

Cul-de-sac

(Thesis)

&

The Limits and Possibilities of Words

(Exegesis)

Lorraine Marson

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Abstract

The genesis for my thesis *Cul-de-sac*, a work of realist fiction, lies in the notion that the past always informs the present, that a character's birthplace, formative years, and familial relations place an indelible stamp like a birthmark upon them. The main protagonist in my thesis, Abbey Elliot rubs at this birthmark throughout her childhood and adolescence, rejecting a path clearly mapped out for her. Whether walking down a Sydney street, working for an art agency in London's Soho, or suffocating in a plush Boston sitting room, Abbey comes to accept how her background can thwart desire but often liberate it too. It is through this character that I explore ways of being and ways of living.

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Candidate's signature

Lorraine Marson

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The Limits and Possibilities of Words

Introduction

The contemporary landscape is very different from that of thirty years ago. There has been a revolution in technology that has informed and transformed every part of our lives, sending our inmost thoughts hurtling into various spheres of discourse and enquiry, from social media sites such as *Facebook* to 24 hour news online agencies like www.bbc.com. In one sense everyone is a writer. More words are written by more people than at any other time in history. We don't need permission to share our lives on *Facebook* or our opinions through any number of other social media. We can self-publish our work, text and blog ad infinitum, even older men and women who years ago would never have picked up a pen.

Has this given the written word more credence and power or will it, because of the nature of the medium, render those words insignificant as it consigns them to the digital ether? Has it lessened the pull of realist fiction? As Jeanette Winterson says,

"If television and cinema can mop up that need for narrative drive, for life as it is lived, for a picture of the everyday, then great! Let it ... that should free up words into something far more poetic, something about the inner life, the imaginative life." Paris Review, (No 150).

She goes on to say,

"Unless you are absolutely and thoroughly soaked in English language and literature (if you are writing in English), you will never know what you need to know. The funny thing about creative writing courses is that they busily rush around teaching people how to express their banalities without teaching them how to source the things they need to discover. If you go and study music or painting, you learn about the past. You learn where to look, you learn what to look at, how to look things up. You need creative reading courses not creative writing courses." Paris Review, (No 150).

I'm challenged and provoked by the confidence in the words of Jeanette Winterson, and want to explore these ideas through my exegesis. I'm writing an emerging realist fiction with narrative drive, but is it well written? Or is it full of well-expressed banalities? Have I read enough? Or will I never know what I need to know?

My writing life started only recently in 2011. My reading life started in earnest when I was a teenager. Before that I read indiscriminately and all the time, but did not have easy access to

books so apart from a few classics (*Heidi*, *The Incredible Journey*, *Black Beauty*) I read children's annuals from the 1920s, magazines and, in early adolescence, Mills and Boon romances. Not an auspicious start, but the habit of reading saw me move swiftly on to more difficult texts which would sometimes be indecipherable to me. I still read indiscriminately, but it was and remains to literary fiction that I am drawn. A career in both publishing and bookselling later allowed me to feed my habit.

Reading and writing have been the most all absorbing of my interests through my life and the desire to write, one that stayed with me through the years. Spooked by the magnitude and genius of all the writers I have read and worked with, my own writing started at a time of flux and change. Without the constraints of work, I could see a space open up that would allow me to write. I joined a writers' workshop and embarked on the long journey that has brought me to an MA thesis and this exegesis. Am I 'absolutely and thoroughly soaked in English language and literature?' Probably not. Do I have permission to write? First of all, I must give myself permission. That has been the longest journey.

Synopsis

When Abbey Elliot flies to Australia she leaves behind a boy she loves, a mother she hates and a father she pities. Brave, independent and ambitious, she has grown up in a suburban Christchurch neighbourhood in the 1960s and 70s, full of instability, silence and a childhood trauma that will take her half way across the world to discover.

Abbey rejects the limited expectations that are her birth right. Away from the confines of marriage and children that is all her family ask of her. Her brother, Michael, full of education, hard work and bravado, seems to fulfil his dreams with an ease Abbey can only wonder at. He too, has seen a path she should take and worries at her stubborn adherence to her own ideals.

Abbey thinks she can find another way to live, buoyed by the changing social landscape women now find themselves in in the late 1970s. She is heartened too by her friendship with Maia Cassidy, a friendship that comes to haunt her as Maia chooses a very different path to her own. Talented, high spirited and impulsive, Maia is involved with Ivan Creed, who exerts a powerful influence over her, to become a troubling presence in both Maia and Abbey's lives.

In Australia Abbey finds love again with artist, Tony Edwards, has a tragic friendship with German Jewess, Fredrika Teller and an enduring one with bookseller, Eileen Champion. She is drawn into the world of theatre by Maia and Ivan and art by Tony. But, always, she must earn her living. Lacking the education her brother Michael has, her working life is spurious, often hostile, and sometimes exploitative. Negotiating it from New Zealand to Sydney then to London through the tumultuous years of the eighties, it is a background and boundary to Abbey's expectations in a life that is lived without the stabilising influence of family money.

In London, as Abbey's ties to her homeland loosen with distance and time, she finds herself driven backwards by memories. Of her childhood, of a house with blue paint splattered on a brick wall, of Maia disintegrating and out of reach, and of Ivan, a self-appointed antagonist whose creative but often ruthless nature, leaves Abbey questioning her own motives in a life changing event that sees her confront her past in order to embrace her future.

Motivation behind the creative work

The structure and discipline of the MA in Creative Writing, has allowed me to complete an 83,000 word work of realistic fiction. The Masters has provided me with my mentor Siobhan Harvey's guidance and its weekly Masterclasses immersing me in craft, content and group discussions. As I didn't have an undergraduate degree, my path onto the Masters course came with the submission of two chapters of written work, which were taken from the start of what became my thesis. This meant that I began the Masters without a thorough plan of what the finalised work might be; however, in this, I was forced to mine the unconscious, to feel my way through a dense fog, through the characters themselves and their stories. Perhaps I was without any signposts; or as Smither (2010) so eloquently put it,

"How strange it is to go deeply into yourself like a diver going down into the depths of the ocean with a torch on his head. Feeling your way in the murk, sensing grotesquery's slide into their burrows. The feeling, though everything is unfamiliar, of being watched. And when the surface is regained or the next sentence put down, the strangeness remains, like the fast receding recollection of a dream."(p.71).

Or, as Virginia Woolf also stated similarly, using the analogy of light, I was: Atwood (2002),

"... writing a novel is like walking through a dark room, holding a lantern which lights up what is already in the room anyway." (p.xxiii).

But to do so excited me, as well as overwhelming me with a sense of panic and a desire to rush along with the story, telling not showing. Irrespective, the more I immersed myself in

the act of engagement with writing, the more I had a sense of what shape the story might have. Up until joining the Masters course, I had written short stories and some non-fiction pieces. So I also had to scope in my head the trajectory an 80,000 word manuscript would take.

In following this trajectory, one of the first practical decisions I made about the development of the narrative was to use third person and a free, indirect style. Wood (2008) says,

“... when I talk about free indirect style I am really talking about point of view, and when I am talking about point of view I am really talking about detail, and when I am talking about detail I am really talking about character, and when I am talking about character I am really talking about the real, which is at the bottom of my enquiries.”(p.3).

I felt that this approach would be more expansive and allow me the freedom to roam in my character’s heads as Wood states, *“through the character’s eyes and language but also through the author’s eyes and language, too. We inhabit omniscience and partiality at once.”* (p.11). In terms of *the real* I also wanted to explore, in part, Wood’s notion that *“fiction is both artifice and verisimilitude, and that there is nothing difficult in holding together these two possibilities.”* (p.2).

Because my narrative’s themes are based on the idea of home, identity, friendship, alienation and exile, my characters have an interior life that is about impressions and feelings. The emotive world they inhabit being as present as the ground they walk on. Wood calls realism *“liveness, life on the page, life brought to different life by the highest artistry.”*(p.186).

This seems to me a fitting defence for the contemporary novel and, in creating my main protagonist Abbey Elliot, I wanted to strive for ‘*life brought to different life*’ in my rendering of character using the best arrangement of words I could muster.

I also wanted to use the present tense to bring immediacy to the page as the narrative is set in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. As an emerging writer, I often have difficulty sustaining the present tense and would frequently lapse into the more familiar immediate past. So, in a sense, I created for myself an added pressure in my quest to see a coherent first draft.

The time constraints I faced have also been instrumental in the way the work has developed. I am aware that there are elements in the narrative that need more attention. For instance, depth of characterisation has sometimes been underplayed in my haste to realise a coherent story within the nine months of the university year. I have completed a third draft and am

discovering as I go, and with the invaluable help of my primary supervisor, Siobhan Harvey, all the areas I will need to develop as I continue to let this story unfold. As Siobhan walks beside me I am able to see on a micro level my clumsy sentence construction and lack of variation in their length, my uninhibited use of too many conjunctions, my inattention to the detail in a scene where more would create atmosphere. On a macro level it is the deeper motivations of my characters that I must wrestle with, the transitions within scenes and an on-going attention to structure and plot.

Genre

My primary supervisor, Siobhan Harvey has categorised my narrative as Women's Literary Fiction. This genre, literary fiction, Stein (1995) says,

“is concerned primarily with character understood in depth and engaged in activities that are resonant with the ambiguities and stresses of life...Those novelists and nonfiction writers who strive to produce durable work share an interest in precision and freshness in the use of words, in insights into human nature and the physical world, and in resonance. These writers usually develop a ‘voice’ or style that is distinctive.” (p. 251).

I found my own experience of writing not only about giving myself permission to write, but finding the time and space in which to write, and also, the difficulty of discovering that ‘voice’. I knew I would have to write lots of words before I found any coherence on the page, no matter what the inherent rightness and quality of the language would bring to the words. I think I have always been mindful of what Simone de Beauvoir says about Virginia Woolf's, *A Room of One's Own*, “*she (sic) talks about the situation of women. It's a short essay, but it hits the nail on the head. She explains very well why women can't write.*” De Beauvoir goes on to say, “*Have you seen any photos of her? An extraordinarily lonely face...*” *Paris Review* (No 35). To me this is a poignant reminder of the place of women in literature.

Mullin (2006) explores Virginia Woolf's assertion in a *Room of One's Own* that:

“Women's writing ... is an art of exclusion, ‘if one is a woman one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness, say in walking down Whitehall, when from being the natural inheritor of that civilisation, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical.’” (p.142)

Mullin goes on to say,

“A Room of One’s Own develops Woolf’s thought from earlier in her career that women’s writing was a genre of its own: It is possible, however, that both in life and in art the values of a woman are not the values of a man. Thus, when a woman comes to write ... she will find that she is perpetually wishing to alter the established values-to make serious what appears insignificant to a man, and trivial what to him is important.” (p142).

My idea in formulating a ‘mindset’ for my main character is an inherent belief that her gender, where she is born, and the class she is born into, make her an unwilling participant in a rigid set of values that are pre-ordained, and that she herself does not adhere to. There is inarticulacy to her thought patterns, but an overriding belief that she will walk her own path. In the early parts of the narrative there is a meandering almost stream of consciousness quickness to the flow of thought as I write from childhood through to adolescence that slows down in adulthood. I had difficulty navigating this path and I have to address the pace in my work in subsequent drafts.

About a third of the way into the narrative I also discovered that I had unconsciously used the characters I was developing in two short stories. One story was about a close friendship between two girls who reach adulthood and go their separate ways, and the other was about a Jewish man who settled in New Zealand after the Second World War. The girls became Abbey Elliot and Maia Cassidy and the Jewish man became a woman called Fredrika Teller who settled in Sydney, Australia after the Second World War. Abbey meets Fredrika in Australia and both are ostensibly outsiders, looking into a culture they both have no real investment in. Fredrika gives Abbey a window into another world. She is older, cultured, has known great tragedy, and acts as a salve for Abbey’s deceased grandmother who had shown her unconditional love. In the character of Fredrika, and Abbey and Maia to some extent, I was trying to explore the conditions that women so often find themselves in when they live a life of their own choosing, outside of the conventions of marriage and family and in exile.

I have also described the relationship Abbey has with her brother, Michael who she sees as the one with the ‘bright future’ in front of him. *“Somewhere in his arcane nature she hopes he will have the bright future predicted for her by Doctor Cunningham.”* Marson (2015). This hints at a deeper psychological truth I was unaware of – one illustrated by Weil (2006) when she quotes Irigaray:

“‘Patriarchal culture has repressed its own maternal origins and it has made it impossible for women to represent or imagine their own relation to the mother by refusing her difference from the male subject.’ Antigone, not Oedipus, is the mythical figure Irigaray turns to in order to demonstrate the resulting genealogical impasse

for women. Antigone can envision a future only through her brother. As a woman she has no future and identifies with her mother not in giving life but in suicide.” (p.168).

I also developed the main character’s world through intertextuality. The impetus for this came from feedback my primary supervisor, Siobhan Harvey gave me in our one to one meetings throughout the course of the year. She gave me the confidence to explore the world’s my main protagonist finds herself in with reference to the books she reads, one being *The Making of Americans* by Gertrude Stein. The fluidity of meaning and experimentation in Stein’s prose act as a metaphor for Abbey’s state of mind at the time of reading:

“Abbey gradually stops going to her job and worries at her savings. She takes methedrine and reads Gertrude Stein ... finding a trajectory in her reading that has no bearing on her surroundings, her friends or her experiences. She reads and reads and the words fall over her ‘... perhaps no one will ever know the complete history of every one. This is a sad thing. Perhaps no one will ever have as a complete thing the history of any one. This is a very sad thing ... Surely some one some time will have a complete history of some one ...’ as she stumbles over repetitions and laborious renderings of personality and place and wild divergent scenes so she doesn’t know where she is in history, her own history obliterated or is that the whole point.”
Marson (2015).

As Birch (2006) says, which has freed me, the writer, to interpret Stein’s work:

“...no matter how appropriate you think your reading to be, there is no way you can make that reading the ‘correct one’ by implying or declaring it to be the same as the writer’s. As analyst and critic you are not a nameless and faceless explicator of someone else’s meaning. You are involved in explaining how texts mean for you and no-one else. And to do that requires that you are known. ...The way you construct meanings for texts depends on the way you construct theories about the world – about realities.”(p.25).

In thinking about the novels that resonate and always stay with me, I am drawn back to the writing of Jean Rhys and her early series of novels set in Paris between the wars. In *Quartet* 1928, *Good Morning Midnight* 1939, *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* 1930. It is the sparse writing style, her adherence to truth, her fearless depiction of her lonely, marginalised heroines often lost but still striving in the “*felt experience of life*” as Robinson (2012) calls it, referring to the soul. I can see Rhys’s influence in the portrayal of my main protagonist Abbey Elliot, and her friend Maia Cassidy.

A more formal examination would be as Spilka (1990) says “...*what constitutes a novel is the experiences and oppositions of ‘felt forms of life’ rather than kinds of fiction.*” (p.39). Or is there a politics of exclusion when Pearce (1990) says,

“the question I would ask is what constitutes felt forms of life? Or isn’t this, like ‘humanism’ a term that pretends to be universal but is nonetheless defined by those who taught us how to read and passed down a particular literary tradition? If we feel the urge to impose order on chaos, don’t we also feel the exclusion that certain forms of order impose? Robert Scholes points out that a generation of women had to stifle their reactions to Hemingway or be told they had not learned the lessons of ‘close reading’.” (p.39).

My female characters bear some of this inheritance in their meanderings and strivings and failings. Both Abbey and Maia are away from home. Maia becomes embroiled in a life of excess and her artistic temperament sees her mostly unemployed relying on others to keep her alive. Abbey Elliot strives to do well but the odds are stacked against her due to her lack of education. Jean Rhys offered me a way to think about women and girls and how they are depicted in fiction that didn’t necessarily adhere to the more orthodox version of the ‘hero’s journey’ no matter the outcome. Rhys never denied the material for her novels came from her own life, but, as Diana Athill says in the Introduction to *The Early Novels*, “*Jean Rhys could stand back and her concentration on the process was as intense as a tight-rope walker. As a result her novels do not say ‘This is what happened to me,’ but ‘this is how things happen.’*” (p.2).

Grant (2013) says, “*When I read Rhys, I lost interest in fireworks in fiction. Sentence after apparently unremarkable sentence would pass until suddenly you would feel yourself hit in the solar plexus by the accumulated tension. I would look back and ask: how did you do that?*”

According to male writers and critics of the time domesticity, romance, and motherhood were not the stuff of novels. Mullin (2006) states that Ford Maddox Ford praised (Rhys’s novels) for their:

“‘instinct for form’ but criticised them for their ‘sordid’ subject matter – women living alone in squalid bedsits, trading sexual favours for subsistence. Similarly T.S.Eliot paid Katherine Mansfield’s work the backhanded compliment of praising ‘the skill with which the author has handled perfectly the minimum material,’ the ‘slightness’ of both her content and her chosen form, the short story, making her writing ‘what I believe would be called feminine.’” (p.145).

Therefore, in choosing to write about the lives of two ordinary girls while not bathed in domesticity, but reacting against the drudgery they see their mothers enact every day, I am following a tradition that is perhaps even more relevant today as women strive to find balance in a complex world that demands they be part of the work force but also requires them to be

exemplary mothers. The genre of “women’s writing” has a long and discordant history even though seventy years have passed since these great modernist women writers were deftly marginalised. There is still debate that flares up. In 2011 V S Naipaul called Diana Athill’s memoir *Somewhere Towards the End*, ‘feminine tosh’. Debate also as recently as 2013 about the place of women’s fiction on short lists for book prizes and in the review sections of newspapers. There is still debate about how many female critics write for the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *London Review of Books* and its New York counterpart.

“*The Man Booker Prize has been given to a woman 17 times in 45 years. The Pulitzer Prize for fiction has been given to a woman 18 times in 67 years. The Pen Faulkner Award has been given to a woman 8 times in 33 years.*” Heller (2013). This suggests sexism and the advantages in education and social cache that men have enjoyed for eons that goes some way to explain it but as Zoe Heller also says, “*The obliging helpmates who have traditionally made so much novel writing possible are still more likely to be men’s wives than women’s husbands.*”

This is the history behind which I sit at my desk and try to write every day. It inhibits and incites me but it could never stop me writing about two ordinary girls. On a more personal journey my writing is both an exorcism and a eulogy. In my characters I try to invoke a sensibility that is intelligent and authentic. I drew upon my memories of the seventies and eighties and am still trying to impart a flavour of the times in the narrative without being too obvious. I struggle with saying velvet bellbottoms or platform shoes for example and am striving for a more subtle approach that may not succeed.

The Bildungsroman

In a Masterclass on *Structuring the Plot*, (March 31, 2015) Bianca Zander gave me a deeper understanding of how my thesis was progressing with the realisation that I was drawn to character driven stories. And that plot was equally important in literary novels. Their complexity, often influenced by a characters desires rather than by external events and illustrated in a series of conflicts that lead to internal change for the protagonist. It is in this internal change and the progression of the plot that, as a sub-genre, I can see affinities in my narrative with a coming-of-age or Bildungsroman story. It is specifically to the female tradition of Bildungsroman that I want to reference.

“Nancy Miller defines the Bildungsroman as an ‘ambitious text’ - which traces the development of a young man, not just from youth to maturity, but from powerlessness to a position of power. So where does that leave the young woman, except to marry or die at the end of her story?” Pearce (p.39).

Hence the progression over the last two hundred years from that young man (the genre is normally dated to the publication of *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* by Johann Wolfgang Goethe in 1795-96) through to female characters in novels from Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* to Jeanette Winterson’s *Oranges Are not the Only Fruit*. Although Winterson would say, most emphatically, that it is not a Bildungsroman because it interweaves the main linear story of the protagonist’s growing up with fairy stories, Arthurian myth and dream sequences. It also questions its own voracity in terms of fiction and doesn’t adhere to straightforward plot devices so becoming a postmodern pastiche. Jane is a heroine for Winterson’s own mother and when telling the story to her daughter Jeanette, she always suppressed the ending by telling Jeanette that Jane agrees to a loveless marriage with St John Rivers in order to be able to go to India as a missionary. Winterson too, suppresses any idea of heterosexual love by returning home to her mother in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. It still, however, adheres to the basic premise of a Bildungsroman:

Cosslett (1998) says *“Like Jane, Jeanette is maltreated by a false mother figure, she suffers at school, she battles against loveless fundamentalist religion, she has a demonic alter-ego; she is parted from her love by religious prohibitions.”*(p.24).

McWilliams (2009) states that *“Jane Eyre ... represents the apotheosis of the nineteenth-century interest in female narratives of self-realization.”* (p.17).

She goes on to say that one of the most influential books of feminist literary criticism, Gilbert and Gubar’s *The Mad Woman in the Attic*, -

“ takes its title from the famous crux in Jane Eyre and summarises the novel as: a story of enclosure and escape, a distinctively female Bildungsroman in which the problems encountered by the protagonist as she struggles from the imprisonment of her childhood toward an almost unthinkable goal of mature freedom are symptomatic of difficulties Everywoman in a patriarchal society must meet and overcome: oppression (at Gateshead), starvation (at Loward), madness (at Thornfield), and coldness (at Marsh End).” (p.339).

The progression of my own protagonist, Abbey Elliot, adheres to the various stages that address the female Bildungsroman. She rejects the confines of marriage, has a conflicted relationship with her own mother also echoed in the character of Maia and her difficult

relationship with her mother. She struggles to embrace the attitude her mother has, completely subsumed under the patriarchal blanket of her times and class, with her own striving towards a different path as McWilliams (2009) set illustrates below:

“Such examples of the female Bildungsroman often develop along the same trajectories as those associated with the masculine tradition. Recurring motifs and defining moments in the course of the protagonist’s progress frequently include: separation from the constraints of marriage and domesticity, conflict with an older generation complicit in perpetuating oppressive images of femininity, deliverance into a radically different social sphere.” (p.37).

McWilliams is talking about Marge Piercy’s *Small Changes* (1972), Erica Yong’s *Fear of Flying* (1974) and Marilyn French’s *The Woman’s Room* (1978). “all overtly political in the way they attack existing stereotypes and explore the possibilities for female development and self-realization.” McWilliams (p.36).

These books were seminal in my own growing up and while in both *The Woman’s Room* and *Small Changes* the “radically different social sphere” leads both protagonists to an academic community where they can pursue: McWilliams (2009) “*freedom of self-expression and the pursuit of intellectual fulfilment*” (p.36), my own protagonist Abbey Elliot, finds herself party to the mechanisms of a radically different social class through the work she adopts on a different continent. Her position, however, remains conflicted, alienated as she is from that privileged world. She remains somewhat static in terms of transcendence, not unlike Rhys’s heroines who come to an acceptance of their circumstances.

Conclusion

There is a voice I can hear at the end of this exegesis, a niggling inquiry concerned with what I thought I was doing writing my thesis. How much I believed in myself and my ability to write. It is Jeanette Winterson’s voice and she says:

“You have to choose the best of the past – and the standards are very high in the English language – and ask yourself, where do I figure in this, do I come anywhere near it? If not, you may as well stop. If you really think that you are nowhere compared with the people you admire - and that has to be a very ruthless and honest self-examination and not simply flattery – then really you should stop.” Paris Review, (No.150).

I am not going to stop. If “*there are only three possible endings to any story: revenge, tragedy or forgiveness*” as Winterson also suggests, *Paris Review*,(No.150), the story that

unfolds in *Cul-de-sac* is one I could never have prepared for. It offers no place for self-doubt on behalf of the writer and in completing it to a third draft to a conclusion that seeks forgiveness and renewal, I, in a sense, have to forgive myself for all my failings as a writer, as I am my own worst critic. O'Connor (1972) says,

*"If you go to a school where there are classes in writing, these classes should not be to teach you how to write, but to teach you **the limits and possibilities of words**¹ and the respect due them. One thing that is always with the writer ... is the continuing process of learning how to write."* (p.83).

If Abbey Elliot is learning how to live in my narrative then her creator, Lorraine Marson is learning how to write. I hope that journey will always continue. O'Connor (1972) offers another very prescient comment that resonates with me,

"If a writer is any good, what he makes will have its source in a realm much larger than that which his conscious mind can encompass and will always be a greater surprise to him than it can ever be to his reader." (p.83).

It is also this element of surprise that has been the greatest revelation to me in my writing journey, and whether my work is ever published or not, has offered me the greatest reward.

In a world where the publishing industry has diminished, become risk averse and relies on the known selling abilities of non-fiction in the way of for example, a celebrity biography, fiction has an even more limited reach. As I suggested in the introduction to this exegesis words, in terms of the online environment, continue to expand but in the real world they are diminishing in the rigorous economic conditions most publishers find themselves in.

However, I take heart that I and myriad others still wish to have the world explained and will always go to the novel. Wood (2015) says in a recent interview,

"By fixing on humdrum domestic details, novels, redeem life and rescue it from its sad ephemerality; a book is not solitary, like the person who reads it, but dispenses 'proximity, fellow-feeling, compassion, communion'". Wood, (2015).

As I continue to realise my manuscript through subsequent drafts I can now acknowledge in the writing of this exegesis, to place in context, given the huge body of work that sits around and behind me, that I will always be a reader. Am I a writer? I like to think so.

¹ Title of Exegesis taken from *Mystery and Manners* by Flannery O'Connor.

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