

**The Body as Fiction / Fiction as a Way of Thinking:
On Writing *A Short (Personal) History
of the Bra and its Contents***

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This thesis uses fiction as a research technology for investigating and thinking about issues to do with bodies and knowledge at the cusp of the 20th and 21st centuries.

It includes sample material from a novel in progress -- *A Short (Personal) History of the Bra and its Contents* -- to illustrate some of the unique outcomes of this approach to exploring cultural history and writing cultural criticism.

One of the advantages of fiction is that it allows me to create a discursive field in which it is possible for the very wide range of issues raised by my topic to coexist, work off each other and cross-fertilise. These include ideas regarding gender, sexuality, nurture and subjectivity; issues to do with the implants controversy, the cancer industry and the corporatisation of medicine (and hence various current debates within science and medicine); as well as movements in fashion history and popular culture -- all of which contribute to making up the datasphere in which and through which we continually reproduce ourselves as subjects.

More importantly, fiction allows me to write from within a specific historical, cultural and sexual body; thus engaging readers likewise as embodied desiring subjects. Which is to say, it presents a way to write about the body and to involve it in relationship at the same time; to engage and move readers on an emotional (visceral) as well as intellectual level -- indeed, to explore the place where these are inseparable.

As a companion text to this material, the first section of the thesis describes the discursive strategies used in the novel in the context of an exploration of points of convergence between post-structuralism, quantum physics and ecological spirituality -- in particular, regarding the relationship between body and mind, matter and spirit, nature and culture, as well as the overriding question of: 'how do we know what we know?'