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**KNITTING A NOVEL:
A RETROSPECTIVE VIEW**

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
In Creative Writing
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ABSTRACT

The novel *Knitting* explores issues of grief, women's work, friendship and grace. The two main characters, Martha (a generous artist with little paid work) and Sandra (a highly-strung academic with an interest in textiles), slowly develop friendship across a social divide. Both have experienced the loss of a partner, Martha in her youth, and Sandra more recently. Martha appears to wear her grief lightly, but Sandra, still feeling 'covered in glass' finds it difficult to move on. Committed to the joint project of mounting an exhibition of retro and contemporary knitting, they find themselves also committed to sustaining each other. Each has a history to be addressed, and each, out of that history, damages the other, Sandra by selfishness and obsessiveness, and Martha by passivity. Ultimately both need external help. The novel can be read superficially as cause and effect and resolution, or more deeply as a theological reflection on the nature of grace given to and shared by flawed human beings.

The novel was accepted for publication well before submission for examination and so had the attention of readers both in the academy and in publishing. Suggestions from both were gratefully received and many were incorporated into the novel. There were no structural changes as a result of these comments: changes were mainly in expansion (about 6000 words) and in smoothing continuity. The version of the novel offered for examination is certainly all my own work, a draft which took these comments into account, but which precedes the intensive line editing undertaken with the publishers' editors.

The exegetical essay *Knitting the Novel: a Retrospective View* both chronicles and explores two parallel journeys, the journey of writing the novel *Knitting*, and the journey of my development as a writer, not only as novelist but also as essayist.

Part A is a consideration of two sets of metaphors, mapping/journaling, and knitting/fabric, which have provided a basic framework for my consideration of process in both the novel and the essay. Part B documents autobiographical elements at work in the novel, then contextualises them via a discussion of the work of other influences—particularly painter Grace Cossington Smith and textile artist and theorist Diana Wood Conroy. Part C consists of two examples of the kind of meditation and mulling process generated by research, which may or may not ultimately find expression within a novel. Part D demonstrates two samples of exploratory technique; a reflection on primary records kept during the early phase of novel writing, and a short sample of one of the ways in which a character or other aspects of the novel can be explored (and in this particular case resolved) through a creative tangential approach. In the conclusion I return to the metaphors of journey, map and journal and, with the particular journey of writing this essay completed, adjust my earlier definitions.

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