

**Out of the shadows:
Representations of the reading and writing
process in fiction.**

A novel and exegesis

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Abstract

The categories of reader and writer have often been conceived as binary opposites representing the poles of passivity and production. The idea of this dichotomy between reading and writing has dissolved as the recognition of the indeterminacy of the text is mirrored by postmodern conceptions of the contingent nature of subjectivity. However, the novel form as we know it emerged during the post-enlightenment age when the subject was conceived as singular and original and the individual life as narrative. The issue of who gets to speak and how that speech is received continues to be a major thematic concern in the novel to the present time.

This exegesis examines the locus of narrative authority as played out between representations of the author and reader, and reading and writing, in *Foe* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The same two novels also show how 'writing starts with reading' as Cixous says. Reading and writing share an impetus to override the existing text to rewrite what has been unsaid. These two novels explicitly address a shared reading history, through the recuperation and overwriting of canonical texts and their authors, and therefore illuminate the spectre of the actual author and the actual reader haunting the margins of the text.

The creative component of the thesis, the manuscript 'Tex Surfacing', is a complementary exploration of the notions of narrative truth, narrative authority and the relationship between reading, writing and subjectivity. The characters of 'Tex Surfacing' play out the argumentative positions of author versus reader, and reading versus writing in order to establish who gets to tell the story and what, indeed, the story is.

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Tex Surfacing: a novel