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# Encounters and Directions in Research

## Pages From a Simulacrum Journal

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This article is a companion piece to a presentation given at the 19th Annual Conference on Interdisciplinary Studies 2006 (University of Georgia), at which I read extracts from my simulacrum reflective journal—performing a narrative about narrative research. Narratives of research, like all narratives, are a means by which we impose order on a chaotic world. But narratives also function to subvert that order, to undermine the commonplace and the canonical. It is the appearance of the unexpected from which the narrative emerges. The journal facilitates this process of narrative construction, enabling a creative exploration of concepts and ideas, functioning at both a content level and supporting “writing as a method of inquiry.” The article illustrates this, its purpose to subvert, but extend, understandings about the processes involved in doing “being a researcher.”

**Keywords:** *narrative; professional identity; discourse; story; intertextuality; writing as a method of inquiry; simulacrum; reflective journal*

This article is a companion piece to a presentation given at the 19th Annual Conference on Interdisciplinary Qualitative Studies 2006 “Quig” (University of Georgia). In that presentation (or perhaps performance, in which I did “being a social researcher at an international conference”), I read extracts from my simulacrum reflective journal—a narrative about narrative research.

Starting out as a means to focus on the subjective experience of doing research, as the work developed, the journal became a resource for thinking and paradoxically perhaps, a realization of the processes of doing, writing, and performing research rather than just a reflection on it.

The notion of writing as a “field of play” (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 969), a form of inquiry that blurs the boundary between data and analysis, became an important legitimizing principle for the project in which

I was engaged. In effect, the act of writing the journal became a research methodology in its own right, a research tool for doing “writing as a method of inquiry.” Among the many surprises that this methodology furnished was the way in which it enabled the significance of the apparently insignificant to emerge and the decompartmentalization that it encouraged, both facets of what I came to think of as a kind of lived intertextuality, productive of a social and cultural matrix and capable of joining the dots between our different selves.

It was largely inspired by attendance at the First International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry held at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana (QI2005), this proving to be a very significant encounter.

## May 26, 2005

### “The conference” (QI2005)

All these famous people have walked off the pages of the *Handbook* [Denzin & Lincoln, 2005]. It’s like the book has come alive:

Norman in his shorts and flipflops.

Patti Lather and Betty St Pierre double act (Patti and Betti as I like to think of them)

Holstein and Gubrium (they go together like—horse and carriage).

Yvonna Lincoln (ain’t she sweet)

And me . . . neophyte, drinking it all in.

I attended workshops by Carolyn Ellis/Art Bochner on Autoethnography and Experimental Writing by Yvonna Lincoln (can’t you tell?). I am telling anybody who wants to hear (and many who don’t) that Yvonna made me stand up and read my “poem” to the class.

As I worked on this idea I turned aside from my original interest in the development of teachers’ identities and started to focus on my own professional identity—not just (I hope) from some deep seated narcissistic impulse—but also a recognition that, as I wrote in the journal,

It was always presumptuous of me to want to look at other people. Poor saps, I would say, subjected within their discourses. While me, I’m free . . . How invisibly we are hailed—the siren call.

So my narrative was to provide “a window to the contradictory and shifting nature of hegemonic discourses” in which I was immersed (Chase, 2005,

p. 659). And because it was now to focus on me, it took an autoethnographic turn, and because I was to present something about this new direction in my research, it became performance autoethnography. The presentation at Quig then was a personal narrative about a bigger narrative in which I moved from “insular engagement of personal reflection to a complex process that implicates the performative nature of cultural identity” (Alexander, 2005, p. 423)—or in other words, research as stand-up. So at one level, the journal entries are broadly related to narratives, identities, and discourses (as this is still my area of research interest), whereas at another level, it is a means for exploring these themes. It both represents and is about the narrative construction of identities. The presentation worked these levels together to create an exploration of self in relation to research but aimed to connect through the explicit, implicit, and complicit use of intertextuality as an inherent feature of the self, any self, as text.

For the presentation, I read extracts from my simulacrum research journal about the significant encounters I claimed had shaped my research. A tastefully bound work, hardback, with gold lettering, and little gold-tooled figure on the front of a Thunderer. The Thunderer had become emblematic for me, providing a beginning for my writing and prompting me to examine my underlying philosophical beliefs—at least that’s how I story it now: a serendipitous encounter at the start of my doctoral studies that sparked an exploration of my understandings and beliefs about research (see Watson, 2005). But I have to question now, Was it ever anything but a literary device?

**October 10, 2003**

**Salem, Massachusetts**

A town given over almost entirely to the macabre and kitsch, with the exception of the wonderful Peabody Essex Museum.

Much struck by a deerskin pouch embroidered with “Thunderers” by a Chippewa-Ojibwa artist 18th or 19th century.

The caption reads:

Thunderers.

Supernatural beings that fly through the sky hidden by dark clouds. Thunderers are extremely powerful. Thunder booms from their flapping wings and when they blink lightning shoots from their eyes.



It was a strange experience. The pouch was a conduit through which I glimpsed a world in which Thunderers exist. What view of reality would you have to have for Thunderers to be part of it (and how would you even come to know of them if you can't see them?).

Insight: Knowledge is incommensurable, hence relative.

This has important implications for my research. I think I've just accepted things, "reality," uncritically—need to examine what my beliefs about knowledge etc are before I embark on this whole research thing . . .

But the journal isn't just a work, it is a text—and hence permeated and permeable, part of an infinitely intertextual network of language. Signifiers referring endlessly to other signifiers in that hugely, if not parasitic, then at least commensal Other world of language. As Roland Barthes (1981) says, all texts are intertextual, each "a new tissue of past citations" (p. 39). To represent this (a strange word to use perhaps in relation to a simulacrum), I included what I eventually decided to call *hyphaetexts*—threads that carried the connections out of the work and into the infinite and back again. A conflation of Gerard Genette's (1997a) typology of transtextualities, which "set the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed with other texts" (p. 1) and Roland Barthes (1981, p. 39) "hyphology" (the theory of the text). The *hyphaetexts* are asides to draw attention to the permeability of the text and to parody the use of citation as a key intertextual device in the genre of the research paper. For example:

*"Allow your public to feel intelligent. Provide references they can easily understand but are challenging. Build spelling mistakes and grammatical errors into your texts."*

*Strategies for aspiring artists, Number 12. From "Mission Statement" (Peter Robinson, Christchurch Art Gallery, New Zealand).*

*Hyphaetext, type: art installation.*

One of the advantages of a simulacrum journal is that it enables me to flag up the significant and serendipitous events that have shaped my research much

more effectively. Actually, this isn't a particularly strange or original idea. It makes use of an accepted, though necessarily concealed, characteristic—the tendency for all journals to be simulacra, more or less. To illustrate this, on the day James Boswell first met Samuel Johnson (May 16, 1763), he writes in his *London Journal*:

Upon my word I am very fortunate, I shall cultivate this acquaintance.  
(Boswell, 1952, p. 261)

Knowing the ending of this narrative, we are struck by the prescience of this remark. Of course, it is all artifice—its impact depends on our belief in “the moment of writing” as coinciding with the date given, but there is no reason why this should be so. A journal pretends to be a linear accretion of experience with time, but the text isn't fixed, it gets rewritten, significance is attached later, extra bits can get inserted, or deleted—just like real life, a palimpsest in which narrative time subverts chronological time.

One of the inspirations for the journal came from a conference I attended fairly recently. The entry for the April 9, 2005 says:

### **April 9, 2005**

Attended conference in Huddersfield on Narrative and Memory. Very interesting presentation by Helen Dampier and Liz Stanley (2005), on the Diaries of Johanna Brandt Van Warmelo, a volunteer worker in a concentration camp in South Africa, 1899-1902, subtitled ‘the moment of writing’. In Brandt van Warmelo's case this moment was several years after the daily events she purports to be writing about—an interesting idea . . .

Simulation, as Baudrillard (1994) says, stands in opposition to representation. Representation rests on the metonymic exchange of meaning via signs, one thing for another. Simulation, on the other hand, implies “negation of the sign as value,” something “never exchanged for the real but exchanged for itself in an uninterrupted circuit.” In other words, a simulation is something that conceals the fact that there is no real.

### **May 9, 2005**

#### **After QI2005—Doing “being a tourist”**

Sears Tower: “a perfect model of the all the entangled orders of simulacra.” (Baudrillard, 1994)



Going up the Sears tower is like a Disney version of getting into the USA. You join a line, you go through security, you have your picture taken, you queue again, you get funnelled and processed. Finally you go up. Getting out is much easier—you are more or less ignominiously expelled (but at least you get the chance to buy your photo).

It seemed to me that writing a simulacrum reflective journal was an apposite way to reflect on research—for if a journal is an artful form that conceals the narrative it is constructing, then research too is an artful form that conceals the fact that there is no equivalence between the real and its representation. In the end, we are left with the realization of the impossibility—like narrative—of research. But again, like narrative, research “loses nothing by this claim that it is impossible” (McQuillan, 2000, p. 15). As narrative, research is desire for the Other in language—a desire that can never be satisfied and that therefore is interminable.

The journal, then, purports to be about resources for inspiration and the appropriation of the unexpected into research—encounters and directions—the role of chance events and serendipity in research. *Serendipity* has been defined as “the art of finding what we are not looking for by looking for what we are not finding” (Queau, quoted in Dias de Figuiereido & Campos, 2001). The emergence of the unexpected, “l’avenir,” the unpredictable coming of the Other, as Derrida (2002) puts it. Fine and Deegan (1998) suggest that serendipity depends on “the readiness to seize upon chance events” and further that the inductive nature of qualitative research provides potentially fertile ground within which this can occur. This evokes Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) rhizome as the line of flight, metaphoric of the exploratory wanderings in which the researcher engages. (A metaphor that, like all metaphors perhaps, gives us rather more, and less, than we bargained for.)

## July 29, 2005

As a former botanist I wonder if Deleuze and Guattari have thought about all the angles. Imagine the scene . . .

Line of Flight 1. Rhizomatous wanderings

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari are doing a spot of gardening. Felix is having problems with a troublesome weed.

Felix: Hey Gilles—this plant is spreading everywhere, it’s getting out of control.

Gilles: Yes, Felix. It’s *Equisetum*, it has an underground rhizome by which it spreads vegetatively. Vegetative propagation enables rapid colonization of an area with genetically identical plants.

Felix: Hmm. A rhizome, eh. That gives me an idea. Something that is intrinsically stumbling in the dark, responding only to external stimuli, suppressing other plants, reproducing itself without variation and producing nothing new . . .



(It is a hot day and Felix ponders this in the shade of a spreading chestnut tree in whose branches a multitude of bees is busy gathering nectar and pollinating flowers producing an infinity of variation for the next generation—not to mention honey).

So a different metaphor might have been born.  
And who now remembers the, at one time,

*“indispensable Italian Wedding Fake Book, by Deleuze & Guattari, which Gelsomina, the bride, to protect her wedding from such possible unlucky omens as blood on the wedding cake, had the presence of mind to slip indoors and bring back out. . . .”*

*(Vineland, Thomas Pynchon, 1990, p. 97).*

*(Hyphaetext, type: literary. These chance encounters induce delight and serve to connect different locations of the self.)*

But serendipity, like the narratives we piece together about our lives, is often something that is constructed in reverse, part of a story we retrospectively create about our research. Narratives of research, like all narratives, are a means by which we impose order on a chaotic world. But narratives also function to subvert that order, to undermine the commonplace and the canonical. Narratives emerge when an unexpected element appears—narrative is thus suspended between the expected and the unexpected that constantly threatens to undermine it (a recurrent theme in the journal). Serendipity is thus an integral aspect of narrative, and hence research, rather than external to it.

## August 2004

### Essex University summer school on Discourse and Narrative Theory. Encounter with Juan Pablo Lichtmajer

In a Chinese restaurant in Brightlingsea (the Chinese restaurant in Brightlingsea—for anyone who doesn't know Brightlingsea it is a time warp (not back in time, but time strangely warped) on the Essex coast. Almost an island, where shaven-headed whelk-eating Essex man rules and the pubs still close in the afternoon. Not a place to pass through unless you were a veal calf in the 1990s. Anyway, in the Chinese restaurant in Brightlingsea I am given a fortune cookie.

It reads—unfortunately, it has become indistinct and blurry—it reads something like, “You will meet someone who will be advantageous for your career.”

This is Sunday night—the night before the Essex Summer school starts. The next day, in introducing ourselves, I produce my fortune cookie and read it to this rarified group of fearsomely intellectual, mostly foreign and

all several decades younger than me students (one of whom has a t-shirt with the words ‘empty signifier’ on it) and wonder if I have indeed met someone who will be advantageous for my career.

Juan Pablo Lichtmajer says:

“Narrative is a pendular tension between the expected and the unexpected.”

Ochs and Capps (2001, p.17) describe this suspension as the constant pull the narrator feels between the desire for stability and desire for authenticity in narratives of personal experience. On the one hand, narrators search for a stable and settled rendering of past events, but this is undermined by a re-rendering in the present. The illusion of continuity, the metonymic exchange of a point-like present for a stable, narrated past, as McQuillan (2000) puts it, starts to unravel as a result of this rewriting of the past in the present. This reflexive, doubling back on itself of narrative time, troubles the distinction between the story (fabula, what is told) and the discourse (used in the sense here of the *sjuzhet*, the telling), the bedrock of structuralist narrative theory.

## April 29, 2004

*“What is a narrative? How does one know when one has done one?”*  
(Fenstermacher, 1997, p. 120).

Gary Fenstermacher (1997) tells a story of how he once wrote a narrative and being quite pleased with it he showed it to some colleagues. The first said it was too analytical to be a narrative, the second that it was too autobiographical, the third that, though bits of it was a narrative, not all of it was. In a way one would rather the third had said that it was ‘just right’, which just goes to show that life doesn’t always imitate art—even in a story.  
(Hyphaetext, type: intertextual reference, fairy tale.)

Forster (1927/1962), in a widely quoted passage from *Aspects of the Novel* (p. 93) says that “the king died and then the queen died” is not a narrative, whereas, “the king died and then the queen died of grief” is. McQuillan (2000, p. 12) on the other hand says that “pass me the salt” can be a narrative.

*Everybody Loves Raymond, U.S. sitcom. Episode #0412 “Tasteless Frank”*  
*Frank: pass the salt*

*[Marie picks up his plate and throws it in the bin]*

*Frank: the list of things I’m allowed to say is getting shorter.*

*(Hyphaetext, type: popular culture)*

Forster’s definition relies on a strict demarcation of story and discourse—the told and the telling, a cause and then an effect. McQuillan deconstructs this binary, arguing that what he refers to as the narrative-mark (roughly

speaking the story) only has meaning within the narrative-context (again, roughly the discourse) and goes on

to distinguish between the narrative-mark and the narrative-context is not to re-appropriate a dualistic model of language. Rather it is to insist upon the aporetic relationship between them and to demonstrate how one [quoting Derrida] “installs the haunting of the one in the other.”

In other words, the rewriting of personal narrative occurs within the context of the narrative matrix, which is itself structured like a narrative. The distinction becomes unresolvable.

The simulacrum journal is a device that realizes these aspects of personal narrative construction, revealing aporias that undermine the story/discourse distinction, dissolving the link between narrative and chronological ordering, and blurring the boundary between an event and its narration. The journal is subject to endless tampering. In some cases, the narrative appears to have been rewritten to give prominence to the chance event, as some of the entries shown earlier might suggest. Or an effect seems retroactively to bring to mind the cause, producing a sequence of cause and effect which is, as Culler (2001, p. 214) says, a product of discursive forces which we then treat as the “true order.”

**May 5, 2005**

**QI2005**

**The First International Congress on Qualitative Inquiry  
University of Illinois, Champaign Urbana.**

Have opted for the workshop on experimental writing with Yvonna Lincoln. Yvonna is soft spoken and mothering. She envelops us in her rather teacherly way. We are set the task of doing some experimental writing. I remember a poem-like story of Derek (one of my interviewees). Etched as his words are on my memory I get it down more or less pat and then wait for a chance to speak to Yvonna. I am not quick enough though and keep missing my opportunity. Eventually, I go up and ask if I can ‘bagsy’ her next (does this mean anything in American I wonder?)—noting also how when positioned as a pupil you “do” being a pupil. Eventually I get my chance—she is so sweet and enthusiastic, suggests I look for other stanzas in the data. At the plenary a few people volunteer to read their writing. And then, right at the end Yvonna speaks my name, calls on me to read what she refers to as my poem (funny, I’d always thought of it as Derek’s) I stand up, go to the front of the class and read . . .

A boy at the door—  
 the one I was telling you about  
 was involved with this attempted murder—  
*and* he's a bit of a **hard nut** y'know  
 and he's at the **door**  
 blethering to someone else  
 and not going into the **classroom**  
 and blocking the **room**  
 and I **do** things that I'm not supposed to,  
 and I said "Sit down or I'll kiss you"  
 You've never seen a pupil head for his seat  
 it was funny, y'know

Note added 23rd June 2005.

I have, at Yvonna's suggestion, looked for more stanzas in the data, and in fact have written up a lot of the interview in this form (still working on this). But, also I have finally finished the paper on the interview with Derek I started writing last year. Kept getting stuck. This time it seemed to work—talking to Yvonna must have done the trick.

The entry suggests that I have retrospectively attributed a cause to the effect of having written the paper, rearranging the order—paper written, remember Yvonna's advice—to Yvonna's advice (cause), paper written (effect).

The journal offers, it is tempting to say infinite, but that might be overstating the case, a number of possible narratives. The journal as a resource can be endlessly rewritten. It is this very narration (and renarration) of events that troubles the story/discourse distinction—there is no "basically basic story" (Smith, 1981, p. 217) that can be narrativized. Instead, each telling is a different narrative. The journal resists a stable rendering of events. So, for example, the question of beginnings is kept open. As Said (1975) said, a beginning is something that is established after the event.

## August 2005

### Beginnings

It is tempting, as Tristram Shandy<sup>1</sup> does to go back to a time before conception to look for a beginning. To search for the roots of an idea, a stable beginning, a foundation—metaphors of certainty to ground not just my research but who I am. In looking back this attempt at "grounding" in the sense of establishing an identity for myself is very evident. As a teacher I grounded my identity (or so I claim) in two creation stories and say the motivation for the

research into teacher identities stemmed from a desire to ask, “How was it for you?” to connect with other teachers—“Hey, this is who I am, who are you?.” Searching for an *understanding* of identity for myself (not enough just to have one), I put together a proposal to re-search the identity of others. Perhaps what I really wanted to ask was “Hey this is who you are—who am I?”

Possible beginnings:

It all started while I was still a teacher. I was aware that I had grounded my identity in two potent creation myths . . .

It all begins conventionally enough, I’d been in my job in teacher education for about 6 months when we merged with the University. This changed my perspective and I began to take an interest in research . . .

It all started with a chance encounter with a Thunderer . . .

After QI2005 I found I couldn’t switch off doing ‘being a researcher’. It took me in a whole new direction . . .

## May 2005

### QI2005

#### Doing “Being an ethnographer in Chicago” on Mother’s Day, the day after the conference ended.

Dinner in Pizzeria Due (Pizzeria Uno was full). A loud-mouthed group of young men are “doing being masculine” at the bar while a girlie group on a night out are sitting at a table a little way away. I am in a kind of half-way position—seated at a small high table away from the main eating area and slightly removed from the bar. Slightly conspicuous also, but affording an excellent viewing platform for both groups. (I am doing “single traveller” with a copy of the Lonely Planet Guide on view on the table top, legitimising my presence as a lone female on a Saturday night in a bar/restaurant).

Eventually one of the males comes across (to check me out I suppose) and introduces himself and apologises for his colleagues’ language (though his was no different). I do ‘polite but a. definitely not interested and b. not a threat to the social order’ so all is well. He kisses my hand and returns to the bar.

After dinner I go along to Andy’s Jazz Club prepared to do “single female in a Jazz place having a beer—you got a problem with that?”—but actually, Andy’s is pretty tame stuff – smooth and peopled by couples (and their mothers??)

The significance of this last observation escapes me for the moment and I retire to my hotel directly across the street, falling into a deep sleep and being awoken at 6 am by the telephone (it is after midday in the UK).

But of course, I should have realised.,.

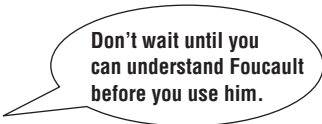
Being in Chicago on Mother's Day ("Mothering Sunday" we call it in the UK—or should that be (after Lacan) mOthering Sunday?). You can't escape it. All week the shop windows have been parading it, Mothers' week even. But today is the big day. Chicagoans are "doing" motherhood writ large. From the masses taking part in the Breast Cancer Awareness walk (like a simulacrum of a movie set) to the hotel chambermaid and wait staff who wish you "Happy Mother's Day." I answer them all, "Thank you, but I'm not a mother. Are you?" "I have six, ma'am" says the chambermaid in the lift. "Six," I say, "That must be a handful" (did that come out at all patronising? Me doing white, middle-class Brit or maybe I think I'm the Queen). But the newspapers are where it's really at. The Chicago Tribune [08 May 2005] is constructing motherhood like mad. From the supplements on motherhood and how it unites across "age, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, geography or employment status" (Study debunks "mommy wars"), to the article on prom sweethearts who are still together after all these years (and then the one on weak pelvic floors—motherhood as sacrifice). This is not just construction of motherhood, it is construction of America.

In a sense, all beginnings are in medias res. And throughout the research process, there have been moments of dislocation, each bringing about a new beginning.

On the other hand, narrative tellings can become objects of discourse or events in their own right, influencing further narration. Narration itself an event. The journal presents several creation myths, identities, taken on and now discarded (disputed even—alternative tellings creating aporias in the narrative, troubling the story/discourse distinction, retrospectively uncoupling a previously assigned cause and effect) and a new one, still in the making about my developing identity as a researcher.

New creation myth . . .

“. . . as my teaching career receded further my identity changed. But by this time I was ready for it—waiting to be interpellated into the managerialist discourse of the University in the time of the RAE<sup>2</sup> (I had, of course, become familiar with the work of Althusser<sup>3</sup>). I became aware that I was being taken over, consumed, subject to internal surveillance, the most powerful kind of panoptic vigilance, that nonetheless was increasing my usefulness, my productivity, my own power (I had of course, become familiar with the work of Foucault).



**Don't wait until you  
can understand Foucault  
before you use him.**

*(Elizabeth St Pierre, panel session, Q12005)  
(Hyphaetext, type: personal communication)*

*Notes from an encyclopedia: Foucault's Panotechnicon*

Jeremy Bentham's idea of the panopticon was famously taken up by Foucault in 'Discipline and Punish' (Foucault, 1991). Encouraged by the reception of his ideas concerning panopticons, Foucault attempted to repeat his success with the concept of the Panotechnicon—a refinement of the basic idea that incorporated an element of mobility. However, it was not well received and soon fell into obscurity. Foucault was stung by the cutting remarks of some of the French critics (one remarked, "c'est une idée complètement fou"—a setback from which he never fully recovered).



*(Hyphaetext, type: fictitious)*

My goals became the goals of the university—to do research, write papers, present at conferences—even while I saw in the larger scale of things that these goals were part of the game, and not even a very serious game at that—that is to say, that at the same time as rejecting the managerialist discourse as not what education/scholarship/learning should be about (clinging to a vestige of humanist thought perhaps), I nonetheless immersed myself within it and sacrificed myself to it. Identifying with the subject position of lecturer as constituted within the discourse (and so turning away from an interest in identity-as-teacher to identity-as-researcher) while at the same time retaining a sense of resistance to it as 'Other' to this excluding, masculine discourse, (I had become familiar with Luce Irigaray) . . .

May 12

## Luce Irigaray

Attend a lecture by Luce Irigaray, “The path towards the other” (‘ze uzzerrr.’ Her accent is all but impenetrable and she reads softly, peering intently at the pages. She is though captivating. When she has finished she toys with us—claims she cannot understand our questions, makes us nervous and flustered. Afterwards though, as I run around getting her glasses of wine that make her pull a face, and she signs books, she engages me. Tells me mine was the only question she understood. Smiles her charming, gallic smile. I select a book for her to sign, *To Speak Is Never Neutral* [Irigaray, 2002]. She pulls another face, Why this one? It is so scientific. Why not this one—it is about love (‘lurve’). She signs the book: *for Cate* To speak is never neutral *hoping that in these texts she will find something for her life.* (Hyphaetext, type: personal connection)

*Notes for “The paratext and the research paper.”*

*Irigaray incorporates the title into the inscription thereby personalising not just the copy but the text too. What Irigaray writes is decidedly not neutral drawing the inscriber in to the text and imbuing the title with a deeper significance, “For, Cate, To speak is never neutral.” The wording is modest but the gift of inscription creates a debt. As Genette (1997b, p.141) says “one of the presuppositions of the inscription is that the author expects, in exchange for the gratification, a reading.”*

*(Hyphaetext, type: in preparation/aspiration)*

But I digress. I cast myself as protagonist within a narrative of research conceived as a emerging from the pendular tension between the expected and the unexpected in which my nemesis was . . . but that would be telling.

If identity is constructed through narrative, then intertextuality, the condition of our being in language, teaches us how to narrate, how to locate and think of ourselves within the cultural array (Scheurich, 1997). All texts are intertextual, each “a new tissue of past citations” (Barthes 1981, p.39). He goes on:

Epistemologically, the concept of intertext is what brings to the theory of the text the volume of sociality: the whole of language, anterior or contemporary, comes to the text, not following the path of a discoverable filiation or a willed



imitation, but that of a dissemination—an image which makes sure the text has the status not of reproduction but of a productivity.

This universalist version of intertextuality (Moraru, 2005) sees it as an inherent feature of language, a result of our colonialisation by that, if not parasitic, then at least commensal, Other. We are constituted by the innumerable fragments—sentences, words, phonemes, letters that inhabit us. This intertextuality is represented in the journal by the use of hyphaetexts, which enmesh us in the cultural array. Such links are many and various and often appear to be completely unremarkable, trivial heteroglossia. They come from numerous sources. A rather desperate sounding journal entry was jotted on waking in the middle of the night.

## September 2005

### Life as intertextuality

Writing—the act of writing—highlights the intertextual nature of subjective experience. As I write references, allusions, echoes come unbidden.

I write about beginnings, about being caught up in an infinite reflexive vortex of beginnings ‘shtop’ I say to myself (in imitation of the Grolsch advert<sup>4</sup>) while at the same time an image from Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* appears in my mind.

This is the best/worst idea ever—where did that “e-verrrr” said in my head in that American accent come from? A puzzle until the picture materialises alongside and I remember it is from an episode of “Arthur.”<sup>5</sup>

I have to say “simulcrum” and not “simulacrum” because I hear Liz Stanley saying it in my head whenever I use it.

I have to say “ze uzzerr” instead of “the other” because I have attended a lecture by Luce Irigaray . . .

And so it goes on—am I in there at all?

The intertextual sources are from everywhere—art, TV, film, people, books, adverts, newspapers—at first I separate them out from the serious business of my research but they are insistent and in the end I have to acknowledge them . . .

These fragments of the Other’s language form the basis of our narration. They connect us to the Other in language. This cultural intertextuality is related to “identity” or perhaps better, the process of “identification

with.” Derrida (1998) captures something of the contingent and fleeting, insubstantial nature of identity when he says, “identity is never given, received or attained. Only the interminable and indefinitely phantasmatic process of identification endures” (p. 28). Narrativisation is the means by which we identify and through which we are interpellated (Watson, 2006). It feels transparent precisely because we experience it as a personal process.

## August 9, 2005

As so often happens nowadays I find I am not a free-thinking individual at all but have merely been interpellated into the prevailing discourse. Now in my late forties I had become rather self-congratulatory—feeling comfortable in my skin, fitter than I have ever been and still interested in sex (even with my husband). However, it emerges that far from being unusual I am just part of a trend.

According to a survey of women in their “fifth decade” undertaken by Health Magazine (reported in the *Independent* 07/09/05, p.35) 82% say sex is as important to them as it was in their twenties; 67% say that the best sex they’ve had is with their husband; and 67% feel more confident about their bodies.

How does this happen? Why the transparency? Why do I feel I am a free agent rather than being hailed by an ideology. A form of social control? Like yourself, an opiate for the over forties (‘Everybody’s happy nowadays’ Huxley, 1932/2004).

The process of identification with is one of specular recognition—desire. In Lacanian terms, desire is cast in language, as the result of our colonialization by the mOther tongue (Fink, 1995). So our narratives are the narratives of the discourses in which we live—we can express them in no other way. But to desire is to lack, so there is always a gap between us and the thing we identify with. Perhaps this is why interpellation can never succeed completely.

Fictional account

[Date/place anonymised]

Attend training for PhD supervisors.

We are here to hear about the new PhD programme which focuses on skills development (used synonymously with personal development). We have to use a form (which is “a structured way to get to know your student

better”) so that we can break down the student’s needs and then focus on those needs by developing their skills (anyone else feel a bit of Foucault coming on here?)

We are shown a powerpoint slide:

“Is generic skills training mandatory?”

YES

So, personal development is “doing training.”

At some point the presenter goes off into a reverie in which he talks about teaching students to be ‘photo readers’—this seemed to be about being able to photographically capture a page of text—he even talks about both eyes doing it simultaneously with different pages. Cyborg students . . . .

Feel deeply depressed—especially as this is what he refers to as “the inspiring bit.”

The presenter looks around, fixes us with his penetrating gaze. He clearly casts us in a deficit role. “Some people say they are already doing this. That’s great.” (But he doesn’t sound convinced). “Now the rest of you need to come up to this level.”

Then we get into the real managerialist speak. The PhD is a project. It starts with the end in mind. It gets broken down into steps. There is calm, rational planning . . . .

We are told this is an evidence-based approach. He wants evidence. There must be evidence, there must be . . . an audit trail. (Anyone else feel some more Foucault coming on?)

And so it goes on.

The journal, dangerously, encourages this participant observation as subversion, recognizing that the simultaneous discourses we inhabit can be in conflict, introducing the possibility for resistance to the hegemonic discourse.

## October 1, 2005

One day, awaking from uneasy dreams, I realised that I had been transformed into some kind of sociologist. First, I started to wear jeans to work (occasionally), smart, black jeans displacing little by little the neat tailored suits that constituted the departmental uniform. Then I bought a leather jacket (experiencing, admittedly, some conflict with a previous identity as a vegetarian, but it was secondhand from a charity shop for the homeless). Today, as I was walking into work I looked down and I suddenly realised that I was wearing my leather jacket and—a pair of cords. The transformation was complete.

## Concluding Remarks

The device of the simulacrum journal has enabled me to explore my narratives and my identification with the research process and to arrive at an understanding of how these are enmeshed in a cultural matrix that I have referred to as a kind of lived intertextuality, conceived of in a universal sense. In the more limited sense, this article draws reflexively on the simulacrum journal as an intertext—intertextuality does, indeed, seem inescapable.

The journal is then both about the narrative construction of identities—my identity as a researcher—and represents the process by which identity is narratively constructed. It foregrounds the interpellatory processes by which this occurs and the intertextual matrix within which it occurs. It highlights the conflicts of this process and its ambiguities. But it also illustrates research as search, or quest, an underlying theme of all Western literature. A picaresque process, peopled with the fabulous characters met along the way.

Intertextuality, as a condition of any text whatever (where did I get that phrase from?), cedes control of the reading from the author to the reader. As Barthes (1977) writes,

a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (p. 146)

Research papers are an interesting case in which the author sets out to impose a reading using a very explicit kind of intertextuality (citation) to create authority. An authority that is enhanced by the standard paratextual features (Genette, 1997b) of the research paper—abstract, keywords, references, and so forth. The aim is to create an implied author who is indeed authoritative. A reliable author cum narrator. But this is undermined by the reader who is at liberty to impose their own meanings, bring to the reading their own references, allusions, echoes, and so forth. This is another manifestation of the, in the end, impossibility of representation, the “semantic vibration” inherent in the text resists it. The journal uses the stylistic device of the “hyphaetext” to foreground the author’s own intertextual episodes. The implied reader (another version of another simulacrum) is exhorted to come up with their own.

## Notes

1. (Sterne 2003[1759-67])
2. Research Assessment Exercise. The means by which UK universities are ranked and through which they receive their funding. Held every 5 years. The next one is in 2008.
3. Althusser, 1971.
4. <http://www.grolsch.co.uk/Ads/>
5. <http://pbskids.org/arthur/>

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