It may be to disguise politically sensitive commentary to avoid sanction from those people (or their ideologies) whom it perhaps criticises. This might be so where direct literal transmission of the desired meaning is politically dangerous. The political allegory might also be used simply to better parody. Portraying a particular politician as a donkey imbues the reader's recognition of traits we associate with that creature, stubbornness and stupidity. An example is George Orwell's *Animal farm* (2000) in which the farm yard animals represent, in addition to the literal meaning of the story, specific political figures in Russian political history and their context. Directed more at ideologies rather than a particular application of an ideology is *Gulliver's travels* (Swift, 1967). This is an allegorical satire, thought to be directed against what Jonathan Swift appears to have believed were narrow-minded philosophical approaches.

The two traditional forms of allegory already described have deliberate purpose – either commentary or pedagogy on the matter being allegorised. Another form

has as its purpose an homage to an existing creative work. This fits within my framework of pre-existing reader recognition. Examples include the retelling of Jane Austen's *Pride and prejudice* (1992) by Helen Fielding in *Bridget Jones' diary: a novel* (1997), and Jane Smiley's *A thousand acres* (1996) which is a retelling of Shakespeare's *King Lear* (Shakespeare, 1994). Jean Rhys's novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1992) relates an untold aspect of the life of a character, Antoinette Mason, who appears as Bertha in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (Brontë, 2000). This is in a similar vein to Tom Stoppard's treatment of two minor characters from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Shakepseare, 1992a) n his play *Rozencrantz and Guildenstern are dead* (1994). And *The child thief* (Brom, 2009) is a reimagining of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1999) as a horror story.

In all of the traditional uses of deliberate allegory, pre-existing knowledge of an historical event, fiction or abstraction is required to be recognised by the reader in order to be able to see past the literal. Thus in *Pilgrim's progress* the personification of vices and virtues is obvious to anyone reading with any knowledge of the pervading religion of that culture. In contrast, *Gullivers travels* and *Animal farm* are both works in which only a well-informed reader is likely to recognise the signifiers of the sub-narrative.

William Golding's *Lord of the flies* (2001) is of particular interest because it contains two distinct allegories. It is, according to John Carey's biography of Golding (2009), a retelling of R.M. Ballantyne's *The coral island* (1966) and an allegory of Christianity with characters Ralph and Simon both exhibiting Christ-like attributes. This was more evident in passages in drafts of the novel according to Carey but these were removed at the insistence of the book's publisher at Faber & Faber. Golding was quite possibly also creating an allegory in *Pincher Martin* (2002) as to purgatory.

In some cases the author feels compelled to go so far as to expressly point out the existence of that which is being allegorised (as does Dante in *La commedia*, Paul in his writings in the New Testament, and the fable creators.) This is most noticeably so in the case of a fable or cautionary tale. The whole object of these tales is often to exemplify a particular human strength or failing or moral principle. Animals are doubly personified – first as people and second as abstractions of

moral values. This has a distancing effect on the reader or listener so that the abstract or idea is more readily distilled in the receiver's mind. It may be because such principles were and are used pedagogically with children who may relate better in some way to received stereotypical attributes of animals. Fables then often end with an expressly stated epigram to drive the point of the allegory home.

Sometimes the allegorical reference is only incidental to the main work and might be regarded as a minor tribute to a particular figure or idea to the knowing reader. Thomas Gray did this when he personified the abstractions Honour, Death, and Flattry [*sic*] in his poem *Elegy written in a country churchyard* (1968).

There are varying distinctions in the minds of different commentators between symbolism and allegory. Goethe (von Goethe, 1984) aligned allegory with clear meaning and with the concept but symbolism with an idea which is by its nature unable to be completely grasped. Walter Benjamin criticised the romantic distinction between symbol and allegory "This is the essence of melancholy immersion: that its ultimate objects... turn into allegories, and that these allegories fill out and deny the void in which they are represented." (Benjamin, 1977). Whilst Jacques Derrida advocated deconstruction to expose the ideological and metaphysical subtext, Paul de Man differentiated symbol from allegory (de Man, 1983). He noted that Benjamin defined allegory as a void "that signifies precisely the non-being of what it represents". He said allegory is deconstruction because it asserts the impossibility of reading a text for a single meaning. All text has subtext and allegory is a category of subtext. All writing for de Man (1979) was allegorical on the basis that all language fragments are tropes laid alongside one another in a temporal way. Allegorical subtext is present whether intended by the author or not. The corollary is that it is impossible to read what has been written:

> Allegories are always allegories of metaphor, and, as such, they are always allegories of the impossibility of reading" (1979, p. 205) and "the difficulty of allegory is... that emphatic clarity of representation does not stand in the service of something that can be represented (de Man, 1996, p. 51).

Symbolism is impossible, de Man argued (1983, pp. 188-189), because there is a distinction that must be made between 'experience' and 'the representation of this experience' a simultaneous synchronic relationship between the image and

the reality and so implies a totality of men. But because an allegory takes the form of a narrative, this cannot be so:

> The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can...consist only in the repetition...of a previous sign with which it can never coincide since it is the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority...whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference (de Man, 1983, p. 207).

De Man held that allegory starts from the "loss of reality that marks the beginning of the poetic states of mind" (1979, pp.72-77). We should think of an allegory of reading in terms of the following three axioms: by deciding text is in allegory, an allegory of reading is also a reading of allegory; we do not read the text but read tropes or figures of it, our own version of it "the allegory of reading narrates the impossibility of reading"; and the reading is therefore of referential meaning, a reading of an allegory of the text. Understanding can only be of another allegorisation of the text. Reading and understanding will, he says, never coincide.

I was interested not so much on the effect on a society of story or what type of stories influenced societies but rather story's effect on consciousness and consciousness's effect on story.

In so far as Richard's consciousness in concerned, represented in both the top or bottom layers, these stories differ from traditional allegory. There is pre-existing knowledge held by Richard, but it is unconscious. The pre-existing knowledge is that of abstractions, real events or fictions, all outside of those top and bottom layer conscious narratives. Richards position might recognise that there is some sort of a sub-conscious narrative going on, he would not access the detail. It might be said to represent, and have the influence of, the conscience.

I have explored a new type of myth or legend in allegory – that told by oneself to oneself – to see if that also fits within my framework. This is what the middle layer of the CW does with its stories in these forms.

Settings for the middle layer stories

The settings for the middle layers are more mythic and involve either new worlds of creation or in the case of worlds of personalisation of concepts the same world as the top or bottom layers. As Richard's mental state becomes more fractured so the mythic landscape in these becomes odder. In the earlier phases of Richard's progressive breakdown, the mythic worlds are certainly alternate realties but all familiar in the sense that they are primal landscapes and fixed. A forest, an icebound plain, a garden, a castle on a hill. In the more severe phases of Richard's condition, the worlds become less traditionally primal or real seeming. In "Crow times" (p.183) for example the story is set in an other-worldly landscape which is part cemetery, part abandoned fairground and part field. The area outside of this is not described but it is implied it is very odd because of the nature of visitors from it. In "Cooking quantum soup with strange lightning" (p. 213) Richard's mind has been scrambled with electro-shock therapy and the setting is an infinite and very strange swamp, representing the scramble of his mind as a result of the treatment.

The concept of the self as an amalgam of stories

I turn now to deal with the reasons for supposing that there might be more than one synchronous but disjunctive set of stories going on within us at all times (modelled in the CW with the creation of the three layers of narrative).

I reflected on the split-brain research, the inaccuracy of memory and of perception, the seemingly fundamental role of story in our psyche, and the well-known idea of separate selves within us, all in the context of a trip in 2013 to Russia. The trip allowed me to apparently experience several parts of the brain operating separately. I did not know much Russian, and what I knew was patchy and rusty. I had re-learned the Cyrillic alphabet for the trip. I quickly became conscious of a similar feeling to that which occurs whenever I see any written English. That is, my brain wished to read the language it saw. Normally this happens with any foreign language but it stalls and gives up until I have learned vocabulary. I had arrived via Sweden and this was certainly my experience there.

In Russia however my brain had an extra mechanical step to undertake: transliteration of the Cyrillic characters. Transliteration was not instantaneous. My brain wished to read, could transliterate, and it did this continuously and involuntarily. I was conscious that "I" was doing this but that my "usual I" was simply watching this process.

This took perceptible time. Simultaneously another part of me was taking what had been transliterated already and was trying to fit the phonetic sounds into contexts around the text. Again this took perceptible time and simultaneously another part was comparing the stems of the so far recognised phonetic text with mostly Latin, Greek and English correlates. This part fed back to the contextual part and a guess came through to the "usual I". On occasion the latter parts were not able to make a good enough match and would put a close synomon to the transliterator which would re-run to see if the suggestion was plausible.

This was for me a very clear experience of apparently different parts of my mind working separately on separate tasks at the same time and then forming a sort of committee vote that my "usual I" would try on for size. This was a completely different experience to looking at an unknown language text written in English letters, as when I was faced with Russian text written using the English alphabet. There was no sense of delay and of different parts working at the same time. It seems the transliterator was key.

Split-brain experiments are fascinating for those interested in neurology or involved in perception. They show the lack of communication between the two halves of the brain if the corpus callosum is cut and the differing roles of the left brain, which is responsible for verbal matters, and the right brain, which is mute but still able to make sense. But one other idea coming from such research, as I speculatively explore below, interests me as a creative writer: that there may normally be more than one story of explanation in an intact brain and communication of those stories if the corpus callosum is intact.

The first point of note is that the researchers suggest that the experiments show there is 'behind' the brain an 'Interpreter'. This makes sense of the data coming in and creates story according to what it has at its disposal only (ignoring for the

sake of discussion the difficulty of the infinite regression of that model necessary to explain consciousness behind that Interpreter). It shows the left brain's ability to create a narrative from incomplete data, to spin that narrative into a story connecting shovel and chicken, and to verbalise it and to allow the brain to be honestly convinced that this narrative was linear in cause and effect – that a led to b. Or not.

Some studies suggest that the interpreter has its offices in the right hand part of the brain:

> Psychiatric patients solved syllogisms while recovering from transitory ictal (i.e. seizure) suppression of one hemisphere by electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). The premises were familiar or unfamiliar, true or false. While the right hemisphere was suppressed, syllogisms were usually solved by theoretical, deductive reasoning even when the factual answer was known a priori, the premises were obviously false and the conclusions were absurd. While their left hemisphere was suppressed, the same subjects applied their prior knowledge; if the syllogism content was unfamiliar or false, they refused to answer. We postulate a left-hemisphere mechanism capable of decontextualized mental operations and a right-hemisphere mechanism, the operation of which is context-bound and incapable of abstraction. We show that each hemisphere tends to overextend its perspective on the problem and that in the intact brain they both contribute to an extent that depends on the characteristics of the problem at hand (Deglin & Kinsbourne, 1996).

But the right brain also came up with a plausible narrative. It invented an association of a snow shovel with a snowy scene (Gazzaniga, 1998). It must therefore also have access to the tools of inventing story, albeit a story the right brain cannot by itself verbalise and must describe by gesture and those tools cannot reside only in the left hand brain therefore (given the lack of physical connection).

The third point of great interest to me is that the experiment shows the creation of any narrative at all. Fourth is the conviction with which that narrative is believed, whatever it is, by its particular inventing side of the brain. Each side of the brain comes up with a valid hypothesis of story based on its recognition of the two objects it sees. The left-hand brain is not mute and can tell us what it is doing which is exactly the same: connecting the images it recognises. The right-hand brain sees the snowy scene and picks the snow shovel. The right-hand brain is

mute and cannot tell us that except by the action of picking an image. It is nevertheless surely a story.

All sorts of questions occur to me. Chief amongst them: what if the left and right brain in the split brain experiments referred to above were shown two objects that they simply did not recognise? Would an answer be invented by each side of the brain. It would be interesting to see such experiments.

In some of the split-brain patients, apparently intelligent involuntary actions – not simple movements – can occur. So for example the conscious self is buttoning a shirt with the left hand but the right hand is unconsciously undoing the buttons (Gazzaniga, 1998). There is no way for the conscious self to instruct or interrogate the part of the brain that is undoing the buttons. But surely undoing a series of buttons presupposes an unconscious form of narrative mandating it. Similarly with those Tourette's syndrome patients who are unconscious of a phrase they are about to utter and lack any way to control it.

Reflecting on all of this I wondered if humans are indeed creatures with a consciousness made entirely of story, and what that might look like in the CW. In the sense discussed above in relation to memory and the temporality of sensory input, we do not have a present; we only have stories of possible futures and pasts. The present people are apparently experiencing, physically, by the time we come to experience it mentally, is already passed, and has been filtered by organic limitations, by what they choose to either consciously or unconsciously focus on as important, and then by their inability to necessarily recall even all of that precisely.

One difference between reflecting on the past and contemplating the future is that people are one would suppose generally aware when considering the future they are consciously choosing between story scenarios. Conversely they may not always be conscious that they are also doing this when recalling their past. Other influences such as so-called unconscious desires may serve to gloss that phenomenon even further.

Does this then mean that human consciousness is comprised only of story and that it is always in part fictional? I explore this idea in the CW as a whole but more particularly in the ways explained in "The phase transitions of Richard" (CW, p.183).

If there is an interpreter in both the right-hand brain and the left-hand brain, each comes up with a valid but different hypothesis of a story based on its peculiar recognition of the two objects it sees and recognises. The left-hand brain is not mute and can tell us what it is doing: connecting two images it recognises with a story. That the two sides of the brain are unable to talk to one another is the interesting feature. It suggests to me that there are possibly two different interpreters one on each side of the brain.

If so then is tit he case that in the normal (non-split) brain there is arguably some mediation that occurs between them both or some third interpreter, a 'super interpreter', which chooses or mixes the most appropriate of the stories to present to the conscious self? Or perhaps the interpreters form a sort of editorial committee which makes such a decision? In any event there may be some judgment between submissions of many interpreters; effectively one entity that is doing the selecting or at least receiving it to form the self's view.

I also consider story using the analogy of a society made up of individuals but having a single coherent view on a matter for the purposes of future planning despite a plethora of individual voices. In a society there are many stories and agendas, all independently held by many people vying for attention. By definition, what sooner or later becomes the conservative story wins out as defining what the story is that is accepted by the society as a whole as appropriate for the time. Imagine that there are 1000 interpreters in the brain, all looking at the facts or data or sensory perception is that is given to them. They are each firing off at different times as groups of neurons and they are associating with other interpreters. There will therefore be a myriad of stories. Perhaps this is what the super interpreter/committee is doing, mediating or deciding what story or mix of them defines what is acceptable to the society of interpreters as a whole, despite the plethora of interpreters' views still extant in the brain. And what if one of these revolutionary stories takes hold? Then the self might change. If two or more

stories are seen in as running on different theatres in the conscious mind at the same time then there might be a split of the mind.

In the CW I posit the existence of such a multitude of interpretations and voices (modelled as just three layers) and a mechanism akin to a super interpreter or committee. In order to explore what something like this might look like, that mechanism is represented by Richard's squint. The squint is capable of independent thought and judgment as to which is the appropriate story for Richard's consciousness to adopt. While always conscious of its existence, he becomes aware of its role in interpreting his reality for him when he finds it swings around to put him into his psychotic state as narrated in the top layer in Part One (albeit that he perceives that he is being swung out of a psychotic state).

Having decided on this, I turned then to consider some other and, to my purpose, very important studies referred to below and carried out by Wertheimer and others (Wertheimer, 2012 as cited in Steinman & Pizlo, 2000).

The first of these suggests that humans may always unconsciously predict the next step when faced with a new sensory input. The studies showed that the so called 'beta movement' is perceived by subjects when a bright spot is flashed onto a screen followed immediately by a flash in an opposite corner. If the cycle speed is correct then the flash appears to the subjects move diagonally across the screen.

This appearance of this false movement might be explained by assuming that the brain is filling in the intervening space with movement, conceptually similar to the movement we see with a sequence of still frames in movies. The brain is in effect faced with two stationary sensory inputs and then creates a narrative which relates them – the movement of one spot – and believes it.

The studies go on to show that if the two spots are different colours, observers see the diagonal movement of the first spot to appear (this time red) changing colour half-way through its apparent but false movement path to the second flashed colour (green) in what is dubbed 'the beta phenomenon'. That is, they are told by an internal story-teller (of some sort) that the spot has changed colour

apparently before it even appeared as the second flash. It turns from red to green – but turns green in that story *before* it has flashed in the opposite corner.

This leads to the next experiment set which suggested that the subjects were narrating backwards in time to themselves in effect.

In the flash-lag illusion, first an arrow is shown on a screen pointing straight up (like a one handed clock face without numbers) and a spot immediately above it flashes (the arrow is therefore pointing directly at the spot). Subjects perceived just what has been described above. But then it gets really interesting to me. If the clock-face arrow is now spinning and the spot is flashed at exactly that point in the spin when the arrow and spot are both oriented in the same way as in the first experiment, one would expect the subjects would perceive an arrow moving towards a 12 o'clock position, then a spot flash immediately above it, just as it hits that 12 o'clock position, then the arrow continuing to move away without pause. They did not. The spot appeared to flash only *after* the arrow had gone past it.

It might be that their brains were predicting where the arrow would be when it saw the spot and was somehow thrown off in the relative perception times of each. So the experiment was repeated in exactly the same way, with one exception: that the arrow stopped this time as it reached the 12 o'clock position and the spot simultaneously flashed. If the prediction explanation was correct then one would expect the subjects to still perceive the arrow as having moved past the spot. But this time they perceived that the arrow and the spot appeared together at the same place and place. Perhaps the brain has had time to check its own prediction and correct for the lag – yet why didn't it do that with the experiment immediately prior?

Finally the arrow was caused to be stationary at the time the spot flashed and was pointing directly at it; but then immediately after the flash started moving. This time the subjects perceived the spot to have flashed *after* that movement had occurred. Again their brains appeared to be inventing a narrative (of the movement of the arrow) incorporating events that already happened in the past (the flash). As the researchers put it:

> A series of psychophysical experiments yields data inconsistent with two previously proposed explanations: motion extrapolation (a predictive model) and latency difference (an online model). We propose an alternative in which visual awareness is neither predictive nor online but is postdictive, so that the percept attributed to the time of the flash is a function of events that happen in the ~80 milliseconds after the flash. The results here show how interpolation of the past is the only framework of the three models that provides a unified explanation for the flash-lag phenomenon. (Eagleman & Sejnowski, 2000)

It is open to speculate therefore that humans may have no choice about creating a narrative; so powerful or fundamental is the need to make a connection and a narrative sense, i.e. a change in time and space.

The reasons why it is necessary may be an organic or other physical limit on frame rates of the optical nerve or any manner of other possibilities. But regardless of the cause it nevertheless appears to be that the gap is filled in by an invented narrative.

It might be argued that the subjects did not so much need to predict that change but invent it and then convince themselves that it had occurred. They did this unconsciously. This goes further, it seems to me than apophenia (i.e. the tendency to find patterns) in just some people or in just some circumstances.

The questions that then comes to mind are 'what happens within that ~80 milliseconds after the flash?' and 'why is that particular narrative handed up at the end of it?' I believe it is plausible that the split-brain experiments, the beta phenomenon, and the flash-lag experiments, occurring at such a fundamentally low level of perception that humans involuntarily always narrate forwards and backwards, might all suggest that we are unable to perceive anything unless it is in a story. That this is the only way two pieces of data can be apprehended is to place them in a cause and effect narrative of relativity to one another, no matter how incomplete or wrong or right those data or stories might be, because we are arguably hardwired so that we cannot do anything else.

It might very well be then that the only way to relate to things is by story; either of remembered experience or invented experience which is consistent with the

possibilities as interpreters in our brain conceive them and the Super Interpreter/Editorial Committee chooses as to which goes to our consciousness.

If understanding and predicting risk are paramount to our survival then it would make a certain sense that the brain will filter out from many stories the most plausible and hand up it or them up as options because that is fundamentally what we need to plan and act upon rapid survival mechanisms. It may not be the right narrative but it is one that in the limited time given appears to the brain to best ameliorate the most probable risk.

In stories, the receiver's prediction can either be fairly straightforward as it is in a simple children's story or in some formulaic genre fiction, or it can be one of many possible outcomes. Part of the enjoyment for me of engaging with more complex works is in being challenged to predict from what is known or possible and either having that cleverness confirmed or being plausibly surprised. The trick is that the outcomes need not in fact be predicted by the receiver but simply plausibly have been predicted by someone with the prior knowledge that the receiver has just gained. In other words it is recognised by me as valid in accordance with the rules that have been set up but I am nevertheless surprised (just as I am surprised by a surprise but perfectly legitimate goal kick as a spectator at a rugby game when I had been predicting a different outcome). If the story twist is not valid in terms of those rules, I as the receiver will be thrown out of the story (just as I will complain that an illegitimate goal kick is a breach of the game rules).

What is probably important to any human's survival is our ability to quickly make up story about that future. One has the sense then of an inordinate number of interpreters and some filtering occurring until only one is chosen, in a microsecond. The CW is showing Richard doing this at several different planes as my model for exploring that.

Most story told for entertainment relies on heavily on tension in a plot. There is some form of difficulty involved. I wanted to look at the idea that, as a matter of survival of self or consciousness or life, Richard's brain takes pieces of data to work with, creates narratives of what for him are the best and worst possible ways in which these things could possibly be related (and everything in between), and

then come up with plans for dealing with each of these. The multiple synchronous layers of the CW reflect this, albeit in a very small number of the variations that might be expected to actually exist if this were correct. Richard might come up with any number of scenarios/stories that link the bits of data together in different ways representing danger to him.

At some level, conscious or not, he uses some scoring system to choose which are is the most likely and acts accordingly. In this work such a system is represented by his squint insofar as it produces a narrative for his conscious self. But the non-chosen stories remain being created at the same time. His brain is always however changing the story of each layer as more data comes in, either in the way it is linked to the already stored, or which story that linking represents. His brain is always looking for the danger in the new collection of data that now exists and what he might both interpret it and will do about it, because in this fictional world that is what survival has always has been about since our ancestral single cell days.

When he listens to other's stories his brain is working to simply reflect his need to take the most dangerous elements that he might be presented with and have to come up with a plausible way of overcoming them. He is highly motivated to win, to take advantage of all possible advantages, highly motivated to survive against all possible dangers. The stories however must be plausible enough that he, at one or more levels, is prepared to suspend his disbelief in order to rehearse strategies that would give him the feelings of reaching goals or overcoming issues that he ultimately desires. In having several such story lines he is best able (assuming his squint is functioning to give him the best of those story lines at each point) to experience all that in a way that teaches more unexpected situations than one self's predictions alone would give him. And he is able to experience them without any payment in terms of actual risk.

While it is not the only way to see the relationships between neurons, the brain, stored knowledge and consciousness, one way to look at it is to regard data as being stored and then connected. The result of the beta phenomenon experiments suggested a plot in which that meaning is about the connection of two data points in some way.

Looked at in one way sport for example is a story. Players are faced with an obstacle and a conceptual sense, i.e. to get a ball from one end of the playing area to another past opposition. They make predictions and act accordingly (and this after the thrill of one of those predictions even a surprising one coming true) and, becoming victorious as a result. The same might be said to apply when listening to music or an entertaining story. The excitement comes from prediction of a number of outcomes, each emotively charged to one or other extent, and then possibly being surprised and getting the delight of reaching a goal that may or may not be well defined at the beginning.

I built the CW on the assumption that such a multiple story system exists in Richard's brain. How might a selection system for choosing amongst the multiple stories work in order to bring one story to the forward consciousness of the self? Although it does not appear in the physical CW text, I speculated in the backstory of the work that in Richard's brain there are scores associated with each fundamental story element. A high emotional attachment to it gave it a high score. A high score was given to a further story element associated closely in time with another already in the particular narrative.

My speculation about this came from thought about the beta movement and beta phenomenon experiments with the light and arrows. The position there appeared to me to arguably be that if subjects had a single data point i.e. a light, then a connection was made with some other pre-existing data points or stories – there may be little reason to give these any sort of high score (whether this is ultimately correct or not does not matter as it is simply the basis upon which I am creating Richard's fictional world, not describing the real one). In the case of the arrows and circle, movement is not so much a necessary connection between the light and the arrow on the circle. However the light occurs in a wider context. That is, it is intimately connected in time sequence with the light datum point. If that were correct, then that might also occur in experienced people within a context of further pre-existing knowledge, a context that has been learned (an arrow on a circle tends to move one way or the other) thus adding to the score again. Therefore a high score to the narrative formed by the two data points.

So for my CW I defined my use of the term story as (paraphrasing) 'something has happened or is happening or will happen, and it is caused by X and it fits in to the existing contextual narrative in this way'.

I also speculate as to whether there is a smallest unit of story, and that such a unit has a score. Perhaps there is a 'story bit' that similar to a computer bit. Thinking about the narrative of chicken and shovel, or of shovel and snow, and the beta and flash experiments brought me to a consideration of what Richard's mind would be formed if such a smallest unit of thought is a unit of narrative and really existed. One piece of data in no context at all is an isolated one or zero as in the binary system. In order for it to be a story byte that bit needs to be put into a context of another bit. They are not only two single units; there is a relationship between them created by the human mind. That relationship between them is at the very seat of Richard's consciousness.

The trouble with assuming for the CW that such a story bit does exist in the ways speculated upon is it modelling in the CW in practice. The numbers of stories that might be simultaneously occurring in such a scenario is staggering. Hence the reduction to just the three written layers.

What might result with three data points a, b, and c, where an observer's brain looks at relationships a-b, a-c, b-c, a-b-c and so on in all orders. I am aware this is an immense oversimplification but I want to consider it in this way in order to examine the sort of numerical scale such meanings might represent, and therefore possible narratives for Richard.

First the issue of how many neurons are found in the brain and therefore how many possible theoretical connections are possible. I am in this ignoring that there are all sorts of issues involving the numbers of connections between neurons, the direction of transfer of information between neurons, the redundancy between circuits of information, the tensions between competing processes, the continuing debate over the form of neural networks, mechanistic connections or diverse.

For the sake of argument assume that just one datum point is captured in one neuron and that there are 100 billion neurons in the brain. That means $2^{100,000,000,000}$ possible connections in terms of a network. This is an inconceivably large number. By comparison, the number of atoms in the observable universe is estimated to be 10^{81} which is only about 2^{269}.

It is plausible for the purposes of the CW, given the size of this proposed network, that these stories already exist in Richard's mind and to some extent at least their links with each other; that they are all in existence and all always linked already. The 'creation' then of a story by his conscious mind (as represented by the first person narrative in play at any one point) may be the finding of a sub-pattern that already exists in that network. Every new sensory data point would change that pattern and every recognition or selection of a sub-pattern inevitably change the overall pattern of the network.

From these sorts of chains the many interpreters might construct fuller narratives. Richard's squint, representing the super interpreter/committee might then perhaps choose one of those narratives for his consciousness when the conscious self is searching for a fitting narrative to match its expectations.

My interest was piqued in looking at this structure by consciousness in general, not just in humans. Inevitably (for me) I felt I should reference this in the CW as well. It is sometimes said that humans is the storytelling species, as Elie Wiesel put it in *Gates of the forest* 'God made man because he loves stories' (Wiesel, 1995). It appears is not just the human species which is a storytelling one, however. Any animal which hunts the prey presumably is telling itself a story. It is drawing on past experience and it imagines the future as it smells a trail, stalks and predicts the prey's behaviour and the feast that will result if it acts in certain ways. If there is such storytelling it is not necessarily evident to humans. One could look at the day to day communication with and between pets and see at least what looks like the same sort of storytelling. A dog obeying an instruction. A dog deciding whether to catch a ball in a particular arc, or that it ought to bury a bone to protect it from a possible rival. Recognition of the past in that when it sees its human companion it bends its tail to the right.

My particular interest is in speculating in the CW that in fact a consciousness in humans based on a story bit would surely be the same in all other entities. As Darwin put it, "Nevertheless the difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, certainly is one of degree and not of kind." (Darwin, 1981).

It is popularly thought that the differences between the human frontal cortex and that of other mammals are responsible for our ability to imagine and engage in higher processes of thought. But this certainty is gradually being eroded, with the folded nature of that cortex also evident in animals such as elephants and dolphins and the frontal cortex *per se* in all mammals.

Larger mammals, it seems from the empirical evidence relating to the presence of REM sleep, do in fact dream (Morrison, 1993). They predict (think of a predator stalking prey or a dog catching a ball). And the same applies to smaller creatures such as rats for example (Bendor & Wilson, 2012). Studies of birds show a remarkable degree of intelligence but they lack a frontal cortex and instead have a pallium, a structure that would appear to share a far older ancestor structure with the cortex. Amongst many other research projects involving a wide range of species, is the recent interesting research by Alex Taylor that includes a crow, which, having been taught eight individual tasks, then taught itself to carry out these tasks in the only order which would give it the necessary reward (BBC, 2014).

A bee's dance not only indicates the presence of, quantity and direction of foodstuffs but past foraging experience influences that behaviour (Raveret Richter, M. & Waddington, K., 1993). It could be said that the dancing bee is also telling a story: that it found food and this is what other bees must do to find it. This must mean recognition that there is a story to be told, a construction of it, a memory of it, an expression of it in telling the story, and a prediction that others will find it useful. A recent study has found a candidate for primitive physical structures for intelligence in platynereis, an annelid worm and similar structures in the fruit fly drosophila (Tomer, Denes, Tessmar-Raible, & Arendt, 2010).

It has even been thought that those organisms without what we might think of as brains in any sense whatsoever such as bacteria may have communicating

abilities (Ben Jacob, Becker, Shapira, & Levine, 2004). Other work looked at a red algae where single cells are placed in destructive situations that it appears they could not have evolved to respond to, show they are capable of self-repair as though using ingenuity (Ford, 2010). How does a bacteria plan action and think? Or is it the same sort of mechanism that is attributed to woodlice, negative phototaxis-driven random motion? But of course just because phototaxic response can be shown does not mean there is no other plan or thought in their movement.

In my CW I therefore touch upon non-human animal consciousness in "The apes of Carnavale" (p.122) in which the apes portray themselves in one way and portray humans in another, whilst humans describe their experiences in relation to that of the apes in entirely different stories. I also deal with it with insects, this time in Peter Page's reference to men as being woodlice randomly moving in a phototropic way in "The assault on Mount B layer", with the consciousness of birds in "Crow times," and with arachnids in "Spiders".

I also mixed non-human intelligence with non living intelligence when dreating personification of concepts, such as democracy ("Trial Witness No. 87 Democracy" p.142), revolution ("Trial Witness No. 19 Revolution" p.128) and of the dead ("Trial witness No 15 The brothers" p.175). What these things have in common is that people look at other people in a similar way. They cannot see the stories and experiences going on in others' minds but instead predict and make suggestions to themselves about what is going on.

Writing about this brought me back time and again to a consideration of the idea of story at the level of neurons. In our own bodies, single cells reproduce and take other action independently of the brain. In what to me is the most remarkable research in this area to date, it appears that a conditioned fear response to a smell of cherries associated with electric shock in mice is passed on through the single cell, that is, one sperm. This suggests that information and memory even if accomplished through an epigenetic mechanism are very much more complex than just the on/off model of one cell such as a single neuron (Dias & Ressler, 2013).

To me, this is extraordinary. It takes us back perhaps to Jung's archetypes, memories and narratives that are fundamental to consciousness and buried in our minds and transferred in this somatic way. Sufficiently complex strings of such information might conceivably assemble in the mind as effectively the same narratives. That these are then 'developed' into photographs as it were in generation after generation of fundamental cross-culture survival and religious lessons for children in myths, legends, and fables would not then be surprising.

I considered the possibility then that if a single cell can operate and react independently, then there is little reason to think that a neuron is in any way different. Neurons are cells that are alive and functioning at any point in time. They must be carrying (whether 'storing' or 'experiencing' or 'representing through being part of a pattern') at the same time, unless the cells go into some form of suspended animation and stop functioning except as frozen memories – a proposition to that would seem to be entirely unnecessary compared to simply letting the neuron continue to fully function as do the single celled organism referred to above, and with unknown primary, monitoring, and control mechanisms. To treat the cells as some sort of on/off computer switch makes little sense – the data and the patterns must be somewhere at all times.

This comes back full circle to the idea of story bits all being in a constant state of relationship one to another, one to many, many to one (at least in the model I postulate in the CW). There may be, following this argument, a very complex degree of calculation, of connecting cause and effect, action and reaction, within each neuron. The idea of denigrating the neuron to a simple binary on/off state is naïve. I will not endeavour to introduce any further calculation for what this does to the possibility of connections save to say that if there were only say ten states in which a neuron can communicate to another then the number of possible network connections rises to $10^{100,000,000,000}$. Again, simply impossible for me to model in the CW.

When looking at the nature of the multiple synchronous stories representations in the CW, I was driven also to consider the particular delusions I had chosen for Richard in the context of creativity. It is interesting to note that creativity and mental illness have long been said by writers of literature to be related, from

classical to modern times. 'No great mind has ever existed without a touch of madness' (Aristotole, 2013), 'There is no great genius without some touch of madness' (as cited by Simonton, (1990), 'Great wits are sure to madness near allied/And thin partitions do their bounds divide' (Dryden, 1973). I do not wish to suggest that psychosis is the wellspring of creativity or to glorify the debilitating nature and sometimes horror of psychosis or belittle its effects for both sufferer and those supporting that person. I did wonder though whether there is some relationship or if this was just a myth. I wanted to comment one way or the other on this through the CW and so looked further.

Recent studies suggest that this is to an extent correct (Kéri, 2009; Kyaga, Lichtenstein, Boman, Hultman, Långström, & Landén, 2011). Although ascribing a sort of enhanced creativity for Richard caused by his illnesses would assist in the foundation for the existence of multiple stories, it is in fact not a necessary ingredient given the supposition of the CW (that different stories exist at all times in all conscious beings). This sort of explanation for the creativity need not be unusual in Richard's case. What was unusual is the conceit within the fiction that the reader has access to the other stories not normally presented in a fictional narrative (or rather, access to an extremely reduced number of them).

Following the findings of the longitudinal study of Kyaga I chose some undefined form of schizophrenia or schizotypy for Richard (unipolar depression not apparently being related to creativity while bipolar disorder and schizophrenia are). I have been no more specific as to the precise form of his illness (it helps to be slightly but not fully mad).

Part Two

Schizophrenia is now once more treated in some cases with electro-shock therapy (Adams, 2005) which suits my purposes in being able to show a movement from Parts One through Four.

At the end of Part One there is electroshock therapy, creating in effect the new part Two. After the treatment first chapter presents only the story of the man lost and alone in an infinite swamp, representing Richard's mind.

In Part Two, electroshock therapy has been administered. There is a chapter where his personality is 'lost' in his mind after the confusion of the therapy. The beneficial effect of treatment is shown in that the first person story becomes that of Richard at the third layer and the top layer becomes the third person account, signifying, that his sense of self has reverted to that of the businessman rather than the soldier. At this point the three layers all remain, however. It is the focus of the conscious self that switches from the top to the bottom layer: it becomes the first person conscious self and starts to pick up the richer voice that the first layer had prior. This richness also indicates what the conscious self is said to be experiencing. The deluded or misleading self-narrative becomes the third layer and swaps to the third person suggesting a removal from the conscious self.

The Part Two image is a representation of lightning in the mind. This is both the little understood spark of consciousness and the electroshock therapy that occurs in that part – and of our primitive understanding of the electro-mechanical workings of a mind.

Part Two opens with the period of confusion in the story "Cooking quantum soup with strange lightning" (CW, p. 213) representing the isolation inside the mind of the consciousness or one of them. The top and bottom layers of this chapter reference in their names ("Top I and bottom he" p.213) the first and third person points of view of the top and bottom layers in Part One. In fact the first and third layers each contains exactly the same words as the storied middle layer, except the words have been scrambled to produce gibberish out of those words. A model, then, of story chains but with no guiding super interpreter/committee functioning in those layers; representing the different combinations of confusion that reign in the two more conscious levels of self that Richard has been experiencing. Richard's lack of bearings and purpose and any way of getting out of his mind's isolation at that point suddenly become changed when he is confronted by another one of his selves, something he is not expecting in that state but is completely able to accept.

From then on in Part Two, the first and third person first and third layers of narration have, although the narration continues in each case in the linear fashion, swapped in point of view. The super interpreter/committee represented by Richard's squint is now allowing through to the consciousness the story of Richard as businessman while the confabulation of Richard as warrior has been swapped to a lower level interpretation (or rather one that has not been chosen by the squint).

Part Three

A further episode of electro shock therapy leads to Part Three, *Revelation*. This represents the reconstitution in Richard of a new apocalyptic world of self, where all is revealed and yet nothing, where all are one and yet there is a sense of fantasy and the surreal as the merging of the three selves begins to form the one and therefore the fractured nature of that self's reality.

As Part Three opens Richard is once again in the confused period immediately after a session of electro-shock treatment. The "healing" is continuing to advance. The first layer is, as it was after the first treatment, gibberish, but the words are not made up of those of the middle layer scrambled as before. And this time they are all words with a related theme. The third layer is made up of different words again but they, too, bear a relationship of theme within that layer. The middle layer is a confused understanding that there is an archetypal, mythical infinite number of stories behind the personality.

The Part Three introductory image is a representation of the summation of a life in a rather bleak philosophy that the main character might adhere to. That is, a balance sheet starting with life at zero and ending with zero. First some 100,000,000,000 neurons are given and then they are taken away. There is a sense of confusion in the first chapter of a different character to that at the beginning of Part Two. This part represents the final treatment. It appears to break up all of the layers, leading to Part Four.

Part Four

The image introducing Part Four suggests the idea of the self as an illusion, and this is represented in hands drawing one another.[1]

This set of three layers represents a re-forming of sensible ordered layers within the self. Over time they resolve and the confusion wears off as the sense of one self in Part Four, which contains the final chapter, "Endgame" (CW, p. 261). There is only one, first person, layer of narrative here. In this the super interpreter/committee is choosing amongst several different stories to produce a coherent whole.

Part Four, *Illusion*, which contains only a single layer, in the final chapter, *Endgame* (p.261). Here, all three layers are now apparently integrated into one melded self-aware personality. The book ends in this part with Richard's death as a youth shoots him in a robbery, the final ironic assault on Mount B.

As indicated earlier, each of the three layers throughout have been in subtly different but related fonts throughout Parts One, Two and Three. In this final chapter, *Endgame*, these three layers have merged into one – the self is unified now. But the reader looking very closely may see that there are in fact those three different fonts still being used in different words or phrases. The different subcomponents are each represented by the slightly different fonts of the layers. The different story line sources are therefore hidden from Richard's conscious self (and from the reader unless closely observing) but they are all feeding it because now the super interpreter/committee is taking a bit from here and a bit from there. This represents the continuing theme that there is no one self, even though Richard the narrator now believes that to be the case.

In the *Bible* there are 66 books. I created 66 chapters leading then to the final single-layer 67th chapter in which all three layers are melded. The *Old testament* is also the root of three great monotheistic religions, each one of which believes that the others do not represent the true state of affairs. I reflected on these aspects as I wrote and named Part Four, *Illusion*; the monosolipsistic self in

Endgame is an illusion made from three parts. Richard is an amalgam, not only of the parts of himself, of archetypes, of his memories and experiences, but also of his genes and the religions and cultures of his antecedents and his upbringing.

In a sense the Super Interpreter is creating a sort of Abraxas in the final chapter, a combined One of all beings. (Jung wrote a treatise in 1916 called "The seven sermons to the dead", which called Abraxas a God higher than the Christian God and Devil, that combines all opposites into one being (Jung, 1989, Appendix).

The use of physical layers in other creative work

An early concern was an appropriate way in a hardcopy novel to deal with the interruption of each narrative thread by another narrative thread. This bothered me during my Masters work also, where I paused the main narrative and introduced other stories before resuming the main narrative. In that case I interspersed, in a linear way within the main narrative, stories and dreams related by the narrator. It led, inevitably, to a fractured narrative. This style is not uncommon today with literary devices such as alternate chapters written from one of two points of view or temporal origins. This is sometimes also done within chapters, with some physical signifier such as an extra line break or line with a symbol such as an asterisk or an ellipsis on it to show the shift. How this affects one's reading experience is of course subjective. I find such breaks within chapters to be more off-putting than between chapters, influenced perhaps by expectations of change at chapter breaks conditioned by years of reading works set up in that way.

The synchronous nature of the layers was the point here. I therefore decided upon the existing physical layout in order to signal that as much as I could.

I now discuss other creative writing using different physical layers, considerations of the construction of meaning in such work, and then finally turn to the way in which I physically tackled mine.

In terms of the concept of several simultaneous stories, the closest I can find is the idea of the story constructed at the instant of the end of a life in the earlier novel by William Golding, *Pincher Martin.* Golding dealt with alternative views of the story going through a dying and unreliable narrator's life (Golding, 2002). This is getting into similar territory to that examined in my CW.

However I know of no other fiction in which exact correlates of co-existent physical layers representing contemporaneous narratives are iterated by the same narrator.

At one end of the scale are strictly chronological books following the unity of time and a single point of view from beginning to end. In these examples, one is forced to read sequentially through the book.

At the other end of the scale of different structure are those books which may be described as ergodic. Usually these days computer tools are used to both write and read them as they tend to either allow or require the reader to progress through the story by way of choosing among different hyperlinks or nodes at each point, thereby giving each path chosen a different story. Such texts do however predate hypertext itself: *Calligrammes* for example is a 1918 book of poetry in French in which the words are arranged to form a visual message (Apollinaire, 1995). Ergodic books (of which computerised hypertext books are an example) are those in which one is not limited in that sequential pattern, non-linear texts where the path of the reading can differ from reading to reading. Ergodic texts take non-trivial work to engage with. The work is written with different options available to continue reading at many points in the story. The medium of the literature is therefore influential upon its meaning. The style was championed particularly in 1997 by Espen J. Aarseth in his doctoral thesis later published as a textbook (Aarseth, 1999). He drew the parallels between such texts and interactive computer games where such choices are also made. Computer hypertext allows this very easily – at the end of text chunk, the reader may choose one of two or more alternate paths to follow in the narrative from that point on. Clicking on a hyperlink in an electronic text is one way of doing this which is familiar to us as a mechanism now. In paper form the reader might instead be asked for example "To read why Jack went into the cave, turn to page 45. To

read how Jack missed the cave and fell down an interesting waterfall, turn to page 64." These are therefore very complex works which need carful structuring in order to continue to be able to offer sensible choices.

In between these two extremes (the former common and the latter very unusual though far more common in media such as computer gaming) lies a lot of ground. There are very many works of written fiction that deal with contemporaneous viewpoints of different characters or narrators, or the same narrator of other characters using different points of view. It is a common way to tell contemporary stories in written text and other media such as film. There are innumerable examples of this type of structure. Almost all use a strictly linear sequence, simply switching from one story to another, perhaps by chapter. In Gillian Flynn's thriller *Gone girl* the husband's narration alternates with the wife's by chapter (Flynn, 2012). A recent example of a time shifting where the story alternates between 1922 and the present day and in both times the narrator is the same person is Sally Beauman's *The visitors* (Beauman, 2014).

The round house is an example of a recent work where the narrative steers off into either case histories or legends (Erdrich, 2012), in what might be called a serial layered effect. That is, physically only one physical layer of narrative is presented at a time to the reader. One narrative is interrupted to bring the other in to explain something or expand it, then the original narrative begins again. It is a very familiar device in literature and in film. I refer to this book as an illustration of that not just because it has such serial layers physical layers but also because it includes case histories and legends as clues to the main narrative and in that way it shares in a small way a kindredship with my CW.

Moving just a little further along the path towards fully ergodic works are books such as David Mitchell's *Cloud atlas* (Mitchell, 2004). Its six narrative tracks are what I call 'butterflied'. Imagine reading half a book, stopping halfway, leaving it open, opening another on top of it and reading the first half of that. Doing that with five books but then on the last one also reading the last half, closing it and continuing with the last half of the fourth and so on, until one reaches the first book once again and continues to finish its last half. *The luminaries* (Catton 2013) is a similar construct based on an astrological arrangement to present the novel's

various unified stories. The butterfly technique does give a sense of departure and return as one hits each right hand 'wing' of what you've left behind. The nesting in this structure allows for quite a different sense from reading the book as five sequential short stories. Each layer is informed half way through by the by the preceding half or full story and then the full preceding full story by the latter.

The layout of my CW allows for a similar effect but in a rather more complex way. While all the chunks of text within any one layer must be read sequentially there are many different orders in which one can traverse all of the layers of the whole text. There is a greater degree of choice given to the reader than with either Mitchell's or more traditionally sequential books.

There are two other works that are arguably more ergodic and that bear some similarity to the rich form of multiple-story found in my CW.

The first is *House of leaves* (Danielewski, 2000). The physical layering is different to the examples above. This book's form owes much to its origin as a hypertext accessible via the internet. It has a main narrative and an accompanying set of commentary footnotes. The latter collectively form their own continuous narrative. The footnote commentary is entirely aware of the main or top narrative and comments directly on it. In contrast to my CW there are only these two layers however. There is no attempt to physically balance the relative sizes of the layers from page to page, nor to keep any similarity of length of layers. This made the novel for me at least difficult to keep in rhythm. It was difficult also because of the ever-present understanding that every footnote is a direct reference to a part of the main narrative on the page on which it starts – the reader is guided toward jumping layers on all pages in order to be able to keep track. The reader is to some extent therefore forced always to approach the two layers together, uncomfortable though that may be.

Diary of a bad year by Coetzee (Coetzee, 2007) has a similarly physically horizontally layered system. In this case the primary layer is a series of academic papers by a scholar, known to the reader as Señor C. A secondary layer starts at p.1, which appears to be his diary, kept as he writes the academic papers. This journal concerns his meeting and growing relationship with a young woman,

Anya, a neighbour he engages as a secretary. He writes his paper. It refers to his relationship with his housekeeper. This layer ends after their separation with a long letter she writes to him. The third layer is introduced later (at p.23) and is the diary of the secretary housekeeper and it reflects on her relationship with the scholar.

As with my CW, these three apparently simultaneous narratives and the paper itself all influence the reader's response to each layer. Again, as with this CW, the order in which the layers can be read is vast and so therefore may be the different responses of readers. But this differs from both *House of leaves* and *Diary of a bad year* in that the physically horizontal layers do not reference each other directly. For this reason, and because there is a consistent size to each physical layer on each page size within the bounds of each chapter, Coetzee's book is easier to read as one wishes. It does require close reading within each layer rather than between them however because of the swapping of voices, without punctuation in layers two and three.

I did not set out to write the CW with the ergodic approach or the above books in mind. The three physical horizontal layers do not directly reference each other and remain in balance, size-wise, with one another to minimise the level (if not the fact of) the distractions inherent of having related layers on the same page. I have at all times been conscious of the 'non-trivial' (Aarseth, 1999) way of reading forced upon readers by ergodic texts and by *House of leaves* in particular.

Constructing meaning from this layered work

> We are so accustomed to disguise ourselves to others that in the end we become disguised to ourselves. (La Rochefoucauld, 2008)

> We all know that art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand. The artist must know the manner whereby to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies.
> (Pablo Picasso in 1923, as cited in Barr, 1980).

In both top and bottom layers Richard's personal history is disguised as an adventure in the style of the hero's journey, as he reacts to and against seminal events in his life. The middle layer of stories represent a step further away from

realism and interrupts Richard's two more traditional narratives. Those two traditional narratives however are also peppered with embellishment and interpretation to complicate the reader's search for the truth of an implied author, in order to further suggest an unwritten fourth and uncertain layer.

I have endeavoured to mix a variety of types of unreliable narrator into the CW. For example, Richard speaking in the top layer in the first person may be aware of some of his false statements, uses humour to make points, is aware of a different reality from time to time (e.g. the bus shelter incident). He rationalises when he is accused of atrocities and tries to excuse himself. He appears to inflate his report of bravery when he leaves home by suggesting it was a deliberate and easy act, whilst the third person layer shows Richard desperate in those particular circumstances. He takes upon himself the blame for the death of Christopher Page as though he had himself planned it in one layer and in the other suffers from near-miss accident survivor guilt. Richard's autobiographical memory is apparently deficient in the top layer but at least seems more rational and complete and reliable in the third. That third layer is what shows the top layer to be unreliable.

In the top layer Richard then is an unreliable homodiegetic-autodiegetic narrator. The largest signal for the top layer though comes from the heterodigetic third layer, itself with an unreliable layer with textual signals to that. Who is the narrator there? Is it Richard in the third person or is it a part of him? Is it some presence hovering above Richard? The references to the squint in particular suggest that it is a narration by Richard because of the similar (though not identical) style of referencing the motif that occurs in the top layer. Whatever the answers, the biographical memory in the third layer is nevertheless not going to be completely full or accurate because of flaws in memory and perception, biases and conscious favourable selection, the conscious fabrication and embellishment that exists in any autobiographical memory. There is no suggestion of any semantic memory deficit (this is memory of impersonal knowledge without any memory of source tags) or episodic memory deficit (memory of knowledge still attributed to a particular source) to the extent those are different.

The middle layer has a heterodigetic and more or less overt narrator - who acts in accordance with the world the implied author sets up for each story and, read alone and as a series of unrelated stories, are written to seem that their narrator is reliable (within the rules of each story). Read as each one as part of a triptych of top middle and bottom layers in that chapter however that layer becomes very obviously unreliable in narration.

There is the further tenuous layer, the voice of the implied narrator, unwritten, unknowable and unreliable. It is present in all fiction and that is the understanding that the individual reader takes as the narrative that emerges from behind the written text. It is identified by the reader through textual clues and individual response both to content and to the inconsistencies that are expressed or implied. The use of three layers both helps and hinders this. Because the top and bottom layers are in different styles and the middle layer is completely different, focussing on different aspects of story represented at the same moment, that voice is, I would suggest, more obviously different to the reader than it would be if there were only one layer. Because of the disruption forced by the physical presence of the layers additional information is available for each narrative layer, unwritten in that layer and therefore akin to a contemporaneous statement of narrator intent or to subtext or both. This factor encourages a rich, in-depth engagement by readers with multiple understandings. It sets up all sorts of inconsistencies and multiple interpretations and so points firmly to an outside overall narrator. In terms of the weight to be given to each layer's claim at any point, the choice is not between each layer's narrator and implied narrator of all layers (to the extent that this is possible in any case) but a complex weave between that implied overall narrator and the other narrators, and above that, the overall implied author of the CW, and the overall implied author. None ultimately can be judged against the implied views of the real author because there always remain alternative choices. So while it is may be recognised that there is such a voice, and that it is different from any of the three express narrators and the implied narrator, inevitably the voice is much harder to pin down.

This highlights the argument that there is no way to imply only one objective implied narrator that is consistent between readers (following reader-response theory) but having to accept that there are multiple implied narrators even outside

the reasoning of reader-responses. And if there are multiple implied narrators then there is clearly no way for the reader to objectively ally with the overall implied author let alone the real author. And further, the underlying speculation being examined claims that in any event the real author is similarly fractionated into different selves and therefore different and multiple implied authors.

By introducing an enormous variety of choices in the order in which the CW is read, the reader response issue is multiplied. No longer is the response of each reader a possibility based on the context that that reader brings to the reading but that reader may choose different reading paths and therefore be experiencing different contexts within the text itself. Not 'reader-response' to a linear and contiguous text in the order set by the author then but rather to a non-linear text in an order chosen by the reader (limited by the chronological sequence requirements of each stream of narrative).

The context in which any reader receives a given chunk of text now can be understood to have two environments influencing it: the first is that unique environment that has placed the particular reader at the beginning of the book, the reader in his or her own historical context in all things the algorithm that describes all aspects of that reader's readiness to approach the text. The second has always been there but in the case of a sequentially read book, is the same environment for every reader, which, except for time and what other and external influences on the reader algorithms occur within the period the text is being traversed, the number of ways to read the book.

In the simplest case of a sequential book read in only one sitting, it is the reader algorithm x 1, the number of ways to read the book. This is an instance of reader-response at its simplest – the variation from reader to reader is only because of the differences between those readers. In ergodic texts it is in fact the multiplication of the reader algorithm and the possible reading orders that produces a very large number of reader responses arguably for each and every reader.

Ergodic hypertext literature is primarily concerned with providing a number of different routes to read a story through reader choice. Eliza is a related form in

which a computer algorithm is used to give the most sensible response constructed from the programs database when it is given a question.

This CW differs from other ergodic projects in that the layers are all internal to the same person, or different 'selves' within that one who may or may not be 'aware' of the others and may or may not nevertheless be influenced by them. Each is a different narrator with different memories and motives. It is more concerned with using that resulting multiplicity of story understandings to reflect the speculative internal network of stories within one brain (accepting the always-on network of story bits premise of the CW). Looked at in this way, the conscious self is the resulting story that clicking on various links in the brain presents to it (rather circularly).

And given the sheer number of different responses possible for the one individual reader in those order choices, the author must accept that s/he cannot therefore be able to enforce any one or more responses, even if s/he were to argue there is a 'true' meaning in a traditional single or multiple but serially layered narrative and the responses in a multitude of readers can therefore not be said to be either right or wrong.

I do like the way the plethora of narrators and implied narrators and implied authors all emerge from this sort of structure and the complexity it adds to overall interpretations of the work. It reflects the underlying premise of the CW that there is a complexity of networked story bits and at the same time makes the implied author more complex, synchronous, multi-voiced and harder to fathom.

The narrative of a fictional creative work can be thought of as a fictive lie. For the purpose of this research I define the fictive lie as 'unreality' as described in *The Shorter Oxford English dictionary* as "Absence or lack of reality; an instance of this" (Trumble, Brown & Stevenson, 2002). The fictive lie can range from realism to complete abstraction but is normally understood to be a narrative where the author has an intention to fabricate or to leave out relevant truth to an extent. I further define it as including one or both of the following attributes:

> 1. a deliberate narrative of what, at least in part, did *not* happen,

2. a deliberately incomplete narrative in part at least of what *did* happen.

I examined 'delusory realism' in *Vivienne's blog* (Leaton, 2004). I hoped the reader would understand that one interpretation is that that the narrator was deluded in thinking there was magic. My concern and interest both in that work and in this PhD CW was as to how to craft adequately so that there was sufficient allusion to a hidden layer within the literal text and then how to test that. This in turn led me to exploring allegory and the idea of deliberately building into the work a cryptic or hidden narrative as it seemed to me that a narrative that was based on self-delusion had a hidden layer within it – the layer the unreliable narrator is revising by his or her narration.

Thinking about writing a novel where the primary literal text is written by an unreliable narrator who is describing either a deliberate revisionist or a self-deluded history, I was concerned early on in the process that there was a practical problem with my novel in that readers may not realise that my intention was that the work referenced self-delusion. But that concern not only disappeared but turned inside out and became the goal as I considered the following matters.

There are many examples in literature where authors have felt that the original text was misinterpreted. Kafka's short work "The metamorphosis" (Kafka, 1971b) is often cited as a bearing a message of the futility of humanity and existential despair but some see it as comedic and with a different message (Foster Wallace, 1998). Both can be right in the sense that it is reporting what different readers read as the message. While either, both or neither might have been Kafka's intention, one can see that all interpretations can exist no matter Kafka's actual intention, even if they are all mutually exclusive (though I do not say that they are). This would be more difficult to sustain if Kafka had told us what his intention was. Some have gone on to make such statements even years after first publication. In Tolkien's *The lord of the rings* some readers and viewers look for specifically biblical analogies and allegories. This was the approach for example of Bruner and Ware in *Finding God in lord of the rings* (2001) despite Tolkien's explicit foreword statement that he did not intend it to be an allegory of anything, biblical or otherwise: "As for any inner meaning or 'message', it has in the

intention of the author none. It is neither allegorical nor topical." (Tolkien, 1996, p10). Hermann Hesse wrote *Steppenwolf* in 1955. In an author's note added in 1961 and appearing in the Penguin edition he made reference to his intention differing to that ascribed to it by the critics (2009, pp. 5-6). And Doris Lessing in her 1971 introduction to *The golden notebook* (2007, pp. 7-21) written nine years after first publication was very firm that not only had she had her intention misinterpreted but that she had been ignored when she stated it.

I engaged in particular with reader-response theory, and the phenomenon of different interpretations by each reader as it relates to the writer's intentions, thinking that I needed to understand how these related in order that I could build layers. Reader response theory has several different definitions (Tyler, 2006). Some reader-response theorists say that the author's intentions in the writing as to the meaning of the text is entirely irrelevant as the meaning is derived only from the work and the perception of that work by the reader. There are as many interpretations as readers. Though I have sympathy for it I was interested not so much in the individualist approach of those such as Bleich, i.e. that the interpretation of the text cannot be objective but is an entirely individualistic hermeneutic experience by each reader. I will for the purposes of this discussion adopt the definition of Tyson:

> […] reader-response theorists share two beliefs: 1) that the role of the reader cannot be omitted from our understanding of literature and 2) that readers do not passively consume the meaning presented to them by an objective literary text; rather they actively make the meaning they find in literature. This second belief, that readers actively make meaning, suggests, of course, that different readers may read the same text differently. I fact, reader-response theorists believe that event he same reader reading the same text on two different occasions will probably produce different meanings because so many different variables contribute to our experience of the text. Knowledge we've acquired between our first and second reading of a text, personal experiences that have occurred in the interim, a change in the mood between our two encounters with the text, or a change in the purpose for which we're reading it can all contribute to our production of different meanings for the same text. (Tyson, 2006, p. 162)

Tyson's second paragraph in the quote above is particularly apposite to a work in which the same reader might read it in two different orders on two different occasions or on reading the exegesis between those readings, for example.

Barthes (1968) argued that the author can no longer be regarded as the omniscient and all-pervading presence and influence on the work and that the reader holds all the power – that s/he supplants the author. Barthes goes so far as to title his essay *The death of the author*, and Foucault (1977) speculated on the eventual anonymity of authors (an interesting development in much of the anonymity associated with publication by many using the internet in social media in particular).

Following Booth and then Nünning (both as cited in Olson, 2003) the reader judges the narration against what the reader perceives as an implied author's intent but that is not possible because that implied intent depends, in a circularity, on the reader's individual response. So the concepts of implied reader and implied author are unsustainable although they may be ideals in the minds of any one reader and any author. Booth talks of texts and the textual signals within that show there is a difference between the narrator's statements and implied authors and this leads to unreliable narrator. Nünning refers to similar textual signals but then says that because there is reader-response which is different for every reader, that this idea of whether the narrator is, and to what extent, unreliable will depend on every response and therefore on cultural and changing world concepts.

Looking at it in terms of the fictive lie, for it to exist or succeed, it seems to me there is on the reader's part:

1. no necessity to be aware there is a particular fictive lie but it is generally expected that the reader understands there are or will be fictive lies (in the sense of deliberately incomplete truths) in the text in some or all parts, and
2. a desirability, whether aware of which parts are fictive lies and which are apparently not, to be willing to suspend disbelief for all of the work of the purposes of engaging with the work.

Literary fiction as a genre (to the extent that it can be defined as excluding other recognised genres of creative writing) is on a spectrum of approaches to the fictive lie. At one end is the *roman a clef*, where the author is attempting to portray

as closely as possible his or her own perception of reality, changing only the characters names in that attempt. Even in this, the version chosen or perceived by the author is different from that of other people and only some aspects of the perception can be chosen to be included. Each reader will then have a different perception and response of what he or she is reading.

Conversely, science fiction imagines other worlds, future or speculative states that are possible within the laws of physics, while fantasy deliberately posits non-real worlds and physics, as well as events and characters that are not and could not be real or a sensible reflection of the author's view of reality, though they may meet the criteria of plausibility.

Much creative fiction lies somewhere on the continuum between these extremes.

In social realism the purpose of the writing could be social commentary or it might be pure entertainment foro example. The credibility of the writing in terms of a reflection of what could be real life is certain even though (in most cases) the reader is expected to understand this is a fictive lie but to suspend disbelief. The reader may be hard-pressed to itemise all of the fictional and then all of the non-fictional elements in the story. But the underlying assumption is usually that the story as a whole, its plot, has not occurred in reality and that its characters have never existed or at best are not completely accurate representations of real people. Therefore the reader knows that the story is in fact no less a fictive lie than what may be regarded as more fabulist literature.

Some genres take a place between the purely fantastic and the social realist stories. These types of literature deal with realism and elements of magic. In positing a fluid borderline between fact and myth that is socio-culturally located, I have been influenced by the Latin magical realists where they portray the magical elements as in fact understood realities in their own culture. Hence the reader's response is likely to be different if from a different culture to the writer. This was said by Garcia Marquez in relation to the ghosts, yellow butterflies and the ascension which featured in *One hundred years of solitude* (2000) for example, in the interviews recorded by Mendoza in *The fragrance of guava* (1988) and by Isabel Allende in relation to magical elements in her own work *Daughter of fortune*

(1999) recorded in both *My invented country* (Allende & Peden, 2003) and in an interview in 2003 (Zapata Whelan, 2003). For such writers, the magical elements are said to be real and that it will also be to readers from that culture (though Coetzee wonders whether Marquez, at least, was speaking tongue in cheek (2005)). To the readers of another culture the magical elements are simply unreal.

There are other writers often described by the magical realist label whose magical element is not based however in a culturally accepted supernatural reality e.g. Angela Carter's or *The bloody chamber and other stories* (1993a) *Nights at the circus* (1993b) or Gunter Grass's *The tin drum* (2004). These writers are not relating culturally accepted supernatural realities but rather symbols of the characters' unreality.

In my master's thesis I drew attention to the differences between these two broad types of magical realism styles and suggested that Marquez and Allende include what we regard as cultural magic, whereas Grass and Carter might more properly be distinguished from a lack of any culturally accepted reality. To generalise into a category that includes both types of this literature, one might borrow inspiration from the Spanish phrase for magic realism, 'lo real maravilloso', and call it instead 'marvellous realism.' The two sub-categories should perhaps be called 'fantastical realism' (e.g. Carter and Grass), 'cultural supernatural realism' (Marquez and Allende). So, in fantastical realism; the author expects the reader to understand that the characters are not deluded but actually experiencing magic. In cultural supernatural realism the actual author expects the reader to accept that not only the narrator but also the implied author believe in the magic. The differences lie in the intention the author has in asking for the reader's response.

Despite the ideas behind reader-response theory, there remains that uncomfortable craft issue of their intention for any author: despite the theory the creative writer must have some intention, whether or not it is achieved in the text for any particular reader. The question still arises as to what the intention of the author is in creating a particular fiction. And that leads to the craft questions of first, how the reader is expected to know what the author intended, and how the author can influence that?

But so be it. I as the author strive to be understood but can never expect to be my intentions for the text to frame its reception. As Nietzsche wrote:

> It's certainly best to separate an artist far enough from his work, so that one does not take him with the same seriousness as one does his work. In the final analysis, he is only the precondition for his work, its maternal womb, the soil or, in some cases, the dung and manure, on and out of which it grows — and thus, in most cases, something that we must forget about, if we want to enjoy the work itself. Insight into the origin of a work is a matter for physiologists and vivisectionists of the spirit, never the aesthetic men, the artists — never! (Nietzsche, 2010).

The real author and his or her intentions are one thing. The supposed intentions of the narrator of a fictional work is another and that of the implied author yet another. In terms of craft the reader can be led further away from an understanding of the author's true interests and motivations by having to look at those through the deforming lens of the unreliable narrator.

And so my intention became to introduce impenetrable complexity of choice into any attempt to distil the overall implied narrators meaning and the overall implied author's meaning and intention, to highlight the impossibility of doing that in any work.

I wanted it to be clear that the author of the work intends the reader to understand, at least by the end of the work, that the narrator has been in some way unreliable, even if only to the extent of ambiguity. This might be a deliberate attempt at deception by the narrator of his or her hypothetical audience, or it might be because of one of the forms of delusion are present, or there might be a form of playing with the story that the reader and the narrator are supposed to be complicit in in some way, both understanding the unreliability. In every case however the author is aware of the unreliability of the narrator.

The author of a fictive lie deliberately gives cues to the reader. The reader applies his or her own predictions to the story unfolding and there is a delight in seeing if the prediction matches what the words show next – as long as it is within the range of possible consequences. The author gives cues and the reader paints the picture. The author has no say in what the reader paints once the cues have

been given. The author is unreliable, the reader cannot be relied on and the narrator can never be anything but unreliable from both points of view. The reader cannot understand the author properly from the narration as his or her understanding is a construct that he or she has made from his or her own mind and the cues of the words; the reader cannot be relied on to understand what the author intends to communicate. Similarly the author cannot design precisely how the reader takes those words into his or her construct. It is very much a hit and miss affair.

It is not a matter of where and when an author chooses to depict an unreliable narrator, or when one spots one as a reader, nor quite what the hidden or shown voice of the author is saying in the narration. It is instead the case of there being no reliable narrator ever.

It is at this point that the unreliability of all narrators – implied or express – and of all implied authors caused me to accept as not only inevitable in all wroks but could and should be actively promoted in the structure of my own CW

The implied author and the narrator are unconscious constructs. They can be unreliable. For example the narrator can be at odds with that implied author and appear reliable for any actual reader. The implied author can be at odds with the narrator and so be unreliable in the mind of the reader. The implied reader is unreliable, and the narrator is unreliable whether the textual signals of unreliability as defined by Booth and Nünning are detectable by any particular reader or not. The actual author is unable to be anything other than unreliable in what he or she is attempting to portray. In other words the actual author is unreliable.

Looked at in terms of consciousness, the actual author (me in this case) is conscious but incompletely so and is in reality unreliable. The actual author is therefore attempting to portray something in the fiction that cannot truly reflect to anyone else, even that actual author, the actual author's appreciation of the truth of the fiction that he or she is trying to show. With the real world, one person can be in any of those positions with his or her audience. But the real life speaker/writer can also be unaware of the fact of unreliability. The author is bound

up completely with the narrator and is not in the privileged position of being aware of the detailed specifics of the narrator's unreliability.

In other words, whatever layered nests of knowledge and unreliability or otherwise the narrator of the story appears to be caught up in and the reader understands, the fact is that all narrators are unreliable and all authors unreliable.

But thinking about the idea that all of us are all of the time in the grip of some unreality, there is a different way to look at writing, one which has no intention on the author's part to be deceptive, where there is no fictive lie (if a lie is deliberate). That is where the author is attempting to tell 'truth'. Here the writing must also include inaccuracies and incompletenesses. It will be a narrative having no necessary element of conscious deception on the part of the author and has one or both of these attributes:

1. a deliberate but unsuccessful attempt at a narrative of only what *did* happen,
2. an incomplete narrative, whether intentional or not, in part at least of all of what *did* happen.

In the case of this second sort of writing, there is on the reader's part:

3. no necessity to be aware there is a particular or any untruth, and
4. a desirability, if aware of at least some parts are untrue or incomplete and which are apparently not, to be willing to suspend any disbelief or perhaps judgment for the purposes of engaging with the work.

In both cases of deliberate fictions (fictive lies) and in the case of attempts at truth, for the reader:

1. what is first important factor is what is perceived by the reader as the story - the reader's understanding as to whether there is a full lack or partial lack of veracity is unimportant to engagement with the text if the reader is prepared to so engage

2. in what has been perceived by the reader as an untruth, the author's intention or motivation is:

    a. probably irrelevant to the reader in fiction, but

    b. probably relevant to the reader in terms of an attempt at reportage of truth

If it is correct that all authors are deluded in thinking that they are setting out reality on paper, or that they can represent reality in their own minds at all, let alone set it out on paper, then the work the author produces must always be (except by fortuitous accident) not a complete representation of the truth. If, as appears, all writing has elements of deliberate or non-deliberate fiction, reader-response theory as far as the author's intention is concerned should in this sense be applied to at least some non-fiction as well as fiction, most notably biographies, autobiographies, and reportage of events.

All authors then are caught up as real unreliable narrators in truth, who is unknowingly creating an unreliable narration whether or not the narrator of his or her created story is supposed to be unreliable or not (or at least knowing that they are unknowing but not aware of in what sense).

When trying to establish from the text the presence of, and exact departures from, the implied author of an unreliable author, and to equate the views of the implied author (with all the caveats about that) as those of the actual author seems all but impossible.

I have recently re-read the works of Jorge Luis Borges. I was reminded of his stories when I considered the possible mathematics of a supposed always-on network of story bits involved in our brains. In *The Aleph* (Borges, 1998a) the protagonist is shown in a basement an Aleph (ℵ), described by him as a point in which the entire universe is contained. The Aleph number in set theory represents a sequence of numbers describing the size of infinite sets. It was introduced by Cantor in his theorems relating to comparing infinite sets – countable and uncountable. Here the Aleph is an object rather than an abstraction and is large enough at a scale of centimetres for him to look into and he sees the whole infinite

universe at once. He describes images, which are evocative of stories. This is a theme that I note in the last canto of Dante's *Paradiso* as well:

And I remember that I was more bold
On this account to bear, so that I joined
My aspect with the Glory Infinite.

O grace abundant, by which I presumed
To fix my sight upon the Light Eternal,
So that the seeing I consumed therein!

I saw that in its depth far down is lying
Bound up with love together in one volume,
What through the universe in leaves is scattered;

Substance, and accident, and their operations,
All interfused together in such wise
That what I speak of is one simple light.

The universal fashion of this knot
Methinks I saw, since more abundantly
In saying this I feel that I rejoice. (Dante, 2013)

In approaching the idea of multiple stories in my CW, I compare the human brain with Borges's Aleph. The brain cannot contain an infinite number of stories but a very large number indeed and as such, if we could look into it, we might see what was to all intents and purposes a sort of 'organolectric' Aleph.

Other Borges stories that deal with the idea of infinite existences or texts include *The garden of forking paths* (Borges, 1998c) where the protagonist is faced with contemplation of a number of choices of different futures, *The library of Babel* (Borges, 1998d) in which the library forms a universe containing very possible variation of a 410 page text; and "The book of sand" (Borges, 1998b) in which the protagonist purchases the Book of Books. This contains an infinite number of pages and in the particular case no end or beginning and an unusual numbering system in which the pages seem to be parts of infinite series.

I was put in mind by this plethora of experiences of Don Quioxte: "A world of disorderly Notions, pick'd out of his books, crouded [sic] into his Imagination." (de

Cervantes Saavedra, 2003), and also reminded of the works of authors in Ouvroir De Littérature Potentielle ("OuLiPo" - a society French-speaking writers and mathematicians creating works using new structures and patterns which may be used by writers in any way they enjoy).

The CW is set up with three physical layers in over 230 pages of the work. The reader of my CW can – must - also choose to interrupt his or her own reading. This is forced either because the reader must complete a layer before returning to read the next, or interrupt that layer by jumping to another. If one regards each layer on each page as a 'chunk' then there are 720 chunks and therefore 720! different arrangements for reading them. The factorial of 720! is 1,747 digits long.[2]

It is of course very unlikely that this purely random approach is what any reader would take. We want to read each chunk to be followed by a chunk occurring later in the chronology of that particular layer, whether interrupted by a visit to another layer or not. There are three layers on each page so this means there are 3! orders of reading the chunks on each page, none of which is any more sensible or necessary than any other in terms of maintaining a chronological stream. There being 230 pages then there are 3! X 230 = 1380 ways of reading the book in that way.

One sensible method would be to read the top layer of each chapter in full then read the second in full and then the third. Given that there are 22 such three-layered chapters, this still gives a choice about which layer to read through first and there are 3! x 22 = 132 ways of doing this when considering the whole book. There are therefore a very large number of reading options that are opened up and the gap in terms of response between each reader, and between each reader and the author, is widened dramatically.

Then this question is raised: who has written these different reading experiences? As the author I wrote one of them at least. But my writing experience has been made up of all sorts of dips in and out and reordering and editing of all sorts of text. There is no one way I have written (in the sense of thought through and deliberately created) the story that is easily seen from the end result (even though it is of course one pattern) though physically I have done so.

The reader starts with a complete set of the characters at that point. But given:

(a) that the reader can read in hundreds of different sequences; and

(b) the reader brings to each character or word as it is read a whole existing substrata of thoughts to that experience,

then it is might be that each new data chain that is formed for and by each reader is subtlety different to every other. Just as it would be if the reader had already read through it once.

Finally, given the theme of multiple stories in Richard's mind, and po9bbile multiple reading experiences and interpretations of story in different reader's minds I became intrigued with considering the possibility that the author him or her self writes with many stories going on in the creative mind. Perhaps the particular skill of the writer or any creator is to be able to self-inhibit the choice between stories enough to suspend his or her own disbelief and allow a particular story pattern to emerge from the patterns already there within the brain. That may come up fully formed as a complete tale (as some writers and composers say occurs) or be merely a sufficiently interesting data chain to provide an emergent phrase or sentence the conscious self is able to add to from other emergent chains and continue to write the tale forward.

I speculate that the reader in such a model suspends disbelief by opening up his or her thoughts and allowing the writer to help them to inhibit and replace to an extent his or her own super interpreter/committee by placing an external sourced set of chains into the consciousness. The reader then interprets or responds to those external chains in a way unique to that reader because it involves his or her own consciousness and unconscious thoughts as well as those given by the author. That is, the path that the reader in such a model might be guided down is not necessarily one of the chains of memory or thought that exists in the reader's mind (or highly scored ones) in any sense before it is stimulated by the subsequent prose.

The logistics of writing in three layers

I approached the prose writing itself in a variety of ways. Commencing and developing a story for me is an internal contemplation. I try to allow my own subconscious to throw up connecting storylines which I then build on.

I kept a reflective literary reading and writing journal. This journal helped inform both my creative writing and my understanding of the themes I was exploring. I used this to record reflections on material I read (both creative and academic literature) and its relationship to the themes and practice in my work as well as created prose elements. I noted down scope and outline ideas, and links on and between practice and theory. I included many images, thought or dream fragments, text and musical phrases, if I found them interesting to the development of writing.

In the initial phase of this particular work, I did not have a formal outline though I gradually developed that using the document map of Microsoft Word[3], a good navigation and organisation tool in long work. Each chapter or story appeared as a title and I coded each one with a letter signifying the point of view and other attributes:
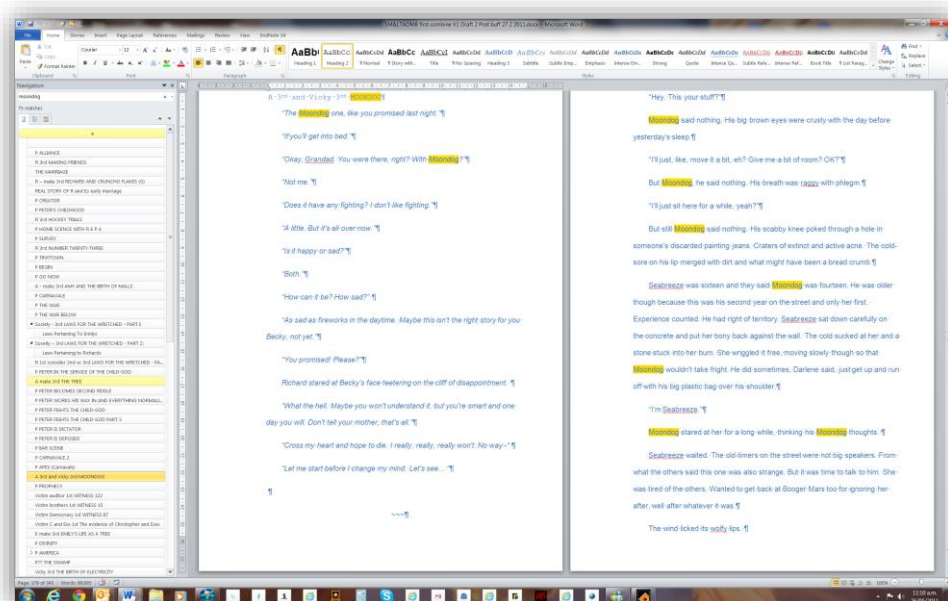
I also used Mindjet's Mindmanager[4] mind-mapping software to organise and refine parts and included in this my theoretical questions and how I was interrogating each:
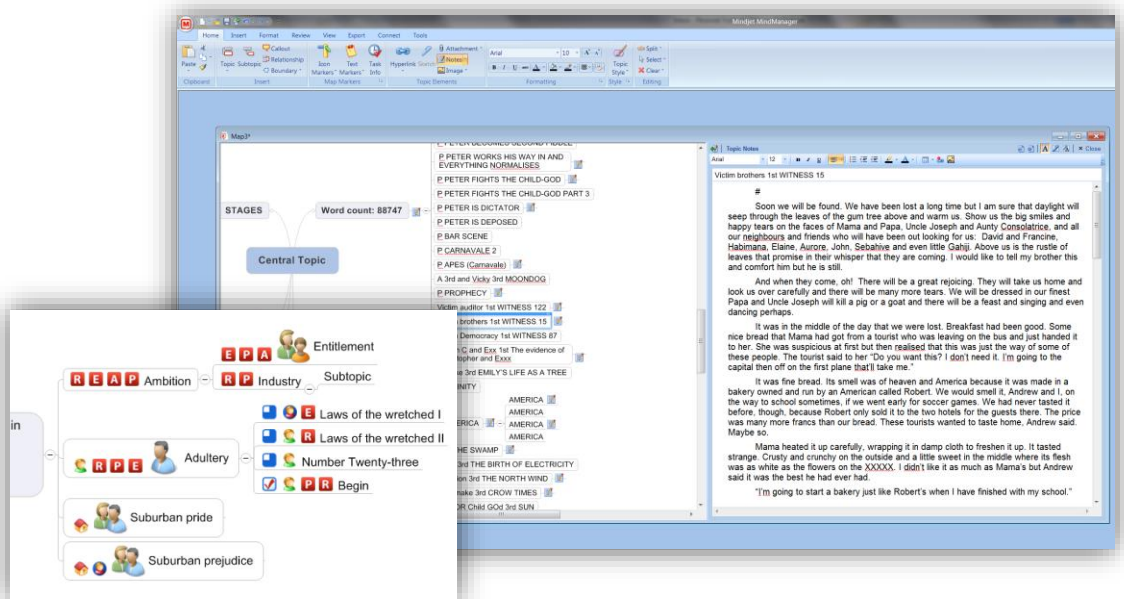
These two tools enabled me to navigate efficiently and to re-order through click-and-drag techniques. I could create hyperlinks between different appearances of characters and scenes and importantly kept track of the internal mindscapes created by various characters and the changes as those characters experiences of their lives changed.

This was followed by a re-reading of the chapters on either side of the new story and a period of reflection as to what adaptation each new or changed element then required of the work already written. These were also periods in which I reflected on what further theoretical research was suggested.

Saving versions of drafts and maps of their structures enabled me to continue to excavate the content of prior as well as current drafts to explicate my writing practice and the links between my writing, my wider reading, and the theoretical concerns expressed in the literature review section.

I searched for ways to free myself from the desktop or laptop PC. The use of SugarSync[5] cloud-based file storage, synchronisation and access software enabled me to write where and when I needed to on a variety of devices. My smartphone helped to some extent in direct typing but it was fiddly at best. I came to use Dictamus[6], a smartphone voice recording application which, combined with a combination of Dragon Record on my smartphone and the voice-to-text Dragon Naturallyspeaking[7] on my PC, increased my mobility and freedom to create. I discovered Evernote[8], a note taking application that is available on my Windows PC, Mac and on my smartphone. As each note is created on any of these devices, it is automatically synced to the rest. This quickly became an indispensable journaling tool. I also used Livescribe[9] pens and booklets. These enabled me to write by hand in the booklets at any time, record sound notes linked to places in the booklets to supplement the written note, and transfer that electronically to a computer and translate (with reasonable accuracy) my handwriting to text.
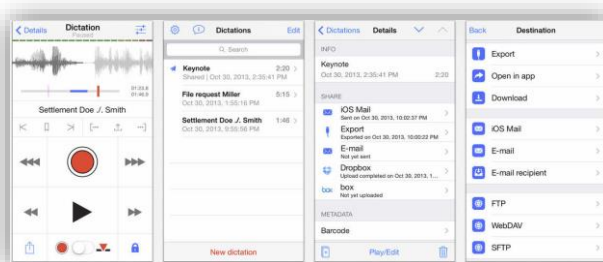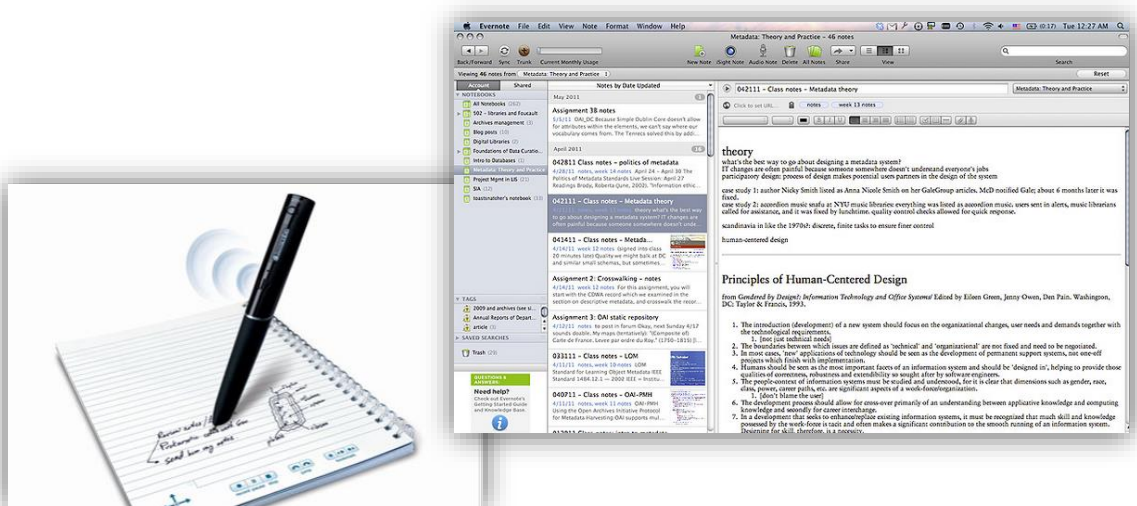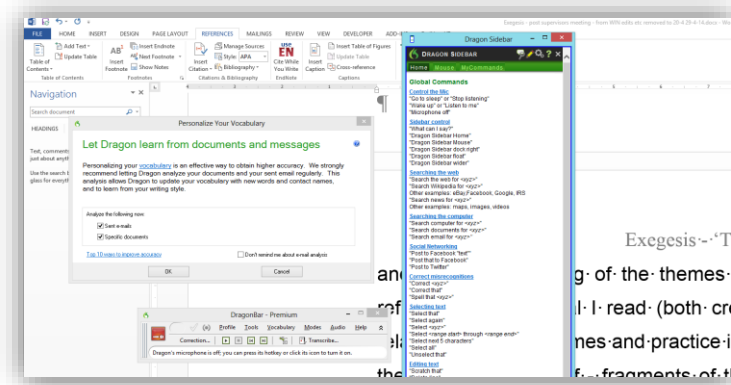
The use of Microsoft Word for the manuscript (as opposed to initial drafting) became logistically problematic. The Windows version of Word did not allow for the flowing of multiple layer frames between pages other than using a combination of header, main page and footnote which posed complex problems for keeping layout synchronised between layers as well as causing file instability – it could not handle the sheer number of text frames needed. Word 2011 on a Mac provided a way to create separate frames and flow the text within each across pages but it was limited to only 31 boxes.

I was therefore forced to find a solution in other software. After experimenting with many different types I settled on Adobe Framemaker[10] as the only practical option open to me. This software had a steep self-taught learning curve but I managed to achieve what I needed to.

I was initially concerned that the use of three layers on each page might have left chunk sizes too small in each layer to allow a comfortable reading experience. I experimented with A3 paper size but this as a physical artefact was too cumbersome and I reverted to A4 with several technical layout adjustments to increase readability and the word count per page:
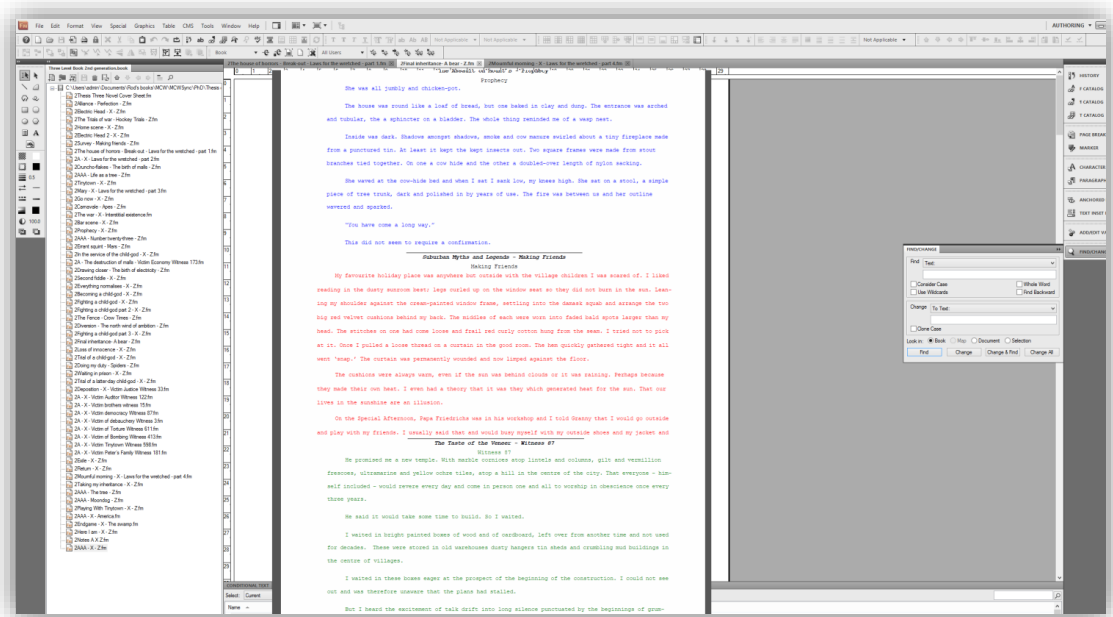
My next step was to choose slightly different fonts to represent the different layers. I wanted to avoid any fonts that were too idiosyncratic or too different from one another, as orthodox conventions of readability remained crucial, and I was already taking risks in that respect with the use of layers. However I first experimented with different colours for each layer instead of differing fonts but rejected that for similar reasons. I came to the conclusion that I wanted the differences to be very subtle indeed (almost as unnoticeable as the various stories from which the self is constructed) and chose fonts that were extremely similar to each other. My intention was to emphasise that all these narratives were coming from parts of only one person so there was fundamental similarity as well as difference between the layers of narratives. I decided on three different font families, two of which are derivations of Claude Garamond's famous font and one of which is a direct predecessor to it. I chose Microsoft's Garamond variation for layer one and Bembo for layer three. These two fonts represent possible versions of self for Richard. They are almost indistinguishable from each other unless mixed. Layer two is in Adobe Garamond Pro. This is slightly more easily distinguished from the other two. By sandwiching this in as layer two, the other two fonts look even more similar to one another and it is only when they are mixed in the last part of the novel, Part Four, that the minor differences can be perceived in the fonts, representing the layers underneath that form the apparent sole narrative layer there presented.

Thinking about these different orders of reading and my CW led me to consider Georg Cantor's mathematical work on sets. Cantor compared the size of the infinite number of members of the set of all fractions of integers with integers. He suggested a grid. The first row is all fractions with the denominator "1". The second row was all fractions with the denominator "2" and the third with "3" and so on through all integers. The set is infinite in the length of each row and infinite in each column. To give a sequential count number to each fraction is not possible if you start labeling along one row. You never get to the end of that row and therefore cannot say what the first entry on the second row is numbered. Instead you count diagonally. It is therefore possible to see that the sequential integer series though infinite is the same size as the set of fractions described.

Whether the exegesis is read before, alongside or after the CW also affects the number of ways the CW can be understood. In other words, the experience of interpreting the CW will be influenced by reading some or all of the authorial statement of intent beforehand. Clearly there could be differing reader-responses in each case.

In the CW I have numbered the pages of each chapter in a method that is a small homage to both Cantor's work and Borges'. Each page is numbered as the page count so far in the work over the page number at the end of the current chapter. This serves two purposes: first, it allows the reader some idea of the size of the chapter and therefore may factor that into the decision as to how to read that chapter. Second, it amuses me to see those numbers as a way of enumerating the infinite, using the page numbers as analogues of fractions that might be used to uniquely identify each story number following Cantor's diagonal operation in relation to countable infinite sets.

My use of external feedback during the development of the novel was very limited.

With my supervisors qualified in other fields, and as the first PhD student in this field with no PhD candidate cohort to resort to, there was no easy way to get sufficiently informed long term peer feedback. Whilst I did attempt to get some

feedback from each of two writing groups I am a member of, I found the experience of very limited help.

In part this was because the groups were concerned more with support for each other than criticism of any depth. I found this support good but of little benefit in terms of cogent feedback. Members and critique preparation time and commitment is limited, with rare exceptions, and the focus as mostly on each member's own writing.

I have also found that my creative process is strongly affected by the revelation to others of the work as I am producing it. My creative urge to produce the work tends to dissipate as soon as it is expressed verbally. Thus if I discuss future aspects of the work, or drafts of already produced work, the essence seems to become set at that point. It also removes from me the enjoyment of the creative process with its intense solitary invention.

Finally, the nature of this particular CW is such that feedback on any particular part of the work could be useful only as to the quality of writing. Until the whole had been produced, the parts cannot be seen in context.

Conclusion

The CW brings together research and reflection on delusion, on self and memory, and on neurology to create an experimental type of narrative that explores, in both theme and in physical form, the concept of simultaneous multiple narratives rehearsed within us, none of which represents more than an interpretation of reality. It provides insights into the inevitable relationship of compromise that these multiple stories and our appreciation of what we perceive to be reality creates.

If there Is not one self, if there are several unconscious streams, surely we are an amalgam of these; we are all in a sense Mary Shelley's Frankenstein's monster.

But what if behind and forming each of these selves is a near infinite array of imperfect pattern connections networking? They can and do serve us up stories or story bits all the time if stories are our only method of understanding of facts, data points joined by our best guesses of facts, narratives that lead to a conclusion so that we can predict what may happen next, a necessary function for survival.

Perhaps there is nobody, no homunculus behind our eyes with an infinite number of others behind directing him. Perhaps there are only tiny bits of story joined into larger and larger chains of story and such a scoring system. Our individual neurons and perhaps other cells join together two or more data points in the tiniest piece of consciousness that can exist, a cause and effect story between two datum, forming a story bit that is then thrown into a vast network. All our experiences and ways of joining them perhaps exist in that contemporaneously; every station and route exists and runs, every carriage is full of chattering people swapping stories, all the time in that underground that is our brain.

Seen this way our consciousness is simply the result of a filtering process in the brain, something which constantly selects between a possibly enormous number of competing narratives that seem most likely, in order to produce the best-guessed at facts, filtering the others if not out of reach, somewhere just at the threshold of self. If we did not have access to such different story-fillers, then we could never fill in the gaps between the facts as we see them in order to make the story that enables us to predict. Our reality is not as we perceive it. Our memories are not as we perceived them at the time first formed and indeed are destroyed and inaccurately recreated every time we access them. When we do not have enough information to form the 'true' story of an event that has happened, is happening, or will happen, we speculate and make a number of stories up and we then select consciously or unconsciously somehow what something in us suggests is the most likely of them. We can interrogate the navigation system to see what may be ahead and then through this imaging of the future choose what our actions should be. We re-direct our lives to avoid, or to avoid repeating, bad endings. As we travel, though, the scoring of each story bit continues and the memory of what the journey is that is being experienced or was as we remember it, is the filtered out result of this process. Based on

connection to emotionally charged, temporarily close, consistent in memory of sensory data (imperfect though all that is), perhaps it gives a score to some carriages and routes and stations that mean these are the ones we are allowed access to by that satellite navigation god, and that is the narrative-experiencer that we call self.

If that filter is damaged or scrambled in any way, then it will serve up a narrative based on some slightly different system. If this is through sleep, we call it dream. If this is through injury or disease we call this a physical or mental illness - perhaps it really is the case that our choosing system loses its way. Our minds somehow choose which of the stories best fits at any one time. And perhaps if it is consciously supressed, we can give ourselves access to those other stories in imaginings.

If my speculation on the consciousness being created from stories has any validity, it really would be a need for story in the absolute sense. The true essence of the smallest thought would be a tiny story and all our thinking must be done in that way.

Whether this speculation is correct or not in some ways does not affect whether there are multiple simultaneous narratives – just the mechanism of how they are built and their scale. If there are unconscious selves, who or what is it that really invents these stories? What does it mean to say that there are unconscious selves, Jung's myths and archetypes, conscience, dreams, imagination, and delusions? But no matter how simple or complex, each by definition must have its own narrative of our lives and it must differ from the narrative of any other self.

Regardless of where these multiple selves and their narratives come from, none of this is to say that the stories within us are immutable or deterministic. Quite the reverse. Rather, I look at what happens from this starting point. Those little stories made from tiny bits can change, be sampled and mixed in a huge soup of change. And some sort of discrete unconscious self is not alone and must inevitably be influencing in a form of argument or compromise the discourse that ends up as our consciousness.

This frees the absolute of 'story' from its inherently repressive ideology and moves toward the mobilisation of story as a fractured and multiplied reality.

In my speculation other complex narratives might exist within us but we find them hard to access for our conscious selves except in dreams or fevers or in difficult to construct imaginings. Perhaps it is that which distinguishes them from our conscious narrative because there has to be a way of preserving that distinction. Writers and other artists let us access other stories that internal choosing system does not give us. Such creators loosen their scoring system just enough to allow these other stories through to their consciousness and then use conscious manipulation to create realistic alternate worlds and event-lines. The viewers and readers of such works are able to get the benefit of the joys of an imagining to them without the work of fighting their scoring system.

If we consciously suppress it a little so that we can pick up some of these other narratives, it might be called creativity. Perhaps it is because our scoring system is just as unknowing as our conscious selves – if we do not know there is a world outside a dark prison and we hear noises from an invisible source, then we will hear Gods. As Shakespeare had Duke Theseus in *A midsummernight's dream* say it:

> The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact

and

> Lovers and madmen have such seething dreams
> Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.

 (Shakespeare, 1992)

If one takes the point of view (putting aside any personal religious views one might hold) that we are unable to perceive anything except in terms of story and that that is in fact our consciousness – that we take become incoming data and narrate a story by referring to things that we recognise and inventing the things that we do not – then religion can be seen in terms of our attempt at explaining what we do not know cumulatively developed over hundreds of thousands of years. Some of these stories have become codified into rules of behaviour for society and are taught and therefore are acted upon as though true in some cases. To teach, we have proverbial tales and they are able to be remembered

and repeated because they are story with plot and are easy to pass from one generation to another. We might think that religion exists in order to explain why we are here and on earth at all and what happens when we die and these questions are perfectly valid. But they are only, I think, a subset of the stories that we come up with in a religion. The closest analogy to this in the secular world are conspiracy theories. A large percentage of people are prepared to believe all sorts of conspiracy theories to explain not only what they don't know but what they choose to put together and the stories that they want to believe.

As research into consciousness continues in the scientific community it will be interesting to see how that can be used to create new works in creative writing and how practically they can best model new findings.

In terms of implications for the future of my practice I cannot see how I can take the particular concept of presenting multiple simultaneous narratives further without the use of hypertext computer models of parallel stories. The page layout required to create multiple simultaneous narratives on paper are difficult. Four layers might be possible but any more makes the information contained on any one page minimal. To ask a reader to deal with more than even three layers is almost certainly a step too far. While the ergodic texts and games that exist now suggest that using hypertext is more likely to lead to a choice of narratives for the particular reader within a particular time, I can see ways in which it could be used to do so to a better appreciation of simultaneous narratives and any other models of consciousness and would be more flexible in that regard than the use of paper.

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