

Standing in the Plaza: Problematic Place in the Short Story

Sally Sian Lily Fermer

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Philosophy in Creative Writing
Discipline of English and Creative Writing
School of Humanities
The University of Adelaide

Date of Submission: October 2013

Standing in the Plaza: Problematic Place in the Short Story

Volume One: Standing in the Plaza, Wanting

Sally Sian Lily Fermer

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Philosophy in Creative Writing
Discipline of English and Creative Writing
School of Humanities
The University of Adelaide

Date Submitted: October 2013

Standing in the Plaza, Wanting

Contents

Title page.....	i
Table of contents.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Declaration.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Standing in the Plaza, Wanting.....	1
Henry Miller Loved it Here.....	2
Surfers Paradise.....	6
Platform.....	11
Aberdeen.....	18
Bell Street Station.....	31
The Whole of the Suburb, Nothing to See.....	35
Highway.....	40
Standing in the Plaza, Wanting.....	47
On the Reserve.....	52
Pedal Boat.....	58
Caravan.....	67

Abstract

There are places in the contemporary world where the predominating feature is a kind of worrying absence. We negotiate a relationship with these problematic places in order to live with them or in them or in close proximity to them or in order to use them. They are ubiquitous in the contemporary world: carparks; demolition sites; shopping centres; pieces of fenced-off land called reserves; freeways; service stations; animal refuges; train stations; main roads; empty buildings; abattoirs; residential subdivisions; sites dedicated to solely to tourism; prisons; boarded up rooming houses; detention centres. How does one talk about these problematic places in fiction? How does a writer describe and understand the in-between place, the temporary place, the ugly place, the bland place in terms of its effect on the people who inhabit it?

The exegetical component of this thesis takes a work of anthropology as its starting point and asks can an anthropological thesis on place assist in writing fiction about place? In looking for a way to describe and understand the nature of the problematic places described above and their effect on the individual, Marc Augé's *Non-Places: an Introduction to Supermodernity* provides a useful linguistic and a philosophical approach. He attributes the term 'non-place' to places defined by particular characteristics of excess, temporality, representation and effects on identity. This exegesis will examine the interface of place and the individual in two short stories using Augé's thesis of non-place. The short story "Safety Procedures" by Nadine Gordimer exemplifies the characteristics of Augé's supermodernity and non-place. The second story examined in this exegesis is Raymond Carver's "Kindling". Responding to a number of authors who have critiqued Augé's thesis, this exegesis will ask whether the definition of non-place can include places other than sites of supermodernity. "Kindling" is studied with this question in mind.

The creative component of this thesis is a collection of eleven short stories titled *Standing in the Plaza, Wanting*. Each story is set in a different problematic place and, drawing on features of Augé's thesis to better understand the nature of problematic places, each story investigates the

influence of that setting on the characters who inhabit the it, rather than the setting itself.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other 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. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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.

I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

Signed:

Date:

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Brian Castro, for his invaluable feedback and assistance during the writing of this thesis. I would also like to thank my co-supervisor Ms Jill Jones. I am also grateful to the Commonwealth of Australia for providing me with an Australian Postgraduate Award and to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Adelaide for a Divisional Scholarship awarded to me at the outset of my candidature.

Standing in the Plaza: Problematic Place in the Short Story

Volume Two: Problematic Place/Non-place and the Short Story

Sally Sian Lily Fermer

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Philosophy in Creative Writing
Discipline of English and Creative Writing
School of Humanities
The University of Adelaide

Date Submitted: October 2013

Exegesis Table of Contents

Title page.....	i
Table of Contents.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Declaration.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Problematic Place/Non-place and the Short Story	
2.1 Introduction.....	1
2.2 “Safety Procedures”.....	5
2.3 “Kindling”.....	12
2.4 <i>Standing in the Plaza, Wanting</i>	20
2.5 Conclusion.....	27
List of Works Cited.....	30
List of Works Consulted.....	32

Abstract

There are places in the contemporary world where the predominating feature is a kind of worrying absence. We negotiate a relationship with these problematic places in order to live with them or in them or in close proximity to them or in order to use them. They are ubiquitous in the contemporary world: car parks; demolition sites; shopping centres; pieces of fenced-off land called reserves; freeways; service stations; animal refuges; train stations; main roads; empty buildings; abattoirs; residential subdivisions; sites dedicated to solely to tourism; prisons; boarded up rooming houses; detention centres. How does one talk about these problematic places in fiction? How does a writer describe and understand the in-between place, the temporary place, the ugly place, the bland place in terms of its effect on the people who inhabit it?

The exegetical component of this thesis takes a work of anthropology as its starting point and asks can an anthropological thesis on place assist in writing fiction about place? In looking for a way to describe and understand the nature of the problematic places described above and their effect on the individual, Marc Augé's *Non-Places: an Introduction to Supermodernity* provides a useful linguistic and a philosophical approach. He attributes the term 'non-place' to places defined by particular characteristics of excess, temporality, representation and effects on identity. This exegesis will examine the interface of place and the individual in two short stories using Augé's thesis of non-place. The short story "Safety Procedures" by Nadine Gordimer exemplifies the characteristics of Augé's supermodernity and non-place. The second story examined in this exegesis is Raymond Carver's "Kindling". Responding to a number of authors who have critiqued Augé's thesis, this exegesis will ask whether the definition of non-place can include places other than sites of supermodernity. "Kindling" is studied with this question in mind.

The creative component of this thesis is a collection of eleven short stories titled *Standing in the Plaza, Wanting*. Each story is set in a different problematic place and, drawing on features of Augé's thesis to better understand the nature of problematic places, each story investigates the

influence of that setting on the characters who inhabit the it, rather than the setting itself.

Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other 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. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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.

I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

Signed:

Date:

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Brian Castro, for his invaluable feedback and assistance during the writing of this thesis. I would also like to thank my co-supervisor Ms Jill Jones. I am also grateful to the Commonwealth of Australia for providing me with an Australian Postgraduate Award and to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Adelaide for a Divisional Scholarship awarded to me at the outset of my candidature.