

# 'The Broken Hold'

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## Abstract

### Major Creative Work: 'The Broken Hold' – a novel

The major creative work explores the power that narcissism has to define and capture others and it depicts this force from a number of points of view. In doing so, the novel attempts to draw parallels between personal and cultural manifestations of narcissism. It explores the lengths that the narcissistic subject will go to in order to maintain his or her world-view, and the often violent consequences that come from these assertions. The novel's two main characters, Katherine and her daughter Alice, struggle against the confines of narcissism, which are represented through both the actions of other characters and an overarching cultural depiction of post-colonial Australia. Katherine is part of a team that recovers a shipwreck from South Australian waters. The remains of an Aboriginal woman are discovered during the excavation and Katherine is faced with a difficult question. Should she conserve the remains for the shipping company that funded the recovery or should she return them to the rightful descendants? The more that Katherine is drawn into her work, the further away Alice becomes. The separation of mother and daughter is equally important to the narrative, relating retrospectively to the effect of narcissist capture and the possibility of recovering from such capture. The bigger story of the novel is concerned with the possibility of cultural change.

### Exegesis: 'Becoming: from capture to recovery'

The exegesis considers the relationship between my research and the major creative work. Framed by Luce Irigaray's concept of 'becoming', which looks beyond the narcissism of western cultural tradition, the exegesis questions whether recovery from private and public forms of narcissistic capture is possible and, if so, to what extent. It illustrates my process, explaining how I came to apply an understanding of narcissistic capture, and its effects on others, to the form and content of my novel. Reflecting my areas of research, the exegesis draws from psychoanalytic theory, in conjunction with *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the nature of violets, as well as from maritime object conservation and Critical Whiteness Studies, in order to map the development of the project as a whole. Three short experimental films work as an appendix. Each film explores a particular chapter of my exegesis as a way of visually representing the overlap between theory, research and the creative work.

# Declaration

## **For a Thesis that does not contain work already in the public domain**

NAME: Jessica Wallace

PROGRAM: Creative Writing

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