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EXEGESIS: Trafficking in human possibilities.

THESIS: A Chair in the Square.

An exegesis and thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Creative Writing (MCW).

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School of language and Culture

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Attestation of Authorship

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

Signed:

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Abstract

A Chair in the Square is the draft of a literary novel, which is the creative component required for Masters of Creative Writing. It is accompanied by the exegesis: *Trafficking in human possibilities.* The exegesis will elucidate the creative work and provide an overview of the process employed in the writing of *A Chair in the Square*. *Trafficking in human possibilities* explores narrative patterns and investigates the universal characteristics of storytelling.

A Chair in the Square is a tandem narrative novel with multiple protagonists, and interweaving threads. It is a modern day tale of wounded individuals set in a medieval village. *A Chair in the Square* is a novel that illuminates the idea that the stories we have been told, and that we tell ourselves, create the world we live in.

Trafficking in Human Possibilities

Introduction to Exegesis:

Trafficking in human possibilities is an exegesis that accompanies the Creative thesis *A Chair in the Square.* It frames the creative work within literary fiction and provides an overview of the process employed in the writing of *A Chair in the Square.* The exegesis investigates some of the universal characteristics of storytelling and the effect they have on our psyches and our ability to be objective.

The first part of the exegesis provides a synopsis of the novel. I discuss the motivation behind the work, before moving on to detail the role of tandem narrative and point of view in my creative process. I discuss the use of allegory and archetypes and then provide an overview of the ways that *A Chair in the Square* fits within the genre of literary fiction. Finally, I explore some of the major themes of the novel, including narrative patterns and the ways that our lives function as 'storybooks'.

Synopsis: A Chair in the Square

In a village where the lanes circle back on themselves, and the Tudor houses lean in on each other, we meet our four protagonists: Emily, Edward, Narcisso and Jay. Each has fabricated a story about who they are. As their distorted realities break down they are forced to confront 'The truth.' We are led through a portal that illuminates the idea that the stories we have been told, and tell ourselves, create our worlds.

Emily was hoping for the fairy tale, but she wed a frog thinking she'd married a prince. Narcisso thought he was a prince, dressed in Armani suits and living in an apartment in a desirable part of the city. He spent all his money on fancy things and then lost his job. His return to the village stripped of his robes, leaves him exposed and in need of a new identity.

Edward's truth is much more horror. He killed a boy and came to the village to hide. He has spent most of his adult life trawling through books, trying to work out, "Who forgives you if you don't believe in a God?"

And then there's Jay. He's just been given the wrong script. A part his father had written for him but that he would never be able to perform. Jay is looking forward to the final curtain.

In this quest for identity, the dragons and demons our protagonists' battle are internal. Most return with a treasure; but, imitating life, there isn't a happily ever after for all of them.

Motivation:

> For some of us, books are as important as almost anything else on earth. What a miracle it is that out of these small, flat, rigid squares of paper unfolds world after world after world, worlds that sing to you, comfort and quiet or excite you. Books help us understand who we are and how we are to behave. They show us what community and friendship mean; they show us how to live and die. (Lamott, 1995, p.15)

My brother and I communicate via books. It started when we were children and he read to me to block out the sounds of our parents fighting. Later, I mailed books to him in prison so he could escape to other worlds. He returned the favour while I was overseas and sent books that both comforted and connected me to home. For a long time I thought that books where a place to hide, but I believe now, as Jeanette Winterson said, that "Books aren't a hiding place but a finding place" (Winterson, 2011, p. 40).

The idea of writing a novel about the transformative power of stories and our lives as storybooks has been incubating for several years. As an avid reader and writer, I have been fascinated with the human predilection for storytelling and the narrative nature of humankind. We understand the influence that books can have on our lives, but what about the stories that we tell ourselves? Do we become them? This is the question that preceded the writing of the creative, *A*

Chair in the Square (which I will refer to as *ACITS* for the remainder of the exegesis).

In John Locke's work *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* he suggests that we "suppose the mind to have no ideas in it, to be like white paper with nothing written on it"(Locke, 1690, para.2). He is referring to the concept of *Tabula Rasa*, the epistemological idea that the mind is a blank slate at birth and that it is filled later through experience and perception. We gain our experience and perceptions through storytelling. They infiltrate our daily lives and our night-time dreams. Stories shape the way we think and help us make sense of the world and our place in it.

In *ACITS*, I hope to engage the reader in a fictional story, which illustrates the idea that our lives are storybooks and that our thoughts play a central part in the creation of these stories. Philosophers and sages have referred to this same idea for several millennia. The idea that we create our own realities is often found in books on the self-help/transformation shelves. My initial quandary was over non-fiction self-help versus a fictional novel. The intention behind *ACITS* is to deliver a message but to package it differently. By creating fictional characters; ACITS takes the narrative away from nonfiction and the self-improvement genre and the author away from the role of the expert.

The decision to place *ACITS* in fiction was in part due to my frustration with the pre-packaged and 'one size fits all' nature of the majority of self-help books. The self-help/improvement genre grew exponentially in the last half of the twentieth century and according to a recent study by Marketdata enterprises (2016) the forecasts are still for growth. The flipside of this phenomenon is that the overuse of words and phrases such as 'Journey' and 'Everything happens for a reason,' mean that we hear them like a cliché and effectively switch off.

Philosopher Jules Evans talks about the need for a better quality of 'self-help' literature. In particular, he points to the ways that conventional self-help

literature is overly focused on the individual at the expense of consideration of how we can learn through our relationships with others and through our engagement with larger social issues (Evans, 2012). The prescriptive and didactic nature of a number of self-help books become substitutes for explorations. The placement of *ACITS* in fiction, acts as a portal rather than a conclusion.

Psychologists, Melanie Green and Timothy Brock (2000) assert that entering fictional worlds "radically alters the way information is processed." Their research shows that the more readers are absorbed in a story, the more the story changes them. Their theory of "transportation into a narrative world" focuses on immersion into a story as a mechanism of narrative influence. I extend on this more in the section, Lives as Storybooks. I focus here on the choice between fiction and nonfiction. Gottschall (2012) suggests:

> When we read non-fiction we read with our shields up. We are critical and sceptical. But when we are absorbed in a story, we drop our intellectual guard. We humans are constantly marinating ourselves in fiction, and all the while it is shaping us, changing us…Fiction is one of the primary sculpting forces of individuals and societies. (Pp.151-152)

Tandem Narrative:

ACITS is a tandem narrative novel with multiple protagonists, and interweaving threads. The four protagonists each have a distinct storyline, and narrate their own story. In considering my narrative options, I settled on a tandem narrative structure, as each of the individual threads were set in the same village and followed a linear timeline. Aronson defines Tandem narrative as having, 'equally important but separate stories (each with its own protagonist) running simultaneously on the same theme' (Aronson, 2010, p.182).

The themes of *Story* and *Truth* are an underlying part of each protagonist's story in *ACITS*. In a novel with tandem narratives, the reader is being asked to

jump from one story to the next. This places greater demands on the reader, and without a single plotline there is a risk that the intended audience doesn't engage or is left wondering 'What is the connection?'

One of the fundamental questions to grapple with was whether the text was a novel or a short story cycle/composite novel. Dunn and Morris (1995) define a composite novel as: "a literary work composed of shorter texts that— though individually complete and autonomous—are interrelated in a coherent whole according to one or more organizing principle." Each of the protagonist's stories in *ACITS* had potential as individual short stories, but I wanted the overlapping dynamics of a novel. Here Aronson refers to film, but the same applies to prose narratives:

> Good tandem films are like a piece of fabric. The separate stories make the horizontal threads, and the different kinds of connections between the stories provide the vertical threads that weave all the stories together. (2010, p.183)

ACITS is a contemporary novel set in a small English village. The closeness of the fifteenth century buildings, with doors that open straight onto the narrow cobblestones streets, makes for intimate social relationships. The village gives the protagonists plausible reasons to be walking in and out of each other's stories. This small scale society opens up opportunity for events to have an impact on everyone.

I used Edward's storyline as the connector of all the threads to avoid what Aronson describes as, "Characters in search of a plot" (Aronson. 2010, p.183). This can often happen in the telling of separate stories without an obvious link.

The term tandem narrative is popular and prevalent in film, but the structure has a long history in prose work and can be traced as far back as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* from 1475 (Chaucer, 2011). Analysis of novels that have used the same narrative structure, *The Sweet Hereafter* (Banks, 1991), *Last Orders* (Swift, 2012), and Faulkner's classic 1930's novel *As I Lay Dying* (Faulkner, 2004) drew attention to the fact that as well as individual story lines,

they each had an overarching or macro plot. This is often referred to as a 'throughline.[1]' The macro creates a common problem that affects all the individuals. Aronson suggests that having a macro plot is the strongest narrative device for connections, which are of paramount importance in tandem narratives. (2010, p.187)

In *The Sweet Hereafter* the macro was a town grieving after fourteen children were killed in a bus crash. A paragraph from one of the four narrators epitomizes both the plot and the narration: "A town needs its children, just as much and in the same way a family does. It comes undone without them, turns a community into a windblown scattering of isolated individuals" (Banks, 1991, p.236).

In *As I Lay Dying,* Faulkner's protagonists made a wagon trip with a corpse; and in *Last Orders* Swift's protagonist made a road trip with a friend's ashes. These macro plots were subtle, and technically they acted as the adventure or "action line", a term Aronson (2010) uses for a series of events that force change on the characters and relationship line. They drove the story forward, which also propelled the reader along. The arrival of a film crew in the village was added to *ACITS* after the first draft. This addition was employed to act as the missing macro plot and as a device to expose the protagonists.

The novels: *The Sweet Hereafter, Last Orders* and *As I Lay Dying,* all drew attention for their narrative structure. Oliver Reynolds in the Times Literary supplement said of Swift's novel:

> The novels structural patterning returns to a form Swift often uses. The alternation of different characters points of view. There is neither an old fashioned omniscient narrator nor the modern equivalent making an open palmed avowal of unreliability. …One of the books many technical triumphs is the parity of its characters. (Reynolds, 1996)
>
> *The Sweet Hereafter* has been embraced by critics and readers alike for its unique narrative structure. Banks's intention in writing the novel this way

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[1] The term 'throughline' comes from acting, proposed by Constantin Stanislavski.

was to avoid what he considers the artifice of omniscient narration and the somewhat preachy tone that often accompanies it. (Encyclopaedia, 2002)

Faulkner had used stream of consciousness and interweaving first person narrative in three of the four sections in his 1929 novel *The Sound and the Fury (1954).* His next novel *As I Lay Dying (2004)* used a similar structure:

> Faulkner's famously fragmented novel is composed of 59 first-person chapters, written in the voices of fifteen different characters. …In Faulkner's novel, form and content converge: the disjointed narrative structure, which lacks a presiding narrator, manifests the isolation that defines the characters' lives, which are marked by hidden secrets and unspoken desires. (Entin, 2013)

The oscillation between the four protagonists in *ACITS* allowed me to expose the isolation and unspoken desires of all the characters, which is central to the story.

Point of View:

With the interweaving narrative threads of the proposed work, it was clear that the point of view was going to be crucial.

> "The house of fiction has many windows, but only two or three doors" (Woods, 2008, p. 3).

Woods is referring to point of view and specifically the fundamental choice of first, second or third person narration. *ACITS* explores personal identity with the lens set on the illusory self. Albert Einstein referred to this self as "An optical delusion of consciousness" (as cited in Calaprice, 2005).The illusory self can only be accessed from an internal point of view. The employment of 'first person' in *ACITS* was to gain access to the interiority of the characters and because the function of 'first person' is to reveal the self.   It is, as Eliot suggests, "a confessional mode for the speaker shares confidential details with an unseen but assumed sympathetic group of listeners" (Eliot, 1954).

The choice of 'First person narrators' allowed me to explore and highlight the subjective nature of perception:

> By definition, the first person character is always focalized internally. It is an I, and everything the I experiences is automatically part of its psyche. In the first person narrative, everything that happens is interpreted as something the I perceives. (Farner, 2014, p. 241)

Farner uses Genette's term focalization[2] (Genette,1980, p.189), which arose from the need to distinguish between viewpoint and voice. He settled on a three-term typology of focalization: Zero, internal and external. [3] The creative thesis employs internal focalization, which, to summarise Genette's definition, is the narrative with restricted field. To explain further, Genette used Todorov symbols Narrator = Character. (as cited in Genette, 1980, p.189) The text of *ACITS* would be characterized as variable internal focalization because of the change of the focal characters. This is the dominant technique used in Flaubert's *Madam Bovary* (Flaubert, 2009). He uses it to switch between characters. He delves into their psychological depths and the reader gains an intensely internalized view of the characters even though the majority is told in third person omniscient. *Madam Bovary* and *ACITS* both deal with reality and illusion, of seeing and being seen.

Farner suggests that internal focalization may achieve two goals:

> It may encourage identification with the character as well as create a sort of virtual understanding. When the reader experiences the action through a given character's sensory apparatus, he identifies more easily with this character and makes a greater effort to understand him as a human being. This tendency is reinforced if the reader also gets insight into the character's thoughts and feelings. (2014, p.256-7)

In *ACITS*, and particularly in the case of Emily, the reader can feel both inside her experience but see outside her understanding. The reader, as the observer,

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[2] Genette adopts Brooks and Warren's term *focus of narration*, which he translates into French as *focalization*

[3] Most narratologists after Genette avoid the tripartion and drop the zero focalization as it doesn't fit with the other forms of viewpoint.

has the advantage of listening to the protagonists, but also seeing things that they may not be aware of.

It should be obvious to the reader from the first chapter that Emily is married to an abusive man and yet she appears oblivious to this. She internalizes all culpability and presumes his words are the truth. Following is an extract from *ACITS*:

> 'Did you get the sauce?' (Spoken by Emily's husband Rob)
>
> I close my eyes at my own stupidity. 'God, I forgot.'

And later in the same chapter:

> 'You shouldn't wear that colour. You look hideous.' (Rob)
>
> I look down at my new dress. The lady in the shop said it would be a great colour on me. I guess she lied. I go upstairs and change my dress.

A certain amount of authorial flagging is employed in the above text. Woods explains this in *How Fiction Works*:

> We know that the narrator is being unreliable because the author is alerting us, through reliable manipulation, to that narrator's unreliability. A process of authorial flagging is going on; the novel teaches us how to read its narrator. (Woods, 2008, p.7)

As Emily's story unfolds, the gap between what she knows and what the reader knows closes. This is echoed in Narcisso and Jay's stories. Narcisso is exposed early in the narrative as someone who has no regard for other people's feelings and yet he has no concept of this. Jay also is unaware of the controlling influence his father exerts. The use of 'first person' allows the author to disappear and for the reader to be privy to the 'truth' often before the narrator.

Allegory and Archetypes:

My original intention was that *ACITS* was to be an allegorical novel because I wanted to encourage the reader to look beneath the literal surface of the fiction. The allegorical novels of *The Pilgrims Progress* (Bunyan, 1967), *Animal Farm (Orwell,* 1996*),* and *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 2003) pointed towards an underlying message and demonstrated personifications of people and concepts. C.S Lewis (1943) said in the preface to the third edition of *The Pilgrim's Regress* that Allegory exists "Not to hide but to reveal; to make the inner world more palpable by giving it an (imagined) concrete embodiment."

More recent models *The Alchemist* (Coelho*,* 1993) and *Illusions* (Bach, 1998) with their didactic storylines moved more towards parables. Both novels with their inspirational quotes illustrate the possibilities of fiction to constitute 'self-help.' However, sentences like: "The closer one gets to realizing his destiny, the more that destiny becomes his true reason for being." (Coelho, p.75) and "You're never given a wish without also being given the power to make it true. You may have to work at it however" (Bach, 1998, p. 92) do feel more instructional than story like. This influenced my decision to deviate from my original intention for the novel and to use the creative work to fictionalize themes and have the story's issues play out in mimetic moments. This allows the novel to have some metaphorical instructive value, but not be a determined self-help book, or a more obvious allegory.

A Chair in the Square is an exploration of the human condition and represents ideas about life. This focus on the inner story of the protagonists is characteristic of literary fiction.

The protagonists in *ACITS* could be seen as archetypes for the wounded parts of us that need healing. Jung suggests that archetypes reflect different aspects of the human mind – that our personalities divide themselves into these characters to play out the drama of our lives. (as cited in Vogler, 2007, p.4) Myss (2013) believes that, "archetypes are the psychic lenses through which

we view ourselves and the world around us." Emily is a collapsed personality archetype looking for someone else to validate who she is. Narscisso's fear of not being good enough leads him to ostracize people and to use external trappings as a way to display his worth. Jay was wounded early in life and had to suppress and disown certain aspects of his personality in order to be "acceptable" in his father's eyes. He has become emotionally overwhelmed and feels cut off from everyone. He finds comfort by the river which is a place of significance from his childhood. Archetypically his penchant for the river is about his emotions, which are represented by the water element. Edward has a caregiver archetype and yet struggles to be kind to himself. He finds solace in books and consoles himself with words.

As mentioned earlier, there is parity with the characters but Edward does illuminate pathways for others in the way that he 'tops' them up. He dispenses books and sugar pills, which both represent hope. Here I point to the transformative powers that both books and placebos appear to offer. In placebo trials, the biggest influence on outcomes is derived from the expectations of the patient. Freud could have been the poster boy for placebos when he suggested that "Expectation coloured by hope and faith is an effective force with which we have to reckon" (Freud, 1953. P.289).

One of the main signifiers of literary fiction is that it is more character-driven than plot orientated. The introspective characters in *ACITS* and the choice of first person sit well within this frame. I started the novel with an understanding of the protagonist's backgrounds and inner turmoil and an idea of where they were heading. I built the plot elements around the protagonists. I was guided by the tone of the novel when considering where my work should be placed.

Saricks suggests: "The tone of literary fiction is often darker, as befits the serious themes with which much of it is concerned" (Saricks, 2009, p. 182). Through the characters, *ACITS* explores the interiority of abuse, depression and suicide. My research into the subject matter included Styron's *Darkness*

Visible (Styron,2007), *Sophies Choice* (Styron,2014), Flaubert's, *Madam Bovary* (*2009*) Haig's *Reasons to Stay Alive* (Haig, 2015), *Humans* (Haig,2013) and *The Battered Woman Syndrome* (Walker, 2000).

Initially I was able to put a distance between myself, the research, and the creative work, but it eventually seeped in and drew a strong emotional reaction from me. I thought it was ironic that I was writing about the power that stories have to affect us and yet I'd failed to connect my feelings of despondency with my reading material. It demonstrated that it is hard for a mind to distinguish between real and imagined. Words had been my undoing which also meant that they could be my pathway back. There are fundamental choices that a writer makes when composing a novel, but we also must decide how much of ourselves we want to invest and interrogate.

The slow reflective pace of events in *ACITS* often felt like a quotidian wander around the village. This was intended to replicate the emotional feelings of the characters. The deliberately slow pace was obvious in both Styron and Flaubert's novels. According to Saricks, "Literary fiction is almost never deemed fast pace. Layered plots, lyrical language are all employed to slow the reader's reading down"(2009, p.182).

Jerome Brunner (1987) uses the term "subjunctivize" when explaining his idea of what constitutes a story of literary merit. He refers to the presence of certain mechanisms that render the text indeterminate and those that recruit or enlist the reader "in the performance of meaning under the guidance of the text." He asserts that the mechanisms that subjunctivize reality are: 1) Those that create implicit meaning and are viewed through the filter of the protagonist, and 2) Multiple perspective, or "beholding the world not univocally but simultaneously through a set of prisms each of which catches some part of it." White sums the mode up succinctly, "To be in the subjunctive mode is, then, to be trafficking in human possibilities rather than in settled certainties" (White, 1990. p.79).

The Hero's Journey:

Ironically, given my comments about the overuse of the word 'Journey', *ACITS* does in fact follow each of the four protagonists on a journey of self-discovery. It follows the monomyth structure identified by Joseph Campbell in his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces:*

> This classic study traces the story of the hero's journey and transformation through virtually all the mythologies of the world, revealing the one archetypal hero in them all. (Campbell, 1973)

One of the main premises in Campbell's work is that embedded in all stories is the structure of a departure, initiation and return:

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (Campbell, 1973, p.30)

Campbell's work has been used and referenced so many times that in the interest of originality I initially wanted to steer away from it. But when something is so universally coded, it circles back to the same point. Campbell demonstrates how intrinsic many of the storytelling features are and the universality of the imprints of the monomyth on our psyches.

The journey is replicated in *ACITS*. At the beginning of the novel we observe our protagonists in their everyday world of the village. Their departure from this world into unfamiliar territories where they engage in a battle is a psychological one. When the facades of who they are break down and they can no longer remain as they are, they are forced on an inward journey. We observe them as they struggle to untangle from stories that have led to feelings of inadequacy. We watch our protagonists as they move from one way of being to another. It is this emotional journey that we recognise. In this way the hero's journey mirrors the way human beings solve problems.

Lives as Storybooks:

Campbell's work was not just about identifying narrative patterns in myths but he was also concerned with the reasons why we should care about myths and what they have to do with our lives. In conversation with Bill Moyers, Campbell states:

> These bits of information from ancient times, which have to do with the themes that have supported man's life, built civilizations, informed religions over the millennia, have to do with deep inner problems, inner mysteries, inner thresholds of passage, and if you don't know what the guide signs are along the way, you have to work it out yourself. (Campbell & Moyers, 1991, pp 35-36)

Patricia Waugh says a similar thing: "If, as individuals, we now occupy 'roles' rather than 'selves', then the study of characters in novels may provide a useful model for understanding the construction of subjectivity in the world outside novels" (Waugh, 1984, pp. 2-3).

In the same interview with Moyers, Campbell went on to say that: "Myths are clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life" (p.40). The Greek word *mythos* is translated into English as plot. Hillman suggests that, "Plots are myths. The basic answers to *why* in a story are to be discovered in myths" (1994).One of the earliest authenticated libraries, that of Pharaoh Ramses 11, bore an inscription over its portals designating it as: The house of healing for the soul. This expresses the idea that books hold more than just words and also point to the fact that the thought is an ancient one. Jeanette Winterson suggests, "Fiction and poetry are doses, medicines. What they heal is the rupture reality makes on the imagination" (2011, p.142).

In the process of the research and writing of the novel, I kept circling back to the question of how humans make sense of their experience in the world.

> Until the day we die, we are living the story of our lives. And, like a novel in process, our life stories are always changing and evolving, being edited, rewritten, and embellished by an unreliable narrator. We are, in large part, our personal stories. (Gottschall, 2013, p. 176)

Gass adds, "we select, we construct, we compose our pasts and hence make fictional characters of ourselves as it seems we must to remain sane." (Gass, 1970, p. 128).

What this highlights is the cognitive function of literary fiction. Farner suggests:

> The fictional world is constructed according to the same pattern as the real world and resembles it. On account of this likeness, the fictional events shed useful light on the general structure of the real world. … The reader conceives of the fictional world as a parallel to the real world; he expects the conditions in the former to conform to conditions in the latter, with the two worlds shedding light on one another. (2014, p.40)

ACITS has used mimesis, which simply put is the cognitive exchange between fiction and reality. As I researched, I often felt like I was caught in a perpetual loop as I asked the questions about the relationship between the two.

The fields of philosophy, psychology and narratology all influenced my thinking on how important the role of narrative is in our daily lives. One of the most important works that contributed to all of the fields came from Arnold Van Gennep. He was an ethnographer and folklorist. His 1909 work *Les Rites de Passage",* which translates as *Rites of Passage*, was one of the earliest books that researched life stories. He introduced the idea of rites of passage rituals, and believed they could be broken down into three phases: preliminary, liminaire and postliminaire.

> I propose to call the rites of separation from a previous world, *preliminal rites*, those executed during the transitional stage *liminal (or threshold) rites*, and the ceremonies of incorporation into the new world *postliminal rites*. (Van Gennep, 2004)

This contribution was highly influential on Victor Turner's work[4], and in the structuring of Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Departure, initiation and return.) Narrative therapy, which is a relatively new form of

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[4] Turner explored Van Genneps structure of rites of passage and expanded his theories on the liminal phase.

psychotherapy and involves a kind of're- storying' of patients' lives, also draws heavily on Van Gennep's work. The following is an extract from Michael White and David Epston's book, *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends:*

> The crisis will be interpreted as relating to some aspect of a transition or rite of passage in the person's life, and questions will be introduced that locate the crisis in relation to:
>
> 1.   The separation phase-perhaps from some status, aspect of identity, or role that is determined to be no longer viable for the person concerned.
> 2.   The liminal or betwixt and between phase-characterized by some discomfort, confusion, disorganization, and perhaps heightened expectations for the future; and
> 3.   The reincorporation phase-characterized by the arrival at some new status that specifies new responsibilities and privileges for the person concerned. (White & Epston, 1990, p. 7)

The three act structure[5] that divides a fictional narrative into three parts: set up confrontation and resolution also replicates the three phases that Van Gennep referred too. All of this suggests the way storytellers organize their texts to reflect the comprehensive story behind all things.

Iris Murdoch has suggested that fictionalization in life occurs because, "People create myths about themselves, and are then dominated by the myths. They feel trapped and they elect other people to play roles in their lives …a novelist is revealing secrets of this sort" (Murdoch, 1977, p.138).

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[5] The three act structure is a model used in screenwriting.

Conclusion

"If you don't feel that you are possibly on the edge of humiliating yourself, of losing control of the whole thing, then probably what you are doing isn't very vital" (Irving, as cited in Moore, 2012)

There were moments during the course of the year, when I felt that I was out of my depth. It seemed that I had challenged myself above my capabilities with my decision to have four protagonists each telling a separate story, and then to embed a message into the whole. Cohesion between the characters and storylines often eluded me and time constraints put pressure on me to locate the problem and remedy it quickly.

It was never a conscious intention to investigate the space between fiction and nonfiction but over the course of the year I wondered how close the borders had moved towards each other and what if any influence this would have on a writer's placement of their work. An entire exegesis could be devoted to this question but for the purpose of this exegesis, I must settle for a summary. Amnitta Forna believes the lines of Fiction and Nonfiction are clearly marked and that they both serve a different purpose:

> Each time a writer begins a book they make a contract with the reader. If the book is a work of fiction the contract is pretty vague, essentially saying: "Commit your time and patience to me and I will tell you a story." …A contract for a work of nonfiction is a more precise affair. The writer says, I am telling you, and to the best of my ability, what I believe to be true." (Forna, 2015)

Sukenick argues: "All accounts of our experience, all versions of 'reality' are of the nature of fiction" (as cited in Farner, p.5) and Ryan is of the same mind when he says: "There is no fiction or non-fiction as we commonly understand it, there is only the fictional' (as cited in Farner, 2014, p. 5).

Creative nonfiction books[6] that employ literary styles and techniques, and novels such as Knausgard's autobiographical series of six books, *My Struggle* (2009) clearly blur the lines.[7]

The Norwegian version of *My Struggle* put the word "novel" on the title and his American publishers removed it saying in an email:

> "It was a conscious choice not to label the book for the reader," Jill Schoolman, the founder of Archipelago, wrote in an e-mail. "I feel that 'the project' dwells comfortably between (and embraces both) fiction and memoir. (Aren't they always inextricably entwined?) Why try to define or label the work?"(Rohter, 2012)

At the commencement of the creative project and before I started the research, I believed that my novel straddled nonfiction and fiction. I hoped to write a novel that moved people by accessing the *collective unconscious*. According to Jung, The *collective unconscious* consists of images, figures and experiences that are shared by all humanity (Jung, 1996). My research points to the idea that access to these universal themes is best served by fiction or at least to the fact that fiction may be the place we look for them. I concur with Forna when she suggests that: "nonfiction reveals the lies, but only metaphor can reveal the truth." (Forna, 2015)

It feels cathartic, to have penned a draft of a story that has been dancing around the edges of my mind. I look forward to subsequent drafting towards a publishable novel. As a writer, I can only guide a reader and the final verdict on what my story may or may not do, will always rest in the readers mind. Gottshall suggests, "A writer lays down words, but they are inert. They need a catalyst to come to life. The catalyst is the reader's imagination." (2012, p.6)

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[6] Lee Gutkind defines creative nonfiction as "true stories well told." (2014)
[7] Woods reviewed *My Struggle* for the New Yorker and said of his prose "The writer seems not to be selecting or shaping anything." (Woods, 2012)

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