

# 5251

Volume 1

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis comprises a work of fiction, '5251', in the form of a short story cycle, and an exegesis, 'The Short Story Cycle and the Representation of a Named Place'. The components of the thesis are intended to mirror Susan Mann's defining 'essential characteristic' of the cycle genre: they are both self-sufficient and interrelated (15). Together, they illuminate and contextualise one another.

'5251' locates its thirteen stories within the postcode area of Mount Barker, a regional town on the outskirts of Adelaide, South Australia. Setting is employed as a framing device, as developed by cycle writers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Place is an explicit connection between the stories, but implicit connections are also explored, in the spaces between the stories, to examine contemporary themes including individual isolation and alienation, middle class aspiration, land politics, gender and family. Michelle Pacht's argument, that the cycle genre's 'unique generic makeup' enables writers to explore and express subtle and subversive ideas (6), informs the creative work and is discussed in the exegesis.

The exegesis outlines and interrogates the journey of the short story writer in discovering the extended form offered by the short story cycle, described by James Nagel as the 'most neglected and misunderstood of the major genres' (246). It also explores the opportunities and tensions that arrive when a creative

writer engages with theories that challenge personal concepts of artistic vision and the realities of the publishing marketplace.

Mount Barker can be found on Google Maps but its representation is born from the fictive imagination and engaged with the notion of ‘referential field’, as described by Wolfgang Iser; setting is not only place but also the *effect* of place (40). The exegesis explores the interplay of ‘space’ and ‘place’ in literary representations that utilise the short story cycle. In this regard, the work of Silvia Ross and Eric Prieto is considered, in so far as they draw upon spatial theorists Lewis Holloway, Phil Hubbard, Bertrand Westphal and Robert T. Tally Jr. in their understandings of representations of place in literature. Geocriticism and textual mapping are also explored.

Sherwood Anderson’s rendering of a fictitious town in *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) and Belle Boggs’ representation of specific areas in America’s Virginia, in *Mattaponi Queen* (2010) are both discussed as useful templates for literary representation of place. The exegesis argues that *Mattaponi Queen*, although marketed as a collection of short stories, is more appropriately read as a short story cycle.

## **STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY**

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide.

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A version of ‘Dancing On Your Bones’ was published in the Spineless Wonders eSingles Digital Long Stories Series in June 2015.

Versions of ‘A Simple Matter of Aesthetics’ were published in *Zettel Magazine*, in Canada, 2014 and in *Breaking Beauty*, Midnight Sun Publishing, in Australia, 2014.

A version of ‘May Twentieth’ was published in the anthology of the 13<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Short Story in English, *Unbraiding the Short Story*, Charleston SC, USA, 2014.

‘The Five Truths of Manhood’ was published in *Australian Book Review*, Issue 355, October 2013, as runner-up in the Elizabeth Jolley Short Story Prize.

A version of 'Raising Boys' was published in *Southerly*, Volume 72, Number 3, 2013.

Versions of 'Here We Lie' (previously titled 'The Apex Club') were published online by *Wet Ink*, and in *Short Story*, New Series Volume 20, Number 2, Fall 2012, The University of Texas at Brownsville, Texas.

A version of 'If It Wasn't This' was published in *REX*, Queensland University of Technology, 2012. A version of 'Barking Dogs' was published in *Wet Ink*, Issue 23, 2011.

*For Ruby Dahlia,  
who says she would never do a PhD.*