

VOLUME II: THE EXEGESIS

An Act of Reading and Writing

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ABSTRACT:

This Old Man

This Old Man is comprised of a childhood section from a larger novel that interweaves the experiences of a group of childhood friends who, as adults, are compelled to return to their home town to face an evil they were haunted by as children. Due to word count constraints, the chapters submitted for the Thesis are from the ‘childhood section’ of the novel only.

The novel in its entirety explores how adult selves are shaped by their past experiences. This first thematic drive is explored alongside another, which focusses on ideas of agency and humanity in the face of these deterministic forces.

The larger work responds to Stephen King’s *IT*. It employs the tropes of the Horror genre to tell a story about manhood, boyhood, and what happens in between; a story about the summer when, as kids, the characters were hunted by The Farmer and his Doberman, and the summer nearly twenty years later when they return to finish the battle as adults: adults with inner demons that may prove to be stronger than the Farmer himself; adults who are facing the traumas of their past and attempting to find the capacity to forge and maintain relationships; adults who must finally grow up and accept responsibility for their actions and the fate of their lives.

‘An Act of Reading and Writing’

Why am I drawn to heroic genre fiction? Why did I choose it as a mode to explore agency? And why did Horror end up being the mode in which to do it?

What is it about the reinvention of these familiar structures that on the one hand fills a deep need for stability, but on the other challenges the way I think about the world?

Why do reading and writing act as a meditative process? What is it about fiction that evades essentialism, and how do prescriptive structures like the Hero's Journey act as a meditative space that open themselves up to interpret the world around us?

This exegesis explores these questions through a framework of discussions with texts that informed my work. Using a humanist framework centred on the agency of the individual to affect change as argued for by Edward Said, I explore how literature acts as a kind of humanist theology in the post-modern world, as envisaged by Andy Mousley. I then explore how heroic structures in genre fiction might be a meditation on agency.

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 and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. There is a two year embargo pending on *This Old Man* at the time of examination.

I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time. There is a one year embargo pending on *This Old Man* at the time of examination.

Jonathan Zweck

May 30th, 2017

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