

THIS IS NOT A LOVE STORY

a thesis novel

by

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or 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.

There will be a one-year embargo on the work, after which I will give consent that this copy of the thesis be made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*.

30/06/16.....

Signed

Date

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KEY TERMS

poioumenon

fabulation, fiction, metafiction

modernism, postmodernism

experimental fiction, philosophical fiction

self-conscious, self-reflective, self-restraint

Coetzee, Calvino, Gadda, Beckett, Kundera, Gaddis, Robbe-Grillet, Pécoc,

Scholes, Barthes, Eco, Musil, Wittgenstein, Strawson, George Eliot, Iris

Murdoch,

Simone de Beauvoir

thesis novel, dialogue novel, unfinished novel, novel-in-progress

novel in letters, novel in performance

author, novelist, novelising

creative writing degree, exegesis, thesis

philosophy of love, falling in love, falling out of love, attentiveness, habit, illusion

Plato, Irving Singer, Harry Frankfurt, Simon May, Alain de Botton, Tony

Milligan

PRÉCIS

The work is a thesis novel combining a creative and exegetical exploration into the viability of beginning a fictional exploration into the nature of love. The work explores the potential for the novel form itself to help interrogate what love is and what love means. As the work is a *poioumenon*, a work about the production of itself, it also documents the author's thinking about producing the work, the author's experimenting with forms and voices for writing the work, and the author's exploration of the dialogue between fiction and criticism.

The current incarnation of *This is Not a Love Story* is that of an unfinished novel, a novel-in-progress, where the author (the autobiographical author and the fictional author) begins writing stories about love through which she hopes to discover some new philosophical understanding. The project begins ambitiously, however, the author is quickly overwhelmed by the task and, unable to find a form or voice, can only *think about* writing a novel about love. She therefore crosses over into the novel to become Author, the chief conceptual architect behind the novel, "the great prose form in which [is explored], by means of experimental selves (characters), some themes of existence" (Kundera, *The Art* 143). The novel is then also narrated by these "experimental selves." Novelist, who is a retired philosopher, helps with the imaginative process. Woman and Man are ending their marriage and their exchanges (dialogic and epistolary) are the literary vehicles through which the investigation of love is executed. Professor offers philosophical counselling on the problem of love. Doctor offers psychological insights. Finally, Critic punctuates the text with the exegetical work in fictive form.

The work is executed in three parts named after three “memos” (of the five written by Italo Calvino) on the qualities a writer should embrace. Each part is framed by a summary of the memo and a brief exegetical response to guide the reader. In “Multiplicity,” the project of discovery is introduced, but Author, overwhelmed, cannot write the story. In “Visibility,” Novelist arrives to help Author write the couple’s dialogue and get the story going. In “Exactitude,” Woman and Man, now estranged, write letters contemplating love’s nature from their own particular perspective.

The fictive exegesis occurs in Critic’s commentary and Author’s reflections and functions as the metafictional voice on structure, form, content, creative process and experimental goals. Because the entire work is a discovery there is exegetical work throughout and all “experimental selves” participate in the event. The intermingling of the exegetical with the fictive thus makes this a *poioumenon* (Fowler 372)—a novel that is also about the production of itself.

In conclusion, the work explores the viability of doing philosophy and literary theory in fictional form. Because of its intrusion into and disruption of the narrative, this requires a form that allows for more *telling* than *showing*, a form that undermines complex character creation and plot, something that contemporary theorists and the reading public often reject as exhausting and unsatisfying. This is certainly a problem for a writer producing a literary work of this sort. However, I argue that late modernist and postmodernist writers like Calvino, Kundera, Beckett, Robbe-Grillet, and Coetzee embed allegorical thinking in their work while demonstrating that such novels can be both intellectually and emotionally engaging for a reader. Finally, this hybrid form is important because it aligns itself with a growing excitement about how the humanities can bridge gaps between abstract philosophical or scientific knowledge and concrete anthropomorphic knowledge.