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THE STONE CROWN

Malcolm Walker

**Submitted as part of the requirement for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Discipline of English
School of Humanities
The University of Adelaide
South Australia**

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Prologue

The two waves of horsemen clash, a knot of shrieking, cursing warriors. Here upwards of six hundred perish and the blood of the northern tribes seeps into the frozen earth.

I had not foreseen this.

Did Nimuë not say—had I not thought—that Arthur would be rendered weak and directionless by our deception? With his power gone he would forget this running feud, this ulcer, and take more interest in his women, his hawking and hunting.

We may have stolen from him his magic; taken the power which I placed in him all those years ago. But his strategies, his strength, and his skill with weapons—we have not taken these, nor have we dimmed love of his comrades and their deeds. None of this has withered.

How could I not have seen this?

And Modred, Arthur's bastard son by his half-sister, he too calls his scattered household to him in twos and threes, and with a grievous cry breaks through the press of men and horses that shield his rival. Here Modred drives his lance deep into Arthur's side.



**Wrestling Knowledge of Another Kind: Memory,
Myth and Mapping the Exegetical Process.**

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Abstract

Two teenage newcomers to the Scottish Borders unleash an unearthly power when they unwittingly remove one of a group of wooden horsemen from an ancient site known as Sleepers Spinney. Containing the trapped spirits of King Arthur and his men, the carvings have been magically held in check since the Dark Ages by an ancient line of Keepers. With the Keepers prepared to stop at nothing to recover what has been stolen, a fragile and at times troubled friendship grows between the two youngsters as they are drawn into a parallel world of myth, magic and the supernatural. Arthur is awake—and he is no venerable, grey-bearded King come back to save The Isles.

The Stone Crown is, in part, a contemporary reworking of the Arthurian legend. While the novel includes the stock figures of Merlin, Arthur, Modred and Nimuë, they are presented more as flawed characters caught up in the power struggles of the time rather than heroic figures, thus anchoring the historical and fantasy elements within the story of two young people trying to deal with their respective pasts. The novel explores a variety of young-adult themes, including guilt, madness, teenage ostracism and loneliness, absentee parents, migrants and child-soldiery.

Accompanying *The Stone Crown* is an exegesis entitled 'Wrestling Knowledge of Another Kind: Memory, Myth and the Exegetical Process', in which I reflect on how creativity can be affected by the exegetical process. In particular I look at the difference between a post-publication exegesis and one penned mid-novel, and how the unconscious drivers that inform artistic themes, often to the bewilderment of their creator, cannot necessarily be analysed, reduced or slavishly deconstructed to fit a set of theoretical maps or models. While acknowledging the mid-novel exegesis may suit some writers, I investigate how the need to work creatively often involves a delicate balance between rational thought and the unconscious, a process that can be thrown into a state of disequilibrium by the exegetical act itself.