

Stay

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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.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'SS', is enclosed in a light blue rectangular box.

Sarah Shepherd

Abstract

This thesis consists of the creative work *Stay*, a collection of interlinked short stories. Although wholly self-contained, each story in *Stay* makes a vital contribution to the collection as a whole. Characters are revisited. Tiny slices of their lives are glimpsed, moments expanded. At other times, the cast is left to stagger through time, from revealed pasts to told futures, in ways that may or may not be imaginable to empathetic or curious readers, thus revealing a 'story around the stories'. This characteristic of the collection represents both its biggest strength and its primary challenge.

The exegesis *Fleeting Glimpses, Fragile Moments* discusses the creative work *Stay* and the work's genre, the short story cycle. The exegesis looks at the history of the short story genre, and in particular, the sub-genre of short story 'cycles' or 'sequences'. It discusses this niche genre's unique characteristics, opportunities and challenges. *Stay* is analysed in terms of its relevant generic characteristics, alongside influential contemporary works within the genre.

Fleeting Glimpses, Fragile Moments: An Exegesis to *Stay*

Introduction

Stay is a collection of interlinked short stories, intended to be read sequentially. The stories are, like many collections of short stories, linked thematically, by their character-driven nature, and by the ideas they explore. However, most integrally, the stories and characters in *Stay* are linked by their relationship to the collection's protagonist. They are also linked structurally and in time. These are the primary characteristics of the collection that locate it firmly in the short story cycle genre, a niche sub-genre of short fiction.

Although wholly self-contained, each story in *Stay* makes a vital contribution to the narrative arc of the collection as a whole. Characters are revisited. Tiny slices of their lives are glimpsed, moments expanded. At other times the cast staggers through time, from revealed pasts to told futures, in ways that may or may not be imaginable to empathetic or curious readers. This characteristic of the collection represents both its biggest strength and its primary challenge.

The collection explores two core ideas, both relating to the psychology and dynamics of relationships between people, in the present and over time. The first idea is that our pasts are part of us, and impact on our present. The second is that there are always at least two sides to a story. The use of the short story cycle genre, which is discussed in critical/theoretical contexts in this exegesis, facilitates the exploration of these core ideas in unique and exciting ways; ways that the novelistic or independent short story forms would not necessarily allow.

However, by nature almost paradoxical, the genre also requires that the collection has unifying features that, while satisfying to the reader in some way, are not too tidy, heavy-handed or consequential (especially in contrast with the traditional short story conventions that the stories, individually, adhere to). This required a willingness to write stories of fleeting glimpses and fragile moments—Woolf's 'matches struck in the dark'—and trust that these would ultimately come to represent something more than the sum of the parts.

The short story cycle is a niche genre often referred to in literary theory as the 'short story cycle', 'short story sequence', 'short story composite' and various other terms. In this exegesis, the genre is referred to as the 'short story cycle', because this is the term that best describes the collection. I have not used 'sequence' because *Stay* does not have a purely linear or sequential narrative. I have not used 'composite', because although *Stay* does represent a mosaic, or patchwork, of inter-related moments in time, it does have elements of sequentiality, or chronology. 'Short story cycle', therefore, with its hat-tip to the cyclical, ongoing nature of human emotional lives, is the literary term most suited to the collection.

Stay began as a collection of independent (or so I thought) short stories. This exegesis will briefly touch on the history of the short story and how the stories in *Stay* adhere—or otherwise—to the broadly accepted conventions of the genre.

The short story cycle and its necessary elements have been debated and variously defined in literary theory and criticism—some theorists defining the genre tightly, others preferring a broader catch-all. This exegesis analyses relevant definitions, and the challenges, opportunities and unique features of the genre.

What makes a short story?

Elizabeth Bowen, in her 1936 introduction to the *Faber Book of Short Stories*, proposed that a short story was a unique literary form with its own characteristics, rather than—as was commonly perceived then—simply a miniature novel. She described ‘the necessity of treating the “shortness” of the short story as a “positive” quality, rather than a matter merely of “non-extension”’ (Hunter, 2007, p. 97).

From this (and other) oblique initial observations in the first half of the twentieth century, a well of literary theory has sprung up around the short story and its defining characteristics. This exegesis looks only at those that have influenced the writing of *Stay*.

In his essay *Principles of a Story*, Raymond Carver, one master of the form, quoted another, VS Pritchett, in defining the short story as ‘something glimpsed from the corner of the eye, in passing’ (Carver, 2005). Carver extrapolates: ‘First the glimpse. Then the glimpse given life, turned into something that illuminates the moment and may, if we’re lucky... have even further-ranging consequences and meaning. The short story writer’s task is to invest the glimpse with all that is in his power’ (ibid).

This desire for illumination informed the development of *Stay*. The collection is concerned with people and their motivations, and how these can differ from their actions. Patricia Grace says of her approach to writing:

‘I’m mainly interested in people, the way they react and interact, and showing what makes a person tick... Once I understand the person I’m writing about all I have to do to advance the story is think what would happen to them or how they would respond in a situation’ (qtd. in Kedgley, 1989, p. 57).

Grace’s words resonate with me. *Stay* is what’s left after several stories have been written and discarded. Those abandoned stories attempted to impose a ‘plot’ or course of action on a character. As I wrote, I often

discovered the character would not respond by taking this course of action. Or I would write a story that needed to be told, only to discover it needed to be told from a different perspective, by a different character. Far from being a waste of time, however, these thwarted attempts at stories served to deepen my understanding of the characters, to help create more authentic ‘glimpses’ into the characters’ lives. As I wrote, and biffed, and wrote some more, meaning and story developed out of the characters’ actions like a photograph.

There is a desire for connection at the heart of *Stay*. Characters struggle to maintain connections and ideals. Loneliness and abandonment are recurrent themes in the stories. Characters seek—or sabotage, or ache for—meaningful relationships, in a world where such connections are difficult to come by. Several characters are willfully displaced, choosing to live thousands of miles from their families and homeland. In this way, the stories concern characters that are emotionally alienated, cut adrift—at least momentarily—from society by their feelings. This is perhaps best evidenced by the protagonist Adam’s drunken interior monologue in the car park of an ostentatious wedding, when he posits the rhetorical question: ‘When did we all become such wankers?’.

This sense of loneliness, of unbelonging, is the primary concern of short stories, proposes the Irish short story writer and theorist Frank O’Connor, in his touchstone work of short story criticism *The Lonely Voice*. O’Connor claims that this is why the form has been taken up so enthusiastically in the USA, Ireland, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and other nations containing ‘the outlawed, the lonely, the “submerged population groups”’ (qtd. in Hunter, 2007, p. 106). Although it remains an influential idea, O’Connor’s assertion has recently been criticised as a ‘reaction to, or attempted rationalisation of, literary modernism’ (ibid). However, the concept of the short story as an art that speaks of the ‘intense awareness of human loneliness’ (ibid) has resonance with the stories in *Stay*, which, although written about characters that exist almost exclusively within the

cosy confines of the western middle classes, aim to depict alone-ness by portraying differing, co-existing realities and perspectives.

Theorist Charles May asserts that the short story has its origins in primitive myth. In his blog *Reading the Short Story*, he provides a heuristic distinction between the two forms: while the novel is 'a syncretic, secondary form, deriving from history (May, *The Short Story's Way of Meaning: Alice Munro's "Passion"*, 2010), the short story is 'a fundamental, elementary form, deriving from folklore' (ibid). Further, he asserts that these origins, along with the basic 'shortness' of the short story, inform those elements he believes to be inherent to the genre:

'In the short story, the formal demands of the story outweigh the realistic demands of verisimilitude, both because the story's shortness demands an aesthetic rather than a natural form, and because the short story remains closer to its ancestry in myth and folklore than the novel does. In the short story... the very shortness of the form prohibits the realistic presentation of character by extensive metonymic detail, and since the history of the short story is one in which a character confronts a crucial event or crisis rather than slowly developing over time, the very form and tradition of short fiction militates against the central conventions of realism' (ibid).

These origins in myth and folklore, according to May, also lend the short story another of its greatest qualities:

'[In] all great short stories, from Chekhov to Carver, there is mystery and not a little menace... for the form originated in primitive myth, which, by its very nature, was concerned with mystery, for which story was the only explanatory model available' (May, *Short Story Month 2010*, 2010).

May describes the worlds created in short stories (those shifting, shimmering worlds as pioneered by the likes of Chekhov) in terms of the readers' journey:

'You begin moving confidently along as if you were living in the real world... as you read, you begin to experience a sense of an alternate reality... Events in such stories may seem to be... everyday reality, but at any moment, with a subtle shift, events unfold that can only happen in the world of wish or fear. However, by this time, you have been so gradually captured by the rhythm and tone of the story's language that

you will accept anything' (May, Paul Yoon's *Once The Day*, A "Best Book" for 2009, 2009).

Of the many short stories I have enjoyed this year, those that seemed, in terms of my own creativity, most out of reach, were those stories which steer away from realism and into May's mystical, magical 'world of wish and fear'. By comparison, the stories in *Stay* generally (but not always) tend toward actualism, or a concern with a realistic portrayal of domestic life and relationship dynamics¹. In terms of literary theory, these could be considered more novelistic qualities. As *Stay* took form, I had to acknowledge that this characteristic, so valued by May, this 'world of wish and fear', was sometimes not present in my work.

To move forward, to let the work take shape, I needed to be prepared to 'let go' of this arguably key quality of the short story. This 'letting go' manifested in a growing sense of the characters becoming more real to me. As I tried to abandon them and move on to stories new, they lurked at the back of my mind, neglected but doing their own thing—becoming. I found myself wondering about Adam, about Claire, Malcolm and Laura: why did they do the things they did? What happened to them next?

What I got in return for this sacrifice of May's 'world of wish or fear', was thus a cast of characters into whose pasts and psychologies I could probe in-depth, using Pritchett's 'glimpses'. Moreover, by acknowledging and working with, rather than against this 'otherness' of the work when compared to those short stories often acknowledged as definitive examples of the genre, I was able to switch to the short story cycle, a genre more suitable for the collection—a genre that, with its possibilities, notably the space it offered for character development, offered more excitement, reward and freedom for me as a writer.

¹ Aside from these peculiarities, the stories in the collection adhere to the broadly-accepted conventions of the short story, featuring compressed plots, single events, little development, little denouement, few characters. It was important to me that, taken independently, each story represents a clear example of a short story.

Cycle, sequence, or composite?

The short story cycle is a niche genre, nominally referred to by various terms in literary theory, usually as the 'short story cycle', 'short story sequence' or 'short story composite'. Although these terms are sometimes used interchangeably in literary criticism, each is weighted with its own implications. 'Cycle', with its conceptual notion of some kind of repetition or return to origin (either in time, by theme or by some other principle), was the first definition, put forward by Forrest Ingram in his 1971 study *Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century*, and by Susan Mann in her 1989 work *The Short Story Cycle*. 'Sequence', with its implication of progression, or development, or forward movement (again, in time or theme or by some other principle) came next, used by J. Gerald Kennedy in his 1995 work *Modern American Short Story Sequences*. In the same year, Maggie Dunn and Ann Morris produced *The Composite Novel: The Short Story Cycle in Transition*—thereby coining a new term for the genre and avoiding the cycle/sequence issue altogether.

In this exegesis, the genre is referred to as the 'short story cycle', because this is the term that best describes *Stay*. *Stay* does not have a purely a linear or sequential narrative, therefore I have not used 'sequence'. Although *Stay* does represent a mosaic, or patchwork, of inter-related moments in time, it does have elements of sequentiality, particularly in its largely chronological movement through time, that make 'composite' less appropriate. The themes and ideas in *Stay* are cyclical and repetitive in nature: characters inherit and pass on emotional wounds. 'Short story cycle', therefore, with its hat-tip to the cyclical, ongoing nature of human emotional lives, is the literary term I feel is most suited to describing the collection.

The genre proves prickly beyond the specifics of the title, too. Attempts to define characteristics and conventions of the genre have resulted in

something of a literary turf war, with some theorists casting the net wide, creating a definition by which nearly all short story collections might be included. Others narrow the parameters in attempts to more precisely define and differentiate the genre. Generally speaking, the genre refers to those literary works composed of short stories which—while individually self-contained and complete—are related to a coherent whole according to at least one organising principle. What those organising principles are, and whether they are necessarily intentional, is the subject of debate.

In *The Short Story Cycle*, Mann offers a simple defining characteristic:

‘There is only one essential characteristic of the short story cycle: the stories are both self-sufficient and interrelated. On the one hand, the stories work independently of one another: the reader is capable of understanding each of them without going beyond the limits of the individual story. On the other hand, however, the stories work together, creating something that could not be achieved by a single story’ (qtd. in Lunden, 1999, p. 17).

Mann states there is ‘considerably less emphasis... on plot or chronology, at least as these terms are traditionally defined’ (qtd. in Geyer). Rather than a linear, developing plot building chapter by chapter (as in a novel), a cycle provides non-linear action, with fewer causal connections of plot or action between stories.

In her exploratory paper *Sequences, Anti-sequences, Cycles and Composite Novels The Short Story in Genre Criticism*, Suzanne Ferguson cites two more common definitions of the genre. In 1971 Forrest Ingram proposed: ‘a short story cycle [is] a book of short stories so linked to each other by their author that the reader’s successive experience on various levels of the pattern of the whole significantly modifies his experience of each of its component parts’ (Ferguson, 2003, p. 2). Robert M. Luscher, in 1989, defined the ‘sequence’ as:

‘A volume of stories, collected and organised by their author, in which the reader successively realises underlying patterns of coherence by continual modifications of his perceptions of pattern and theme... Within the context of the sequence, each short story is thus not a completely closed formal

experience... The volume as a whole becomes an open book, inviting the reader to construct a network of associations that binds the stories together and lends them cumulative thematic impact' (ibid).

The crucial points of these definitions, according to Ferguson, is that the author *intends* the stories to be linked, and the reader *participates* in the creation of the sequence or cycle.

Ferguson's genre-focused analysis of landmark modernist short story cycles, *Go Down, Moses* and *The Golden Apples*, accords with the intentions behind *Stay*: 'Both Faulkner and Welty designed these sequences, and readers have... found pleasure in teasing out the connections among the stories. Yet all the stories have the structural features that make them seem to a reader independent and meaningful without the others: however—and the distinction is crucial—separately they mean something different from what they mean when read in the sequence where their authors published them' (Ferguson, 2003, p. 4).

In contrast, Maggie Dunn and Ann Morris in 1995 looked to organising principles, rather than author intent. In their study *The Composite Novel: The Short Story Cycle in Transition*, Dunn and Morris coined a new term for the genre and significantly broadened its parameters. A 'composite novel', in this study, is simply defined 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 organising principles' (ibid).

It's clear that theorists have struggled to develop and agree on a definition of the short story cycle genre and the characteristics inherent to the genre. Mann's assertion that the only 'essential' characteristic of the short story cycle is that the stories within a work are both 'self-sufficient and interrelated' is enough to position *Stay* within the genre, but does not provide a clear enough understanding of the unique characteristics of the genre. After all, even a seemingly unconnected collection of short stories

tends to have unintended unifying features when read closely. What differentiates the short story cycle?

Author intent, for one thing, although this is shaky ground: literary theorists from Barthe onwards have challenged the idea of 'author intention', or would construct this argument in terms of the 'intention of the text'. Within the context of this discussion, a definition of 'author intent' is Ferguson's simpler concept; that cycles are the result of unifying strategies applied intentionally by the author—strategies that act as an 'invitation to the reader' to create associations. This definition serves to help define the genre more precisely, and to understand how *Stay* conforms to it.

In *The Contemporary American Short Story Cycle: The Ethnic Resonance of Genre* (2001), James Nagel states that within the genre, 'each contributing unit of the work be an independent narrative episode, and that there be some principle of unification that gives structure, movement, and thematic development to the whole' (qtd. in Ferguson, 2003, p. 3). To further differentiate the short story cycle from the novel or unconnected short fiction collection, Nagel tightly defines six characteristics, or unifying strategies, that the short story cycle usually includes all or some of:

- A continuing protagonist;
- A consistent setting;
- A progressive development of theme;
- The recurrence of people, places, objects, and situations;
- Continuing ideas;
- Framing episodes that begin and end the collection (qtd. in Geyer).

Stay utilises all of these strategies. It has a single protagonist, Adam Lang. Its settings are predominantly the urban domestic environments of the western middle class. Themes and ideas are explored repetitively (as discussed earlier in this exegesis). Metaphor is used on a macro level (such as the use of London across stories such as *Y2K* and *Signs of Life*, to

reflect Adam and Claire's relationship). The collection features mirrors as a recurring motif, both the object (a comment on the self-reflectivity of the characters) and in mirrored characters (reactive, acted-upon Laura mirrors proactive, choice-making protagonist Adam). The collection is chronological in time except for its framing episode bookends, *Sunday Afternoon Drop-Off*, the macro-narrative's central crisis, and *Coda: Hope and Regret*, the macro-narrative's denouement.

Ancient roots: the history of the short story cycle

The modern short story cycle traces its roots back to ancient texts. Nagel, in *The Contemporary American Short Story Cycle: the Ethnic Resonance of Genre*, claims the genre's origins are 'antedecant to the novel, with roots in the most ancient of narrative traditions' (qtd. in Geyer)—the oral tradition of prehistory.

According to Nagel, the historic meaning of 'cycle' is a 'collection of verse or narratives centering around some outstanding event or character' (ibid). Cyclic forms, then, were used in ancient history by the Greek poets (notably Aesop), in the Bible, and in *One Thousand and One Nights*. In western literature, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* are early landmark works within the genre.

James Nagel, Susan Mann and Charles May each point to Washington Irving's *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon* (1820) as the first modern cycle. Stories in the collection, including *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, feature regional settings and characters and have in common their eponymous narrator.

In the twentieth century, the genre developed in sophistication. Seminal early works include James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914), Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) and William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* (1942).

All three authors were clear that these works were not a series of unrelated stories, but rather, formed an integrated, connected whole, and were intended to be read as such.

Throughout the later twentieth century, the genre was adopted by many writers, and although still a niche genre, experienced a surge in popularity. Hemingway's *In Our Time* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tales of the Jazz Age* are unified by their focus on an historical era. *Dubliners* and John Steinbeck's *The Long Valley* are unified via a common setting. Cultures, communities or families bind *Winesburg, Ohio*, *Go Down, Moses*, Tim Winton's *The Turning* and Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*. In Hemingway's *The Nick Adams Stories* and Alice Munro's *The Beggar Maid: Tales of Flo and Rose*, a central protagonist or couple is the primary unification device. Additionally, the genre has recently been explored in film, with notable cinematic examples including *Paris je t'aime*, *Sin City*, *Traffic*, *The Hours*, *Love, Actually*, *Four Rooms*, *Pulp Fiction* and *Three Colours Trilogy*. The diversity of these contemporary filmic and literary examples further serves to illuminate how problematic a task it is to uniformly define the genre.

This exegesis looks in more depth at two influential contemporary works alongside *Stay: The Joy Luck Club* and *The Turning*, both shining examples of the strengths and the unique opportunities short story cycles offer.

Core ideas and genre choice

The short story cycle genre facilitated the exploration of the two key ideas in *Stay*: that our pasts are part of us, and that there are always at least two sides to a story.

The stories in *Stay* represent shards of the pasts of those who influence, or have influenced, the collection's protagonist, Adam Lang.

These influences are sometimes direct, and sometimes subtle. Malcolm, Adam's father, unconsciously passes his fear of abandonment to his children—a fear based on his mother's premature death. This inherited fear impacts on the actions of the adult Adam (who sabotages his relationships to avoid being abandoned) and Laura (who clings to relationships with a grim determination). In other stories, we develop an understanding of Adam's wife's historical abuse of substances, as a way of dealing with mental illness, long before this affects Adam. In the collection's central crisis, it is hoped that the empathetic reader will draw on these and other glimpses from the past that reveal the foundations of Adam's emotional world and go some way to explaining how he comes to betray his wife.

By providing what seems at first to be only tangentially-related fragments and glimpses into the past of various characters, and then exploring the impact of these revealed events in the present, *Stay* implicitly offers the reader the opportunity to reflect on the cyclical, non-linear nature of our emotional lives. When Adam's young daughter picks up a re-found doll and murmurs 'She was very lonely. She missed me very lots,' we can sense her inherited sensitivity—the cycle, the handing down of 'emotional DNA' repeating itself.

Amy Tan, author of an influential contemporary work, *The Joy Luck Club*, utilises the genre's form and characteristics in a similar way. In her analysis of the work, theorist Mariela Gunn proposes that Tan's use of the short story cycle genre serves to highlight 'the aspect of cyclical repetition in the relationship between women of successive generations' (Gunn).

'The short story cycle reaffirms the theme of continuity by repetition in the bond between women from successive generations by means of its structure... The mothers' narratives exemplify just a minute piece of the eternity of circular repetitiveness in the mother-daughter relationships (Gunn).

The second core idea that *Stay* explores is that there are always at least two sides to a story. The world of *Stay* is small, and populated by people who have hope, people who want to be ‘good’—people who are usually, at least to a small degree, self-aware. When Bridget and Adam commit adultery, the reader can empathise with the grief and vulnerability of Bridget, the sense of abandonment Adam feels. There is no villain, just two people acting on impulse. The reader, drawing from their broader, mosaic knowledge of both characters, can understand what motivates this impulse—it is my hope that as they read, they cringe in despair for Adam and Bridget’s actions, which represent a loss of hope for each.

Similarly, the life event of becoming a parent is explored from different angles. Working from the idea that there is no such thing as a ‘normal’ birth, the characters in *Stay* experience those issues common to people wanting to create a family: lack of a partner to have children with, failed IVF attempts, miscarriage, still birth, birth trauma and post-natal depression are all explored, as are the simple and profoundly joyful emotions of a new parent or grandparent.

Tim Winton’s short story cycle *The Turning* similarly features a central protagonist, Vic Lang, and depicts him from several different perspectives and vantage points, at different times in his life. As theorist Michiel Heyns stated, from a structural perspective, the collection is masterly:

‘The links between the stories are planted so surreptitiously that it takes a while before you realise that you are reading, much of the time, multiple perspectives on a single story... [Vic Lang] is mentioned in passing in the very first story... only later does the full drama emerge... We have, in effect, the breadth of a novel, enlivened by the opportunistic flexibility of the short story, the master narrative emerging only gradually from oblique angles and apparently disjointed fragments, into the clarity of achieved art (Heyns, 2006).

It is these ‘oblique angles’ and ‘disjointed fragments’ that provide the opportunity, in cycles such as *Stay* and in *The Turning*, to empathise, not only with the protagonist, but with lesser, but pivotal characters such as *Stay*’s Bridget and *The Turning*’s Boner MacPharlane—characters that might otherwise be cast in a less sympathetic light.

Opportunities and challenges within the genre

Using Mann's broad definition of the short story cycle (and including her theory that the inter-related stories work together to create 'something that could not be achieved by a single story'), Ferguson's idea of author intention/reader creation and Nagel's 'unifying strategies', it is possible to examine the unique opportunities the genre provides beyond supporting the core ideas of the collection.

Gerald Lynch, in *The One and the Many: English-Canadian Short Story Cycles*, notes the primary opportunity offered by the genre is in its: 'formal possibilities that allow its practitioners the opportunity to challenge... the totalizing impression of the traditional novel of social and psychological realism' (qtd. in Ferguson, 2003, p. 3).

Put another way, the charm of the genre lies in its possibility. Freed from the constraints of a linear, developing plot, the short story cycle can also utilise the array of devices available to the short story form; Heyns' 'opportunistic flexibility of the short story', to create a sum greater than its parts. In *Stay*, this meant being able to freewheel across generations, oceans and decades in order to detail shards of the characters' pasts—in particular, those fragments of the past that in some way impact on the protagonist's present. It meant being able to look at the same event from differing, even opposing, perspectives. It meant being able to freely ask (and answer): why?

Tim Winton, in a 2007 interview, spoke of his beliefs on the ongoing influence of the past, an attitude that doubtless informed the structural and narrative development of *The Turning*: 'Everything that happens in the past *stays*. Nothing goes away, it's all present—in DNA, in memory, in collective unconscious, you know, it's in our biology. Every bit of shit that was put in the river gathers up in the fish and ends up in your body' (qtd. in Bisley, 2007).

By bringing this to bear in *The Turning* using the cycle form, Winton achieves a work that offers the depth and breadth that might otherwise take a word count high into the six figures. Without the trappings of a linear plot, he moves through time and perspective fluidly and in seemingly insignificant ways. Throughout the cycle, however, connections and details and shifting perspectives accumulate and gather pace and rigour. Additionally, environment is hero; Winton's desolate working-class town in remote and dusty western Australia pervades every story, bleaching the characters in despair while Winton tenderly illuminates their humanity.

In *The Joy Luck Club*, widely referred to as a 'novel', Amy Tan uses the titular club as a 'framework, the basis for the community, and a way to relate what would otherwise be disconnected stories and disparate characters with individual pasts' (Tan, 2010). On her process in developing the work, Tan describes how she wrote short stories, then later wove them together into a premise. 'I did not intentionally limit the stories to those of mothers and daughters. That naturally came to be, and I only recognized it in retrospect. When the book was published, the short story collection was called a novel by reviewers.'

The flip side of the freedom afforded by the short story cycle genre? Ferguson describes the inherent challenge: 'This hybrid genre [is] in some sense oxymoronic, since the brevity and concentration of the short story are contravened by their assembly in a larger fictional entity' (Ferguson, 2003, p. 2). In *Stay*, the central challenge of the cycle was to make it work on the short story level, while also creating a larger entity that provides the reader with a satisfying sense of a whole—a whole that is not too tidily consequential, nor too heavy-handed.

Stay is linked in many ways: in time, by protagonist, by setting, ideas, themes and motif. The collection's protagonist and other major characters also have their own simple narrative arcs. Adam, the protagonist, meets Claire, loses Claire then wins her back. Laura feels abandoned by her

mother, resents her, and experiences a powerful and healing reconciliation when she becomes aware of the depth of her mother's love. Malcolm's journey sees him abandoned by his parents, forgiving his neglectful father, and experiencing the perfect inverse of grief when his granddaughter is born. The 'story around the stories' speaks of the way we pass on or inherit emotional issues: Malcolm passes on his fear of abandonment, which manifests in different ways in Adam and Laura's lives. With so many close links, it was challenging to avoid the weightiness of repetition, to ensure each story moved the collection forward (or indeed, around) in terms of its ideas and themes, and to make sure the collection didn't suffer from repetitive downloads of back story.

As *Stay* moved into redraft, the primary focus was to identify and reduce laborious or cumbersome elements of causality and consequentiality between the stories. This remains the challenge with the collection. Moving forward into a third revision, I will continue to trust that my knowledge of the characters, and my understanding of the internal logic of the work as a whole, will ensure cohesiveness within the collection. I will further embrace ambiguity, exploration, differing perspectives and lightness, and reject explanation and extrapolation. Trusting that the collection will be more than just the sum of the parts allows me, at the individual story level, to capture those fragile moments, Pritchett's 'something glimpsed'. To, as Raymond Chandler said in *Principles of a Story* (2005): 'Get in, get out. Don't linger. Go on'.

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