

The Return to the Mother

Exegesis Accompanying the Novel

And the Word was Song

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ABSTRACT

The novel manuscript *And the Word was Song* is a work in five parts, structurally (and very loosely) mirroring the first five books of The Old Testament. It is the story of Lily May, a young woman who travels around the world trying to find meaning in her life after her prostitute, heroin-addicted mother has died.

Throughout her journeys, Lily May comes into contact with people who have issues with sex and / or addiction, always forcing her to remember her mother, a loving yet entirely flawed woman. Some of her fellow travellers are neglected children; some are street-smart gypsies; some are lovers; all are unknowingly Lily May's mother substitutes. Through an impending birth, a return to her childhood home and an unexpected discovery of a half-sister, Lily May is able to end her journey and accept her mother for who she was: an imperfect woman who gave birth to her, then loved and cared for her the best that she could. The story is about spirituality, sexuality, love, addiction, acquiescence — and Elvis. Ultimately it is about mothers.

The exegetical essay is a reflection on the journey from daughter to mother. I discuss the structuring of my novel manuscript and explore ways in which memory is accessed in the recreation of the maternal bond. Through an imaginary conversation with my mother about the legitimacy of psychoanalysis in re-evaluating mothers and maternity, I look at three concepts of mother substitution, considering ways in which the subconscious reconstructs the mother in the relationships women have. I deliberate on homecomings, both literary and personal, and consider the ethics of using my mother's stories to further my own story.

DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

I give consent to the thesis being made available for photocopying and loan if accepted for the award of the degree.

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