

‘Hidden’

and

‘Looking in a Broken Mirror:

Reflections on the Split Writer and the

Visual Artist Character’

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## Table of contents

Abstract .....	iv
Declaration .....	vi
Acknowledgments .....	vii
A note on spelling .....	viii
‘Hidden’ .....	1
Table of contents .....	3
Part one .....	5
Part two .....	197
Part three .....	219
‘Looking in a Broken Mirror’ .....	313
Table of contents .....	315
Introduction: Breaking the mirror .....	317
Margaret Atwood’s <i>Cat’s Eye</i> : Reflections of the artist .....	337
Pricked by shards of glass: Writing ‘Hidden’ .....	353
Works cited .....	383

## Abstract

'Hidden' is a novel exploring ideas of secrecy, self-presentation and what it means to be an artist. The two main characters are Jemima, an art student at university, and Clement. They meet at a party when Clement walks in on Jemima cutting herself. Something about Jemima reminds Clement of his sister, Hannah, who died as a result of her anorexia. Jemima is intrigued by Clement's reaction to her cutting and finds herself drawn to the only person who knows her secret. While she finds comfort in the fact he knows something she keeps hidden, and the space of intimacy this creates, she refuses to participate actively in that intimacy, keeping him, emotionally, at an arm's length.

Clement and Jemima travel separately to Barcelona. Clement visits before the start of the novel and returns early when Hannah is readmitted to hospital. Clement remembers Barcelona in a twist of pleasure and pain. It is where he found his artistic voice and where he felt free as an artist for the first time. At the same time, however, he feels that he deserted Hannah for art, represented by Barcelona. Since his sister's death, Clement has become 'anorexic' about art. In an attempt to control something in this uncontrollable world, he avoids seeing or creating art.

Jemima, perplexed by Clement's feelings about Barcelona and knowing nothing of Hannah, thinks that by going there she'll be able to connect with him, without the risk of real intimacy. At the same time, travelling alone to Barcelona appeals to Jemima as a way to escape their burgeoning relationship. In Barcelona she discovers that she will always be herself no matter where she goes. She also

finds her own way of thinking about art and what it means to be an artist – very different from Clement's.

'Looking in a Broken Mirror: Reflections on the Split Writer and the Visual Artist Character' is the exegesis for 'Hidden'. The exegesis explores the idea of split or doubled artists, looking specifically at the relationship between writer-artist and fictional character-artist. It is argued that writing about a fictional artist can be a way of exploring the creative process and the relationship between artist (writer) and artwork (novel). Margaret Atwood's novel *Cat's Eye* is discussed as exploring a possible relationship between the artist, her life and her art. Other novels about visual artists are also discussed in relation to 'Hidden'. The creative process and the experience of research for this project are examined, specifically in relation to the split or doubled relationship between life and art and the split between rational and creative thinking. Gaudí's architecture, in the city of Barcelona, is considered in these contexts as a significant influence in the development of the novel.

## Declaration

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 in all forms of media, now and hereafter known.

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Om Shanti Shanti Shanti



I have used the original spelling and grammar in quotations even when it is not consistent with my own spelling and grammar.