The Discipline of Novel-Writing:  
A writer’s creativity toolkit (exegesis)

and

Six Minutes (novel)

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Abstract

The Discipline of Novel-Writing: A writer's creativity toolkit is a creative writing thesis in two parts: a draft novel centred on the contemporary Brisbane legal scene, titled Six Minutes, and an exegesis which examines and addresses the scarcity of self-evaluative creative writing resources for writers who are no longer novices.

The exegesis and toolkit evolved from my search for answers to complex, common, but little-understood writing problems which I had encountered while producing Six Minutes.

By overlaying the legal world onto the world of novel-writing, I show how a novelist builds a case, much like a lawyer does. A number of aspects of my toolkit are generated out of appropriations from legal thinking and practice. An interesting irony, therefore, is that my novelistic interrogation of misbehaviour in a law firm uses the tools of the legal world against itself.

The novel reveals the quirks, traditions and unwritten rules of the patriarchal legal profession and explores the hegemony at play, where women have been let into the profession, but continue to be outsiders. The story centres on the protagonist, Sandra Jeeves, and her painful, growing realisation that access does not amount to equality, or equal opportunity.

There continues to be a need for writer resources that address in a precise, but not prescriptive way, the research and creativity processes in the whole conceptualisation and production of a novel. It is largely about understanding the connections between thinking, researching and writing (including editing) and how they impact on the production of ‘story truth’. A reader ‘believes’ a story; much as a juror accepts or rejects a case.

This project focuses a writer on the ultimate ambition of finishing a novel that is believable, authentic and in some way, transformative.

The toolkit prompts writers to make more effective creative decisions by becoming more observant readers of their own work, feeding into a the-better-the-reader-the-better-the-
writer causative link. While this project focuses on the novel, many comments would apply equally to other forms of creative writing.

This project is not about producing another delimiting formula, or another how-to-write or how-I-wrote-it memoir. (Specific examples of these works will be examined in the exegesis.) Rather, it pursues a better understanding of the discipline of novel writing.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. 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 thesis itself.

Signed: Theresa Elizabeth Lauf
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