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“JACK LONDON SLEPT HERE”

(A NOVEL)

“FOREGROUNDING DIALOGUE: AN ETHICAL APPROACH THROUGH COURAGEOUS RISK”

(AN EXEGESIS)

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“JACK LONDON SLEPT HERE”

(A NOVEL)

Volume 1
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii</td>
<td>TITLE PAGE (NOVEL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii</td>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi</td>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viii</td>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ix</td>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>VOLUME 1: NOVEL - JACK LONDON SLEPT HERE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>JACK LONDON HOUSE (PHOTOGRAPH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>NOTE ATTACHED TO TRANSCRIPTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>CHAPTER 1 - Playboy Entrevue Interruptus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>CHAPTER 2 - Rolling Stone (Part One) - Swinging for the Moon: An Unexpected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rendezvous With Brilliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>CHAPTER 3 - Rolling Stone (Part Two)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>CHAPTER 4 - Ladies Home Journal - Dinner with the Queen of the Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With Hartley Sickerdick</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5

Architectural Digest

A Spin Around the Jack London House ........................................ 99

CHAPTER 6

Nintendo Power

Capturing Ghosts: The Hartley Sickerdick Way .............................. 127

CHAPTER 7

Rave

Up and Atom: Get Hip to the Cool Hot Clues ................................. 165

CHAPTER 8

Girls and Corpses

The Songwriter and the Exotic-Dancing Porn Star ............................ 221

CHAPTER 9

Esquire

Birds on the Line ........................................................................... 237

CHAPTER 10

Parenting

Pounce of the Now ......................................................................... 257

DEAD END (PHOTOGRAPH) ......................................................... 294

VOLUME 2: EXEGESIS

“FOREGROUNDING DIALOGUE: AN ETHICAL APPROACH
THROUGH COURAGEOUS RISK” .................................................. 295

INTRODUCTION ............................................................................. 296

Chapter Outlines ............................................................................ 308
CHAPTER ONE

THEORY ................................................................. 311

Bakhtin and Pure Dialogue ........................................ 311

Friedrich Spielhagen and Objective Narrative Theory .......... 321

CHAPTER TWO

OMISSION .................................................................... 335

Pretty Words .................................................................. 336

A Chary Approach to the Chamber of Consciousness ............. 344

CHAPTER THREE

TEXT ANALYSIS .......................................................... 350

Eternal Curse on the Pirates of Privacy .............................. 350

Doting on Carpenter’s Gothic ......................................... 361

CHAPTER FOUR

A NOVEL UNDER THE EXEGETICAL INFLUENCE .......... 372

Foregrounding Plot in a Dialogue Novel .......................... 372

CONCLUSION ................................................................ 380

ABBREVIATIONS .......................................................... 386

WORKS CITED ............................................................. 387

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................ 395
ABSTRACT

The thesis couples my creative work, *Jack London Slept Here*, with an exegesis that argues for an “ethical” approach to the foregrounding of fictional dialogue. My argument will take into consideration the role of the reader and characterisation through dialogue rather than author-intention and self-interest. It invites participation and collaboration as a gesture of abdication of control. My original contribution to knowledge will be found in my argument that this ethical invitation is not the product of ideological positioning or experimentation with novelistic technique, but rather, the result of courage – manifesting through risk; humility – manifesting through erasure; and ultimately, a respect for the boundaries of reader and character.

The novel is composed entirely through a series of interviews with my protagonist in his house on a dead-end alley in Hollywood. These interviews take place shortly before and after a shooting massacre at a nearby golf and country club. The interview structure has afforded me the opportunity and challenge to not just reduce narrative description but to eliminate it altogether. It has allowed me to forego all reliance upon speech tags to convey the emotions of the characters. There are no interior monologues and any attempt to interpret character consciousness must be made by the reader based upon their relationship to the dialogue presented to them.

The exegesis will investigate the foregrounding of fictional dialogue as a narrative choice for the unobtrusive author and how this function requires a collaborating
reader. Bronwen Thomas, who has made significant contributions in the scholarly study of fictional dialogue with her book, *Fictional Dialogue: Speech and Conversation in the Modern and Postmodern Novel*, was initially inspired by novelist and critic David Lodge’s assertion that novelists who foreground dialogue “have been somewhat undervalued by academic criticism because their foregrounding of dialogue makes them resistant to a method of analysis biased in favour of lyric expressiveness.” [*After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism.* London: Routledge, 1990. 83.]

My research takes the form of a critical reflection of the dialogue novels of William Gaddis, Henry Green and Manuel Puig by employing the theoretical lens of the nineteenth-century German author and theorist, Friedrich Spielhagen.
DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma 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 of the thesis.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for photocopying and loan subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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