Parallax:

the novel ‘After and Before Now’
and an accompanying exegesis
‘Experiencing the Ekphrastic Imaginary’

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Abstract

‘Parallax’ is a hybrid creative writing PhD thesis comprised of two interrelated parts – the novel ‘After and Before Now’, and its accompanying exegesis ‘Experiencing the Ekphrastic Imaginary’. Both novel and exegesis are concerned with notions of multiplicity and simultaneity as they relate to acts of creation, transformation and to ideas of the self.

‘After and Before Now’ is an ekphrastic novel exploring connections between creativity and selfhood through the experiences of its central protagonist, young visual artist Lola Hayward. The three-part narrative centres on the opening night of an exhibition to which Lola has contributed three main works. The novel’s formal structure is circu-linear, with a kaleidoscopic approach to narrative point-of-view that utilises first, second and third person perspectives to examine and represent the idea of the multifaceted self. The imagined art objects function as temporal touchstones, entry points through which narrative burrows into the present moment, into the memories and projections of events and ideas formative and transformative, gateways to those shadow-selves that continue to underlie and inform Lola’s attempts to understand her own being and becoming.

‘Experiencing the Ekphrastic Imaginary’ is a fictocritical essay investigating the processes of writing the novel, with a particular focus on its imagined art objects, and on the representation of creative praxis. Contemporary ekphrastic fiction and theory are surveyed within the context of the search for an appropriate framework and language for the exegetical discussion. Exploration of and experimentation with the temporal/spatial possibilities and constraints of the ekphrastic mode are described in the
context of the novel’s treatment of the interconnected narrative spheres of structure, tense and perspective. The creation of the novel’s structure is also explicated through a discussion of the relationship between literary theory and quantum theory. The notion of slippage – between author and narrator, truth and fiction, art and self – is linked to the concept of the transformative act of selfhood.

Both texts engage with and explore techniques of discontinuity, destabilisation, intertextuality and self-reflexivity in order to seek out strategies for and methods of representing the interdependent, indissoluble nature of the relationship between the creative process and the transformative self.
Declaration

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

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. In the case of ‘After and Before Now’ there will be a one year embargo.

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Chelsea Avard

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