

THE LIGHT IN THE LABYRINTH: Young Adult Novel and Exegesis.

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to meet the requirements of the PhD by artefact and exegesis

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ABSTRACT

Two components go hand in hand in this practice-led PhD – *The Light in the Labyrinth*, a young adult historical fiction novel, and its complementary exegesis that illuminates and contextualises what underpins the creation of this work.

The Light in the Labyrinth constructs the fictional experience of my teenage female character, Kate Carey, the bastard daughter of Henry VIII and niece of Anne Boleyn, as she witnesses the last months of Anne Boleyn's life.

My exegesis explicates the position of *The Light in the Labyrinth* in the young adult historical fiction genre. It also explicates my writing methodology of autoethnography, using the prism of Feminist Standpoint Epistemology, and how this methodology enables me to construct fiction through an imaginative and empathetic response to historical research.

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Wendy J. Dunn

DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE

I declare that this exegesis, and the accompanying artefact:

- contains no material which has been accepted for the award to the candidate of any other degree or diploma, except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome;
- to the best of the candidate's knowledge contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome; and
- where the work is based on joint research or publications, discloses the relative contributions of the respective workers or authors.

Wendy J. Dunn

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	2
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	3
DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE	4
CONTENTS	5
LIST OF IMAGES USED	6
EXEGESIS TO ACCOMPANY THE ARTEFACT <i>THE LIGHT IN THE LABYRINTH</i> . 10	
INTRODUCTION TO THE EXEGESIS	11
THE PROJECT.....	11
RESEARCHING THE NOVEL.....	11
RESEARCHING FOR SCHOLARSHIP: THE EXEGESIS	13
THEORY AND METHODOLOGY	14
THE WRITER'S JOURNAL	14
FICTIONAL TRUTH.....	16
THE EXEGESIS OVERVIEW	17
MYSELF, THE WRITER	20
THE RIGHT TIME TO WRITE	20
CLAIMING MY GAP	21
ENTERING THE LABYRINTH	22
PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH	24
THE ONLY METHODOLOGY FOR SOME RESEARCH QUESTIONS?	28
AUTOETHNOGRAPHY	30
MAPPING OUT MY WRITING PROCESS	31
AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: A PRODUCT OF POSTMODERNISM.....	32
THE 'I' THROUGH WHICH EVERYTHING MUST PASS.....	34
FEMINIST STANDPOINT THEORY	40
WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY WITH FEMINIST STANDPOINT?.....	42
EUREKA: THE REALISATION	48
THE YOUNG ADULT NOVEL	51
A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE YOUNG ADULT NOVEL.....	52
A DIFFICULT GENRE TO DEFINE	54
IDENTIFYING THE IDEAL READER.....	57
TRAGEDY AND YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE.....	62
SITUATING MY ARTEFACT IN FEMINIST STANDPOINT AND YA LITERATURE	63
BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER	65
REVISING ANNE BOLEYN AND THE HISTORICAL NOVEL	68
HISTORICAL FICTION	75
SITUATING MY WORK WITHIN ANNE BOLEYN NOVELS	79
CONCLUSION	87
CITED WORKS	92
BIBLIOGRAPHY	110
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS PRODUCED BY THE CANDIDATE AS A RESULT OF THE PROJECT	131

LIST OF IMAGES USED

Image one: The proposed cover for *The Light in the Labyrinth*, as of 8th of June, 2014. Used with publisher's permission.

Image two: Portrait thought to be Lady Knollys, by Steven van der Meulen, 1562
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catherine_Carey#mediaviewer/File:Steven_van_der_Meulen_Catherine_Carey_Lady_Knollys.jpg

Image three: Cover of *Dear Heart, How Like You This?* Author's image.

Image four: *Portrait of Anne Boleyn*, postcard from Hever Castle.
http://rlv.zcache.co.uk/anne_boleyn_hever_castle_postcard-r52a7dfef457546c08c773eab0cda975b_vgbaq_8byvr_512.jpg?bg=0xfffff

Image five: *Christine Presenting Her Poems to Queen Isabeau*
<http://www.csupomona.edu/~plin/l201/christine1.html>

Image Six: *Anne Boleyn in the Tower* by Edouard Cibot, 1835.
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anne_Boleyn_London_Tower.jpg



Image one: The proposed cover for *The Light in the Labyrinth*, as of 8th of June, 2014.



Image two: Portrait thought to be Lady Knollys, who before her marriage was known as Catherine Carey, by Steven van der Meulen, 1562

**EXEGESIS TO ACCOMPANY THE
ARTEFACT *THE LIGHT IN THE LABYRINTH*.**

INTRODUCTION TO THE EXEGESIS

The project

Two components go hand in hand in this practice-led PhD – *The Light in the Labyrinth*, a young adult historical fiction novel, and its complementary exegesis that illuminates what underpins the creation of this work.

To complete this work involved me in two distinct and vital forms of research. The first was directed towards the writing of *The Light in the Labyrinth*, my PhD artefact. Written in third person limited point of view and targeting the young adult female reader (14-20 year-old), my artefact constructs the fictional experience of my teenage female character, Kate Carey, the bastard daughter of Henry VIII, as she witnesses the last months of Anne Boleyn's life. Whilst world building and character construction were informed by research of the Tudor period and consequently demanded study of books, journals, period documents and experiential research to aid with world building, this is a work of imagination and thus a work of fiction.

Writing this novel also led to scholarly research, identifying issues vital to the creation of my artefact, which I set out in my exegesis. This academic research entailed study of scholarly texts as I sought to deepen my appreciation of my writerly identity, Practice-led research (PLR), the Young Adult (YA) novel, Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST) and why women fiction writers are so drawn to historical feminist narratives like that provided by the story of Anne Boleyn.

Together, my exegesis and artefact add to knowledge about creativity. Metropolis Ink, a small publishing company, will publish *The Light in the Labyrinth* in 2014.

Researching the novel

As previously noted, my artefact narrates my imagined story of Katherine Carey, niece of Anne Boleyn, during the months leading up to Anne Boleyn's execution. Natalie Kon-yu (2010, np.) has argued there is an ethical dilemma of writing fiction that involves filling in the gaps about a real woman silenced by history, as this 'would perpetuate the idea that information about women's history can be easily recovered' but my writer's identity, formed by feminist standpoint epistemology, places upon me a duty to give voice to these silences.

My research of Katherine Carey's life led to that important writerly question, *What if?* – a method of imaginative speculation used by writers to respond to context and situation (Edwards 2007). These *what if* questions were important to the development of my artefact, from the moment I first asked myself, “*What if Anne Boleyn's execution was witnessed by her niece, Katherine Carey?*”

Little appears known of the early years of Katherine Carey, the main character in *The Light in the Labyrinth*, which meant I turned the focus of my historical research to her mother, Mary Boleyn, and her aunt, Anne Boleyn. By this method of igniting imagination, I was able to construct my fictional Kate Carey.

Researching her mother Mary was particularly important to my construction of Kate's character. Reading Tudor biographies (Denny 2004; Ives 2004; Fraser 1992; Mattingly 1942; Starkey 2003; Weir 1998, 2002, 2010) developed in my mind a woman who suffered greatly through being a pawn of her family. A young mistress of two Kings, François I of France and Henry VIII, and left widowed with two children, possibly fathered by the second of these Kings, Mary brought down upon herself the great disapproval of her family when she married for love in 1533 (Denny 2004). She appears to me a woman who has had enough – a woman who no longer wants to be part of the king's court and all that it represents.

Mary lived with her second husband at Rochford, about a two-day ride from the gates of London (something I discovered during my two weeks of experiential research in London during 2012). This suggested to my imagination that Mary sought to distance herself from her family and Henry VIII's court in a self-imposed exile. Reflecting upon this, the context of her life and my own experience as a mother, I found myself constructing Mary as a protective mother – which raised the question of how her daughter would react to being kept away from the court of Henry VIII. This construction of character and story can be represented metaphorically as giving birth. Reflection about the historical Katherine Carey birthed scenes in my writer's mind, such as when Mary confronted a disrespectful daughter who questioned her right to decide her own fate. My Mary stirred in my mind and spoke, her words becoming constructed in text on page 10 of my artefact.

There is no historical record of this conversation between Mary and Kate, but it was this type of omission – the silence of women's voices offered in history books –

that fired my imagination into full play. This method of construction was responsible for much of the plotting of *The Light in the Labyrinth*.

Researching the novel made me aware that these kinds of gaps are vital for my imagination. Not only do they ignite my imagination, but they also led to journal reflections that helped me appreciate why I am so drawn to write about these historical women. They offer a historical feminist standpoint for me to engage with as a writer through my own feminist standpoint, a standpoint used to critique gender and my world. Coming to this realisation aided my appreciation of what actually underpins my fictional revising of real people from history and how that connects to fictional truth. Milan Kundera writes: ‘Only a literary work that reveals an unknown fragment of human existence has a reason for being. To be a writer does not mean to preach a truth; it means to discover a truth’ (cited by Carlisle 1985, np.). Thus, whilst novels are irrefutably works of fiction, they offer the means to speak truths and build bridges of empathy and understanding between human beings.

Researching for scholarship: the exegesis

The process of writing my artefact involved me in two major streams of research. The first one was historical research necessary for the writing of a historical novel; the second was academic research directed at situating my work as belonging to Practice-led research, Feminist Standpoint Theory, young adult fiction and historical fiction that is written through a feminist standpoint and the methodology of autoethnography.

Donna Haraway (1988), through her cry to the academy to position and add to knowledge through feminist ways of inquiry, first directed my research towards Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST) and its theorists – past and present. My research into FST provided me with a critical prism to develop further insights into the world I constructed in my artefact. My research also deepened my understanding of young adult literature and aided situating my artefact amongst these works.

My research situated my work amongst Anne Boleyn novels, too. This aided my understanding of her story as a feminist standpoint narrative that offers the means to critique patriarchal societies – that of the Tudors and my own. Thus, it is argued that both artefact and exegesis ‘speak to one another’ about the situation of women’s lives in patriarchy.

My exegesis illustrates both forms of research, but concentrates upon scholarly prisms to illuminate methods that led to scholarship.

Theory and methodology

My methodology is that of practice-led research (PLR) – I discuss PLR in greater depth in a later section – that draws from autoethnography shaped by feminist standpoint epistemology. Barthes (1975) discusses in his work *S/Z* how writers respond to the world through writing and that means their writing reflect to readers the mirrors by which they see the world. My mirrors operate through a feminist standpoint of a woman born into a working class family who, through education and profession, has broken through to the middle class. My father’s experience of growing up in a time of war and great poverty left him damaged and tortured, which in turn damaged his children. Writing has been my way to achieve healing. Such personal experiences are relevant to taking up the scholarly theory of FST.

Historical records or historical reconstructions by other creators – novels, plays, film or artwork – are pertinent and even act as midwives to my imagination. My imagination was fertilised by the Tudor imaginings of others and formed by a childhood and youth which I spent either reading or being exposed to Tudor stories. Anne Boleyn’s story, as recounted in *Anne of the Thousand Days*, left an indelible impression on me as a child. She struck me then as a strong woman of true substance – a role model I could set before my gaze for inspiration in my growing up years. This is similar to how my teenage Kate feels about her Aunt Nan in *The Light in the Labyrinth* – an example of how the methodology of autoethnography is used in my writing.

The writer’s journal

Crucial to my research and a vital place to formulate my thoughts about creativity was my PhD reflective journal. However, I started this journal uncertain about whether it would indeed prove of a benefit to my practice, but interested in engaging in the experiment of journaling to discover its results.

Prior to writing *The Light in the Labyrinth*, my usual practice of writing did not involve journaling. Rather, due to time restraints imposed by both family and work commitments, I would, after being first inspired by the “search image” I discuss in my

conclusion, confront the blank page and go straight into story writing. Through writing a journal, scholarly reflection on issues that arose in my writing led me to theory: my imagination was inspired by historical research that also drew from feminist standpoint epistemology, a prism that enriched my insights in the novel. My journal also led to a scholarly consideration of my *self* as data and the methodology of autoethnography. As Chang (2008, pp. 48 & 49) writes: “autoethnography is not about focusing on self alone, but about searching for the understanding of others (culture/society) through self”.

Scholars contend that by jotting down ideas researchers start analysis through the possibility of generating eureka moments (Watt 2007). This process I saw for myself when jotting down my ideas in my journal led to the enrichment of both artefact and exegesis. The process of constructing my artefact continually involved me in thinking – a process that helped identify what I knew and how I thought I came to know it (Carter 2005; Watt 2007). By this I mean, writing in my journal helped illuminate what underpins my writing practice simply because writing acts as a thinking methodology that stimulates reflectivity (Avieson 2008; Carter 2005; Coylar 2009; Richardson 1994).

Through the journaling and the interrogation of my writing and the decisions I arrived at by writing, my eyes were opened to the fact that historical fiction was my means to reclaim my own voice. It was not simply that I desired to empower my female character in *The Light in the Labyrinth*, but that through novel writing I, too, was empowered.

My exegesis involved me in researching PLR, FST, YA literature and situating my artefact in historical novels that narrate and revise the story of Anne Boleyn.

Practice-led research was revealed as a fluid, flexible and deliberate methodology that contributed knowledge about creativity through engaging in the act of creativity. As a fiction writer, I cannot help being drawn to metaphors. Throughout my PhD journey, I often visualised my artefact and exegesis as a duck gliding on water. I saw the duck as the artefact, with the exegesis continually pumping its legs underneath the surface of the water to keep it moving. Through engaging with PLR, I now see my creativity as the duck. My creativity is propelled in the water by the issues I discuss in my exegesis, which I arrived at through practice.

PLR illuminated that I write from a feminist standpoint and about feminist standpoints, which led to research about FST. By deepening my understanding about

FST, it became clearer that my feminist standpoint – formed by the autoethnography of my own life – situates me in an empathetic space that engages me in writing about feminist standpoints through entering the silences left by history.

The Light in the Labyrinth was written with the young adult reader in mind, so my research involved not only reading young adult novels, but also a scholarly study of young adult literature. This study indicated the difficulties of defining this genre and its ideal reader. Identifying its conventions helped situate my artefact amongst these works, as well as providing evidence that young adult novels offered the means of igniting empathy and transforming lives through reader engagement.

My section on historical fiction and fictional representations of Anne Boleyn identified that women writers are drawn to historical fiction as not only a means to reclaim women's history, but also to speak to their own time through the mirror of the past. My research revealed the Anne Boleyn story acts as one of these mirrors through being a feminist standpoint narrative that demonstrates the oppression of patriarchy.

Fictional truth

Achieving verisimilitude in a work of fiction ensures the reader is taken 'back then' (Thom 2010, p. 26). It is 'the curious, alluring space between fact and fiction' (Parini 1998, p. B4) that gestates my imagination, but, before I can truly immerse myself in writing, I must also achieve an understanding of historical context and its relationship to situation through thorough research. This has helped me understand that cause and effect of situation is rooted in historical context and enables me as a historical fiction writer to fill the gaps of historical record with my imaginings.

Joanne Brown identifies seeking 'balance between historical details and fictional elements, the demand for authenticity and accuracy, and the issue of provenance' (1998) as a vital problem for writers of historical fiction writers who write for young adults. For me this resulted in a constant battle between my desire to write an artefact for young adults that was true to historical facts and my goal to achieve a successful work of historical fiction. At those times, I reminded myself that I was writing a work of fiction and '[t]ruth, however, is a fickle damsel; she may be wedded to historical accuracy, but as often as not she consults with legend' (Smith 1971, p. 18). Therefore, achieving a successful story always won over historical accuracy.

Even so, throughout the writing process I questioned whether I betrayed my

reader whenever I knowingly changed history or seized upon the gaps of history for the purposes of my story. One simple example of making a narrative decision involved Anne Boleyn's dog, Purkoy. Historically, the dog indeed came to an untimely death to Anne Boleyn's heartbreak (Ives 2004), but Purkoy wasn't discovered dead under her bed in the clean up after the fire, as constructed in my artefact. However, I decided the dog's death could be used for the twin purpose of increasing the drama of the fire and triggering Kate's concern about the threat to Anne Boleyn.

Jerome De Groot (2010) speaks of fiction hoodwinking readers into believing constructions of the past. My reflective journal allowed me to formulate my thoughts about his observation when I wrote:

The paradox of fiction is all fiction is *make believe, a lie*. No matter how much I research the period and its people, I can only hope to interpret, recreate the past and construct my make-believe through the prism of a writer who belongs to and is constructed by the present (Dunn 2012).

The exegesis overview

By constructing a work of fiction I contribute to knowledge, directed by the questions that propelled the creation of my artefact, through imaginative response to historical research. As I discuss in my exegesis, novels are capable of yielding significant insights into the human experience and building places of empathy. Therefore, I posit that my artefact is my main contribution to knowledge. It leads to and interacts with my exegesis, which offers academic knowledge claims. These include how research ignites the writer's imagination to construct historical fiction through the writerly identity. They are claims that have come from reflecting upon my practice and would not exist without the process of novel writing (Bolt 2007; Kundera 2006; Mäkelä 2007), thus I recommend reading the artefact before the exegesis and have bound the thesis to reflect this.

This project brings together the artefact and exegesis as one. In doing so, it brings new knowledge to scholarship. PLR leads me to method, literature, FST, young adult literature and contextualising of Anne Boleyn in the tradition of historical fiction. PLR provides a methodology to help me learn from other scholars and produced research, knowledge and theories documented in my exegesis for the purpose of

contributing to current scholarly discourse (Arnold 2011; Barrett 2007; Bolt 2007). Through engaging with PLR, I deepen my understanding of what underpins my practice as a creative writer.

My exegesis knowledge claims are derived from PLR (Bolt 2007; Mäkelä 2007). I discuss this methodology further in my section on Practice-led research. *The Light in the Labyrinth* acts as my prism to conceptualise gender “in the service of social change” (Risman 2004, p. 430). Through completing both exegesis and artefact, I have come to appreciate my writing methodology of autoethnography operates through the prism of a feminist standpoint. PLR has helped me understand that historical fiction is my means of empowerment in a male dominated world. PLR illuminates that my artefact, written through empathetic and reconstructive use of imagination and from a feminist standpoint and about a feminist standpoint, is my feminist method to critique patriarchy – past and present.

Since Practice-led research also deepens my understanding that my writing identity looks out onto my world through the prism of a feminist standpoint, I turned my attention to Feminist Standpoint Theory. My study of FST elucidated how women have access to privileged knowledge because they are situated both *within* and *outside* patriarchy. My research illuminated that the standpoint of women is one that deepens empathy through the experience of marginalisation. FST aided my appreciation that this empathy was vital to me as a writer, one that both ignited ideas for writing and propelled writing. It also allowed me to appreciate FST offered a space for women to engage with, to help them understand why and how they are oppressed by society. My exegesis explicates that not only does my artefact offer a *herstory*, a feminist standpoint narrative providing this space of engagement, but also, through the power of empathy, feminist narratives begin the process for change.

As my artefact targets the young adult reader, my exegesis includes an effort to situate my artefact amongst works of young adult literature. Through an examination of the history of young adult novels, I provide evidence the genre gained its true importance through postmodernist works and that novels with feminist standpoints are solidly situated and valued. PLR research into young adult literature indicated that my artefact could be identified as a work of *imaginative realism*. Works such as these are seen as better able to engage the reader because they hold up mirrors to the reader through confronting *the Other* – like what I discuss in my exegesis and offered in my

artefact, a feminist standpoint story situated in history.

PLR also revealed my artefact to be that of *historiographic metafiction*, a sub-genre of historical fiction (Banks & Andrew 2013) with conventions of enclosed stories, concern with identity and offering a mirror to our time through the mirror of the past, therefore, a genre well suited to feminist standpoint narratives.

By situating my work within Anne Boleyn novels I arrived at an appreciation of why women writers are so drawn to historical fiction. Byatt seems to be referring to women writers when she says, 'I think the fact we have in some sense been forbidden to think about history is one reason why so many novelists have taken to it' (cited by Heilmann & Llewellyn 2004, p. 137). Women writers are not only re-writing women's stories into history and giving voice to the silences, but also reclaiming their own stories through empathetic understanding of *the Other*. It is through this understanding that women deepen their awareness of the existing master narratives in place that must be rewritten for a more equal world.

As I discuss later in my section about Practice-led research, PLR and the relationship of the artefact and exegesis has become the source of immense and at times contentious discussion in the Australian academy and Australasian Association of Writing Programs (Avieson 2008; Green 2007). Donna Lee Brien (2006, p. 53) writes: '...creative writers can provide valuable insights into the creative process and how creativity can be enhanced both in other academic disciplines and the wider community'. What I offer in both my artefact and exegesis demonstrates this by contributing knowledge to scholarly discourse in these areas.

MYSELF, THE WRITER.

The Light in the Labyrinth is my first Young Adult (YA) historical novel and the third novel that I have completed set in a time far earlier than my own. My first novel, *Dear Heart, How Like You This?* was published in 2002 and remains available today in both print and E-book forms. My second major work, *Falling Pomegranate Seeds*, yet to find a publisher, was the first book of a planned trilogy about the life of Katherine of Aragon.

My PhD journey was one of true writerly growth. I not only discerned more clearly my writing identity, but also came to appreciate the truth of Eco's (2004, p. 133) words, 'Sometimes the most profound influence is the one you discover afterwards, not the one you find immediately'. I appreciate now that my work can be more richly understood through the prism of feminist standpoint epistemology, which provides an empathetic space to incite my imagination. I also appreciate why it is important for creators to enter the more traditional modes of scholarly discourse. By doing so, we articulate paths that connect rather than divide through offering essential knowledge for societies to sustain themselves (Carter 2005).

The right time to write

For myself, I have discovered that the paths I articulate through writing originated from ideas that have often composted for many years before I engage in storytelling. As Ursula Le Guin (1989, p. 194) writes: 'The stuff has to be transformed into oneself, it has to be composted before it can grow a story'. My stories compost in a feminist standpoint, which is the prism providing me the empathetic space necessary for the creation of my stories.

Stephen King (2010, p. 163) posits that 'stories are found things, like fossils in the ground'; Milan Kundera took twenty-five years before he felt ready to develop an idea that became his novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1996) and Umberto Eco discusses in *On Literature* the journeys that presaged writing his novels, including the many decades he remained committed to his academic career. Yet the time arrived when the context of his medieval studies became the context he tapped into for his first novel, *The Name of the Rose* (2004).

Paul Carter (2005, p. 14) argues ‘local invention is always an act of exquisite timing. At the right moment (but only then) a way through can be found’. The reflections of these scholars and authors, anecdotal accounts by other writers, reflection about how I came to write *The Light in the Labyrinth*, and my other completed writing works, leads me to reflect that writers, through the practice of their craft, will arrive at the right time to write. The right moment begins with an idea (Atwood 1998; Eco 2004; King 2010; Kundera 2003; Smith & Dean 2009). The idea for *The Light in the Labyrinth* was first seeded from my reflections about a painting depicting the doomed Anne Boleyn. The initial idea resulted in the writing of a ten-minute play *Before Dawn Breaks*, later performed as one of the ten finalists in the Eltham Little Theatre ten-minute play competition in 2009. The teenage Katherine Carey was a character in my play.

In 2009, I also received the twelfth rejection for my second Tudor work, the first book of a planned trilogy on the life of Katherine of Aragon. My agent's attached communication made it clear that this was the last time she would be sending out this particular work to publishers. However, my agent also wrote that the themes of this novel had made her wonder if I should be writing for young adults. She encouraged me to target this age group because she had editors crying out for young adult historical fiction and believed she could sell my work to them. When I first read my agent's email, my stomach dropped. *Young Adult?* I desired to find my place as a historical fiction writer for adults, why then should I go in a different direction? In my chapter on the Young Adult novel, I explore the commercial realities driving writers.

I think it goes without saying that most serious writers desire to grow in their craft. ‘Experimenting with another genre or strategy can open up possibilities and refresh ... practice’ (Kroll 2006, p. 53). Feeling inspired to develop Kate further, I wondered if this character could indeed step up as the major protagonist for this suggested young adult novel. By the time I was accepted as a PhD student in 2010, I had decided to take up the challenge to grow by constructing a young adult historical novel for my artefact.

Claiming my gap

The title of my PhD artefact, *The Light in the Labyrinth*, indicates the fictional journey of my teenage, female character, Kate Carey. Kate is a noble girl from Tudor times.

Unhappy in her home, she goes to attend her royal aunt at the court of Henry VIII. There, she observes and begins to make sense of the adult world, and claims her identity.

My main character is a fictional re-construction of Katherine Carey, a true person from history and, through her mother, Mary Boleyn, a niece of Anne Boleyn. Katherine Carey has been used as a character in previous Tudor novels, for example, three of Gregory's Tudor novels (*The Other Boleyn Girl* (2001), *The Boleyn Inheritance* (2004), *The Virgin's Lover* (2006)), but my research revealed she had not yet been used as a main character. This was the primary gap I could step into; the second gap was to do with Anne Boleyn.

My fiction work constructs a different Anne Boleyn from the one offered in the popular novels *Wolf Hall* (2009), *Bring Up the Bodies* (2013) and *The Other Boleyn Girl* (2001). They are just three novels that number amongst those that paint Anne Boleyn in a negative light. Whilst I agree with Mantel's construction of Anne Boleyn as a politician in *Wolf Hall* (2009) and *Bring Up the Bodies* (2012), I don't see her as cold and driven by desire for power, as suggested in both novels. The Anne constructed by my imagination, based on my historical research, is not a woman capable of bedding her brother, even out of desperation to become pregnant and therefore secure her position as queen.

Through my many years of research, which has resulted in two Anne Boleyn novels, I envisage Anne Boleyn as someone very much like her daughter Elizabeth. Like Elizabeth, Anne was not perfect, but a woman of great courage and intelligence, worthy of love and respect.

Entering the Labyrinth

The title of my artefact, *The Light in the Labyrinth*, not only indicates the journey of my teenage character to understand the adult world, but also reflects my own journey as a practice-led researcher. Writing the artefact took me on an immense journey through an intellectual labyrinth that involved finding the right path or paths to follow. It was the light cast by my PLR research that led me through this maze, when I recognised I constructed my writing through feminist standpoint epistemology, which propelled the completion of my artefact and its accompanying exegesis. This particular journey has

also opened my eyes as to why historical fiction became my means to combine my two lifelong passions: writing and learning about the Tudors.

My following sections of this exegesis include *Practice-led research*, *The Young Adult Novel*, *Feminist Standpoint Theory* and *Giving voice to Anne Boleyn and the Historical novel*. There is a rich academic debate about these issues and I refer to this literature throughout, rather than provide a separate, named literature review.

PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH

Books, books, books!
I had found the secret of a garret room
Piled high with cases in my father's name;
Piled high, packed large, – where, creeping in and out
Among the giant fossils of my past,
Like some small nimble mouse between the ribs
Of a mastodon, I nibbled here and there
At this or that box, pulling through the gap,
In heats of terror, haste, victorious joy,
The first book first. And how I felt it beat
Under my pillow, in the morning's dark,
An hour before the sun would let me read!
My books! (Barrett-Browning 1996, pp. 23-24).

In this section, I discuss my emerging understanding of Practice-led research (PLR) and how I situate myself in this methodology, as it is used for creative writing (Avieson 2008; Green 2007), through reflecting upon my practice as a historical fiction writer. I contend my exegesis falls into this discipline through giving another more overtly scholarly voice around my artefact (Bolt 2007; Mäkelä 2007) and by telling how, through my creative practice, important issues came to light that led me to research and situate my knowledge claim (Haraway 1988). By this I mean that my exegesis articulates what I have identified through practice as the vital keys to my practice and how that contributes and situates knowledge in the present scholarly debates (Arnold 2011; Barrett 2007; Bolt 2007). By the positioning of my practice through process, I gained new knowledge *of* my practice, rather than *about* practice (Carter 2005).

Despite being entrenched in the conservative, patriarchal Western Enlightenment model, the Academy has opened up opportunities for the creative practitioner/scholar to articulate and explicate the processes underpinning their practice (Arnold 2012; Gray 1996; Haraway 1988; Knowles & Cole 2007). While Bruce Archer is believed to have first set out practice as research in the 1970's (Norman, Heath & Pedgley 2000), studies over the last thirty years reveal that this means of research is still

regarded as a contentious issue (Barrett 2007; Bolt 2007; Bourke et al. 2004; Colbert 2012; Green 2007; Smith & Dean 2009; Stewart 2001). Therefore, I consider myself as part of a long line of creators/scholars striving to cement and legitimise the worth of PLR as a methodology that enables me to contextualise my findings and contribute knowledge (Stewart 2001).

PLR is as novel and inventive as its practitioners (Bolt 2007; Green 2007). Seen as an alternative performative methodology to more traditional qualitative and quantitative research methodologies (Haseman 2006), creative arts-based inquiry, or practice-led research, opens up uncharted areas of research by delivering fresh concepts and shining a light upon knowledge (Barrett 2004). Gary J. Knowles and Ardra L. Cole underline the value of research engaged in creative inquiry grounded ‘by traditions of academic discourse and research processes’ (2008, p. 14) but not locked into its structure. The reason for this is made clear by Robyn Anne Stewart (2001), when she calls for artists to ‘open up a larger domain by recontextualizing and reinterpreting aspects of standard mainstream research processes, looking at the resemblances, the self-resemblances and the differences between traditional and practitioner-based research methods as a logic of necessity’ (2001, p. 1). For me, this means learning from one another and opening up meaningful opportunities for knowledge claims.

The practice-led researcher tests ‘the rigour and validity of their work’ deliberately (Green 2007, p. 2) and repetitively through practice (Schön 1983), desiring to observe the world for the purpose of communicating knowledge (Perry 2008). ‘The practice of the artist is a site of discovery and of communication within itself’ (Perry 2008, p. 7). This is a continual process that I have come to appreciate through my own writing practice since it takes me out of my comfort zone as I navigate and push through by *doing*. As Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze (1973, p. 106) state in *The Intellectuals and Power*:

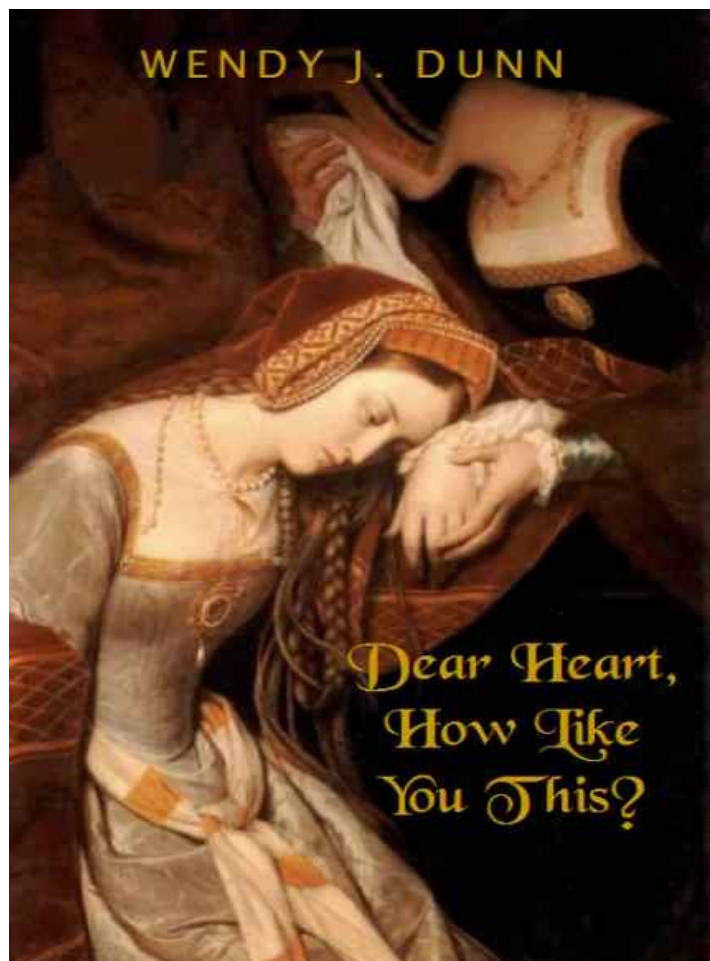
[f]rom the moment a theory moves into its proper domain, it begins to encounter obstacles, walls, and blockages which require its relay by another type of discourse (it is through this other discourse that it eventually passes to a different domain). Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can

develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall.

An additional feature embedded in PLR is that the research contributes to knowledge in such a way that it may be replicated and interrogated by future researchers (Barrett 2010; Green 2007), however, whilst positivist knowledge is replicable, PLR is about the individual's deliberate engagement in the process of creating and acquiring new knowledge through that engagement, with the consequence of learning about process and practice. Whilst knowledge may, but does not need to be, applicable to other practitioners, PRL recognises practicum as scholarship (Candy 2006) through the model of artefact and exegesis. PLR also values the individual creator as an agent who produces new understandings from practice and through practice (Bolt 2010).

Let me put forward this example from my own practice to explain how a movement towards knowledge can result from and through practice – my understanding of the painting inspiring my first Tudor novel, *Dear Heart, How Like You this?*, my ten-minute play, *Before Dawn Breaks*, and also my artefact.

Image three: Cover of *Dear Heart, How Like You This?* Author's image.



Through practice, my imagination conjures up *Anne Boleyn in the Tower* (by Edouard Cibot, 1835, Musée Rolin) as the depiction of Anne on the eve of her execution. This painting has been used as the cover for a number of works about Anne Boleyn, at times cropped to suggest Anne Boleyn is the figure in the foreground.

Through the practice of my craft as a historical fiction writer focused on the Tudor period, which has seen me acquire working knowledge for practice (Avieson 2008), I identify Anne Boleyn as the figure receding into the darker background, the woman hiding her grief behind a handkerchief. The figure in the foreground I identify as an unmarried girl. *Why?* I explain my reasons on my website (Dunn 2013):

In the painting, this girl's hair falls long and loose, with decorative plaits, from underneath her coif, while the hair of the woman behind her is hidden under a gable. The unbound hair of the figure in the foreground declares her maiden status, her virginity, while the figure in the background is the matron, the married woman – for only unmarried or ceremonial queens wore their hair loose at the court of Henry VIII.

But this is not the only reason I believe Anne is the figure in the background. The painter obviously did his research about Anne Boleyn and the Tudor period because there are other features to help the viewer identify this tragic queen. Starting with the black gown of the background figure; black was known as one of Anne's favourite colours. There is also a badge on the gown's bodice that is very similar to the falcon badge of the Boleyns. Also, the painter has placed the women in telling positions. The girl in the foreground appears kneeling, while the woman in the background is seated. By placing herself in a lower position, the girl could be acknowledging the other woman's higher rank.

If that wasn't enough – look at the older woman's lovely neck, adorned by very Anne Boleyn type jewellery. Surely the artist is depicting here what we know of Anne from descriptions that have come down to us from history. Not only did a Venetian ambassador describe her as having a long neck, but

Anne also said, steeling herself for her execution, ‘I heard say the executioner was very good, and I have a little neck’ (Hutchinson 2014, p. 89).

Confronting the difficulties of defining PLR (Candy 2006, Green 2007), Lelia Green provides an embryonic model to assist its classification. She identifies that PLR is ‘Subject to its own standards of rigour and validity; assessable according to judgements of ‘good’ and ‘bad’; experiential and qualitative; non-quantifiable; the only methodology available through which to pursue some research questions’ (Green 2007, pp. 1 & 2). My research adds further categories: no research method situated under the umbrella of PLR works in isolation for practice (Bolt 2007); that practice directs research and contributes to knowledge (Mäkelä 2007) and ‘theory emerges from a reflexive practice at the same time that practice is informed by theory’ (Bolt 2006, p.1).

The only methodology for some research questions?

Let me begin by providing an example of how I understand Green’s (2007) identification of PLR as the only methodology available through which to pursue some research questions. Practice determines the processes of this methodology in myriad ways. As a practice-led researcher, similarly to Eco pacing out the measurement of an Abbey to aid its verbal construction in *Name of the Rose* (1984), I will often use my own body to help find the words I need to find the words to build a scene. For example, I walked barefoot on a cold winter’s day to help describe the experience of my main character in *The Light in the Labyrinth*, when she leaves a warm bed to dash barefoot to the nearby fireplace (2014, p.46). I also used my memories of my sexual awakening as a teenager to help stir internal feelings, which helped me write about the sexual awakening of my fictional character. It is through these times of story construction that I came to appreciate autoethnography as a scholarly writing methodology.

Artefacts such as paintings are seen as inspiring ekphrasis – ‘the literal evocation of spatial art’ (Amir 2009, p. 232). Ekphrasis is also an agent of empathy through filtering the consciousness of viewer to read an artwork in a way that projects the self with the consequence of a greater awareness of identity (Amir 2009). Whilst ekphrasis was originally understood as poetry describing the artwork (Banegas 2010), I understand this key term can also be used for creative writing to help explicate why my practice leads me to period paintings. These physical statements of contextual imagery

not only help open the door of my imagination to a period not my own, but also help me construct character by not only providing a physical representation of my historical personage, but also by igniting a space of empathy. In researching this issue of how visual representations inspire creative writers in their writing, I was surprised to discover little research in this area, which suggests future studies are warranted.

In 2012, I wrote in my journal that ‘writers write to make sense of chaos out of which story comes’ (Dunn, 2012). My research methods also reflect that chaos: messy, chaotic and unstable, but also influential and creative to the writing process that contributes knowledge through entering the ongoing dialogue about life and scholarly debates that seeks to appreciate ‘the meaning of research itself’ (Lincoln & Denzin 2003, p. 7). Another writer influential to my reflections about chaos, storytelling and autoethnography was author Ursula Le Guin. Her belief that ideas of writers come from ‘imagination working on experience’ (2004, p. 164) strengthened my understanding that writers shape their human, chaotic experience of life by the means of storytelling. Le Guin (2004, p. 164) writes: ‘We force the world to be coherent – to tell us a story’. Making sense of chaos, writers discover hints at hidden patterns that reveal *the Other* (Curthoys 1991) and secrets that may hide the discourse of struggle (Foucault & Deleuze 1973).

Curthoys makes use of a powerful metaphor for feminism through the use of the three bodies of Sun, Moon and Earth. Since the orbits of Earth and Moon impact upon one another in their position around the Sun, these three bodies can be seen as representing the feminist prisms of sex, ethnicity and class. Whether we see gender as Sun, Moon or Earth depends upon our own feminist prism. The difficulty to pinpoint these positions due to colonialism, cultural and ethnic diversity, underlining the need for better gender theories in this post modernist age of doubt, returns us to chaos theory (Curthoys 1991).

Through my many years as a writing practitioner, I believe that theory is born from practice (Bolt 2010). I also recognise chaos as a space of meaning making (Carter 2005). Reflecting on my practice also provides me with autoethnography as a powerful method to evoke theory about gender to bring about social change. Identifying this issue as a feminist one led to further scholarly research.

Donna Haraway (1988, p. 581) writes: ‘Feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges’. ‘Situated’ in this sense bespeaks of our place in society and how

that shapes us. For me, that means the space I occupy as a western woman. As a writing practitioner, I appreciate objectivity is the other side of the coin of subjectivity. By this I mean it is the real world I see around me, which I turn on its head by the process of subjectivity, questioning perceived truth and reality, and thereby I situate my position in this world so my writing becomes ‘a pair of glasses directed to the outside’ (Proust, cited by Foucault & Deleuze 1973, p. 108). Subjectivism rooted in feminist standpoint and shaped by autoethnography engages me in experiential research and the qualitative creative process of writing *The Light in the Labyrinth* and its accompanying exegesis.

As well as offering what I view as additional modes of feminist discourse that remain still on the margins of the dominant culture (Pratt, cited by Spry 2001; Cixous 1994), this process was the vital component necessary for me to make claim to being a practice-led researcher who is engaged in arts-informed research (Cole & Knowles 2008), a creator who wishes to ‘enhance understandings of the human condition through alternative (to conventional) processes and representational forms of inquiry, and to reach multiple of audiences by making scholarship more accessible’ (Cole & Knowles 2007, p. 59).

Autoethnography

I now look critically at how I identify my use of autoethnography as a scholarly writing methodology, and why my artefact could not have been written without the context of my own life. It was the reflectivity produced by use of my journal that illuminated how my artefact constructs the story of Kate Carey not only through historical research, but also through the compost of my own history that becomes the source of my imagination (Greene 1982).

Laurel Richardson (1994) argues in her essay *Writing: A Method of Inquiry* that writing from our *selves*, when a researcher is present in their work, offers the means to strengthen the community of qualitative researchers through accessing the attributes of honesty and engagement. Articulating a similar treatise, Chang (2008), Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) and Muncey (2010) argue for the validity of autoethnography as a qualitative methodology that analyses personal experience ‘in order to understand cultural experience’ (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011, p. 273). We discover a parallel discourse when we listen to the voices of writers discussing writing. Interviewed online, Eco describes the crafting of historical fiction as a means ‘that will actually enable us to

better understand the real history' (Eco 2012, np.). Kundera (2003, p. 44) asserts that 'The novelist is neither historian nor prophet; he is an explorer of existence'. Le Guin (2004) speaks of both the danger of the imagination (by challenging the status quo) and the power of imagination to transfigure life.

While it is tempting to challenge what Eco (2012) means by *real history*, I appreciate what Eco is saying through the practice of my craft. Staying true to the genre standard of *historiographic metafiction* means my work is not only postmodern but, at the same time, also strives to construct a fictional world faithful to what is known of the Tudor period (Banks & Andrew 2013). Discovering history through my imagination deepens my understanding of the context and situation of the past, alongside deepening my understanding of my own culture and time.

Eco (2012), Kundera (2003) and Le Guin (2004) all claim writing as a method of making sense of their world. 'Invention,' Mary Shelley (1999, p. 16) wrote in her introduction to *Frankenstein*, 'it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos'. I reflected upon this in my journal, which led to further research about practice, which helped me see I also create to make sense of the chaos we call life. I recognised that I could put a label to this writing methodology: autoethnography.

Mapping out my writing process

I construct fiction inspired by history. My work involves detailed historical research to gain information to help build an authentic and accurate fictional world (Eco 2004), but this does not take away from a simple fact: my work is fiction. My storytelling entails filling the silences and gaps left by historical record by use of my imagination, thereby constructing a work of fiction. Whilst Sutherland (2007, p. 10) asserts, '[i]n writing a historical character in fiction, we start with known facts, which provide a spring form for the imagination to fill the many gaps', I posit that it is not simply 'superfluous detail [that] gives fiction its verisimilitude' (Booth 2007, p. 48) – which is argued as the crucial stylistic dissimilarity between history and fiction – but that research and knowledge about the context of the times gives the writer the ability to imagine.

In my journal I not only observed the times I tapped into my personal experiences for the construction of my historical fiction artefact, but also how the prisms of gender, class and society shaped my writerly identity – a writerly identity

which gives birth to fiction transfigured by the distance and context of history. By this I mean while I strive to achieve believable historical fiction through being true to historical context, I understand more fully now that I use historical fiction as a way to tell my own story, as a woman who has known oppression and been deemed to have less value than the males in her world, a woman who has lived the experience of being shaped by her culture. Filtering my own story through the context and distance of history creates the necessary separation to tell my story, which the drafting process makes new through storytelling (Fishman 1981).

This process is vital if I am to succeed in crafting a work of historical fiction. In giving voice to my imagined Katherine Carey, I am also telling *herstory* (Arnold 2008; Banks & Andrew 2012; Johansson 1976; Sochen 1974) – bringing back to the page the life of a woman who stands on the margins of history – silenced (Kon-Yu 2010). Thus, to succeed as a historical fiction writer I must ensure the now, the context of my own life, is transformed through the context of history and the construction of historical characters in my fictional world. To successfully craft historical fiction *my story* must be controlled and surmounted, through the drafting process, to become *herstory* with the goal of engaging readers. But while the end result must always be a work of historical fiction, the methodology for achieving that end is far more complicated than simply re-telling a story from history.

I recognise autoethnography as a vital writing methodology to construct my works of historical fiction. It is also involved in my creative writing of the artefact, when I produce writing by drawing from the data of my life experience (Muncey 2010), the resulting writing providing the data and evidence of autoethnography (Chang 2008; Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011). The process and product of this method has also illuminated why I write and why I write about the Tudors through the deconstruction of my world for the purposes of writing (Derrida 2013). Writing has allowed me to become an active agent and opened up pathways to empathy – for myself, and others (Spry 2001).

Autoethnography: a product of postmodernism

Understanding how I drew from the context of my own life also aided my identification of Marxist Feminist Standpoint Epistemology as the prism through which I write. By

this I mean, I view and write my world as a woman who has experienced the world as a woman, a woman whose life has experienced the inequality of class in a society controlled by capitalism. Through these experiences, I position myself as a writer who desires to use writing as a mirror to hold up to society to help make my world a fairer and better place.

Autoethnography is itself a product of postmodernism (Muncey 2010; Spry 2002). Postmodernism – resulting in a move away from objective research towards seeking out knowledge through subjective methodologies – embodies doubt (Muncey 2010). Through this doubt, postmodernism tests and questions truth, generalizability and validity (Spry 2001).

Postmodernism has led to multiple subjective research methodologies, including that of autoethnography: that is, believing the process and product of a method grounded in personal experience offers ways to yield significant and evocative research about life itself (Muncey 2010). Therefore, these findings alert members of society to the societal narratives in place and help build bridges of empathy between social groups (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011; Muncey 2010). As previously mentioned, this is very similar to how some writers view the true power of the novel.

Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn (2004, p. 141) assert not only that postmodernist doubt underpins the construction of the contemporary historical novel, but also that historical fiction is ‘the most essential form of postmodernism, continually questioning as it does the very fabric of the past and, by implication, the present’. This type of questioning was very much a driving force in writing my artefact. By questioning the past regarding the construction of my teenage Tudor character and how the past could have empowered her, I found myself questioning the present, and the way my story could empower my young adult reader.

As Heilmann and Llewellyn (2004) remind us, the postmodernist historical novel brings with it the question of *what is truth?* Not only that – but also where truth begins, and where it ends. Postmodernism also asks the historical fiction writer to question whether we ever claim truth when historical fiction uses as its reference a retelling of history, of truth, slanted to a particular viewpoint – not only of a fictional character, but through that of the writerly identity (Heilmann & Llewellyn 2004).

While historians debate these viewpoints, gauging their meanings through understanding historical context, historical fiction writers create their own meanings by

use of these viewpoints and their imagination. As Sutherland (2007) also argues, the historical fiction writer rewrites history through the cultural prism of their own times.

The 'I' through which everything must pass

Graham Greene once wrote, 'An unhappy childhood is a writer's goldmine' (cited by Goldman 2000, p. 151). He also said, 'Perhaps a novelist has a greater ability to forget than other men – he has to forget or become sterile. What he forgets is the compost of the imagination' (Greene 1982, p. 132). While I find it very true I forget a lot of my past in my day-to-day life, preferring to live in the now, I also know from my experience the importance of learning from the past to move forward in life.

Reflection about the autoethnographical data of my own life story in my journal led to identifying four areas important to the formation of my writerly identity that I could measure against other creative writers of historical fiction. The first one was the influence of childhood and adolescence. The second one drew my attention to a relationship between mental wellness and narrative writing. The third underlined a writer's desire to communicate with an imagined audience. The fourth highlighted the influence of historical past upon the present, especially in relation to women fiction writers.

Research into the first issue identified Chadwick (2013), Eco (2004), Lewis (2012) and Sutcliffe (1992) as numbering amongst the many writers who acknowledged they first aspired to become writers or began writing creatively in childhood. C. S. Lewis (2012, p. 10) writes of his childhood:

I am a product of long corridors, empty sunlit rooms, upstairs indoor silences, attics explored in solitude, distant noises of gurgling cisterns and pipes, and the noise of wind under the tiles. Also, of endless books.

A sensitive, lonely boy prone to nightmares, Lewis began to write in early childhood. His childhood was also marked by tragedy and trauma when he lost his mother to cancer. Sutcliffe turned to writing as a way to escape lifelong illness and disability that deprived her of a normal life. Chadwick (2013) says she was born a storyteller and then inspired by authors she read as a child and her love of history. Eco (2004) was also a writer and storyteller from early childhood.

That these examples are not unusual is supported by Adèle Kohányi's (2005)

research comparing the childhoods of creative writers to journalists. While Kohányi alerts us that much of her quantitative data was drawn from other studies that used the autobiographies of writers, and therefore may be skewed, consciously or unconsciously, to the particular world view of these authors, her study builds a childhood profile of the creative writer that fits these examples and that of my own.

Similarly to my own life experience, the majority of creative writers in her study indicated negative school experiences despite a high degree of imagination, love of books, reading and writing. Also like me, creative writers in her study were hypersensitive and emotional children, perceived as *different* to their peers and teachers, who revealed they felt like outcasts as children and possessed few friends. This article also cited a study that showed that 60% of creative writers experienced some kind of trauma in their childhood; other studies stated a high incidence (89% in the 1962 study and 67% in the 1978 study) of writers who testified to unhappy childhoods (Kohányi 2005). Trauma, unhappiness as a child and long periods of serious illness formed the narrative of my early life.

This brings me to of the importance of writing to mental health, something I personally first became aware of during the years I was a very young mother, when I no longer wrote due to that role. I believed I no longer had the right. Remembering my depression during these years, I directed my research to explore the relationship between mental wellness and narrative writing. Karen A. Baikie and Kay Wilhelm (2005) assert studies over the last three decades indicate that writing about trauma and stressful events result in improved physical and psychological health. They also argue writing results in greater wellbeing if the writer directs their focus to explore the event and the emotions produced by that event through a narrative structure.

I have experienced this for myself through my own experience of writing. This experience has also influenced the construction of my artefact, which is infused by my belief that reading and writing can be the means to transform and empower lives. *The Light in the Labyrinth* is very much a narration of how a young girl makes sense of her world by reading and writing, which aids her sense of identity.

These three issues led me to the fourth issue, the one to umbrella the others. I examined 'Hystorical fictions: Women (re)writing and (re) reading history' (Heilmann & Llewellyn 2004), an article addressing the question of what author A.S. Byatt describes as the forbidden nature of history and how it connects to the growing trend of

women writers who have chosen to engage with re-writing the past. Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn assert the forbidden nature of history presents the areas of history shrouded by silence; that is, the stories hidden by history through that of *the silenced Other*. My artefact focuses on one of the many women left on the margins of history: Katherine Carey. She is one of those obscure lives described by Woolf (2009, p. 28) as ‘fitfully perceived’ ‘in those almost unlit corridors of history’. Silencing *the Other* is a way society has found to maintain the status quo. Women writers are especially in a position to understand this through our experience as women who often struggle to be heard in a male dominated world. Our experience has taught us that by giving voice to the silenced we begin the process to change.

Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn (2004) strengthen their claims through citing the theories of Linda Hutcheon (1988) and Steven Connor (1996) as well as the reflections of respected women historical fiction authors in their argument that historical fiction offers women writers a vehicle to reclaim the stories of women from the past. Heilmann and Llewellyn (2004, p. 139) also explicate history’s influence on the present through their discussion of why writers yearn to ‘interpret and repossess the past’. This is reinforced by reference to Nietzsche’s (2004, p. 138) belief that the past can be explained and understood by what’s most ‘powerful in the present’. I contend this provides a stronger answer to Patricia Duncker’s (2003) effort to understand why women writers are drawn to historical fiction, when she suggests that historical writers have a solid understanding of not only the past, but also what it means to us in the present. This, I think, is also why writers desire to communicate to the imagined audience. They have something to tell. The historical fiction novel offers a means to do so.

For an Australian woman writer who celebrated when Julia Gillard took the stage as Australia’s first woman prime minister and then watched with great despair her treatment at the hands of many male leaders, leaders covering the spectrum of Australian society, it is clear that male domination in modern society is very much a reality and women are still largely unheard. Perhaps this is why so many women historical fiction writers, like myself, are drawn to tell the stories of *the silenced Other*. By giving voice to *the silenced Other*, such as those marginalized by history like my teenage female protagonist, we are seizing the opportunity to develop a voice that speaks to our own times. Speaking from my own experience, I also argue that giving

voice to *the silenced other* can present a way for women writers to reclaim, discover and empower their own voice. Duncker (2003, p. 51) writes:

The past is a quilt of traces and text, ambiguous and often incoherent fragments out of which we make stories. We make up history as story, and until we do, it does not exist. But the past existed, and we are proof of its passage. The past is written into us.

I agree the past *is* written into us. Writing brings out into the open those silences of the self, absent memories (McNay 2009), the unspoken (Kon-yu 2010). Women writers are able to empower their own lives and reclaim their identities through reclaiming history as their own stories, which makes sense of these incoherent fragments and the chaos of life. They do this by the empathetic and reconstructive use of their imaginations.

Years of writing have taught me to appreciate what Robert Olen Butler means when he writes about everything returning to its source through response to the corporeal world, a pattern deepened by our writing (Butler 2005, p 97). Years ago, I recognised the patterns in my own writing. Over and over again, I return to the themes of letting go, breaking the circle of the past, the sorrow of unrequited love and the search for identity. I recognise the pattern now, and welcome it. As Ann Patchett wrote in *What Now?* (2008), ‘Coming back is the thing that enables you to see how all the dots in your life are connected’. I argue women writers are drawn to historical fiction because it is a feminist means to look to the past to make sense of the present.

Autoethnography provides a writing methodology that allows me to learn from my past for personal growth. While historian and narrative enquirer Inga Clendinnen speaks of historians, her words also relate to how I use autoethnography in my works of historical fiction: ‘We are increasingly ready to admit that a human hand pushes the pen or taps the keys of the word processor, that there is a needle ‘I’ between the past and the reader through which everything must pass’ (Clendinnen 1996, np.). So, what results when we write through the *I* to construct narrative? W.S. Di Piero (1998) asserts that we reinvent the self through narratives and Kundera (2005) tells us that we are changed through writing a novel. Through my own practice, I have experienced the truth of both these statements. This is not surprising. My novels not only tell the story of *the Other*, but also hold up the mirror necessary for the construction of identity (Horsdal 2012). My artefact is written from the POV of a young Tudor girl born into the ruling class.

Her life experience, as a fourteen-year-old, constructed by a different time and culture space (Horsdal 2012), would have been very different to my remembered teenage experience. Even so, through constructing the feminine standpoint of Kate, *the Other* that reflects my self, I not only deepened my understanding of how she may have experienced life, but also – through the mirror reflected back on my own life experiences – deepened my understanding of what feminist standpoint means in my own times.

In constructing an understanding of this for myself, and hence entering into broader academic discussion, I reflected upon my writing process in my writer's journal. Journal reflection about Hemingway's Iceberg theory was another important factor to aid my understanding about autoethnography and writerly identity, as Hemingway's theory is concerned with constructing stories by leaving out 'many things which it is necessary to know' (Hemingway 2014, Loc 4102). The metaphor used by Hemingway, which speaks of the dignity of the movement of an iceberg due it being one-eighth above water (Hemingway 1932, p. 192), also describes the writerly identity, when the tip of the iceberg conceals the writer's own story, the fount from where all stories birth, again making a return to autoethnography (Chang 2008). By this I mean, I could not have written my artefact without drawing the narrative from the iceberg symbolising my own experience of life.

The iceberg is also used as a metaphor for the self by Muncey (2010), describing autoethnography as the tool employed to reveal the self that is hidden beneath water. Reflecting on this, I found myself returned to the words of Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul: 'Fact can be realigned. But fiction never lies; it reveals the writer totally' (Naipaul 2002, p.7). Years ago, I claimed my work as purely that of fiction. Now I have come to understand that my own story beats its strong heartbeat beneath the construction of my text.

Verita Sriratana (2008), in her essay: 'Literature and the Construction of Identity in Alistair MacLeod's No Great Mischief', helps to explicate this further by reminding us that the creators of literature create through acting as the reader of that text. This is when they *read* their life story, and that of others, and then engage in the process of selecting, editing and rewriting to shape their text into meaning for readers other than themselves. Yet despite selecting, editing and re-writing my story, it is still *my* story that beats its heart in my historical fiction. Whilst I acknowledge other writers may view

their writing process differently to me, I also appreciate that my creative writing process uses the method of autoethnography to construct stories. The method also underpins my exegesis.

FEMINIST STANDPOINT THEORY

*There are vast realms of consciousness still undreamed of
vast ranges of experience, like the humming of unseen harps,
we know nothing of, within us (Lawrence 2012).*

*By looking into the soul of another we often find ourselves
delving just as deep into our own private worlds of identity and
place (Cowell, cited by Stewart 2007, p. 123).*

Practice-led research has involved me in coming to appreciate that my writing identity is constructed from a feminist standpoint. It is the vast realm of consciousness that has allowed me to delve into my private world of identity and place, appreciating that feminist standpoint is my epistemological prism to make sense of my world, exercised through writing works such as my artefact. Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST) provides a framework to understand how knowledge is produced and how power is practised (Harding 2004). Arguing that no truth claim is without political bias, FST shines a light on these biases and examines what they put forward or present as truths (Lenz 2004). Originally theorized by women researchers for women researchers, ‘with the goal of granting authentic expression and representation to women’s lives’ (Brooks 2007, p. 56), FST positions itself firmly upon the belief that women’s experiences share a common ground (Hartsock 2004), a ground that offers a means to investigate and critique phallogocentric ideologies (Brooks 2007; Hartsock 2004).

In the past, it was argued that political movements such as feminism created barriers to the production of scientific knowledge. The proven success of FST as a methodology to explain why feminist research methods are appropriate modes of knowledge production disputed this and offered a framework for future feminist research (Harding 2004). FST recognised that women’s lives operated from both within and outside (Selgas 2004) a male dominated world (Smith 2004), a world that historically gave voice to men while mostly silencing women (Brooks 2007). This is a world where ‘images, vocabulary, concepts, abstract terms of knowledge’, vital to the practice of power and maintaining of the status quo, are all ruled by male dominance (Smith 1987, p. 17). The subservience of women is argued as vital to continuing the

abstracted conceptual order (Smith 1987) that sees society place shackles upon women to preserve their dual roles of producing human beings and contributing to subsistence (Hartsock 2004). This position is also one that offers privileged knowledge. By this I mean, women access knowledge through their day-to-day experiences as women; living their lives embodied as women also situates women as belonging to the female gender. It is this embodiment and female experiences that connects women to the natural world and others (Smith 2004; Hartsock 2004). These dual positions also allow women bifurcated vision (Smith 2004) that in turn is filtered through the experience of the marginalised who possess knowledge concerning the subservient conditions of their lives and therefore have no reason to maintain existing conditions (Lenz 2004).

Sociologist Dorothy E. Smith, one of the foremothers of FST (Campbell & Devault 2011), posited that women's experience of society as members of an oppressed group offered a position of knowledge that not only made sense of the workings of their own group, but also that of the dominating group(s). Smith (2004, p. 28) argues, '[i]f sociology cannot avoid being situated, then sociology should take that as its beginning and build it into its methodological and theoretical strategies'. Thus, Smith argues that knowledge should be sourced from its foundations. This was made abundantly clear to me through the writing of my artefact, when I constructed my text through the knowledge I have gained through a woman's experience of the world.

Smith's research resulted from her own experiences as a woman academic struggling to be accepted as an equal with her male counterparts, but also through engagement with Marx's new materialism, which proposed that rather than confront theories, science should unearth connections and methods *through* and *within* real life experiences (Campbell & Devault 2011). This philosophy offered Smith a structure to examine society by exploring and making sense of the division of societal experiences. Smith's research led her to appreciate that the ways society divided and pigeonholed these experiences offered unique standpoints for knowledge production (Campbell & Devault 2011, p. 271). For me this means that, through the process of reflecting about my practice, I identify and use the method of autoethnography, operating through the prism of Marxist Feminist Standpoint Epistemology, as my means to build spaces of empathy in the construction of my historical fiction.

Since '[e]xperiences contribute to the development of personal identity through the recording and theorizing aspects associated with these experiences' (Stewart 2007,

p. 125) as well as construct social and political awareness (Lenz 2004), it follows that the knowledge produced by Feminist Standpoint opened and widened paths of understanding about the construction of identity, social and political consciousness, knowledge that could point at possible ways to achieve better life for all (Campbell & Devault 2011).

Feminist scholar Donna Haraway (1988, p. 589) strengthened the debate as to why FST was important in ‘Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective’, in which she argues ‘for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims’. FST provides researchers with a methodology to achieve this goal through its situation of knowledge that articulates ‘a more adequate, richer, better account of a world, in order to live in it well and in critical, reflective relation to our own as well as others’ practices of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that make up all positions’ (Haraway 1988, p. 579). FST is clearly a valid and vital methodology for feminist researchers.

What's happening today with Feminist Standpoint?

FST has navigated through controversial waters since its inception (Wylie 2004). One cause of this stems from the fact of the existence of multiple or differing Feminist Standpoints, which not only involve multiple and differing truths, but also involve varying individual experiences and understandings (Hekman 2004; Lenz 2004).

Hekman (2004) argues that these differences and multiple standpoints prevent developing a workable framework for change. She also questions whether it is true that Feminist Standpoint offers a means to obtain greater objectivity (cited by Wylie 2004, p. 344). This can be seen as a reasonable argument because of Feminist Standpoint’s bias towards a particular gender (Rubio 2011).

Feminists, I believe, should keep in mind this bias because we defeat ourselves if we do not consider the wisdom of all theorists. For example, Terry Eagleton, an esteemed and highly respected male Marxist theorist points out reasons why those in positions of dominance are far less likely to achieve objectivity. He asserts that dominance mirrors its own reality – distorted, deluded, desiring to maintain the status quo and the subservience of others, resulting in power enclosed in its own egocentricity.

It is also ‘incapable of getting outside its own skin’ (Eagleton 2000, p. 132). The experiences of women as caretakers and nurturers give them the ability to appreciate these experiences through their own gender (Smith 2004). FST also allows them powerful insights about the dominant gender through the reading of emotion (Brooks 2007) and their bifurcated vision (Smith 2004, p.27). For me this means through the process of reflecting about my practice, I identify Feminist Standpoint Epistemology as my means to build spaces of empathy in the construction of my historical fiction. In our fractured, conflicted world, building places of empathy is paramount (Muncey 2010).

Cora Kaplan (1994) strengthens Hekman’s argument about multiple standpoints by asserting that too much weight is given to the need to defend maternal and sister stories, rather than to examine *why* such stories are constructed. Women’s stories are generally seen as narrating that of kinship (Kaplan 1994). For example, Kaplan reminds us that Able describes heterosexual plots for women as generally exploring *father* relationships. ‘Father’ relationships form a very important part of the narrative of *The Light in the Labyrinth*, which draws from my memory of rejection and lack of love from my own father to help construct a young girl who also craves for a father’s love. Kaplan’s discussion also underlines the need to study feminist mythmaking and male dominated societies in the same conscientious way expected of all research. By doing so, we hold up a not only a mirror of ethics, but also a mirror to the differing and aberrant narratives constructed by women themselves (Kaplan 1994).

Another problem stems from seeking knowledge from women’s concrete experiences – what do we actually mean by *concrete experiences* and what do they teach us? Once again the answer lies in gaining knowledge through understanding ‘what women do’ (Brooks 2007, p. 56) – and this is achieved by seeking knowledge using women’s concrete experiences as the point of entry (Brooks 2007). The concrete experiences of women include living a fair proportion of their lives surmounting bodies controlled by hormones that make them bleed or not bleed; bodies that conceive, grow and feed our babies; bodies compromised by childbearing that often leads to them being that Tudor described ‘leaking vessel’ (Paster 1993, p. 25); aged bodies that make them invisible and seemingly without value in their society. I agree with Hélène Cixous when she states:

Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and

rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reverse-discourse, including the one that laughs at the very idea of pronouncing the word 'silence' (1976, p. 886).

The strongest argument for the use of a FST is that it provides a methodology to access the knowledge of those situated both within and without the power structure of our society. By this I mean the female gender, as a group, possesses knowledge and understanding of their own position and their position within that of phallogocentric ideologies (Wylie 2004). This knowledge comes out of their experience of how the world works for them and also through the labour that sustains the 'entrenched hierarchy of privilege' (Wylie 2004, p. 347).

One other important consideration is that FST operates through multiple prisms. That is, it is a philosophy about natural and social sciences, an epistemology, that is, 'how we know what we know' (Rubio 2011, p. 22). In other words, it situates knowledge, as well as offering a political pathway of empowerment. Whilst more traditional models of research generally contribute knowledge through use of only one of these strands, it is not unusual for Feminist Standpoint Theory to weave its knowledge through the use of all these strands. Sandra Harding (2004, p. 2) argues that these ongoing debates offer a valuable resource for the production of knowledge – not only for feminism, but also for science, philosophy and politics. It is no wonder then that FST is now seen as forging pathways to innovative feminist models (Wylie 2004, p. 340).

The research of Fernando J. Garcia Selgas (2004), which illuminates Critical Social Theory, demonstrates the value of feminist epistemologies, like that of Feminist Standpoint. In the past, traditional Critical Social Theory has been derived from making sense of what could be described as the rational ordering or narration of the world with the goal to achieve freedom – a goal in line with Feminist Standpoint. Selgas (2004) argues Critical Social Theory has been challenged by feminism and similar new kinds of thinking, which prove the stagnancy and enclosed nature of existing epistemologies and thinking strategies. These movements go against the traditional model of research that argued analysis entails the position of critical distance. He argues that feminist epistemology offers ways to give voice to Critical Social theory and thereby entreats for

a privileged feminist standpoint, recognising it as ‘a post modern epistemic condition of possibility for Critical Social Theory’ (Selgas 2004, p. 295). Selgas (2004) believes that Feminist Standpoint offers a method to locate knowledge that in turn will solve the relativity and lack of critical distance problems presented by Critical Social Theory. Selgas cites P. Collins to strengthen his argument. Collins notes that being on the margin, in the role of *outsider-within*, can be a situation of not only frustration but also creativity (Collins cited by Selgas 2004). Selgas (2004) also contends that the *outsider-within* can be viewed as the feminist movement’s effort to demand its right to a voice as well as its right to feminist science critiques.

FST illustrates where power lies in society and illuminates pathways ideologically controlled and dominated, showing how these pathways can ‘be both perverse and made real by means of the group’s power to define the terms for the community as a whole’ (Hartsock 2004, p. 39). FST holds a mirror up to our world to enable us to see that the subservience of women weaves together the fabric of our society and is necessary to maintain the current world order (Campbell & Devault 2011).

Virginia Woolf’s (2003) edict to kill the *angel in the house* retains a powerful relevance to these debates. Her words speak to the silence imposed on women. They also remind us that the master narratives operating in our world prevent women from claiming true autonomy upon their own identities. This prevents them claiming their own stories other than what exists in the stories of others (Gilbert & Gubar 1980). The recognition of this presents a vital challenge for our age – how do we remake our world into a new order where women and men are incontestably equal?

One obvious answer is to not shut the door on dialogue because discourse empowers identities of movements such as feminism. Rubio (2011) reminds us that a fundamental pillar of this discourse is grounded in feminist thinking – thinking that advances knowledge and not obstructs. Clearly FST offers researchers such a methodology for discourse and a way to achieve the rewriting of these master narratives that have enclosed, erased and silenced women for centuries.

Researching present academic discourse about Feminist Standpoint identified four areas that were related to my work. As a writer of fiction, I connect deeply to metaphors. Thinking how snow, blood, enclosure and sewing evoke powerful metaphors for the female gender (Gilbert & Gubar 1980), as well as link powerfully to

my story of Tudor women in *The Light in the Labyrinth*, I will now borrow these metaphors for further explication here.

The metaphor for my first issue is snow. While snow connects as a symbol for female purity, in this instance, I see it as presenting the white shroud of winter that knowledge must sweep away, unearthing connections and bringing forth a new spring, and a new day for women. Therefore, my first issue is rooted in the foundational tenet of Feminist Standpoint: oppressed groups have not only knowledge concerning their own group, but also knowledge about the dominant group and this knowledge illuminates pathways for change.

My second metaphor is sewing – the threads that connect us to one another through empathy, because I contend that Feminist Standpoint builds a space of empathy through its bifurcated and embodied nature. Novels, too, build places of empathy (Castano & Kidd 2013) by providing vital understandings about the human condition through words used in a ‘peculiarly heightened, figurative or self-conscious way’ (Eagleton 2012, p. 25). Kundera (2006, p. 61) reminds us that Hermann Broch believed ‘the novel’s sole morality is knowledge’. This, I see, is because of the nature of fiction. As Autumn Laing, the main character in Alex Miller’s novel of the same name says, ‘Fiction is the landscape beyond reality and has its own truth, the truth of our intimate lives. The place of empathy’ (Miller 2011, p. 5). Constructing these places of empathy is vital to unite humankind (Muncey 2010).

Reflecting on the importance of the young adult novel in my own life, I saw my artefact as a way to take up the challenge to build a similar bridge of empathy through the construction of a novel that offered to young adults new ways of thinking and ‘more sustainable artificial myths’ (Carter 2005, p. xii). To do this, I created a story with a character of similar age to my target reader, a character my target reader could empathise with through the problems also experienced by many young adult readers, such as: mother issues, a broken home, an absent father, sexual awakening, and so forth. Kate’s story is told through third person limited narration – the plot of the story is illuminated through her experiences. Revealing the story through the point of view of my teenage main character is not only another defining feature of young adult novels (Going 2008; Nilsen & Donelson 2009), but also a vital writing device to achieve empathy.

The third metaphor is blood – a deeply explicit metaphor for feminine issues.

Blood symbolizes the force needed to live – the passion to seize life and start the process for change. Socialist feminist standpoint believes this theory is only workable through the standpoint of women (Jaggar 2004), the beating heart of women’s lives. This is the marginalised space necessary for women to engage with so that they can understand society has placed them as members of an oppressed group for the workings of society. Understanding how society operates and is controlled is the first step that must be taken for change to occur, for us to seize authentic lives, for as Peter Berger writes:

Unlike the puppets, we have the possibility of stopping in our movements, looking up and perceiving the machinery by which we have been moved. In this act lies the first step towards freedom (1963, p. 176).

To take that step towards freedom and our true selves, we also need to appreciate that the metaphor of *blood* concerns our shared humanity, which connects us all by accessing empathy.

My last metaphor is enclosure, which I see as a powerful metaphor for *herstory*, the fourth issue to come out of FST. *Herstories* not only acknowledge the importance of female points of view, but also present feminist standpoint narratives that deepen understandings about the social world. Anne Boleyn offers one such *herstory* – a woman described by Eric Ives, her most important biographer, as someone who deserves to be a feminist because she broke through the glass ceiling of her male dominated society by sheer character and initiative (Ives 2004). The tragedy and triumph of Anne Boleyn’s story beats its heart through my artefact. Enclosure is of particular relevance to Tudor women and the story narrated in my artefact. For both Katherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn, much of their time as Henry’s Queens was either spent in their chambers with other women as they waited for Henry to turn his gaze in their direction or waiting to give birth enclosed in *the no man’s land* of the birthing chamber.

The identity and position of Tudor women in society was both storied and situated through a male-controlled context (Jordan 1990), their identities defined and located by not who they were but the positions of their menfolk. But while their gender, a situation in itself, situated Tudor women as a marginalised *other* in their society, the words of Shakespeare’s imagined Portia in *Julius Caesar*, speaking through the context

understood by a Tudor man, reminds us how the knowledge accessed by feminist standpoint allowed women to successfully, and for their own purposes, manipulate the rules of this male-controlled context:

I grant I am a woman; but withal a woman that Lord Brutus took to wife. I grant I am a woman; but withal a woman well reputed, Cato's daughter. Think you I am no stronger than my sex, Being so father'd and so husbanded? (2007, p. 52).

Lenz (2004) argues that literary works offer insights to the processes attained and conveyed by standpoint theory. This argument has relevance to my artefact. Kate, my main character, situates herself through the experience of multiple standpoints. She is not only a daughter, a sister, a niece, the unclaimed daughter of Henry VIII, but also, within her own gender, she is *the green girl*, a girl who comes to the court as an outsider, who possesses little knowledge about how her new world operates. But all these multiple frameworks operate through that of her female gender, and therefore provide a feminine standpoint (Lenz 2004, p. 103). Through this standpoint, Kate witnesses and makes sense of her world, seizing not only an identity but also her place as a Tudor woman.

Eureka: the realisation

It was writing a scene in my artefact about my young Tudor women (p. 97) that made me sit up with awareness that my new novel was re-birthing me as a feminist.

Responding to this scene, I wrote in my journal (2012):

Now thinking how women in Western society must be vigilant and protect our hard won liberties. What? A feminist stance! Is the prism for my work Feminist Standpoint Epistemology?

Donna Haraway (1988 p. 587) asserts that positioning is key practice 'in grounding knowledge organised around the imagery of vision'. Bachelard and Jolas (1994, p. xxxvi) argue:

Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor. It has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination.

The surveying and positioning made possible through both writing and the process of Practice-led research (PLR) led me from my initial simple inquiry of making sense of Anne Boleyn's death to recognizing that all my historical fiction work is concerned with giving voice to women. I also recognized that my artefact not only investigates through fiction the historical context of a culture that denied women power or voice, but the cause and effect of this context related to the situation of gender. Therefore, I contend that my artefact is not only birthed through my position and experience as a woman, thereby making me an actor of Feminist Standpoint, but also presents a metaphor for Feminist Standpoint.

I also posit that imagery of vision is also necessary to formulate theories and begin the process for change. Applying this to the creation of my artefact, the imagery of vision connects to how the labour of creating a novel acts as a catalyst for change (Kundera 2006). Through the process and product of writing, my appreciation deepened that writing is my way to seize my own voice by empowering Kate, my female protagonist. More than that – by empowering Kate, I am in turn empowered. Just like the Renaissance women I researched for my PhD artefact, I read and write text as a 'means by which to revise and rewrite [my] own experience of exploring the world in the way a woman could, that is in the imagination' (Jordan 1990, p. 139). Therefore, I see that imagination is a necessary and vital attribute of Feminist Standpoint theory because it is through accessing imagination that we gain empathy.

My own story places me explicitly as a member of this female gender described as the *outsider-within*. By this I mean I view and write my world as a woman who has experienced the world as a woman, a woman – thinking how I maintain my silence whenever my husband and children protest about our untidy home and the time demanded of my writing identity, even though it is me who cleans the toilets, does the food shopping, cooks our meals, washes and puts away dishes, et cetera– who is still experiencing the inequality of class in a society controlled by capitalism. The second daughter of a working class family, my parents were poorly educated and were very much constructions of their own time. My father placed little value on daughters who were less likely to complete the physical labour expected of sons, while my mother's narrative was to see her daughters married early to become young mothers. I suffered through my childhood and teenage years the oppression and violence typical to my class and gender – perhaps more so due to a father psychologically damaged by a violent,

sadistic father and a war-torn childhood, who in turn was often violent and sadistic and in constant war with his family.

With maternal feelings always the strongest aspect of my personality, my journey of writing only deepened the empathy of my gender. Growing up fearful of men, I no longer feel surprised that I wrote my first novel, *Dear Heart, How Like You This?* through a male point of view – or that I chose to give voice to my father in my writing and found forgiveness. As Kristeva (2006, np) says: '[t]here is only one resurrection for me – and that is in words'. For me, the magic of words is both my resurrection and my saviour. Writing is my tool to re-story my life, becoming the heroine in my own story (Dunn 2010).

By this means, I position myself as a female writer who uses my own concrete experiences as my basis of knowledge to understand and learn from my world. Through these experiences, I also position myself as a novelist who desires to use writing as a mirror to hold up to society to help make my world a fairer and better place. All this articulates and enacts FST, thus I am not only an actor of Feminist Standpoint, but also an agent.

Writing *The Light in the Labyrinth* has deepened my belief that women of the first world must recognize that our battle for equality is one we have not won – and that we must keep fighting to achieve it. We must fight for ourselves, and for our sisters who live in far more oppressive cultures where women and female babies are killed because they are regarded as worthless and replaceable. And the fight is not one to be won through violence – but through the education of both girls and boys. *The Light in the Labyrinth*, I hope, will make young adult women reflect about the possibilities for their own lives through entering the world of Tudor women.

THE YOUNG ADULT NOVEL

We want to see with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts, as well as with our own. We are not content to be Leibnitzian monads. We demand windows. Literature as Logos is a series of windows, even of doors. One of the things we feel after reading a great work is “I have got out.” Or from another point of view, “I have got in”; pierced the shell of some other monad and discovered what it is like inside (Lewis 2012, pp. 137-8).

In this section I discuss young adult literature, which I will refer to as YA literature throughout, with the aim of identifying, through my research and literary review, the ideal reader, recognisable features of the YA novel and setting out genre theory that situates my artefact within these works.

I will begin first by providing a brief summary of recognisable features of the YA novel. Firstly and most importantly, YA novels must be unquestionably a story owned by young adults. Secondly, the main protagonist should be of similar age to the target audience. Thirdly, the story must remain that of the protagonist and narrated from her point of view. Fourthly, the story engages young adults through being relevant to them, that is, a story that possesses familiar teenage themes that the target audience can identify with; for example, absent parents/parent conflicts or a coming-of-age story, also known as the *Bildungsroman* (Trites 1998). Fifthly, young adult stories can be described as a construction of the hero's journey (Nilsen & Donelson 2009). Sixthly, a young adult novel is generally deliberately written for the young adult audience. *Young Adult Literature in the 21st Century* also identified two additional features; that is, the story doesn't have a *storybook* or *happily-ever-after* ending—a characteristic of children's books – as well as being a work of generally under 300 pages, usually closer to 200 (Cole 2008).

A brief history of the Young Adult novel

This section provides a brief history of the young adult novel for the purpose of situating my artefact in this genre.

Michael Cart is not only a columnist and reviewer for booklist magazine, but also the author of *My Father's Scar* (1998), and *The Heart Has Its Reasons* (2006), a critical study of young adult novels with queer/lesbian/gay themes (HarperCollins Publisher author biography). Clearly, his work suggests that he is a writer with an interest in the voices of those marginalized by gender identity or sexuality. Cart is also the author of *Young Adult Literature* (2010), one of a number of important studies critically examining young adult literature. Cart's study underlines a universal belief that young adult literature birthed in America and also explicates the term *young adult* as an economic and societal construction rooted in recent history. Cart makes the reasons for this abundantly clear. Before World War I, the luxury of time to grow up was denied to those able to enter the workforce because there was 'so much adult work to be done' (Cart 2010, p. 4). A change began in society through the writings of G. Stanley Hall, a psychologist in the early 20th-century. Carter asserts Hall invented the term *adolescent*, recognising a third societal group who were no longer children but not yet adult. Hall's research had two consequences. Firstly, his research opened the door to more research about adolescents and therefore to greater understanding about this age group who were appreciated as engaged in a time of 'storm and stress' (Cart 2010, p.4). Secondly, Hall's research indicated that more adolescents remained at school (Cart 2010).

1930 saw the Great Depression arrive in America, with the outcome that less work was available to those members of society with families to support. The competition for work played an important part in keeping young people at school. While in 1910 only 15% of adolescents were still at school in America, by 1939 this had changed to 75%. Cart (2010) argues that a *young adult culture* came about due to this high number. Seeded and nourished by school experiences, the *young adult culture* of this period resulted in an increase of young adult publications (Cart 2010).

This is not to deny the existence of books written and published for this age group before the advent of young adult culture. Alleen Pace Nilsen and Kenneth L. Donelson direct our attention to the post-civil war era works of Louisa May Alcott. Alcott's novels drew the notice of the reading public and mark an important milestone

for the history of young adult literature. Alcott's *Little Women*, a sensitive, humorous and empathetic account of the closeness of family, is now regarded as a classic and is still enjoyed by modern readers (Nilsen and Donelson 2009, pp. 42-43). *Little Women* – a work told through the enclosure of domesticity – is also a story of sentiment, seen at that time as a necessary attribute for those novels written for girls (Cart 2010). Thus, the novel provides an example of the great divide between what was once believed to be suitable reading for girls (sentimental novels) and boys (adventure novels) (Cart 2010, p. 8).

This brings us to consider young adult works narrated through a feminist standpoint. Cart (2010) asserts that in the beginning the young adult culture focused on males rather than females, but this changed by the late 1930s, when more works targeted girls. Cart offers the example of the popular Sue Barton, *Student Nurse* series (Cart 2010). Series novels formed a vital part of this era for young adults and have continued their importance to this day (Bickmore 2012).

Cart (2010) also provides evidence in his study that a book for girls signalled the true birth of the young adult novel, that is, *Seventeenth Summer* (1942) by Maureen Daly. However, Hayn, Kaplan and Nolen (2011) disagree with Cart that Maureen Daly's novel marked the real beginning of this genre. They put forward J. D. Salinger's (1951) *Catcher in the Rye* as the work that gave the world an authentic voice of the young adult who spoke loud and clear about the reality of life stripped of its innocence and open to abuse and neglect (Hayn, Kaplan & Nolen 2011). Rebecca Seelinger Trites (1998) acknowledges these two novels and adds one more – *The Outsiders*, published in 1967. It is interesting to note this disagreement about what can be regarded as the first true young adult novel. Whether we agree or disagree that young adult works are postmodernist constructions, (Seelinger Trites 1998), I suggest *Catcher in Rye* is the strongest contender because of its authentic young adult voice.

Whilst there appears to be a dearth of YA historical novels published in recent times (Cart 2012), YA literature is generally argued as currently experiencing 'a renaissance' (Bickmore 2012, p. 194) with growing book sales (Koss & Teale 2011) in a time that sees a decline of the popularity of the adult novel (Bickmore 2012, p. 186). This is something I have recognised for myself in recent times, and one of the reasons why I listened when my agent suggested I craft a young adult novel for my next major work.

A difficult genre to define

Young Adult refers to a story that tackles the difficult, and oftentimes adult, issues that arise during an adolescent's journey toward identity, a journey told through a distinctly teen voice that holds the same potential for literary value as its 'Grownup' peers (Stephens 2007).

Jonathan Stephen's explicit description of YA literature challenges Michael Cart's contention that it is difficult to ascertain its exact nature, or, more to the point, rather there are a variety of conceptions of what its nature might be. Cart (2010) argues that the reason for this lies in its audience: the young adult. He asks: what do we actually mean by *young adult*? (Cart 2010). This question perhaps underlines one of the difficulties of writing for this age group. Writers can only gauge the success of their work after publication.

Reading novels embraced by young adults can also provide insights into what makes a work succeed for this age group. My reading included revisiting novels that engaged me as a teenager – for example, *The Three Legions* (1985) by Rosemary Sutcliff, *The Last of Wine and Roses* (2008) by Mary Renault, and Margaret Irwin's trilogy about Elizabeth I; *Young Bess* (1998), *The Captive Princess* (1999), *Elizabeth and the Prince of Spain* (1999), as well as more recent novels like Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* (2008), Phillipa Gregory's *The Changeling* (2013) and Sarah Dunant's *Sacred Hearts* (2010). All these novels explore the claiming of identity and generally reveal the narrative through that of one main character.

Who am I? Where have I come from? Where am I going? What does my life mean? Why do I live only to suffer? They are eternal questions; they are also questions tackled by most Young Adult novels, 'linked to a realisation for the protagonist that moves to shaping an adult identity' (Campbell 2010, p. 70). *The Lord of the Rings* provides a vital example of why the young adult genre is often so difficult to define. In letters published posthumously, Tolkien revealed he began writing *The Lord of the Rings* as a sequel to *The Hobbit* (Tolkien 2000), his children's book that introduces the

reader to Middle-earth, the world of the Hobbits and the ring of Sauron. Tolkien wrote in his letters:

I find that many children become interested, even engrossed, in *The Lord of the Rings*, from about 10 onwards. I think it rather a pity, really. It was not written for them. (Tolkien 2000, p. 266).

Clearly, the young adult reader was not the reader Tolkien expected to become engrossed in his fantasy. His words also drive home another important and defining feature of YA literature: while adult creators and purchasers generally attempt to determine YA literature (Nodelman 2008), it is the young adult consumers who determine the success of these works. They do this by embracing works not originally written for them, as many young adults did when they read *Lord of The Rings* ‘despite the hostility of literary critics and some educationalists’ (Yates 1999), thus reminding us of the capitalist forces also at play in the book industry.

Other examples of this type of claiming include *The Book Thief* (2007) by Zusak and Cormier’s *Chocolate War* (2004). *The Book Thief* was first published as an adult book in Australia, but went on to find an important place in the Young Adult genre (Stephens 2007). Cormier’s *The Chocolate War* was first published for the adult market, but is now perceived as a Young Adult classic (Going 2008). Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mocking Bird* (1988) and Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* (1991), two other Young Adult classics, were also written with the adult reader in mind (Beckett 2008). The fact that, in 1961, Lee won the Pulitzer Prize indicates that her publisher also perceived this work as adult because the Pulitzer Award does not have a young adult category and is generally awarded to adult fiction (EW.com 2010).

These books are only a very small sample of novels originally published for adults now regarded as crossover literature. The existence of this kind of claiming by young adults resulted in the creation of the Alex Award, an annual award which recognises ten adult novels that have also appealed to young adults (Beckett 2008).

YA literature is defined as works written about teenagers and for teenagers (Coles 2008; Stephens 2007). Stephens (2007) also notes that this has the consequence of allowing critics to position ‘any of the classics with a teen protagonist’ as YA literature. Especially vulnerable to the voice of the critic, books in this genre have been

banned because their subjects were deemed not suitable for the young adult audience, despite possessing all the necessary attributes to situate them as recognisably valuable literature (Cole 2008; Stephens 2007). Judith A Hayn, Jeffrey S Kaplan and Amanda Nolen (2011) argue for greater acceptance of the genre by engaging in more empirical research.

Whilst YA literature are works generally written by adult writers deliberately for the young adult reader (Nodelman 2008) and therefore marketed to young adults (Going 2008), adult writers often construct their text with a deliberate shadow text operating for their young adult reader, which is more recognizable to the adult reader than its intended audience (Nodelman 2008). I argue that part of this shadow text exists through writers constructing text through writerly assumptions of what will engage the young adult reader (Nodelman 2008) and therefore risks igniting for the young adult reader the kind of sous-text explicated by Barthes (1977) that makes them the author of the text. Indeed, a deliberate shadow text of this nature also risks marginalising young adults and denying them a true voice.

As Roberta S. Trites (1998) reminds us, one underlying subtext of many YA novels involves persuading their readers to endure the status quo of societal conditions. Describing the YA novel as ‘a postmodern phenomenon’ (Trites 1998, Loc 50), she argues that the YA novel is a construction of power and not only articulates the standpoint of young adults in the power hierarchy of society, but also the relationship of power and domination in their lives (Trites 1998).

Many adults hold pre-conceived perceptions about YA literature, as a direct consequence of it being a genre directed towards young adults (Stephens 2007). Its works are seen as ‘somewhat simplistic’ – and even to the extent that it is written by ‘less serious or amateur writers’ (Stephens 2007). Young adult literature, like women’s romances, has been also described as ‘being too light, too easy to read’ (Bickmore 2012, p. 199). This perhaps explains why author John R. Tunis was furious when his work was listed as suitable for younger readers, an anger still apparent decades later when he claimed this juvenile labelling as ‘odious’ and ‘a product of the merchandising age’ (Tunis cited by Cart 2010, p. 11).

Before beginning work on my artefact, I also viewed YA novels as inferior to adult novels and perceived writers of these works as writers of ‘arrested development’ (Disher, cited by Kroll 2006, p. 48), or amateur writers less serious about their craft

(Stephens 2007). Then I remembered how important YA novels were to my development during my teenage years. To borrow from the powerful words of C.S. Lewis (2012, pp 137-8), through reading these books I felt ‘I got out’, and ‘got in’ and experienced ‘what it [was] like inside’. Young adult novels also provide lessons about surviving in our social world (Trite 1998). Remembering this, I can only agree with Bickmore’s contention that the finest YA novels recognize the complexity and problems of teenage life (Bickmore 2012).

Thus, my challenge to construct a YA novel changed to an invitation to find a place amongst a rather important group of writers – writers like Rowlings, Zusak, Tolkien and Gaiman who engage young adults and enrich ‘not only literature courses but social sciences and psychology ones as well’ (Brown 1998) through works answering Carter’s (2005, p. xiii) call for ‘more sustainable artificial myths’. As the research of Philion (2009), Polleck (2010) and Wolk (2009) outlines, and I also believe, YA literature provides tools to build bridges of empathy that enable young adults to engage in new ways of thinking.

Identifying the ideal reader

Nilsen and Donelson (2009, p. 3), while acknowledging others state the age group for Young Adult literature differently, define the Young Adult novel as written for the ‘twelve to eighteen-age-group’. This view is also supported by Brooks (2009), a professional agent and author, Michael Cart (2010) and Susan E. Elliot-Johns (2012). Obviously, this age range and the sophistication of many young adults (Beckett 2008) means there are divisions within Young Adult literature, with books written for the twelve to fourteen age group and others written for the fourteen to eighteen-year old age group (Nilsen & Donelson 2009). Indeed, Scott Macdonald (cited by Beckett 2008), a writer for *Quill & Quire*, believes the thirteen to seventeen age group no longer relates to young adults because this age group tends to seek out adult works. Sandra L. Beckett also points out that crossover literature may be cementing its existence not simply as a literary phenomenon, but through the influence of society and learnt behaviours. She also reminds us that young adults have always sought out adult books for their reading (Beckett 2008). All this indicates the difficulty of pinning down an age range for young adult literature and indeed suggests that determining an age range is more to do societal expectations than in consideration of the individual reader.

The young adult reader appears to prefer character-driven text (Bright & Bright 2013; Nilsen & Donelson 2009). They also look for novels with a main teenager character who is close to them in age and with similar life experiences (Going 2008; Nilsen & Donelson, 2009) because this helps them identify with fictional situations and characters (Going 2008, p. 19). Perry Nodelman (2008) asserts that young adult readers identify and engage with fictional characters through entering a common ground. Nilsen and Donelson (2009), K.L. Going (2008) and Melanie D. Koss and William H. Teale (2009) contend that revealing the story through the point of view of a teenage main character is another defining feature of YA novels and Going (2008) adds that the construction of the teenage character often results in what is described as an unreliable narrator.

While Koss and Teale (2009) identify first person as the most popular choice for YA reader (46%) through their assessment of 59 titles drawn from a total of 370 titles of YA novels published from 1999-2005, third person is the second most popular (24%). These findings show third person lagging behind first person. Koss and Teale (2009) and Bright and Bright (2013) also indicate that stories narrated through multiple points of view have seen an increased of popularity in recent times.

Research suggests that young adult readers will also engage with characters a few years older than themselves (Bright & Bright 2013; Nilsen & Donelson 2009). Bright and Bright (2013) contend that young adult readers seize upon older characters as examples of early adulthood that allow them to gain hints for their own futures. My artefact includes characters such as Madge and Mary Shelton (eighteen) and Catherine, the Duchess of Suffolk (sixteen), amongst others. Just as my Kate Carey sees these older girls as friends and mentors, it is possible that my reader may do so too.

Many YA novels today involve absent parents (Bright & Bright 2013; Cole 2008). This is a familiar theme I found in the novels I read for research. For example, in *Tomorrow, When the War began* (1994), the characters become freedom fighters when their parents are imprisoned by the invaders of their country; Jana in *Rosemary for Remembrance* (2004) loses her mother and goes in search of her father; the main characters of *The Hunger Games* (2010) are taken away from their homes and plunged into a nightmare world of life or death; Bella in *Twilight* (2006), who has separated parents, must become an adult when she falls in love with a vampire; Elizabeth Tudor in *Just a Girl* (2002) determines her own destiny despite being deprived of both father and

mother; the main characters in *The Changeling* (2013) are also parentless, and Eleanor in *The Other Countess* (2010) also takes control of her own life without the aid of parents. This theme also plays a plotting device in my artefact.

Altmann (1994) argues that this type of story convention is something that young adults find engaging because the fact of absent parents creates situations where there is more freedom for the teenage fictional character, thus providing cause and effect necessary for story action. Bright and Bright (2013) also remind us those stories involving absent parent(s) construct a realist, familiar situation for many young adults. Another feature they put forward as a way to engage young adults is through *imaginative realism* – novels positioned in the real world, but also not fantasy or conventionally real (Bright & Bright 2013). My work is *historiographic metafiction* and thus re-constructs real personages and events of the past, yet is ‘intensely self-reflexive’ (Hutcheon 1988, p. 5). Despite its recognisable themes of search for identity, belonging and empowerment typical of the young adult genre, that also belong to *historiographic metafiction*, this is not a conventionally real world for my reader. For this reason, I am encouraged to think that my artefact falls into the category of imaginative realism, I am also encouraged to think that, by constructing a work of *imaginative realism*, I am constructing a space that will be more inviting for my reader to engage with than a work that strives to represent a realist depiction of a teenage girl of modern times. Perhaps the reason for my belief is rooted in one of the reasons why I write historical fiction. As I mention in my discussion on writing process, historical fiction allows me the space to draw from, and engage with, my story through the process of separating my story by the distance of historical time.

Belonging, identity and empowerment are all put forward as three vital themes in YA literature (Nilsen & Donelson 2009; Stephens 2007). Jonathan Stephens (2007, np), in his assessment of twelve young adult novels, writes, ‘at the heart of all twelve novels lies this journey toward individual identity’. This can be also seen in numerous YA novels, novels like *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee 1988); *Sacred Hearts* (Dunant 2010), *The Changeling* (Gregory 2013), *Tomorrow, When the War Began* (Marsden 1994), *Rosemary for Remembrance* (Pulman 2005), *Just a Girl* (Caro 2010) and *The Other Countess* (Edwards 2010).

Young Adult novels also concern themselves with ‘the empowerment, the actualization of the self’ (Kroll 2006, p. 51). The research of Thomas Phillion (2009) and

Jody N. Polleck (2010) develops these issues further. Polleck's (2010) study of the empathetic space provided by book clubs for teenage girls demonstrates how books provide a catalyst for empowering and transforming lives through connecting real life experiences by reading self selected books. My own experiences of books transforming my life – both as a teenager and adult – encourages me to hope that my own work could provide this empathetic space for my reader.

Philion (2009) asserts young adult novels allow readers to understand their world and enter a discourse about current issues. Through critiquing forty acclaimed young adult novels, he summarised these issues as fear, diversity, exceptionality and creativity (Philion 2009). Philion (2009) contends that books produce knowledge just as powerfully as statistics, interviews, polls, journalism and science, and that they go deeper than what is provided by experience and serendipity. Philion (2009) also echoes C.S. Lewis's (1961, p 137) description of literature as windows, or 'even doors' when he describes novels as windows to our world.

Robert McKee (1999, p. 11), author of *Story*, contends that we all search for an answer to Aristotle's ageless question: 'How should a human being lead his life?' Stories provide an answer to this question; 'stories are equipment for living' (McKee 1999, p. 11). For young adults, recent research builds a strong argument that reading novels provides a vital tool to help them understand themselves and others through the building of empathy (Polleck 2010; Wolk 2009). Reading Murdoch's *The Heroine's Journey* (1990), Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2008) and Vogler's *The Writer's Journey* (2007) during the first twelve months of my candidacy shone a light on how the hero's journey connects to the Young Adult genre and the quest for identity (Nilsen & Donelson 2009). I wondered if I could, like so many other writers before me, use the twelve major steps of the hero's journey to map out and help develop my artefact.

Reflecting further on the hero's journey and Murdoch's rewriting of it as a tool of feminism also led me to find further inspiration for the narrative structure of my artefact. The myth of Persephone – a mother and daughter story – married to some aspects of the *Le bel inconnu*, or *the Fair Unknown*, the Arthurian styled legend of the noble youth raised without knowledge of his true identity (Stewart 1973, p. 569), became an analogy that aided the plotting of my story. By this I mean, my Kate is not

only the Fair Unknown, raised without knowledge of her true identity, but is a girl who exchanges the protection of a loving mother for a world of oppression and danger.

Steven Wolk (2009, p. 666) describes our modern times as witnessing ‘the enlightenment of young adult literature’. He asserts a need to create what he calls “the living curriculum” (Wolk 2009, p. 666) through engaging students with literature dealing with issues of concern to young adults. Since he describes *the living curriculum* as a way to teach social responsibility through connecting young people to literature, I take it that he is also talking about developing empathy in students (Wolk 2009). This is further supported through his discussion about how literature combats ignorance by revealing truths (Wolk 2009). Wolk (2009) reminds us that reading is vital for a democratic society and necessary to solve the current problems facing today’s world. He also believes YA literature is a way to teach social studies, countering the current education practices in America that have pushed aside social studies to give greater emphasis on mathematics and literature. YA literature offers a solution to addressing the problem that many students can no longer connect social studies to their own lives (Wolk 2009, p. 665).

Cart’s (2010) critique of *Seventeenth Summer* as the first young adult novel emphasised the author’s own youth with an unwritten suggestion that this qualified her to target the young adult reader of her times. That is, Cart (2010) reminds us that Daly wrote her novel through her own experiences as a young adult with an appreciation of issues relevant to other young adults. Cart’s critique made me reflect about and question my right to write for young adults when I am well and truly a mature woman. However, my memory of my teenage self remains vivid and was aided through revisiting the journals and diaries I kept from that time. Other writers use this strategy. For example, YA author Claire Hennessy (2014) offers it as a writing tip for aspiring YA authors. Teenage diaries in themselves have gone on to inspire YA novels, like that of *How to Keep a Boy from Kissing You* (2013) by Tara Eglington.

Revisiting my own teenage diaries revealed a teenager who hated being condescended to and sought out challenging books. I remember desiring to read books that made me cry and laugh, strummed my heart and soul like a musical instrument, and returned me from the experience of reading on a wave of emotion, richer and more aware of my humanness and my connection to others.

George Sands (cited by Kundera 2006) once wrote she desired to give her readers consolation and not desolation; as a teenager reader, this was what I sought from the books I read. I believe consolation, and not desolation, is important in YA literature because ‘adolescents need to know that they are not alone in their wishes for a better world and desire to believe in the goodness of people as well as in their pain’ (Reid & Stringer, 1997). This now leads me to tragedy and the young adult novel.

Tragedy and Young Adult literature

Bringing a work to a satisfying ending is a vital part of crafting any novel. For the YA novel, there is a strong argument that the ending involves consoling the reader as a positive result of the action in the storyline and the experiences of the characters. For example, Marsha Sprague and Kara Keeling (2007) contend a necessary feature of the young adult novel is the optimistic ending. This does not prevent many modern YA authors confronting tragedy of life ended too soon in their work. Neil Gaiman’s *The Graveyard Book* (2008) begins with a murder and the rescue of the main character from the same fate by the dead haunting the local cemetery. The characters of John Marsden’s *Tomorrow: When the War Began* (1994) lose their innocence, if not their lives or liberty, when Australia is invaded and they are forced to become soldiers of war. In Felicity Pulman’s *Rosemary for Remembrance* (2005), Jana seeks her father after the death of her mother forces her to flee from the only world she has known. *The Life of Teenage Body Snatcher* (Macleod 2010) is a black comedy set in 1828 when sixteen-year-old Thomas learns all about body snatching. *The Book thief* (Zusak 2007) tells the tragic story of a German girl, hiding her true identity in World War Two, and the power of words to heal and destroy. The Harry Potter series have been described as books that are all about death, loss and mortality (Isaacs 2011). The Hunger Games series dealt with tragedy after tragedy. Reading this work as an adult, I wrote in my journal:

I finished the Hunger Games last night – a trilogy written for young adults, and now reflecting why the ending, and therefore the story, failed for me. Was it simply because the author killed off far too many characters I empathised with? No – it was more than that. The ending felt ‘dead’ because of all these deaths.

All the killings took me from engaging with the story to disengaging from a story that had become mired by nightmare and hopelessness. I just couldn't believe that the main character could or would go on. The damage was too deep.

Thinking now of *Brave New World* – a book I read at sixteen and made me wonder if life was so bleak, then why should I go on? I think writers who write for young adults have a duty to give their readers hope (2012).

Whilst YA novels are proposed to be works that are psychologically sound and honest (Nilsen & Donelson 2009), and also give young adult readers hope (Nobles 1998), I agree with Keeling and Sprague (2007) that hope and optimism present difficulties in young adult historical fiction – especially in those novels that tell the story of female characters with lives dictated by societies very much controlled by men.

Historically, not only were women silenced by their societies, but also research opens a window to women's stories regulated by oppression, violence and culturally determined deaths. How do we as writers use these stories to reassure the Young Adult reader that life is worth living despite its road full of pitfalls, struggles and sorrows? Many YA novels – like those written by Rosemary Sutcliff, Mary Renault, J. K. Rowling, Sarah Dunant and Mark Zusak – offer strong illustrations about how this can be done. For example, Renault's *The Last of the Wine* (2008) constructs and confronts the harsh reality of the ancient world while also engaging the reader through empathy. Renault's characters are engaging and vivid, and she makes the reader think about the nature of love and sexuality by crafting unforgettable and heartbreaking love stories filtered through the context of ancient times. Her stories suggest that the human spirit is indestructible, and those we love live with us even after death, giving the young reader hope for their own lives.

Situating my artefact in Feminist Standpoint and YA literature

Abbey J. Fox's (2010) examination of Feminist Standpoint Theory deepened my

understanding of how my artefact situated itself in feminist standpoint – that is, the artefact is a construction of a female standpoint birthed and operated from the position of the female that accesses knowledge through that position. Through this knowledge, they are able to navigate not only what is expected for their gender, but also to successfully manipulate relationships with the dominant gender.

Berger's vital insight that we need to understand the machinery of society before we are able to change it (Berger 1963) is especially pertinent here, particularly in regard to YA novels and their purpose to persuade the young adult reader to endure their world (Trites 1998). It also brings us to Chela Sandoval's argument for a fifth consciousness of resistance to domination, which she describes as 'differential oppositional consciousness' (Sandoval 2004, p. 197). Sandoval contends this consciousness functions nomadically, able to go in and out the five principles – equal rights, revolutionary, supremacist, separatist and differential – of what she describes as oppositional consciousnesses. Differential consciousness unites all five consciousnesses by evoking change through recognizing all standpoints have equal value (Sandoval 2004). For me, that differential consciousness unites through the act of weaving empathy between the five principles, and thus has the power to create new narratives for the remaking of our culture. We return then to the power of empathy – the power that a textual construction such as a novel can produce for both the writer and the reader.

My artefact is not only constructed from a feminist standpoint, but my text also enters a feminine standpoint through the use of a main female character who is both central and subject to the story (Fox 2010). Kate Carey's story shows another prism of female existence and experience – a prism that I used as writer to evaluate my own society, and may be used by my reader for the same purpose. Keeling and Sprauge (2007) position historical fiction as a tool that can be used to help contemporary girls explore issues related to their gender through acting as observers, rather than participants. Keeling and Sprauge (2007) also argue that history's marginalising and silencing of women makes it more difficult for fiction writers to construct engaging characters who are truly authentic to the period. Writers are also challenged to connect authentic issues of the past to authentic issues facing contemporary females.

Whilst acknowledging writing historical fiction for the young adult reader engages the writer in a balancing act, they also contend works constructing atypical historical examples of female lives actually devalue the more common stories of women

of these times through omitting and erasing the stories showing women struggling and suffering to achieve a better future for future generations. The story of my artefact focuses on imagining the experiences of Kate Carey – a little known historical personage on the margins of history, a girl who discovers that writing and reading act as a tool of empowerment for females in her world.

Keeling and Sprauge (2007) argue that it is the telling of these stories that will aid young women to understand how women of the past surmounted and survived the restrictions placed upon them by their societies and enable them to take the lessons of the past to improve their own lives. Wolk (2009) also adds to this discussion by reminding us that citizens arrive at informed and critical decisions about their society through understanding history. This supports my belief that fiction – through writing and reading – has the potential to act as that safe place for women to think about their lives and enter a discourse with other women. Discourse then begins the process to build bridges for change (Brooks 2004; Fox 2010).

Bringing it all together

I aimed to write Kate as a strong female protagonist in my young adult novel for two reasons. The first one was simple: I wanted to enjoy writing Kate's story, so that meant constructing a character influenced by my own reading preference for strong and likeable female protagonists. My second reason came from my research about the genre. Strong female characters for the young adult female reader are seen as an unmet need in the current literary environment (Nilsen & Donelson 2009). Thus, I aimed to construct Kate as a strong character who becomes stronger through the development of my artefact, as well as to include other strong female characters, such as Anne Boleyn.

My decision to write my artefact from third person limited point of view came about not only because it reveals the story through Kate Carey's point of view, but also, since all my previous novels have been written in first person point of view, because it offered me an opportunity and challenge for writerly growth.

While writing my artefact, I became not only concerned I was writing to my memory of my teenage self, but that I was too fixated on my own reading habits as a teenager rather than my targeted readership of today's young adults. While I was writing about a teenage girl who had recognisable teenage problems (issues with her mother, broken home, absent father, et cetera.), I was making far too many assumptions

about what would engage my young adult female reader. I studied again recent novels written for this age group, novels like Sara Dunant's *Sacred Hearts* (2010), Phillipa Gregory's *The Changeling* (2013) and Jane Caro's *Just a Girl* (2010), which helped me recognise that the drafting process entailed a concentrated effort to ensure a style of prose directed to the young female reader.

The Light in the Labyrinth narrates the Feminine Standpoint of a young girl from Tudor times, which also casts a light on the standpoint of today's young female reader by the engagement of empathy. Through my deliberate effort to write for the YA female reader, a work that is told through the point of view of a protagonist in a similar age group to my targeted reader, a protagonist engaged in a quest for identity and belonging, which also involves the attributes of the hero's journey, I invite the reader to enter the world of Tudor women to think critically about women's lives today.

The fact that *The Light in the Labyrinth* illuminates a feminine standpoint of an adolescent female of Tudor times strengthens the bridge between text and my target teenage female reader through connecting to the feminine standpoint of my reader.



Image four: *Portrait of Anne Boleyn*, postcard from Hever Castle.

REVISING ANNE BOLEYN AND THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

*Defiled is my name full sore
Through cruel spite and false report,
That I may say for evermore,
Farewell, my joy! adieu comfort!
For wrongfully ye judge of me
Unto my fame a mortal wound,
Say what ye list, it will not be,
Ye seek for that can not be found
~ believed to be written by Anne Boleyn before her
execution (Bailey-Kempling 1908).*

*We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our
exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the
place for the first time (Eliot 1943, p. 47).*

In this section, I discuss the silence of Tudor Women, historical fiction and genre theory with the aim to situate my work within the body of fictional works on Anne Boleyn. I will begin with a brief discussion about the silence of Tudor women, a historical reality that propelled the writing of my artefact as both a narrative and work of feminist standpoint.

Cowart (1989, p. 28) argues, ‘...the accuracy or inaccuracy of history is a problem only for the naïve. One can know only the “truth” that one’s language equips us to know: language speaks to us, rather than the other way around’. As a writer, I am aware I construct the past through the prisms I use to see, critique and analyse it. By this I mean that I construct stories through the prisms of history, gender, culture and that of my own worldview, all positioned in feminist standpoint. I also construct stories out of chronicles, shape plots through engaging with sequences to arrange the past to evoke meaning through deliberate design (Hutcheon1988).

My artefact explores the lives of Tudor women through constructing a fictionalised version of history by the use of imagination; therefore, it falls into the category of historical fiction. To construct Tudor fiction, the bulk of my reading concentrates on historiographical works to help unpack this period. Thorough historical research and an effort to write directed by that research is arguably even more important for the YA historical writer:

Only through tiny, literal accuracies can the historical novelist achieve the larger truth to which he aspires, namely, an overall feeling of authenticity. It is just like Marianne Moore's famous prescription for the ideal poet. He must stock his imaginary garden with real toads (Mallon, cited by Brown, 1998).

The writing process for my artefact involved creating Kate, my main character, as an empowered Tudor female teenager, and therefore comparable to a 21st century construction. Beginning my work, I wondered about the best ways to accomplish this. Of royal blood and thus highly positioned in the hierarchy of her world, Kate is a girl from the Tudor period – a time when women lives were very controlled and depowered by their patriarchal world (Ward 2013).

Emily Sutherland (2007 p. 10) asserts, 'In writing a historical character in fiction, we start with known facts, which provide a spring form for the imagination to fill the many gaps'. Contradictions and erasures also provide evidence of disjointed or incomplete narratives (McNay 2009) – of gaps (Kon-yu 2010) that opened up for my imagination to step inside. As Atwood (1998, p. 1516) argues: 'the past belongs to those who claim it, and are willing to explore it, and to infuse it with meaning for those alive today'. That is especially relevant to using fiction to fill the gaps, the lacuna (Banks & Andrew 2012), of women's stories. As Glenda Banks and Martin Andrew (2012) contend, this method opens up the possibility of constructing a narrative that speaks of truth to the reader.

What facts did I use for my starting point to write this fictional work? The patriarchal society of the Tudors told women silence was a virtue, and the only form of eloquence appropriate to women (Hannay 1985; Jordan 1990). From high to low, women who tried to make their voices heard put themselves into the dangerous position

of nonconformity. They risked physical punishment, if not their lives (Jordon 1990). Gail Paster Kern deepens our understanding of how the female voice was viewed during this time. Women embodied incontinence and a leaky, ‘oozing’-grotesque body. This leaky vessel makes clear women’s inferiority – their leakiness bespeaking instability, their inability to control themselves and remain chaste, as well as their inability to bridle their tongues (Paster 1993, p.25). Women, like Anne Boleyn, could even be accused of witchcraft if they refused silence. Indeed, there are English pubs that once served to remind women about what could happen if they forgot to bridle their tongues. Named as Quiet Woman or Silent Woman, the pubs often brandish a couplet, a couplet that seems related to Anne Boleyn:

Here is a woman who has lost her head
She's quiet now—you see she's dead (Rothwell 2006, p.
54).

With silence a matter of life or death, it is not surprising the Tudor period left women historically voiceless. Their stories often erased, their portraits identified as unknown, the lives of women were also left as little more than a footnote to, if not just only filtered, through the lives of men (Kon-yu 2010).

I argue that while history does provide documentary evidence for the voices of Tudor women, especially those in the foreground of history, these voices, in most instances, are of the silenced. But women found ways of empowerment, and ‘the possibility of a voice’ (Heale 1995, p. 305). Writing was an uncommon skill even for noble women and men (Harris 2002), yet history shows that three or more of the women I used as fictional characters in my artefact came together to write in what is now known as the *Devonshire Manuscript*. In this small manuscript, the size of an A5 notebook, the women reproduced poems or songs, or sometimes wrote their own works. Heale (1992, p. 303) argues that by adding their voices alongside men, these Tudor women demonstrate their courage to speak up to them.

Tudor women were not brought up to see themselves as equal to men (Sim 1996, p. 33). Women were even *educated* about their inferiority and sinful natures (Fantazzi & Vives 2000). Sir Thomas More wrote to his expectant, beloved daughter, Margaret Roper:

In your letter you speak of your approaching confinement.
We pray most earnestly that all may go happily and successfully

with you. May God and our Blessed Lady grant you happily and safely a little one like to his mother in everything except sex. Yet let it by all means be a girl, if only she will make up for the inferiority of her sex by her zeal to imitate her mother's virtue and learning (Reynolds 1960, np.).

History also brings down to us the words of Elizabeth I, the intelligent and gifted daughter of the intelligent and gifted Anne Boleyn. During her long reign, Elizabeth apologised for her femaleness, referring to herself as a male ruler on countless occasions. Her famous Armada speech is one such example:

I know I have the body of a weak, feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too
(Elizabeth I 2000, p. 326).

One of Elizabeth's poems also speaks poignantly of being constrained by societal expectations:

I grieve and dare not show my discontent,
I love and yet am forced to seem to hate,
I do, yet dare not say I ever meant,
I seem stark mute but inwardly do prate.
I am and not, I freeze and yet am burned,
Since from myself another self I turned
(Elizabeth I 2000, pp. 302-303)

Thus, historical record makes it apparent that women's voices were, more often than not, couched and constrained in a manner that reflected back their prescribed role in their society (Heale 1995, p. 297).

Another example comes from the life of Katherine of Aragon. Historians Mattingly (1942), Luke (1967), Paul (1966), Fraser (1992), Weir (2002) and Starkey (2003) have all written biographies about Katherine of Aragon. These biographies shine with unhidden admiration towards Katherine of Aragon by underlining why she was such a loved queen during these times. History tells us that, for almost twenty years of her long marriage to Henry VIII, Katherine of Aragon navigated a path that fulfilled what was expected of her in her role as the King's consort. She was obedient and gently spoken, a woman who knew her place and purpose. Whilst she did not hide her distress

about his unfaithfulness in the early years of their marriage or when he made a Duke of his bastard son, her distress was soon put aside for compliance to his wishes and desires. Katherine lived up to her motto: *Humble and Loyal*, and spent many years of her marriage being so.

Anne Boleyn was less humble. When she protested about Henry VIII's unfaithfulness during their marriage, he told her bluntly, 'She must shut her eyes and endure just like others who were worthier than she' (Ives 2004, p. 192). It is obvious Henry VIII was referring to Katherine, a woman trained to be queen from early childhood. However, when Katherine of Aragon's marriage was threatened, George Cavendish, Cardinal Wolsey's Gentleman Usher and a witness of the period, provides the words that seem to be that of the real Katherine, a woman no longer willing to endure but determined to fight:

This twenty years or more I have been your true wife, and
by me ye had had divers children, although it hath pleased
God to call them from this world...And when you had me
at the first, I take God to be my judge, I was a true maid,
without touch of man (Sylvester et al. 1962, pp. 149-50).

Katherine was fighting for her marriage and position as the consort to Henry VIII, thus these words can be gauged as political. However, as a woman hearing another woman, I can hear her real heartbreak; she is not only talking about the twenty years she had been a wife to a man and given him her devotion, but of their dead children. They are words that ring true. However, there have been countless other times when the documented words of Tudor women spoke to me of silence. What is hidden in the voices of Tudor women is revealed to the astute reader by the eluded and alluded (Arnold 2011). Through my feminist standpoint, even if it includes more liberated life experience, I recognised women carefully weighing up their words, making them palpable and acceptable to men.

Research for my first novel had already revealed a valuable primary document, the previously mentioned *The Devonshire Manuscript*, which offered me a gap to imagine women's stories. While Sir Thomas Wyatt composed a large proportion of its poems (Ostovich & Sauer 2004), in this small miscellany women also claimed a voice by including their own poetry or writing replies to men. *Reading Early Modern Women* calls the writings of these women 'ammunition for the defence of women, very

probably as part of a popular game of blame and defence' (Ostovich & Sauer 2004, p. 323). This view is strengthened by Paul G. Remley (1994, p. 42) who frames the manuscript as a method to 'protest the mistreatment of women by self-serving lovers'. Remley (1994) also provides evidence, through primary material sourcing William Latymer, Anne Boleyn's chaplain who often purchased religious books on behalf of the Queen, that the young women who surrounded the Queen took pleasure in writing poems.

Writing the first draft of my new work, I remembered that these women were closely connected to Anne Boleyn, either as blood kin or kin by marriage. They shared a manuscript clearly important to them because it was passed down the generations (Baron 1994). It even records the failed love affair between Lady Margaret Douglas, the King's niece, and Thomas Howard – which I foreshadow in my artefact – and the indignation felt by their friends when the lovers were imprisoned (Herman 1993).

My Kate was also the blood kin of these women. History seems very silent about the early life of my historical personage. This gap of historical record incited my imagination into full play – surely, I asked myself, that fact alone would bring her into their orbit? Could not it then follow that she could be included in this group of women who shared this book of poetry? Could this book be a device of empowerment for my female character? Historical gaps gave voice to my characters, as when Mary Shelton encourages Kate to write as a way to find healing when she learns her real father is Henry VIII (Dunn 2014, p 87).

Research for my practice also led me to consider the writings of Christine De Pizan (1364-c.1430), arguably the woman responsible for 'the first major feminist tract in Western tradition' (Bennett 1989, p 251). With *Tresor de la Cité des Dames*, translated into English in the 1520's by Brian Anslay, employed as a yeoman of Henry VIII's wine cellar (Oxford DNB 2013), it seems likely this book was part of the King's library, and thus available for Anne Boleyn and her circle to read. Warnicke provides us with even more circumstantial evidence by reminding us that, during her formative years, Anne Boleyn was part of the household of Anne of Brittany, Louis XII's wife. Anne of Brittany had Pizan's book printed on at least three occasions. Other French noble women, women that the young Anne Boleyn would likely have viewed as role models, also owned copies of this book (Warnicke 1993).

Tapestries depicting episodes in Pizan's *City of Ladies*, which adorned the walls of the royal apartments, also provide evidence that Tudor women knew of this book. These tapestries with their 'protofeminist ideas, writ large' (Bell 2004, p.2), alongside



Image five: *Christine Presenting Her Poems to Queen Isabeau*

others such as those telling the story of Esther, showed women in positions of power and possibly influenced court women to empower their lives. Perhaps, too, women were resisting and responding to Vives (a sixteenth century scholar who wrote the influential *The Education of a Christian Woman*) use of Esther as a reminder to dress according to the desire of their husband, which, he hoped, also meant without adornment. And if the husband desired his wife adorned:

[y]ou will say with Esther, who was dressed and with devil's pomp, "Thou knowest my necessity, O Lord, that I loathe the symbol of my high position and renown, which binds my brow when I appear in court. I loathe it like the menstrual cloth and

will not wear it when I am alone in silence (Vives & Fantazzi 2000, p. 236).

My research led me to evidence that Anne Boleyn identified with Esther – not simply through the fact of the existence of the Esther tapestries, but also by the sermon delivered by John Skip, one of Anne Boleyn’s household priests, just shortly before her world crumbled beneath her feet (Ives 2004). I used this sermon as part of the plot of *The Light in the Labyrinth* (p. 163) and also as an important thread of exposition that acknowledges the silence imposed on women of this period. Indeed, Greg Walker argues Anne Boleyn sealed her own fate through forgetting this silence and speaking inadvisably and dangerously during a few days in 1536 (Walker 2002). My artefact constructs this event as a consequence of Anne Boleyn’s grief at the lost of her baby and through her despair of knowing that Henry VIII wished to end their marriage.

In the days leading up to her execution, there is no question in my mind that Anne, an intelligent woman, would have been well aware of her weakened influence with her husband. This being so, she would have also been reliant on others to act as her mouthpiece while – as she walked a tightrope for her own survival – she generally toed the line of the silence expected of a *virtuous* woman of this period (Hannay 1985, p. 4). However, just as Katherine of Aragon spoke up to Henry VIII at the end of their relationship, Anne Boleyn did likewise through the poetry she supposedly wrote during the final days of her life.

Historical research not only deepened my well of knowledge, but also engaged my imagination through these gaps revealed by historical record for the construction of fiction.

Historical fiction

The Historical Novel Society describes the historical novel in this manner:

To be deemed historical (in our sense), a novel must have been written at least fifty years after the events described, or have been written by someone who was not alive at the time of those events (who therefore approaches them only by research) (Lee 2006).

By this definition, historical fiction writers construct stories that derive from a context beyond their own life experience by use of research to ignite imagination. David Cowart (1989, p. 6) provides a more simple and yet wide-ranging definition by describing historical fiction ‘as fiction where the past figures with some prominence’.

Georg Lukacs (1983) sees no distinction between the novel and the historical novel because all novels are fundamentally historical. Discussing the history of the genre in *The Historical Novel*, Lukacs (1983) asserts that it secured its place in the literary canon in 1814, with the publication of Scott’s *Waverley* novels, just before the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte in the following year. Lukacs also acknowledges the Enlightenment engaged in ‘the invention of the historic sense’ (Lukacs 1983, p. 20) through the writing of history that planted ideological seeds, which flourished in the blood-washed time of the French revolution. However, he also notes that medieval treatment of classical history and myths can be regarded as examples of this genre. There were even earlier precursors of historical fiction in China and India. But for the historical novel, it is Europe where the seeds of this form took deep root and grew into the shape we recognise today.

Jerome De Groot (2010, p. 2), in *The Historical Novel*, asserts that the historical fiction novel ‘is increasingly studied on university curricula and discussed at research level’. Drawn from history, historical fiction is a multifaceted and demanding genre with complex ethical considerations, from enabling voices of the past, to accuracy and authenticity, to world building. Jonathan Nield (1902, p. 41) reminds us of the difficulty in writing this genre when he writes in his *Guide to the Best Historical Novels and Tales*:

The spirit of a period is like the selfhood of a human being—something that cannot be handed on; try as we may, it is impossible for us to breathe the atmosphere of a bygone time, since all those thousand-and-one details which went to the building up of both individual and general experience, can never be reproduced.

De Groot (2010) contends that recent times have seen more historical novels steer away from the more familiar pattern of presenting fictionalized autobiographies or personal accounts of histories to embrace the more conventional form of novel writing

through engaging with themes such as social movements, nonconformity, character conflicts and the creation of empathy. Nelson (2007, np) adds to this that the grand narratives of history and imperial models have been opened up to the consideration of ‘regional, local histories, subaltern studies and histories of resistance’.

Hutcheon (1988) describes works such as mine as *historiographic metafiction*, that is, a work that is self-conscious and plays upon the truth and lies of the historical record. It also refutes:

the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity (Hutcheon 1988, p. 93).

Linda Hutcheon (1988, p. 195) also recognised that *historiographic metafiction* offered feminism a valuable space to engage with the history of women, history which is ‘oral, provisional and personal’.

De Groot (2010, p. 2) reminds us that Flaubert and Tolstoy used their historical novels as ‘experiments and crucial inventions in important cultural debates’. Many other writers since Flaubert and Tolstoy have given voice to the past in order to speak truths about their own time. Nelson (2007) explicates how historians like Antonia Fraser and Simon Schama also use similar conventions to that of the historical fiction writer. In an acknowledgement of the question of historical certainty, Schama uses fictional devices such as imagining interior monologues, giving voice to his historical personages and constructing dramatic scenes. Nelson underlines that this construction comes from Schama’s mindfulness that any attempt to narrate the past must also own it as a crafted narrative and not a lived reality (Nelson 2007). Like myself, Fraser (2014) speaks of making use of historical paintings of her historical personages, reproduced on postcards, for inspiration and even of tossing reflective questions at these personages via their images, stressing the imaginative act involved in their creation.

De Groot (2010, p. 48) quotes Ernest Baker’s belief that the historical novel ‘may have a positive value as a contribution to knowledge...[it] gives us something beyond the scope of the historian, but none the less true for that’. Kundera (2006, p. 61)

reminds us that Hermann Broch believed ‘the novel’s sole morality is knowledge’. Juanita Feros Ruys (cited in Sutherland, 2007) asserts that by using both imagination and authenticity historical fiction writers can add to our knowledge of real historical personages.

De Groot (2010) contends that the defining feature of the historical novel is its hybrid and flexible nature; that is, that works of romance, horror, crime, fantasy, literary, et cetera, can be framed as a historical novel. Larissa MacFarquhar (2012) explicates the hybrid nature of historical fiction another way by describing it as a hybrid genre, ‘halfway between fiction and non-fiction’. I question whether this description comes from a non-practitioner or dabbler in the craft. While it is my perception that the majority of historical fiction writers take immense pride in their research, research is a means to an end, used by fiction writers to understand the context of history for the use of their imagination. As Kundera (2005, p. 44) tells us, ‘...fidelity to history is a secondary matter as regards the value of the novel. The novelist is neither historian nor prophet: he is an explorer of existence’. Thus, even if the fiction strives to re-construct a faithful representation of history, research is the means to write fiction.

Writers such as Margaret Atwood (1998), Umberto Eco (2004), Jan Parini (1988), Sandra Worth (2011), C.W. Gortner (2012), Sarah Dunant (2012) and many more historical fiction writers, including myself, use research as the first step to filter history and historical characters through use of their imagination for the purposes of fiction writing. Nevertheless, I also suggest that most historical fiction writers construct their historical personages through understanding that ‘The past is another country; they do things differently there’ (Hartley 2004, p.5).

Writers of historical fiction craft their work in various forms of this genre – whether historical and historicized fiction, fictionalized biography or historiographic metafiction. Historian Perry Anderson (2011) reminds us that ‘[w]ithin the huge multiverse of prose fiction, the historical novel has, almost by definition, been the most consistently political’. This is true of *The Light in the Labyrinth*; between its lines beats my concern about gender inequality. The nature of this became clearer to me while writing my artefact. I found myself wondering if a work such as mine offers a form of social analysis to help readers question why ‘we choose one alternative over another’ (Risman 2004, p. 431).

Situating my work within Anne Boleyn novels

With the popularity of the Tudors re-fuelled by the publication of *The Other Boleyn Girl* in 2001 (Gardner 2014), many popular authors have chosen to explore through fiction the lives of six women who lived their lives close to one Tudor monarch. Indeed, Miriam Elizabeth Burstein's (2007) study makes use of forty-five Anne Boleyn novels and short stories – the bulk of these works published from 1950 and falling into the romance genre – despite the fact that Anne Boleyn's story breaks the usual requirements of a romance: that is, a happy ending (Parv 2004, pp. 136-139).

Burstein's (2007) study explicates how Anne Boleyn's fictionalized story does not follow the usual genre conventions for a romance. She also states her belief that the popularity of Anne Boleyn with fiction writers indicates 'the continuing failure of romance novelists to hammer her story into acceptable narrative form' (Burstein 2007, p.2) and thus illuminates how romance succeeds and also fails to tell the Anne Boleyn story. I posit it is more than this; that women writers engage with Anne Boleyn's story because they are simply drawn to a story that they can relate to as women.

Some of the novels in Burstein's study include: *My Friend Anne* (Jessie Armstrong 1901), *The Favor of Kings* (Mary Hastings Bradley 1912), *Queen Anne Boleyn* (Francis Hackett 1939), *The Heir of Allington* (Philippa Wiat 1973), *Blood Royal* (Mollie Hardwick 1988), *The Secret Diary of Anne Boleyn* (Robin Maxwell 1997), *The Other Boleyn Girl* (Philippa Gregory 2001), *Anne Boleyn* (Margaret Hey 1967), *The Queen of Subtleties* (Suzannah Dunn 2004), *The Witch-Girl* (Dilys Gardner, 1979), *A Lady Raised High* (Laurien Gardner 2006), *A Dangerous Temptation* (Barbara Kyle 1994), *Passion's Reign* (Karen Harper 1983), *The Dark Rose* (Cynthia Harrod-Eagles 1981), *And Wild for to Hold* (Nancy Kress 1991) and my own Anne Boleyn novel, *Dear Heart, How Like You This?* (2002). Burstein's list makes it clear that the majority of Anne Boleyn novelists are women. Indeed, Anne and the other five wives of Henry VIII continue to captivate the imagination of female writers to this day. While it can be argued the marital adventures of Henry VIII present the female writer with vital subjects valid to their standpoints as women, it is also important to remember that 'women's reality is historically and contemporaneously one of oppression' (Arnold 2008 p.7). Therefore, not only are female writers reclaiming women's stories through revising history, they are also writing through a female standpoint that maps out master narratives of oppression through the telling of these female stories. This *herstory*

approach is argued as having important effects on historical scholarship through providing evidence of the importance of women's history (Scott, cited by Kon-yu 2010). As Heilmann and Llewellyn assert, by writing fiction about the lives of historical women, women are not only reclaiming stories left on the margins of history but also seizing the means of narrative empowerment (Heilmann & Llewellyn 2004).

The story of Anne Boleyn as used in fiction presents a powerful example of this reclamation in action. Burstein (2007, p 3) describes Anne Boleyn story as 'a void' – the gap acting as the space to engage imagination. I posit that the power of these gaps to incite imagination is something Paula Hamilton (cited in Nelson, 2007) failed to consider when she described filling the gaps in historical record as engaging in 'the 'deficit' model of history'. This 'deficit' model is also framed as a naturalised theory of history where historical research presents the possibility of truth, in which the limits of history create the space where story is possible through filling the blanks (Nelson 2007).

Reflecting about the writing of *Alias Grace* (1996), Margaret Atwood comments 'when there was a solid fact, I could not alter it ... but in the parts left unexplained – the gaps left unfilled – I was free to invent' (Atwood 1998, p.1515). This is also my philosophy regarding the crafting of my own historical fiction. Indeed, this writing technique is common to many historical writers – and, I feel, especially relevant to re-writing of women's stories into history. With silence locking away women's stories for centuries, gaps can only be filled through the power of imagination, through invention (Atwood 1998). By doing so, women's stories are reclaimed as revisionist text that is vital to the creation of empathy in the reader.

Many novels about Anne Boleyn revise her with all the attributes of the conventional bitch and the typical *monster* woman (Gilbert & Gubar 1980). I believe we cannot ignore what is actually underpinning these kinds of narratives. Simone de Beauvoir (2011 p. 302) asserts '[w]omen do not set themselves up as Subject and hence have erected no virile myth in which their projects are reflected...they still dream through the dreams of men'. De Beauvoir also theorises that the *female monster* signifies 'all of man's ambivalent feelings about his own inability to control his own physical existence, his own birth systems, his own birth and death. As *the Other*, woman comes to represent the contingency of life, a life that is made to be destroyed' (de Beauvoir 2011, p. 34). These arguments point to the *bitch* revision of Anne Boleyn as a construction of patriarchal narratives – the type of narrative that our world must

strive to rewrite.

Susan Ostrov Weisser's (1994) study of the bitch figure in Harlequin novels adds further weight to this argument. Weisser explicates the bitch figure as an important master narrative for women. As revealed in many Anne Boleyn novels, the bitch has the ability to evoke chameleon-like disguises; nevertheless the bitch always remains the bitch. Weisser (1994, p.272) insightfully remarks, 'the excess of emotion and power left out of real women by the repressive and limiting constraints of being *feminine* in relation to the male and to the public world finds its way into an inhuman and distorted version of womanhood that is the heroine's hated other, i.e.; the Bitch'. Weisser also considers whether the triangle of the hero, the heroine and the bitch creates a situation that results in a cultural contradiction about a woman's forceful self though division into good and bad – the good and bad woman. She claims the bitch figure as 'a kind of dumping ground for anxiety and discomfort in gender roles' (Weisser 1994, p. 274). Weisser's study also exposes the oppression that underpins this form of master narrative. Women are influenced into believing that the good woman – whose attributes are determined by patriarchal society – is the only way to be a true woman. Burstein (2007) argues that Anne Boleyn novels suggest that the construction of the bitch-figure confronted the reality of surviving the Tudor court culture, when the bitch had more chance of enduring than the innocent.

Burstein (2007) continues by reminding us of that there has always been prejudice against the woman who refuses silence. Anne provides evidence of this, but the added complication of her life involved her in a time that saw the virtuous woman as a silent woman (Hannay 1985). Her rejection of silence combatted not only her gender, but also underlined her failure to bear her husband his son. Her female gender stripped her of real power to dictate her own destiny – and stripped her of the right to a voice and to control her own story. The determination of Anne Boleyn to own her voice and story not only underlines her lack of power, but also became an act of self-destruction (Burstein 2007). If we return to Weisser's study of the bitch in romances, she almost seems to be referring to many Anne Boleyn novels when she says: 'the bitch seems to get away with murder, sexually or romantically speaking – until she herself is murdered by being expunged from the plot at the novel's end' (1994, p 279).

Mantel's *Wolf Hall* (2009) is one vital example of a novel revising Anne Boleyn as *the bitch*. Cromwell reveals to the reader a woman who is not only a bitch, but also a

shrew. Ambitious, unkind, destructive and humourless, Anne Boleyn apparently possesses no redeeming qualities at all. Her very appearance is witch-like, a woman of 'black looks' (Mantel 2009, p. 201). Mantel's descriptions of Anne illuminate Cromwell's dislike and distrust of her, as can be noted from the following passages from the novel:

Sheba makes Anne look bad: sallow and sharp. She stands by the window, her fingers tugging and ripping at a sprig of rosemary. When she sees him, she drops it, and her hands dip back into her trailing sleeves (Mantel 2009, 164).

Two days later he is alone with Anne; she is tucked into a window embrasure, eyes closed, basking like a cat in a scarce shaft of winter sun. She stretches out her hand to him, hardly knowing who he is; any man will do? He takes her fingertips. Her black eyes snap open. It's like a shop when the shutters are taken down; good morning, Master Cromwell, what can we sell each other today? (Mantel 2009, p. 352).

The latter scene demonstrates the lust of the bitch for material gain, which points to this scene as constructed through capitalist/patriarchal ideology (Weisser 1994). The subtext of Anne's well-fed, cat-like contentment also speaks to Burstein's contention that while the king's bedding of a woman may give her access to his power, this power was dependent on his desire. Her value was part and parcel of this desire; without it, she was just another used and discarded woman (Burstein 2007).

Reading *Wolf Hall*, I wondered how any reader, especially those with little knowledge of what history tells us about Anne Boleyn, could understand Henry VIII's attraction to her. It is clear that *Wolf Hall* constructs the stereotypical *bad woman* of no virtue, a woman deserving of her *bad end* through her selfish, heartless behaviour.

Another very important and influential novel is Philippa Gregory's *The Other Boleyn Girl* (2001). Gregory – despite saying she believes that Anne was innocent of the charges resulting in her execution (Gregory 2003) – shapes a seemingly cold, very calculating Anne Boleyn. Gregory's Anne Boleyn often behaves with all the traits of a bitch, as well as forever hissing and striking out like a snake. This novel is narrated through the voice of Mary Boleyn, Anne Boleyn's compliant rival. Mary persuades the

reader of Anne Boleyn's desperation to become pregnant, and therefore remain queen, and leaves the impression that she sleeps with their brother George to achieve this. Once again, here is an example from the novel of Anne Boleyn, the Bitch in action:

“Well hear this,” she hissed in my ear. “Hear this Mary. I am playing my own game and I don't want you interrupting.

Nobody will know anything until I am ready to tell them, and then they will know everything too late.”

“You're going to make him love you?”

Abruptly she released me and I gripped my elbow and arm where the bones ached.

“I'm going to make him marry me,” she said flatly. “And if you so much as breathe a word to anyone, then I will kill you”

(Gregory 2003 p. 123).

My first novel, *Dear Heart, How Like You This?* (2002) revises Anne Boleyn in a far more sympathetic light. Narrating the story of Anne Boleyn through the voice of Sir Thomas Wyatt, the poet, one important subtext of the story ponders about the nature of love; another even more vital subtext involves gender inequality. Brazilian scholar Flávia Andrade explicates this further by discussing the construction of my text through the standpoint of gender. She reminds us that *Dear Heart, How Like You This?* is written through the perspective of a man who narrates the story of Anne Boleyn; thus, the text constructs a story of a Tudor male making sense of a Tudor woman and her actions in what may be seen as a parody of a phallogocentric society (Andrade 2013). Andrade is correct in identifying the purpose of Wyatt's relationships with women in my novel. Not only were they constructed through my understanding of the context of this period, but they also served to demonstrate the oppression experienced by Tudor women, from physical violence to fates determined by men (Andrade 2013, p.246)¹.

¹ I sincerely thank Dr Andrade for her help in translating these following passages:

...Tomas, ao apresentar sua versão dos fatos e relatar os diversos relacionamentos que teve com mulheres (Anne, Elizabeth, Lucrecia, Ângela), explicita a opressão da mulher no sistema patriarcal. O poeta é um homem que narra o pensamento e o comportamento dos homens com relação às mulheres. E, assim, o texto torna visíveis diversas situações

Andrade appreciates my efforts to challenge the bitch narrative for the Anne Boleyn story through constructing a strong, independent, thoughtful female who also is a fallible human being who makes mistakes. My Anne Boleyn also seizes control of her body, for a short time, when she chooses to bestow her virginity on a man of her own choice, even if this lover was not of her heart's choice. My novel, and others imagining a love affair between Anne Boleyn and Wyatt, not only depict a doomed passion, but also offer to Anne Boleyn a sexual power of choice she is denied in her relationship with Henry VIII (Burstein 2007). Thus, the text of *Dear Heart, How Like You This?* constructs a Tudor woman through the perspective of a Tudor man, but it is also a representation that goes against the traditional canon (Andrade 2013, p.237) ².

I constructed Tom Wyatt not only as a man who loved Anne Boleyn, but also through my knowledge of the Tudor period. Whilst Tom recognized Anne Boleyn as a woman who stood apart from other Tudor women, he was often bemused by Anne's attempts to drive her own life, her own identity and destiny. Thus, despite telling it through a male perspective, *Dear Heart, How Like You This?* is a story constructed through feminist standpoint. In a more general sense, Burstein deepens the discussion about how Anne Boleyn novels such as mine are often played out. Gender roles determine the destiny of both Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII – 'the would-be woman of power silenced and shattered; the man in charge decaying into sexual self-parody – both figures are trapped by dramatic irony' (Burstein 2007, p 16).

Andrade's study of my novel also demonstrates the error of claiming the historical novel as a conservative vehicle (Nelson 2007). Rather, it demonstrates how 'everyday language is not neutral; it bears within it the presuppositions and cultural assumptions of a whole tradition' (Lechte 2007, p. 109) and enables the reader to

de violência vividas pelas mulheres no passado e no presente: estupro, espancamentos, exploração sexual, assassinatos (Andrade 2013, p. 246)

² Quanto a Anne, Tomas se esforça por narrá-la a partir de um padrão de representação tradicional da figura feminina. Contudo, alguns caracteres, sentimentos e atitudes da heroína, mencionadas pelo narrador, tais como, a indomabilidade, a independência, os desejos de vingança e a entrega sexual sem amor, revelam a falácia dessa representação. A repetição com diferença do discurso literário patriarcal, observada no texto de Dunn, revela um distanciamento crítico em relação a esses discursos. E constitui um questionamento das práticas discursivas-representacionais da figura feminina dentro do cânone literário tradicional, do qual o poeta faz parte, sendo um dos fundadores da literatura de língua inglesa. (Andrade 2013, p. 237)

become the author of the text (Barthes 1977). As Barthes writes: ‘The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture’ (1977, p. 146).

Lukacs (1983, p. 19) discusses a perceived feature of the failed historical novel; that is, the work simply puts costumes on modern characters and does not strive to faithfully mirror a particular epoch of history. In my historical fiction, I strive to achieve what Lukacs describes as a representation of realism through the art of the novel (Lukacs 1983, p. 19; Kundera 2003). I seek to avoid crafting a story like that found in *The Favor of Kings* (1912), which embodies Anne not through the context of her own period, but as an aware feminist who sees herself positioned to change the world (Burstein 2007). Thus, my writing navigates a tight path that strives for verisimilitude as well as engaging the reader of today.

‘[O]nly women are said to be able to read and correctly understand other women’ (Weisser 1994, pp. 269-70). Atwood (1998, p. 1504) reminds us ‘[t]he closer the fiction is to us as readers, the more we recognize and claim it as individual rather than collective’. With Anne Boleyn as an example of a narrative provided by feminist standpoint, all this perhaps helps to explain why women are so drawn to the story of Anne Boleyn – both as writers and readers.

My artefact attempts to illuminate how Tudor women’s lives were determined and controlled by their gender. Researching and writing my novel brought me to a place where I saw Anne Boleyn more than ever as a woman who was determined to claim her identity – a woman who refused to give up the voice given to her by the years of waiting for her marriage to Henry VIII to take place. My artefact shapes my belief that Anne Boleyn’s refusal of silence ended up costing her life. But that is only one simple analysis of my artefact. More to the point, *The Light in the Labyrinth* is a feminist standpoint narrative that acts as a work of empathy.

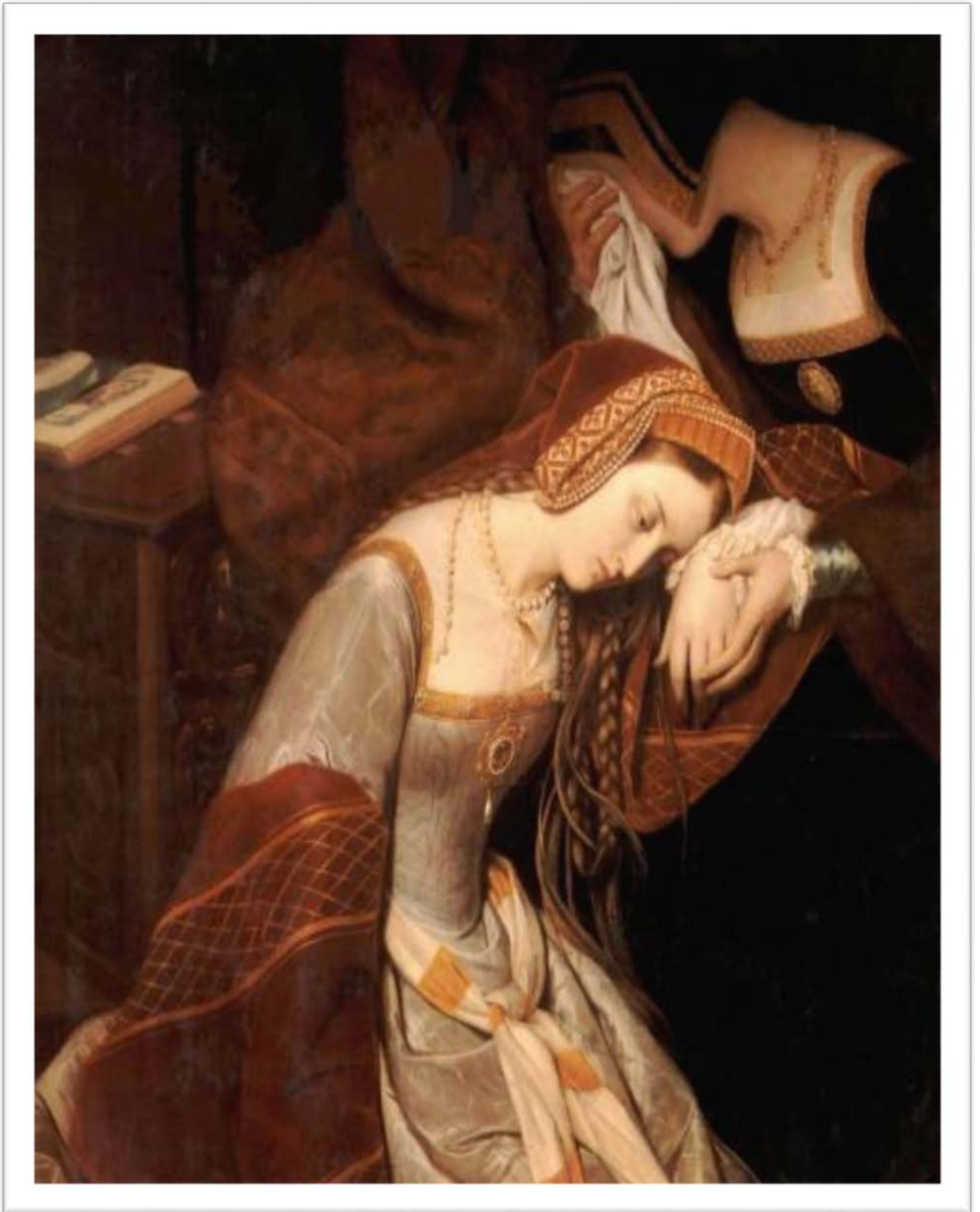


Image Six: *Anne Boleyn in the Tower* by Edouard Cibot, 1835.

CONCLUSION

'Sometimes one decides to tell a story only to get to know it better' (Eco 2004, p. 321).

'[W]e need to read books about them, and they need to read books about us. In that way, maybe, just maybe, we will discover that we are all simply we' (Cart 2012, np).

Before I began *The Light in the Labyrinth*, Edouard Cibot's exquisite painting *Anne Boleyn in the Tower* (painted in 1835) powerfully re-captured my imagination. Many years ago, this work helped to inspire my first novel. Now – reflecting about the two women depicted in the painting – I found my imagination fuelled once again, and 'a kind of knowledge-based dreaming' took over and 'researched elements' led the way (Goodall 2009, p. 2004).

Enclosed in a dark, oppressive chamber, the women are in depths of despair, their helplessness to combat life almost tangible to me, the viewer. The painting revealed an imagined moment in the life of Anne Boleyn, a moment foreshadowing her tragic death. My reflections set my feet upon the road resulting in the writing of my artefact and exegesis, the research of which indicated an area little researched: how visual art incites empathy for the creative writer through the agency of ekphrasis. This agency is yet to be fully understood, whilst the very word ekphrasis is believed little used by the literary academe. However, that does not prevent scholars engaging with its context in their writing (Banegas 2010).

I no longer see my engagement with this painting as simply coming from a lifetime fascination with Anne Boleyn. Rather, I see this painting as acting as what Parini describes as the *search image*, a term used by field naturalists, which indicates that you see what you are trained or disposed to see. Parini (1988, p. 2) unpacks this further by writing, 'Our experiences in life have shaped us, so that we react differently to the same phenomena', just as does Le Guin (2004, p. 164) when she tells us that the ideas of writers come from 'imagination working on experience'. This relates to *idea* as a way of seeing – 'the stuff of visualization' (Carter 2005, p. 27). Through reflecting upon the handling of my writing craft, I now believe the search image acts both as a

catalyst and a space that incites empathy for the writer (Amir 2009). Through this first witnessing of the human experience, an idea germinates for the writer, which engages the writer both in writing and acting as a witness to life.

This process also supports the argument that fiction offers a method of qualitative research, simply because it is constructed through the same aims of the social sciences. That is, by constructing stories of lives through literature, we construct bridges of empathy that help us understand our similarities and dissimilarities (Leavy 2012).

The construction of *The Light in the Labyrinth* opened my eyes wider to the societal space I occupy as a woman. Now I understand why this painting, *Anne Boleyn in the Tower*, speaks loudly to me of the reality of women's power, and how that power is something both given and taken away by patriarchy.

I believe Leavy (2012) is correct in arguing that the beliefs of fiction writers infuse their work. This painting nudged at my psyche and the compost of my memories. So many memories – the daughter rejected by her father because of her female sex; the helpless teenage girl who watched her helpless mother agree once again to return to her violent and abusive husband, a husband also violent and abusive to their four children. At least by doing so, they all would have a place to live and food to eat. The memory of the seventeen-year-old girl denied her hope of completing high school. “I’m not supporting you anymore. Time to move out, get a job and pay your own way,” said my father, enacting his particular parenting philosophy of sink or swim. The memory, too, of the depressed, despairing nineteen year-old mother and wife who saw her childhood and teenage aspiration of becoming a writer slip away from her. “You’ve made your bed,” said an older woman when I cried out to her in my despair. “You’ve made your bed,” seemed to say my world. I then lacked the life experience and knowledge to argue against it. My past goes a long way to help explain why my feminist works do indeed have a political intention (Gardolfo 2009).

Patricia Leavy (2012) explicates the feminist academic novel as a valuable methodology of qualitative research. Such works, she argues, deepen feminist awareness and understanding of those more hidden elements of life and their meanings, which also indicates that novels act as a form of ethnography. Through the writing of both exegesis and artefact, I have experienced this for myself.

As a novelist, I observe and make sense of the social world for writing and by writing (Leavy 2012). Engaged in writing my artefact, I found myself re-birthing as a feminist – an ideology I had steered away from as a mother of three sons – through questioning whether our world had really changed meaningfully from the time Henry VIII decided to violently remove Anne Boleyn from his life. In Australia today, 50% of homicides are domestic, and most of these homicides are women dying violently at the hands of their current or former male partners (Bugeja et al. 2013).

Newspapers regularly report the murder of another young woman, often by the man who once professed his love for her. Feminist Clementine Ford (2014) cites the terrifying statistic that one woman is murdered every week by her current or former male partner. Then we have children killed by their fathers because our patriarchal world affords men that narrative. Tom Meagher, the husband of Jill Meagher, a young woman raped and murdered walking home from a pub one night, powerfully writes:

While the vast majority of men abhor violence against women, those dissenting male voices are rarely heard in our public discourse, outside of the monster-rapist narrative. Indeed, the agency of male perpetrators disappears from the discussion, discouraging male involvement and even knowledge of the prevalence and diversity of male violence against women. Even the term ‘violence against women’ sounds like a standalone force of nature, with no subject, whereas ‘men’s violence against women’ is used far less frequently. While not attempting to broad-brush or essentialise the all too abstracted notion of ‘masculinity’, male invisibility in the language of the conversation can be compounded by masculine posturing, various ‘bro-codes’ of silence, and a belief, through the monster myth, in the intrinsic otherness of violent men (Meagher 2014).

The mirror held up to our society by this kind of discourse reflects that the *monster* is really created from the cultural narratives in place for centuries (Booth 2007). I ask myself, “Why is it so hard to rewrite the narratives of our world? Why is it so hard to make “men’s violence against women” a narrative of the past?” Is it simply because the societal narrative is so entrenched that a woman who seizes her voice and seeks agency

of her own destiny somehow becomes a monstrous force? This force is also seen as a threat to the status quo of society (Booth 2007).

My writing questions these societal narratives in an attempt to build a bridge of empathy that may lead to change. It is through writing that I enter a space of empathy, an empathy that is drawn from my own life experience and reflectivity. This involves my commitment as a writer not to be superficial about truth as I see it (Eagleton, 2004). To succeed in constructing a feminist standpoint narrative for the young adult reader, I believe it is important to strive to be not 'shamefaced about morality and metaphysics' or 'embarrassed about love, biology, religion and revolution' (Eagleton 2004, p 101) and I must not be silent about evil, death and societal suffering. As Eagleton reminds us, we live in times when these fundamental questions must not be ignored (2004).

Muncey (2010) tells us the challenge for the 21st century is to find ways to build mutual understanding. With the ability of creative research to change ways of thinking and broker new relationships (Carter 2005), I agree with the thinking that the art form of the novel is one way for us to achieve this (Cart 2012). I also agree with Leavy's (2012) assertion that fiction offers a method well suited to expand public scholarship.

Decades ago, Haydn White underlined the need to explore how narratives and histories relate and negotiate around and within one another to discover 'the role, status and authority of historical narrative' (cited by Heilmann and Llewellyn 2007, p. 4). Such exploration would only indicate more fully how history is 'gendered as masculine...while story is gendered as female' (Booth 2007, p. 48). Heilmann and Llewellyn (2007) specifically point to historical fiction, authored by women, as an area in need of more literary study. It is hoped that the research offered in my exegesis may address this, even if only in a small way, as well as offer openings for future research that could aid our understanding about gender relationships brokered by narratives and histories.

Recognising that historical novels 'are always about the present, the time of writing' (Hodgkin 2009, p. 15), I also argue that my artefact narrates 'Feminist social research knowledge' (Leavy 2012, p. 517). I hope my artefact will speak to the young adult reader, even if but in a whisper, like works such as Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* (2007), John Marsden's *Tomorrow, When the War Began* (1994) and Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* (2010), *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Mockingjay* (2010). By doing so, it could open the door to social change by making young adult women reflect

about the possibilities for their own lives through entering the world of Tudor women.

But it is more than that. Research is needed to discover solutions to help rewrite the entrenched narratives of the world. With the sale of novels declining in the Western world and seemingly globally (Maass 2001; Bickmore 2012; Nawotka 2013; Fottrell 2013), I believe it is vital to research the power of imagination, and how imagination – through reading and writing – has the power to transform lives through empathetic understanding of *the Other*. Similarly to Michael Cart and C.S. Lewis, I believe it was the novels I read in my formative years that enabled me to *get in* and gain a glimmering of the lives of others to emerge with greater empathy (Cart 2012; Lewis 2012). I continue to build empathy through reading and writing. Research would provide more evidence to show how works of fiction are vital to the development and claiming of the human identity and perhaps even link the modern day decline of empathy in teenagers (Cart 2012) to the decline of reading novels.

I also agree with the arguments that women's reclaiming of women's stories through the vehicle of historical fiction is a vital and valid feminist methodology to critique male culture (Rowbotham, cited by Colón, 2007; Cooper & Short 2012). Feminist literary works not only offer a space for women to engage with post modern ideas (Heilmann & Llewellyn 2007), but also to inhabit *écriture féminine* (Cixous 1976). By doing so, women seize control of their own stories and enact what Enza Gandolfo describes, citing the words of Muriel Rukeyser, as 'What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open' (2008, p 142). This leads to the question about why so many women reject feminism when feminism leads to reclaiming women's stories and surmounting the oppression of patriarchy, another area for future research. I believe such research would show feminism as not only a way forward for women, but also for men.

We are well overdue to embrace new archetypes to re-write the narratives of the world, such as the inequality of women, a narrative that wounds us all. More research is needed to aid our understanding of how to peacefully weave the agency of empathy between groups and, by doing so, create new narratives for the remaking of society. Such research could pave the way for a world where gender does not subordinate or divide, but unites for the common good; a world where women are no longer repressed simply because they are women and therefore rendered voiceless (Foucault, cited by Booth, 2007); a world where men and women walk side by side as equals.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS PRODUCED BY THE CANDIDATE AS A RESULT OF THE PROJECT

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Dunn, WJ 2011, 'What we do for the sake of fiction: walking the walk with historical characters', presented at the Great Writing Conference in London, and purchased as an online lecture for Swinburne University's Postgraduate Writing Program.

Dunn, W 2010, 'Future directions: creative writing as a life tool', Tertiary Writing Network.

Dunn, WJ, Jones, NL, Gamsby, P & Burke, R 2010, 'Does the shoe fit?', *Bukker Tillibul*, vol. 4, <http://www.swinburne.edu.au/lib/ir/onlinejournals/bt/vol4_essays.htm>