

‘The Nightwatchers’ a novel
and
‘Breaking English’ an exegesis on ‘The Nightwatchers’

Melanie Kinsman

Presented as the requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Humanities

Discipline of English and Creative Writing

University of Adelaide

South Australia

June 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	2
DECLARATION.....	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
‘THE NIGHTWATCHERS’ A NOVEL.....	6
‘BREAKING ENGLISH’ AN EXEGESIS	
Introduction.....	148
Silence and Noise: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and the Need for Multicultural Fiction.....	153
Breaking Boundaries: Reconceptualising Multicultural Narratives in Young Adult Fiction.....	176
Strangers in a Strange Land: Writing and Representing Migrants In Multicultural Fiction.....	202
Afterword.....	221
WORKS CITED.....	222

ABSTRACT

The creative work 'The Nightwatchers' is a novel with gothic undertones, written for a young adult audience. Twelve-year-old Mattie Russo and her best friend Harry are the 'nightwatchers', who entertain themselves by watching the comings and goings of the residents of their apartment block. When five-year-old Sammy goes missing, they play detective, discovering his corpse by the local river. Mattie and Harry realise the murderer is someone from the apartments who's been watching where the local children play; this puts them in danger. Mattie cannot turn to her illiterate Italian grandmother (Nonna), or her depressed father for help; nor can Harry turn to his drunken, violent parents. When another boy disappears, Mattie and Harry return to the river in search of him, terrified that their silence has cost the boy his life.

The plot of the novel is a device to engage the young adult reader; the novel is most importantly a 'multicultural' work, drawing attention to the need for cross-cultural communication in Australia. The relationship between Mattie and her Italian migrant grandmother is crucial to the novel. Their struggles to communicate (Nonna's broken English and Mattie's inability to speak Italian) mean they must each 'culturally negotiate' two cultures.

Although the contemporary relevance of the concept of multiculturalism has been contested, I use the arguments of Wenche Ommundsen to support my claim that recognition of cultural difference and representation of minority groups is still important to Australian society and literature. My exegesis, 'Breaking English', analyses contemporary sites of 'cultural negotiation', including my own experiences of negotiation, both as a 'writer' and a supporter of 'multiculturalism'. I examine multiculturalism in a social and political context, in relation to contemporary literature and to my own novel. I compare my novel to Melina

Marchetta's *Looking for Alibrandi* and other multicultural young adult narratives. Finally, I consider the process of writing a novel with my illiterate grandmother Esterina as a muse.

DECLARATION

I, Melanie Kinsman, certify that this work contains no material which 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.

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 catalogue and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

Signed

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my principal supervisor, Dr Susan Hosking, for her support and advice over a long period of candidature. I also appreciate the efforts of Dr Philip Edmonds, my co-supervisor, who read the manuscript and provided feedback. There are numerous others from the University of Adelaide's Discipline of Creative Writing and English I would like to acknowledge: Professor Tom Shapcott, for those two years of writing classes I will use for the rest of my life; Dr Eva Sallis, for her advice when I was a young writer; Anna Solding and Heather Taylor Johnson for their friendship; and Stefan Laschuk, for all the beers, writing advice and crazy times. To my mentor, Ursula Dubosarsky, thank you for your advice which helped me to structure the novel.

I would also like to thank Associate Professor Salah Kutieleh for his advice and encouragement, and Dr Michael X. Savvas, for always finding the humour in absurd situations.

This thesis would not have been possible without the assistance of Suzanne Franzway and Neil Franzway, who offered encouragement, advice and space to write. I'm also grateful to my son, Charlie Franzway, and last but not least, Sam Franzway, to you I offer the greatest of thanks for being there throughout the best and worst of times.

I would like to thank my mother Anna Maria Pinneri, who gave me my first books and encouraged me to write, and my grandmother Esterina, who drew me pictures because she couldn't write. To Dan, thanks for bailing me out so many times and moving house for me. I would also like to acknowledge the Saliba family (Rose, Carmen, Lele and all of you) and the DiGirolami family (Tallora, Sandra and Gino) whose households I grew up in and inspired much of the novel's material. Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my nonno, Bruno Pinneri, who worked on a farm for over fifty years so I could write these words.