

Volume II

An Exegesis to Accompany the Novella:

In the Garden Where We've Been Planted

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Thesis Declaration

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Chapter 1 — Introduction

BACKGROUND

My creative artefact, *In the Garden Where We've Been Planted*, is a novella that focuses on a private investigator (PI) who investigates the mysterious disappearance of a Boston-based American Indian¹ artist. In crafting the story, I use Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) as an intertextual exemplar.² The artist is one of the more talented in the New England area, but vanishes from his home where his studio is co-located. Rather than contact the police, his wife, the curator of an Indigenous art collection at a prestigious Boston museum, phones the PI, who is the unnamed narrator of the story. She wants the PI to find her husband and bring him home. Above all, she wants the PI to keep the matter quiet—no publicity that could reflect badly on the artist's reputation or her social status. Why has he gone missing? If it is foul play, surely the police should get involved? So why would the PI risk his licence to practice by keeping things from the police? Perhaps his disillusionment with his professional life after his wife's passing drives him to do a job he normally wouldn't?

The story is a crime-like mystery, but it's not a narrative that takes the form of one of the crime genre's sub-types, such as courtroom drama, legal thriller, murder mystery, police procedural, or the tough-guy detective. The tale might better be classified as a form of a love story—an ordinary person in search of warmth and belonging. The reason for classifying the story in this way is because the concept of love not only drives the plot, but helps add focus to the story's characters, who, through dialogue, tone, structure, and literary techniques (e.g. comic relief), go on to explore issues of emotional, social, and political importance.

1. It is my understanding that the term *American Indian* is the preferred term by a majority of Indigenous Americans. This view is supported by the US Census Bureau which uses the term in its population surveys (US Census Bureau, 2012). Further support is found in the late-Russell Means's remarks on the topic. Means was an activist and founder of the American Indian Movement (AIM). He said that he opposed the term *Native American* because he considered it, “. . . a generic government term used to describe all the Indigenous prisoners of the United States” (Means cited in Wolfram and Reaser, 2014: 187). So, I have used the term *American Indian* throughout the novella and exegesis.

2. Originally published between February 1899 and April 1899 as a three-part series in *Blackwood's Magazine* (Conrad, 1899).

My story seeks to engage the reader with questions regarding the emotions—particularly love and the desire for affection. Nonetheless, the story touches on issues involving racism, fringe politics, social status, and ethics—contrasting the PI’s personal morality with public values. My research project explores several layers of meaning in contemporary relationships through an intersection of popular genre fiction and literary fiction through my creative work.

RATIONALE

Genre Fiction or Literature?

Some scholars might argue that categorising fiction as either genre or literary fiction is a false binary—and to a large degree this argument holds weight. Nonetheless, the two concepts are likely to find a home in a continuum, or spectrum, that varies in degree of literariness. Therefore, looking at fiction on such a scale provides a useful starting point to explain the rationale for my research project.

Acknowledging Monnte’s (2010: 19) caution about trying to assign a definition to genre (“Genre definitions have been notoriously slippery...”), it is not unreasonable to say that, generally, genre fiction is seen as being focused on plot³ (e.g. via characters’ actions and dialogue) (Disher, 1989: 5), whereas literary fiction is more concerned with the characters themselves, their lives, their emotions (e.g. through internal monologue) and, moreover, about engaging with the human condition as expressed through the subtleties of language (Bell, 2004: 14–16).

While a ‘crime’ forms a foundational aspect of my novella’s plot (i.e. a missing person), this crime element provides an external trigger for me to explore what could be described as literary themes. Although there seems to be a tension between crime writers (e.g. PI genre fiction) and writers of literary fiction,⁴ and whether genre is a property of texts, or “...exists as a part of the relationship between texts and readers...” (Frow, 2006: 102), my hypothesis is that the two can co-exist, thereby the resulting work benefits from the use of crime genre conventions to provide structure and tropes, while adopting the thematic and stylistic features of literary writing. *In the Garden Where We’ve Been Planted* deliberately

3. Disher (1983: 5) argues that “...thrillers and detective novels usually have dramatic plots with vigorous action and strong suspense...”

4. Stephen J. Lord, BA(Hons), MA, crime fiction writer and Chair of Crime Writers of South Australia, personal communication, 5 October 2014.

goes against what might be argued as the traditional canon regarding PI crime fiction⁵ and blends the appeal of genre fiction with literary nuances. This goal follows a trend that combines genre plotting with literary quality writing, which is known by various terms, including: "...crossover, mainstream, commercial, commercial literary, between genre, cross-genre, hybrid, up-market, and genre buster novels (Ellis, 2016: 1)." As crime writer, P.D. Martin (personal communication, 5 July 2016) stated, "Literary crime fiction is crime fiction that entertains the reader while also challenging them and their beliefs through language, characterisation or social commentary, to name a few."

The reasons for choosing a literary-leaning approach, and for selecting a love story over a purely detective story, stemmed from my desire to explore creative avenues to avoid stories that have been made into clichés by large commercial publishing houses. By way of example, it could be said that detective fiction influenced by the so-called Golden Age of Detective Fiction is an anachronism. Contemporary crime novels that feature crooked cops, investigators with personality disorders, and female detectives who have deep emotional scars⁶ immediately present themselves as examples. Take for instance the critique about the Australian Television crime mini-series *Secret City*: ". . . [stories like this] inculcate an unrealistic vision of life: [e.g.] every year thousands of new recruits to the [US] Naval Criminal Investigative Service suffer massive letdowns ... Can we bring about a new golden age of evidence-based [story telling], where everything is true-to-life, and nothing is more exciting, more action-packed, or more graphically nude than it is in real-life? I hope so" (Pobjie, 2016).

No doubt there are tough private investigators in the industry on which a story could be influenced, but there are also private investigators with PhDs⁷ (Prunckun, 2013: v and ix; Thompson, 1988: 68–71), as well the likes of young women medical students who moonlight as PIs (Prunckun, 2013: xi). I would assert that these are thinking people who are well-read, hold advanced degrees, and possess manners and cultural sophistication. Nevertheless, there

5. Also known as *detective fiction*.

6. As an example, see the Stephanie Plum bounty hunter series by Janet Evanovich (1994). The first in the series—*One for the Money*—the author describes the protagonist as having been raped as a sixteen-year-old girl by a crooked cop.

7. Arguably, the most noted is Dr Josiah Thompson who was a tenured professor at Haverford College, Pennsylvania, before becoming a private investigator in San Francisco. He is the author of *Six Seconds in Dallas: A Micro-Study of the Kennedy Assassination* (Random House, 1967) and wrote an autobiographical account of his transition from academia to the world of private investigation in *Gumshoe: Reflections in a Private Eye* (Macmillan, 1988).

are exceptions to the traditional generalisation of PI fiction, such as P.D. James who created protagonists that were thinking people. For instance, James's character, Scotland Yard's Detective Superintendent Adam Dalgliesh, is portrayed in a number of her books as a published author of poetry (James, 1963).⁸

Barring such exceptions, to perpetuate the male-centric, fedora-wearing,⁹ stereotype of the Continental Op (Hammett, 1929) or Philip Marlow (Chandler, 1939)—“. . .who down these mean streets a man must go. . .” (Chandler, 1944)—is to a large extent not creative fiction, but a fanciful myth. In support on this assertion, McCann (2000: 198) argued:

By the late-1950s, Raymond Chandler acknowledged that the hardboiled detective story had run its course. Countless imitations had led the private eye into lifeless caricature.

I argue that PIs do not place themselves in harm's way to deal with clients' issues. Other than physical surveillance work, much of a PI's job—whether they are male or female—is done via the Internet.¹⁰

But a story of a PI sitting behind a desk does not make for an absorbing plot. So, I sought to ignore the stereotype of the tough-talking, hard-living detective that, in my view, no longer rings true. My story discards the image of the PI who drinks to excess (e.g. Chandler, 1946: 469–513), is not in a stable relationship (e.g. Greaney, 2014: 316–317), doesn't have children (Corris, 1997: 38), has a cynical attitude towards human emotions (Moore, 2000: 149), bitterness towards society (Moore, 2000: 132), jaundiced view of life (Masterman, 2015), distrusts woman (Corris, 1997: 20) (or men; Grafton, 1983), appears psychotically depressed (Pepper, 2000: 168–169), and/or acts recklessly¹¹ (Gunn, 2013: 27–28).

These portrayals not only apply to male PIs, but female private investigators as well. Take for instance writers such as Sue Grafton, who has since the late-1970s depicted female

8. Though there are critics of these “clue–puzzle” types of novels that are mostly “. . .set in a secluded location, focusing on a circumscribed situation, and equally enclosed in terms of social classes.” (Di Loreto, 2010: 148)

9. Either literal or metaphoric.

10. In secret intelligence work this is referred to as *open source intelligence* (Prunckun, 2015a: 109–130). As an example of how this is used in practice, see Gray's (2003: 20) description of how her PI training as a recruit began with the use of open source data: “On the second day, [management] started to teach us how to search for liens, court cases, and real estate records. The job, [management] explained, was a combination of sophisticated computer research techniques and skilful interviewing. . . . We learned how and where to look, and how to save money doing it.”

11. As well as acting reckless in law; i.e. *criminal recklessness* (Manley, 2010: 89).

PIs as hardboiled characters¹² (Walton and Jones, 1999: 1–3). In contrast, my novella recasts the PI in light of the sophisticated post-9/11 environment in which private investigators now operate (Prunckun 2013: xiii, 1).

THEORETICAL APPROACH

Creative writing exegeses fulfils two functions: 1) to facilitate the development of the creative work; and 2) to underpin the creative work. In regards to the first function, critical theory acts to inspire the writer to create, as a scientific analysis of some aspect in nature may inspire a painter to render the image on a canvas differently (Hecq 2012). The second function involves theory becoming integrated into the creative work so that it produces *new knowledge*. Hecq (2012: 4) said that in order for knowledge to be produced, “. . .theory needs to resonate with the emotions as well as the intellect.” That is, theory “. . .that becomes [assimilated] with the work or that functions in a way so to produce new knowledge. . .” by connecting with “. . .something in the unconscious by immersion in theory.”

In writing *In the Garden Where We've Been Planted* I used two theoretical approaches to ground the story, thus forming the intellectual platform for my subconscious thoughts (i.e. emotional inspiration) to be interpreted and shaped into the novella (i.e. new knowledge). The two approaches that inform my writing are: adaptation theory and intertextuality.

Adaptation

Hawkes (1977: 65–66) pointed out that a “. . .‘story’ is simply the basic succession of events, the raw material, which confronts the artist. [Whereas] plot represents the distinctive way in which the ‘story’ is made strange, creatively deformed and defamiliarised.” Hence, a story like Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* is adaptable by using his “raw material” to craft new stories (Hutcheon, 2006). As such, the appeal for creative writers is the ability to differentiate their stories by varying plot strategies so that the literary devices that comprise these stratagems will make their stories distinct (Hutcheon, 2006:172–177; McFarlane, 1996: 23).

Hutcheon (2006: 149) said that in adapting a previous version of a creative work, it is not necessary to maintain fidelity to the source text because it is “repetition without replication.”¹³ In fact, her argument is that faithfulness to the original work has little to do

12. Grafton’s PI character, Kinsey Millhone, is described on the first page of her first book in her alphabet crime series as “. . .thirty-two, twice divorced, no kids. . . I’ve lived in trailers most of my life. . . I don’t have pets. I don’t have house plants.” (*A is for Alibi*, 1983)

13. This theory also applies to books that are adapted for stage and screen.

with adaptation, or the process of adapting, because the writer will have other motives for making variations (Hutcheon, 2006: xiii, 8). Edward Said (1985: 12) argued that literature is “...an order of repetition, not of originality—but an eccentric order of repetition, not one of sameness.”

It could be argued that because there has been so much fiction written, it is unlikely that anything completely “new” can be created that does not borrow (which could be termed *referenced* or *referencing*) in some way. If we add stage and screen to this list of fictional works (i.e. performed works of fiction), then the possible universe of ideas that can influence a writer expands. For example, Stephen King (2012: 347–348) wrote that, amongst other stories, Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1902) “. . .had an influence on the books I wrote.” Given this potentially vast quantity of material a writer could be exposed to, it is hard to see how this material could not bear influence (directly, indirectly, or consequentially). Therefore, the argument that adaptation theory is relevant to new works becomes quite compelling.

What this means in practice is that the adapted work is influenced by, or reflects similarities to the original work, or that it shows differences. This is a creative and interpretative process based on the original work to produce a new, original work. The “. . . adaptation is a derivation that is not a derivative—a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing” (Hutcheon: 2006: 9). In writing *In the Garden Where We’ve Been Planted* I have used adaptation theory as the theoretical base to construct the story, which is applied in my adaptation of various literary tropes, the most predominant being, dystopian images, images of physical and mental illness, and problematic moral choices.

Intertextuality

Associated with adaptation theory is the theory of intertextuality (Bathes, 1981; Kristeva, 1980). That is to say, with regard to my research project, the readers’ familiarity with the original novella—*Heart of Darkness*. The reader who is acquainted with Conrad’s (1902) work, according to Hutcheon (2006: 21), is likely to experience a “. . .mosaic[s] of citations that are visible and invisible, heard and silent. . .”. She postulates that intertextuality allows connections to be made between the original text and the adapted text, thus establishing a relationship between the two. These connections help engage the reader as their experience of the former provides pleasure with the latter. Hutcheon (2006: 22) points out that readers “.

. . . need memory in order to experience differences as well as similarity.” But even if a reader is not conversant with the original text, Still and Worton (1990: 1) argue this is not a problem, because: “The theory of intertextuality insists that a text . . . cannot exist as a hermetic of self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system.”

Whether conscious or subconscious, reader text-to-text comparisons can be made of works by the same author or works by various authors. Comparisons can be made within the same genre or across genre. Comparisons can also be made regarding the use of literary devices, metaphors, and so on (Wolf, 2004). And, as Hutcheon (2006: 107) points out: “...the political, aesthetic, and autobiographical intentions of the various adapters are potentially relevant to the audience’s interpretation.”

Although literary texts can be analysed in several ways, my research project used a *synoptic* analytic approach. That is, it took a broad view of the problem under consideration and applied it to the type of story at the central of the tale—a quest. What does this mean for my creative writing project? It allows for the validation of adapting *Heart of Darkness*, while emphasising the proposition that intertextuality (Allen, 2011) could be used in the creative process of my novella.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH

The philosopher A.C. Grayling (2009) said that the purpose of art is to elicit a response. He said, it’s not so much the message in the art that does it, but the crafting of the artefact. It is through academic study that these methods are revealed. Therefore, I undertook this research project because I was disappointed with the way creative writers, in general, approached the PI crime writing.¹⁴ I was dissatisfied with the way the genre seemed to be unable to accommodate PI crime writing as “literature,” and as I argue, is wanting when it comes to blending this form of writing with other genres, such as love stories.¹⁵ My aim was to tell a story that reads as interesting, but meaningful.

My specific goal was to write a story that combined literary merit with popular appeal; consciously turning my eye away from the traditional cannon to focus on the so-called

14. Although there can be many interpretations of what constitutes a private investigator crime novel, for the purposes of this exegesis I define PI crime fiction as a story that’s driving principle is the resolution of a conundrum by a private investigator. This definition accounts for civil as well as criminal inquiries.

15. Dostoevsky’s central theme in his book *The Brothers Karamazov* (The Modern Library, 1950) is that love is the highest value of human existence.

“hybrid genre”?¹⁶ To do this, I used Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* as the intertextual prompt for my artefact. This approach was in keeping with what Vella (2005) argued in his paper, *Keeping the Degree Creative*, was a desirable goal for a research inquiry (i.e. a “research question,” “statement of the problem,” or “statement of guiding purpose”). That is to say, the research endeavour needs to address the question: “How can the artist do something better?” For my novella, I interpreted *better* to mean I was able to demonstrate that it could be performed *differently*, thus making a contribution to knowledge.

16. This type of artistic goal has parallels with, say, a musician who interprets a musical score differently than the way the original composer wrote or performed it.

Chapter 2 — Contextual Review

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Original Text

Since Conrad (1902) wrote *Heart of Darkness* there have been numerous adaptations. Being cognisant of these works is important as they bear relevance to my own adaptation. Starting in 1938, Orson Welles attempted to produce *Heart of Darkness* as a motion picture film, but it was abandoned in pre-production. It was, however, successfully adopted as a radio play in 1938 (DeBona, 1994: 16).

In 1958 a television adaptation was produced for the anthology series *Playhouse 90* that aired on the CBS network (Stern, 1958). The most notable production came in 1979 with Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (Milius, Coppola, and Herr, 1979). In 1991, the Australian author and playwright Larry Buttrose (1991) staged a theatrical production entitled *Kurtz* which, again, was an adaptation of *Heart of Darkness*. In 1993 a television adaptation was screened (Fitzgerald, 1994). Tarik O'Regan (2011) produced another version of *Heart of Darkness* as a chamber opera that premiered at the Linbury Theatre of the Royal Opera House, London. It was a one act that featured an English-language libretto by artist Tom Phillips (O'Regan, 2011).

There was also an interactive video game that was released in 2012 that has its story grounded in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Titled *Spec Ops: The Line*, the video game was described by its software developers as a loose, modernised adaptation with the character John Konrad, replacing the original author's character Kurtz (2k Games, 2012). The stage production was performed by the Crossroads Theatre Company, Sydney (Buttrose, 2014).

Finally, there are arguably many stories that have simply been influenced by *Heart of Darkness*; take for instance, Louise Penny's (2014) crime novel, *The Long Way Home*. In the forward, she states that Conrad's text was an influencing factor (Penny, 2014: vii), but I wonder how many other creative writers' stories have experienced the influence exerted by Conrad, but never acknowledged it? I am sure there are many.

Conrad's Influence on My Novella

When writing a history of my family as part of a genealogy project, I discovered a plausible, but unexplored lineage with Joseph Conrad (Prunckun, 2011: 5). Conrad was born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski on 3 December 1857 in what was then the Russian partition of Poland (in 2016, it was part of the Ukraine; Myers, 2001: 10). Being an Anglophile, he became a naturalised British subject and anglicised his name during the process (Myers, 2001: 10). His birth name is the same as my paternal grandmother's family and hence there is a *possibility* that somewhere along the family lineage we are related. Although my research found nothing to support this proposition, the possibility intrigues me. It is also interesting to note that Conrad visited Australia several times between 1879 and 1892 as a merchant sailor. So, there are some connections both in terms of possible family ties and his travels.¹⁷

Moreover, Conrad's novella has established itself as a story that can easily capture readers' imaginations since it was first published in 1902, as it did mine when I read it in a high school English class almost forty-five years ago. In my view, it is a timeless narrative regarding humanity's search for insights into good and evil. This is evidenced by the fact that the story's framework has been adapted by several authors, screenwriters, and playwrights. Therefore, it is my contention that Conrad's novella remains an enduring platform for exploring other issues affecting the human condition by creative artists. It influenced the writing of my novella.

CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

Adapted Text

In the Garden Where We've Been Planted tells the story of an American small town private investigator (PI).¹⁸ The character is seen to be struggling through an existential journey to find meaning in his life after his wife's passing.¹⁹ As this character grapples to overcome

17. I suspect that personal reasons are cited by many creative writers for why they work in a particular genre or with particular subject matter. Take for instance, James Ellroy's fascination with writing about murders. He explained that his interest stemmed from the unsolved murder of his mother in El Monte, Los Angeles, in 1958 when he was ten years old. (Clark, 2014: 15)

18. Prunckun (2013: 9) points out the subtle distinction between the terms *investigator* and *detective*: "In contemporary practice, the term *detective* is usually reserved for sworn police officers, whereas the term *investigator* is used for those occupations other than police—for instance, private investigators and investigators who may be employed in government regulatory and compliance work."

19. Interesting, this aspect of the story could be seen as a sympathetic theme with P.D. James's character, the published detective, Adam Dalgliesh, whose wife also passed away (though her passing was

these internal forces, they bring him in contact with external forces that are not only acting against him, but that provide the material for his character to develop and grow.

But this story could not take place in a contextual vacuum. It needed some sort of setting. If I wrote the story under “normal” studio conditions, I might have created the setting through any number of creative approaches—such as brain storming, blending several subconscious thoughts, or via some method of free association, and so on (Osborn, 1963). Alternatively, the context could have been dictated by a commercial publisher in order to fill a void in their catalogue.

Broadly speaking, crime fiction had its genesis in the nineteenth century. This type of story found its place not in *literature*, where the story is character driven, but in *genre fiction* or *popular fiction* because these stories tend to be plot driven. The subject literature on crime fiction suggests that its germination and evolution are not distinct events that follow a linear path.

Some scholars argue that crime fiction began with stories such as the anthology of folk tales, the *Arabian Nights* (Oxford, 1999). The forerunners to today’s PI crime novels—“precursor” stories in this genre—could be found in horror stories (Breu, 2005: 28–32). This is because these stories gave rise to mysteries, such as those involving plots with “locked doors” (e.g. Poe, 1841; Zangwill, 1896; Meade and Eustace, 1899–1900; and Carr, 1935). These are characterised by a murder where the body is discovered in a room that was locked. This type of theme, as well as other related horror themes, centres on a hidden truth that needs to be discovered, or revealed, by someone—a detective.

These types of stories were followed by the tales of Arthur Conan Doyle in his Sherlock Holmes series. And in turn, it could be argued that Holmes’s character became the father of the *whodunits* and *cosy crime* novels that followed during the Golden Age of detective fiction (1920s to the 1930s). During this period authors such as Agatha Christie, Dorothy L. Sayers and others used twisting and turning plots, red herrings, and other plot devices to sow intrigue.

Much of the so-called cosy crime seems to be British in origin. The Americans, arguably, not sharing the same cultural finesse as their British cousins, responded by

in childbirth and the wife of the protagonist in my story suffered from cancer) (James, 1963). This, as well as other aspects of various crime novels, are discussed later in this exegesis in relation to the use of adaptation theory.

developing an alternative perspective—the hard-boiled approach to crime writing. These novels, as Symons (1993: 143) puts it, were characterised by “. . . the manners, habits and language of the United States. . .” Writers such as Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Ross MacDonald, Jonathan Latimer and Mickey Spillane are some whose characters dominated this genre (Murch, 1968).

Panek (1987: 121) stated that publishers in the 1920s used a “. . .range of gimmicks to further the addiction of readers to detective novels.” These included book clubs, sealed mysteries and writing contests where publishers encouraged readers to try their hand at crafting a detective novel. Although there may have been the occasional creative writer discovered—e.g. Ellery Queen (pseud. of Daniel Nathan and Manfred Lepofsky)²⁰—by-and-large it could be said that these promotions resulted in trying to immerse readers in a genre that was full of “. . .boring, ill-written, clumsy, and hackneyed books. . .” (Panek, 1987: 121). This view is supported by Raymond Chandler (1944: 52) who wrote: “. . .the average detective story is probably no worse than the average novel, but you never see the average novel. It doesn’t get published. The average—or slightly above average—detective story does.”

In the decades since, crime novels continued to evolve and other genres, and subgenres, emerged. By way of example, there are the psychological thrillers and thrillers in allied genres, such as spy and espionage. As well as these, there are those that focus on police procedures, courtroom drama, and legal aspects (Symons, 1966).

Even the subject of the “inquiries” evolved when in “. . .the sixties American writers had gone far beyond Hammett and Chandler in their readiness to draw crooked cops and sadistic cops” (Symons, 1993: 175). The images of the characters also evolved, broadening to represent life’s diverse human tapestry—“Transvestism, lesbianism or homosexuality may be made the basis of stories, and blackmail by means of pornographic films or photographs is commonplace. . .” (Symons, 1993: 175). Gone also are the stereotypical detectives—like Mike Hammer: “A detective now may be a Jew, a black or a homosexual” (Symons, 1993: 175). Gone also was any reservation to shield the reader from the violence—writers now “. . . dwell lovingly on the physical details of violence, the blood on the bed and the head battered to bits, the torture done for fun, the women tied up and gang-raped” (Symons, 1993: 302).

20. “The Roman Hat Mystery” in *McClure's Magazine*, published by Frederick A. Stokes, 1929. *McClure's Magazine* (1893–1929) was a popular illustrated American monthly magazine at the time.

Chapter 3 — Exegetical Analysis of the Creative Artefact

INTERPRETATION

This chapter explores the research question under investigation: Is it possible to write a story that combines literary merit with popular appeal; consciously turning my eye away from the traditional cannon of detective fiction to focus on the hybrid genre? Specifically, I sought to write a novella that accommodated PI crime writing with a literary nuance and blend this form of writing with other genres—the love story.²¹

Here, I explore the research question by presenting my interpretation of how the novella addressed these aspects. In doing so, I frame my analysis in terms of what new contribution it makes to knowledge; first by looking at adaptation, then by discussing the role intertextuality played in the writing the novella.

ADAPTATION

Original Text—Key Themes Observed

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) presents the reader with several themes that are important to my adaptation (or my *re-imagining*). Although there may be others, I identified three key themes that are sustained throughout the novella. The themes are: 1) the dystopian images of colonisation; 2) physical and mental illness that colonisation could bring to individuals who are subjected to geo-political expansionism; and, 3) the moral choices that are involved in making decisions between two malevolent options is problematic, if not unsolvable.

Dystopian Imagery. Kurtz explains his methods for his success in the ivory trade (on behalf of the Company). On the face of it, Kurtz's (and, the Company's) accomplishments appear to present as wonderful economic successes, but as it emerges, these are a result of Kurtz using unbridled force—"suppression" (Conrad, 1902: 45 and 66) and "extermination" (Conrad,

21. A *love story* has romance as part of the narrative, but it is not the central part of the story. If the writer was to edit out the romance, and the story still stood, then it could be considered a love story. Whereas, a romance novel's focus is the romance. If the writer were to remove the romance, there would be no story to tell. (Parv, 1993)

1902: 46.)—against the natives. “He was—an—extremist (Conrad, 1902: 67).” Although Kurtz’s approach sees him obtaining results in acquiring a stellar business reputation for acquiring ivory, his methods are deemed “unsound” (Conrad, 1902: 57)—extreme and dystopian (Conrad, 1902: 67)—and lead to his demise.

Imagery of Physical and Mental Illness. Life in a colony can be physically arduous and this can place a mental strain on the individual. In the case of Kurtz, his striving to succeed as an ivory trader impacts on his health. He is physically ill and his mental state disintegrates to the point he is thought to be mad. But when his madness is viewed in juxtaposition with the dystopian portrayal of the Company’s role in colonisation, Kurtz’s madness is relative to the Company’s absurdity. Madness takes on two dimensions: the projection of colonial power, and the power of an individual (i.e. Kurtz) who is left to operate without ethical oversight.

Problematic Moral Choices. Marlow grapples with a personal ethical dilemma that places him in a position in which whatever choice he chooses will leave him morally unsettled. That is, he is torn between siding with the duplicitous and merciless colonial bureaucracy, or Kurtz who has become a heartless and cruel individual.

Key Motif

Darkness. No doubt a reader can find several motifs in the text, however the key literary device that I found most appealing for use in the adapted text was that of *darkness*. In fact, it was such a strong, recurring motif that Conrad (1902) used it in the book’s title.

The concept of darkness is used as a symbol throughout the text. Although Conrad (1902) uses it to describe, say, a scene featuring the sky, it is used in the sense that the true situation is somewhat obscured. As an example:

I raised my head. The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky—seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness. (Conrad, 1902: 72)

Therefore, the symbolic meaning this motif invokes when trying to explain the human condition is that there may be some force acting to mask or jeopardise an empathic close relationship—for instance:

I saw him extend his short flipper of an arm for a gesture that took in the forest, the creek, the mud, the river— seemed to beckon with a dishonouring flourish before the sunlit face of the land a treacherous appeal to the lurking death, to the hidden evil, to the profound darkness of its heart. (Conrad, 1902: 29)

Key Symbol

The River. The symbol in the book appears to be the Congo River. This, to me, represents the way Europeans access the vast African continent. It is a gateway. The river symbolises not only a safe way to traverse the continent, but it is a way for the white colonisers to maintain their distance from the natives. As long as they are on the river, they do not have to engage with the natives as they would if they travelled overland. But at the same time, the river seems to exert a pressure of its own on the colonisers—its flow impedes travel upriver, but expedites travel downstream as if it is sending a signal to them every time they travel its course.

Adapted Text—Themes Developed

Bell (2004: 16), in his book *Plot and Structure*, discusses how structures of classic stories have been adapted by various creative writers to produce new works using variations. He likens this to formulaic writing in the same way as a cook makes an omelette—but varying the ingredients, amounts, and cooking techniques can create a new variation. In my adaptation, I have created a new work based on the “formula” created by Conrad (1902). However, I have attempted to add depth to my characters and their dialogue, and to extend social description into social critique.

I have used crime as a plot device and I have deviated from Conrad’s (1902) thematic message to focus on what it means to be human—it is a love story. I also removed Conrad’s (1902) use of a frame, as was done by Milius, Coppola, and Herr’s (1979) adaptation, *Apocalypse Now*. Therefore, the three key themes I identified were used as the basis for adaptation in the following ways.

Dystopian Images. In my novella, I used this theme to discuss the often-argued brutality the American Indians experienced at the hands of the white colonialists and then later because of the policies of the US government. These arguments have been advanced for well over a hundred years and are common knowledge. So, my employment in the novella needed no “backstory.”

These dystopian images can be found in the dialogue that takes place between the PI and Yvette, as well as during the dialogue between the PI and Leon when the PI arrives at Copley, South Australia. Finally, these images are vivid in Kurt’s mind when the PI discovers his isolated camp and tries to convince him to return for medical treatment. For instance, take the following dialogue as one example that demonstrates the intensity of these

images: “Kurt stirred, and muttered several incoherent strings of words; about Indigenous genocide at the hands of the US Government; purveyors of indiscriminate violence against his people; the extinction of countless American Indian languages (p. 122).”

Imagery of Physical and Mental Illness. Like life in Conrad’s Congolese jungle, life for American Indians are not without hardship. Though these hardships may no longer be as physically demanding as those of the natives depicted in the Conrad’s novella, they are nonetheless mentally taxing due to prejudice and racism (Bhui, 2002; Kleg, 1993). Kurt is seen in my novella as a man who has succeeded as an artist, but the lingering prejudices and racism towards American Indians has impacted on his mental health, which in turn has manifested in his physical well-being—he has contracted diabetes, is an alcoholic, and has experimented with psychedelic drugs. Like Kurtz (Conrad, 1902), Kurt is physically ill and his mental state has crumbled; he has become mad.

When Kurt’s madness is juxtaposed with the dystopian images of the treatment of the American Indians by the colonisers and then the US Government, his madness can be explained. One could view this as an overpowering of his senses—and being a sensitive artist he has internalised these injustices more so than most. So, the madness could be viewed as the madness of what policy has resulted in, but also the madness of him as an individual who is drifting in a sea of anger.

Problematic Moral Choices. Like Marlow, the PI grapples with an ethical dilemma. He understands Kurt’s concerns about what Kurt sees as unjust government policies (which Kurt’s wife, Yvette, reinforces), but the PI understands the Rule of Law and what it means to act ethically as a private investigator. When the PI discovers Kurt, and sees what he has been up to at his camp, followed by Kurt’s subsequent death, the PI considers it his duty to report the facts. However, he weighs-up his legal duty with his moral duty to help people in need, and comes down on the side of helping others—i.e. protecting Yvette and the memory of Kurt.

Key Motif

Darkness. It would have been remiss not to use the motif of darkness in my novella given the prominence this metaphor played in *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad, 1902). So, I used it to achieve several effects.

First, on a literal level to describe aspects of scenes, like the scene where the PI describes a flock of cockatoos: “There were so many of them they looked like Christmas

baubles on a pine tree. Dark black eyes, distinctive beaks, and yellow crests that gave them the appearance of being uniformed musicians in a marching band (p. 91).”

Also, I used darkness on a symbolic level to imply, like Conrad (1902), that certain situations were less than clear or dangerous. For instance, when the PI says to Yvette, in regard to the death on the highway: “Things happen in life. We need to find a way through the darkness (p. 91).”

The motif of darkness was also used to alert the reader to a darkness that was yet to fall; that is, when the PI and Yvette enter Copley: “It was as if a blanket of fog had descended. Only the headlights of the road-trains carrying mining equipment to the sites shown through the eerie mist they created (p. 85).”

Overall, my intent was to employ “darkness” as a way of projecting such imagery that might invoke an empathic experience in the reader for its anxiety-producing effects.

Key Symbol

The River. Although there was no Congo-like river *per se* (there were, however, a lot of creeks that flowed when it rained), I created this symbol using the highway—the long road through the outback of South Australia. It could also be seen as a serpent, the same way a river does as it slithers through the landscape.²² This became the symbol that I used to represent the way my novella’s characters accessed the remote areas of the Australian continent.

The road was the surest way to traverse the continent and it also acted as a way to safely avoid the dangers that lay to the sides of the road—snakes, wild animals, and the harshness of the terrain. This is comparable to the way Conrad (1902) used the river to distance the colonialists from the “natives.” Likewise, the flow of the river in *Heart of Darkness* seemed to impede upriver travel, so did the highway—swollen creeks, emus, locust swarms, and a vehicle accident, all conspired to make progress difficult.

Finally, the Congo River could represent a river of hope as well as a river that traverses danger, sorrow and despair. The road north through the Flinders Ranges is suggestive of the same. Yes, danger, sorrow and despair for Yvette, yet the promise of hope—in the form of love—for the sentimental PI.

22. This symbol is consistent with the Rainbow Serpent deity of Australian Aboriginal mythology—i.e. the creator god.

INTERTEXTUALITY

Connections between the Original and Other Texts, and the Adapted Text

If intertextuality is the use of one text to influence another, then it follows that there must be some elements of the original text (as well as other references from additional texts) that can be applied to achieve this outcome. Kristeva (1980) suggests that intertextuality is simply a method to suggest something (i.e. allusions) and thereby influence the reader's understanding.

In creating my novella, I used intertextuality to help shape the reader's understanding in two ways: 1) by "borrowing" allusionary words; and 2) through the use of *optional* intertextuality.

The use of allusionary words was intended to add another layer of meaning to the adapted text. In effect, to stir emotion by referring to these symbolic or iconic words and borrowing the underlying meaning they generated in the original text. For example, "Among educated readers one would expect the allusionary store to include some Greek and Roman mythology and major concepts of the physical and biological sciences (Broudy, 1999: 18)."

There are several intertextual references within the adapted text that can be linked to previously published texts. In terms of optional intertextuality, I used this device to create several key parallel characters and the plot line.

Impact of the Intertextual References

In the Garden Where We've Been Planted is intertextually linked to *Heart of Darkness* firstly by the character at the centre of the quest—Kurt. In Conrad's novella, he is called Kurtz. Kurt is my novella character's first name and Kurtz is the surname of Conrad's.

In cases such as this, the connection between the source text reference and mention in the adapted work does not require drawing the reader's attention to it. However, if the subtext is not well-known, mention may be insufficient to evoke its allusionary presence. Take for instance the PI's internal monologue during the long trip along the outback highway where hearing a Peter Sarstedt song on Yvette's MP3 player triggers thoughts about him misunderstanding Yvette's intentions toward her husband. The PI says:

...I scrolled through her collection and switched to an old Peter Sarstedt song; *Where do you Go to (My Lovely)*. ... The hum of the engine made me drift into a trance, but I came back when I heard the words, ‘...shake off their lowly born tags...’. How wrong I was about Kurt providing the income for her lifestyle (p. 58).”

In this reference, I not only used Sarstedt’s lyrics, but added a “signpost” to them so that the reader had a reference point. The problem could have been that with just my mentioning of the phrase, the reader might have not been able to readily make the connection to the wider context of the song.

Although this is but one example, it illustrates other intertextual references of this kind within my novella. The impact of these references is that they potentially add emotion-evoking context beyond the mere words. That is, it alludes to the emotions generated by Sarstedt’s 1960s song and adds another dimension to the writing.

What if the reader does not know the historical reference to Sarstedt’s song despite me providing a citation to it? I would argue that the six words—“...shake off their lowly born tags. . .”—are explicit enough to establish the context and based on knowledge of other songs by other artists and bands, they could establish a proximal context that would serve substantially well.

No doubt the reader will recognise intertextual references embedded in my novella that were adapted for various literary sources, but the predominant sources were *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad, 1902) and *The Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 1900).²³ The use of intertextual references from these sources form a matrix that, I suggest, tells a larger story; a story that extends beyond the words on the page to include other emotions (e.g. those induced through song or screen). But simply inserting quotations, words or phrases into the novella is unlikely to have an impact on the reader. So, a method of incorporating these hopefully allusionary-inspiring words into the new text was required.

The way I did this was to rely on subconscious “triggers” in my writing. That is to say, as I created the characters and as I imagined them interacting (i.e. internal monologue and dialogue) within the context of the story/plot, I allowed my subconscious thoughts to drift

23. The 1939 screen production starring Judy Garland was an adaptation of the 1900 children’s novel by L. Frank Baum (with illustrations by W.W. Denslow). The novel was originally published under the title of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Chicago: George M. Hill Company). In 1902 there was also a Broadway stage adaptation of the novel.

through my prior knowledge of other texts. As my prior experiences with these published works percolated into my conscious, I wrote them into the narrative.²⁴

How did I bring these references to the reader's attention? In two ways: the first being the use of the words in a new context, which relies on the reader's prior knowledge to recognise the reference. As an example, take this reference: the appearance of Superintendent Adam Dalglish of the criminal investigation department, is a published author of a book of poems in P.D. James's novel *A Mind to Murder* (1963). On page 22 of *A Mind to Murder* there is a reference to Dalglish's wife's death in childbirth thirteen years earlier and his bachelor's life; he is attracted to women though reluctant to commit (e.g. the character Deborah Riscoe), but later in *A Mind to Murder* he asks Emma Lavenham to marry him (*The Private Patient*, P.D. James, 2008). The PI's personal (back) story can be seen as incorporating intertextual references to *A Mind to Murder*, as they, to some degree, parallel the PI's life.

The other way that I brought these references to the reader's attention was to provide a narrative introduction. For example, this occurred where the PI referred to the Henry Miller (1934: 187) quotation: "The main thing is to eat. Trust Providence for the rest."

In sum, intertextual referencing contributes to the way the reader makes meaning. These allusive references in my adapted text hopefully aid a deeper understanding of the themes being explored, thereby enriching the reader's experience. For instance, take this example: the PI refers to himself as a "Renaissance man," which references other fictitious and real-life private investigators, such as those portrayed in the television series *Burke's Law* (Britton, 2004: 3, 182–183) and *Bat Masterson* (DeArment, 1979: 9);²⁵ Although a different reading of this reference (as well as others in the novella) is possible, and the sensory richness of the allusion could be diminished if the reader fails to recognise it, its use nevertheless does not distract from a reading where it is not present. The worst that could happen if the reader misses the reference is that the added impact might be simply lost.

24. "Stories come from the subconscious mind through the conscious mind and onto paper through the hands" (Personal communication with novelist Alexander McCall Smith in Adelaide during *Writer's Week*, 4 March 2014).

25. Like P.D. James's character, Conrad could be seen as a Renaissance Man—a master seafarer who is also a scholar and writer of English literature.

Impact of Parallel Characters and Plot Line

In addition to the influence of intertextual references, several characters and the principal plot line of *Heart of Darkness* (1902) also influenced my novella. This can be seen in Conrad's central character, Charlie Marlow. In my story, Marlow is substituted by the unnamed PI,²⁶ and my use of this first-person narrative device, I provide character interiority. The PI is the narrator who tells his story of his journey to find Kurt. But unlike Marlow who travels through remote Congolese jungle, the PI travels through the remote Australian outback. Marlow journeys into the heart of Africa by river searching for the ivory trader—Kurtz—who has gone mad.

In maintaining continuity, the PI does similarly, but by road—he's looking for an American Indian artist who, too, has gone mad. My story starts in Massachusetts and moves to the Australian outback. Conrad's starts in Belgium and moves to the Congo. Conrad's novella and mine use the plot of a quest for essentially the same purpose—to find a missing person. In a sense, my use of the missing person 'crime' is a trope to explore issues associated with the human spirit; specifically, to find love.²⁷

Other analogous characters that feature in my novella are Kurtz's "Intended," who is Kurt's wife, Yvette Kerslake. At the end of both stories, these characters become widows. And, like Marlow who keeps the terrible truth hidden from Kurtz's Intended, the PI does not tell the whole truth to Yvette about Kurt's last moments of life and the depth of his delusional thinking. Like Marlow, the PI, to some degree, believes "...men must help women to remain in their innocent world 'lest ours get worse' (Myers, 2001: 194)."

In these examples, intertextuality allowed layers of meaning to be brought to the story, which could be consciously recognised by the reader, or perhaps, acting as an unconscious influence. Other instances where optional intertextuality was employed to achieve this affect

26. Conrad's uses "I" as the unnamed narrator in *Heart of Darkness*. I use the same reference for the unnamed PI in my novella.

27. Other parallels in plot can be seen in these examples: the death of Conrad's "Helmsman," who is killed by the arrows. My novella portrays these arrows as flying grasshoppers, and the Helmsman as a local youth traveling past the PI. The PI stops at various points in his journey, and like Conrad's novella, he observes and discovers information that provides him with insights. There is the reference to Kurt's use of CB radio broadcasts with Conrad's Kurtz's letter writing, as well as "unsound methods." There is also the parallel with Colonel Kurtz's use of radio broadcasts in *Apocalypse Now*, making this yet another intertextual reference to Conrad's Kurtz's letter writing, but one that is multi-perspective because it references both Conrad (1902) and Milius, Coppola and Herr (*Apocalypse Now*, 1979).

included Conrad's "The Russian," who is represented in my novella as the Aboriginal man on horseback, "Leon" (p. 86). In my novella, there are intertextual references to Kurtz's "black mistress"—the Aboriginal woman who emerges from Kurt's tent. There are other passing, as well as more substantial, references contained in the novella, but given the limited space afforded to this exegesis by the University's rules for examinable works, I trust these examples demonstrated my application of parallel characters and plot line.

In sum, it's not unreasonable to posit that every story is inspired by the world in which the writer lives and by the books he or she reads. Whether this is done consciously or unconsciously, intertextuality plays a role in the process of creating the new. The influences of intertextuality within my novella were intended to be part of the creative process that inspired me to create something different from, and give another dimension to, works that went before.

Chapter 4 — Conclusion

In the Garden Where We've Been Planted could be seen as one variation of how it is possible for a creative writer to escape generic classifications of 'monstrous' characters and 'romance' tropes. The story is not about 'big lives and small events,' it is about stories that could be considered 'big events in small lives.' *In the Garden Where We've Been Planted* is not purely a crime story. Nor is it purely a PI story. But it has strong elements of both with a love story at its core.

I would argue that what is remarkable in a person's life may, upon examination, amount to very little. That is, because we tend to overlook the significance of small moments—returning a person's lost wallet, gifting a Guatemalan woman \$200 so she can buy a pig for her family, or helping find a husband who has drifted off without letting anyone know where he was going.

Although my story is a fictional work about a private investigator, it is less about the science of investigation (though some tradecraft aspects are presented to add credibility) and more about relationships. Paraphrasing Paretsky (2007: 101), my PI couldn't survive in a lonely world. He needs “. . . dogs, friends, lovers—[he] needs continuity and connection (Paretsky, 2007: 101).” The framework of a PI story provides a chronology that allows the story about a man—a sentimental man who experienced personal upset of the type that could have affected any person—to be told. It shows how he grew and overcame internal dilemmas to find happiness.

What might this story offer the reader in terms of addressing the research question? I would argue that it is through literary expression that we experience what is beyond us—happiness, sadness, joy, tragedy, freedom, love, hatred—and in doing so, to live what might be impossible, or to relive our memories.

“A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies,” said Jojen. “The man who never reads lives only one.” (Martin, 2011: 452)

It is language and expression that draws us from our fixation with plot and theme, and in doing so, provides other dimensions through which we can appreciate narration. In this regard, I hope my creative work makes the link between knowledge of criminal investigation,

generic formulae, and those elusive, private emotions that emulsify personal experience with storytelling.

The search for meaning is reliant on a relationship, whether it is between people or between a reader and a text. Kurtz, in Conrad's novella, suffers from a loss of a relationship to life and to meaning. The events depicted in my novella show how the central character grows despite adversity, so by story's end he recovers meaning. And, in his final state of mind, the PI is able to fit into a new community as well as help them flourish, and vice versa. So, like the clouds that the PI experienced in his life, one came along that was accompanied by a rainbow (p. 91). I hope the reader can search for their rainbow and flourish in the garden where they've been planted.

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