The Grafton Light

Thesis & Exegesis

Rachel Peacocke

MCW

2011
The Grafton Light

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Abstract

*The Grafton Light* thesis is a contemporary story set in Auckland, New Zealand.

The exegesis is an examination of *The Grafton Light* thesis. The current background of the author in terms of the digital age, and an overview of the story’s inception are provided. The principles of writing as applied to *The Grafton Light* are discussed, and the research undertaken in establishing the credibility of *The Grafton Light* is detailed. Jung’s concepts of the collective unconscious, archetypes and the notion of extroversion and introversion are explored in regard to the main characters in the story. The genre of *The Grafton Light* is established under the film definition of Drama, as opposed to a literary genre. Supported by the French philosophy of ‘art for art’s sake,’ the need for interpretation of *The Grafton Light* is challenged. The basis of this challenge is that *The Grafton Light* stands alone as a story and need not be understood as anything else.

Key words: Grafton, Light, Jung, Credibility, Interpretation
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28/02/11

Rachel C Peacocke
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The Grafton Light

Born in 1978 I am a possible member of Generation Y according to Wikipedia (2011) but later in the article several sited references reveal I am not a member of Generation Y, but Generation X.

Kathy Torpie (n.d) unequivocally states however that 1978 is the beginning of Generation Y, so once more I’m back in Generation Y.

This puts me in the same bracket as my younger sisters who can touch-type text on their iPhones, and organise their social lives on facebook. It separates me from my sister, a Generation X-er who like me cannot touch-type on her smartphone, and does not has a facebook account.

What’s rather intriguing is that none of us are a match for my father who was born in 1946. He tells me his company was the first in Tauranga to purchase a facsimile machine. Move forward twenty plus years and this baby-boomer is currently in possession of an iMac, an iPad, an iPod, and an iPhone, the latter of which rarely leaves his hand. Until recently he also had an Apple MacBook Pro, this he moved on to one of the Generation Y-ers because it had become “surplus” to his technology requirements.

‘Technology natives’ my younger sisters are no match for their Dad the ‘technology immigrant.’ My Generation X sister who works in telecommunications informs me the term for Dad is ‘An Early Adapter.’

I tell you this to reveal the ‘revolution’ or ‘movement’ which is taking place amongst those I am most close to.

Its relevance in regard to this exegesis is the following:

This technological, digital revolution is taking place in my family, my workspace and my home life and yet it is not in the story I spent all of 2010 writing.
This revolution of the digital age, moving at high speed through the world, is not the only thing of note absent in *The Grafton Light*.

Philosophical ideas, movements in history, they’re not intentionally present. This is why *The Grafton Light* is a story that does not easily lend itself to interpretation, and more that this, I would prefer it was not interpreted.

*The Grafton Light* is a story. That’s it. Just a story.

However, for the requirements of this exegesis in providing a critical interpretation of my thesis, *The Grafton Light*, I will attempt to explain that which I can, with the caveat that while writing *The Grafton Light* I had little knowledge of the defined movements in the history of literature and any detailed ideas of the theoretical concepts of sociology, philosophy and psychology.

The inception of the story will be examined, as will the application of the principles of writing to *The Grafton Light*. Jung’s (1912, 1921) concept of archetypes, and introversion and extroversion, all under the notion of the collective unconscious will also be explored. In regard to this theory it must be noted that I applied it after I had complete the submitted version of the thesis *The Grafton Light*. As Jung’s concepts are a fit with the characters in *The Grafton Light* this is a perfect illustration of the unlearned behaviours of the collective unconscious which Jung wrote and spoke of. *The Grafton Light* as a representation of his philosophy will be examined in detail.

The categorising of *The Grafton Light* by a genre will also be explored with the result being that the thesis is better defined by the film genre, Drama, as opposed to any of the literary genres. Drawing correlations with Jane Austen’s view of her own novels, I will further support my belief that despite the predominant storyline being the relationship between Joshua Beck and Kate Hayson *The Grafton Light* is not a romance.

Lastly, the reasons for the difficulty I had in providing a critical interpretation of *The Grafton Light* will be explored. With support from the quoted writings of Susan
Sontag, Walt Whitman and Edgar Allan Poe, the very notion of interpreting literature, or indeed any work of art will be argued against.

This argument is not an absolute, it does not apply to all works of art. Some work demands interpretation, particularly when the artist or writer has purposely placed in their work provocative ideas or challenges to the fabric or structure of the given society they work in.

Where it is non-applicable for hermeneutics is when the work was intended only for what it is. The best example I can give is of my own work.

It was my intention to write a story. I wrote *The Grafton Light*.

There is no intended invoking of old ideas, or new thoughts in *The Grafton Light*. I didn’t put anything into it that I wanted interpreted. If the reader interprets ideas or commentaries this is acceptable to me and in some cases unavoidable. But I want to make it clear, that is the reader’s experience, not the authors.

My experience of *The Grafton Light* was attempting to do justice to the story I was given.

Without knowing the concept belonged to Aristotle (as cited in McManus, 1999) I began with the most basic, fundamental knowledge I had of what a story is:

A beginning, a middle, and an end.

**Inception of The Grafton Light**

There was no one seed for *The Grafton Light*. The numerous folders and exercise books full of my notes and research are the physical evidence of the work begun before writing. However trying to recall the inception of the story comes back to me in a series of scattered memories:

The wards I volunteered in as a twenty-year-old at Starship Children’s Hospital.
Two young doctors I once knew sitting laughing in a chair as one tells a crass joke involving car engines and the wives of male gynecologists.

Hearing from a nursing friend of mine that one of those same doctors refused to insert a catheter in a child who desperately needed the relief because his shift was about to end.

A friend of mine with black hair, black nails and black clothes competing in New Zealand’s Battle of the Bands.

Witnessed images of the homeless:
- men and woman living rough outside my apartment in Sydney.
- the doorway down from the Grey Lynn Video Ezy where the streetlights reveal a sleeping bag and a mop of black hair settled in for the night.
- a young man and a duvet on a park bench in my hometown of Mount Maunganui.

I can recall the ever-changing mix of people sitting on the porch of a halfway house across from my Franklin Road flat in Auckland’s Ponsonby.

My flatmates and I woken, in the middle of the night, by an elderly man trying to get in through one of the doors. His yells desperate as he repeatedly calls out for Christine to let him in, though no Christine lived with us.

*The Grafton Light*, although not a direct descendent of these memories, is a derivative of the mood each memory invokes.

Physical illness. The New Zealand Health System. Disenfranchisement. Accountability. Mental illness. These were my concerns when I began to develop *The Grafton Light*.

The characters, however, made these concerns secondary. They had their story, and where my concerns fitted in with that was not important to them. Sometimes the
characters actions and beliefs allowed my concerns onto the page, at other times my concerns were so irrelevant to the characters that I had to give them up.

_The Grafton Light_ is a character driven story. Given that fact it can be concluded that Josh, Kate, Tristan, Emilia, and all the other characters in the novel, were to me, the most important of all.

Researching _The Grafton Light_

Accurate research was one of the key elements when it came to writing _The Grafton Light_.

I’ve read books where I’ve known more about the subject than the writer has. Immediately their story loses credibility. I don’t believe the notion of writing fiction is the same as making whatever you like up. By this I mean, for a reader to buy into a story, assuming the story is set in a fictional but ‘real’ time and a fictional but real place, then it must be believable.

To attain this level of belief in _The Grafton Light_ I undertook the considerable amount of research the story required.

I went, or made sure I’d been to the places where the story goes. Nelson, Cape Farewell, Wellington and Caloundra on Australia’s Sunshine Coast.

I went to these places even though with some of them, like Nelson and Cape Farewell, the end result of the story meant they were only mentioned in passing. Kate and Victor had been there in their past though, so I went there. Saint Vincent’s Hospital in Sydney was also visited, although the chapters set there were subsequently drafted out. While Josh moved to Sydney for a short while, as it happened, _The Grafton Light_ did not.
As with my list of concerns, so too the places I thought would appear in the story, became secondary to the developing arc of the character’s storylines.

Further to visiting the towns, cities and places mentioned above, I leaned on my knowledge of thirteen years spent living in the city of Auckland. I also lived in Grafton for eight months while writing this book. This was invaluable. I walked its streets, sat in its cafes, watched its people, spent many hours sifting up and down K-Rd and the central city streets. I bought my stationary supplies from the shop on the fourth floor of Auckland Hospital and I also commandeered a friend’s lunch break every Wednesday because that was the day she worked at Starship Children’s Hospital.

From a woman named Mary-Jean Paterson I listened to anecdotes about her time, both as an Emergency Room nurse, and a scrub nurse for New Zealand’s pioneering Heart Surgeon, Sir Brian Barratt–Boyes.

The reading undertaken was immense; the writings of surgeons and their experiences in the operating room, books on the practice of medicine in general. I scoured several libraries for relevant books on the heart, as well as medical tomes on anatomy in general.

While doing this I also read books on mental health, closely questioned a family member who is a clinical psychologist, used what knowledge I’d picked up from a psychiatrist over many years, and also drew on my own, and my family’s extensive history of mental illness.

In regard to developing an understanding of surgery the Internet was vital. I entered the virtual work of medical procedures. I discovered a website called ORlive (Heart Transplant Procedure, 2007) where I witnessed my first surgical procedure; a heart transplant.

More videos followed, not only from ORlive, but also commercial sites that explain many medical procedures. In addition to these was YouTube, which allows
viewers to see, not only badly shot footage of procedures filmed in unnamed locations, but also teaching and training videos aimed primarily at medical students and other healthcare professionals.

The other important research I undertook was around music.

I purchased a guitar and attempted to teach myself how to play. Having never displayed any musical ability prior it is not surprising that I failed miserably. I did however, learn the parts of the guitar, how to play a couple of notes, and most importantly became familiar with the musical instrument which had been most influential during Josh and Tristan’s teenage years.

Auckland’s music store Real Groovy was frequented to extend my musical knowledge, and I also downloaded numerous albums and songs from iTunes. Even more valuable than all of this was time spent recalling the musicians and bands, around during my own teenage years, which would have appealed to Josh and Tristan.

The importance of research in providing credibility to a story cannot be underestimated. If a reader doesn’t buy into the story, more often than not they’re not going to turn the page. For me personally I know that my limitations as a writer disadvantage the story from being as well executed as it could be. Research is one way in which I can do justice to my characters. If I know as much as I can of what they know, and I write about it, not in fastidious detail, but as a seamless part of who each of the characters are, then this provides believability. It goes some way in making up for my shortcomings as a writer. It’s also a blunt way of saying, ‘I’m not wasting your time here. This is real.’
Principles and the Process of Writing

The Protagonists

Josh and Kate were born in a creative sphere outside of my planning and researching. They are two characters that illustrate to me an act of literary creation. Somehow during the creative process they just came to life.

I did have some idea of them before I sat down to write. He was a doctor. She was a student with two different coloured eyes.

Then I wrote the first chapter of the book, and Josh introduced himself. He was a heart surgeon, and his primary concerns were with his career and having sex. The only person he cared for other than himself, was his twin brother Tristan. Then Kate walked into shot. Her arrival was filmic. I saw what Josh saw. Long blonde hair belonging to a girl clad in a combination of stylish and worn clothes, with a disorganized, hurried look to her.

This is how these characters arrived in the book. They didn’t come with statements of what they stood for, or which philosophies or political movements their characters were born from. They came as themselves. Thinking about it now, yes they’re democrats. But neither are left or right wing. They just choose to live in the world they live in.

What became obvious during the writing however is that Josh’s obstacles were character driven, while Kate’s were fate-driven.

This harks back to Shakespeare’s use of tragedy of character, for example, in *Othello*, as opposed to his tragedy of fate, Romeo and Juliet.

Josh’s journey is an emotional one in *The Grafton Light*. The obstacles he faces are of his own making. Like Othello, he too could be the cause of his own demise. However, unlike Othello ‘tragedy’ does not apply. Soon after we meet Josh he begins to
changes and grow and he is not the same man at the end of the story that we was at the start.

Kate’s development on the other hand is not an internal journey. Her person is essentially at the end of *The Grafton Light* the same as who she was at the beginning. Kate’s journey is overcoming the obstacles that life, or fate if you prefer, puts in her way. For example, the death of her mother, the death of Victor, the onset of her mental illness. None of these change Kate’s belief systems or the way she moves through the world.

Writing Adult Identical Twins

As Josh’s twin I wanted to make it very clear that Tristan was not a reflection of Josh. At one point during the process of writing *The Grafton Light* my Masters of Creative Writing mentor, James George, pointed out that Tristan was a lot like Josh’s conscience. He was right, but that’s not who Tristan was.

The problem being I hadn’t listened to who Tristan was. So I stopped and did just that.

I believe one of a writer’s greatest tools, when it comes to the craft of writing, takes place away from pen and paper, or as is more often the case these days, keyboard and computer. By simply stopping and listening Tristan told me who he was. This was most definitely not Josh’s conscience. In fact Tristan is someone who, at times, will ignore his brother’s wants in favour of his own. He is more social than Josh, more committed to music than Josh, more outwardly open with his affections and more fastidious than his brother. Tristan is equal to Josh however, in their bond to one another. Like Josh he has no need of their parents. If either of them had lost a parent during their life, they’d be okay because they had each other.
Not having an identical twin myself, I’ve been fortunate in the fact that I’ve known a few. This has given me the understanding of how identical twins can differ in their relationships as opposed to the relationships between separate siblings.

Minor Characters of Importance

We meet Bronwyn only once in *The Grafton Light*. She is Josh’s former girlfriend who purposefully became pregnant with his child and then subsequently had the pregnancy terminated.

Although her character’s physical presence is minor in the book, her psychological and emotional presence in Josh’s thoughts and actions is pivotal to the development of his character. In many ways her brief appearance is the catalyst for Josh taking accountability in his life.

A minor character is also used in one of the most significant moments in *The Grafton Light*.

It is Kate’s flatmate Andrew whose character is present at the climax of the story. It is his voice which pushes Kate forward, back into the outside world and toward the resolution of the story.

There’s something wrong with you.
I don’t want to die.
(The Grafton Light, The Sun, p. 316)

Plot and Structure

I purposefully began this book with plot, and placed the plot in a structure of four-parts (Disher, 2001).

As the characters arrived and developed they informed the plot, which in turn meant the story was altered from what I originally set out to write. This also had an
effect on structure. The original structure of four acts changed to three acts, and instead of the turning points being dictated by Kate’s character only, Josh’s own decisions were placed parallel with Kate’s, meaning both dictated the turning points.

The breakdown of the structure of *The Grafton Light* is as follows:

**Act I:** Inciting incident: The dead man Kate sees hanging in the shower.

**Turning Point 1**
Kate’s telling Josh she wants a serious relationship.
Josh deciding to pursue a serious relationship with Kate.

**Turning Point 2 & Climax**
Josh accepting accountability and deciding to take responsibility
Kate leaving the motel room to seek help.

**Narrative**

*The Grafton Light* has a chronological narrative. It starts in the past and ends in the future. There are however times when the narrative slips into the past. These slips do not so much form the story, but inform the history of the characters. This is what keeps them from being flashbacks. If they were structural elements vital to the plot then I would categorise them as flashbacks, they are however, expository in nature and intent, and so do not alter *The Grafton Light* as a chronological narrative.
Point of View

The majority of the book is written in third person. Under this umbrella I write point-of-view in omniscient, third-person subjective, and third person limited. In revealing Kate’s unwell mind I also, at times, go into ‘Stream of Consciousness.’

Tahunanui Beach. He loved that beach, but not Nelson itself.
Cape Farewell. Where they’d watch seals roll in the sea and rest on the grey rocks. Too isolated for Victor though.
The Domain. No, not right.
Keep him with her. But Josh wouldn’t like that. Josh-
(The Grafton Light, The Sun, p. 314)

Setting

If the plot is the vertebra of the story then the setting is the marrow. Setting influences character. Setting contains the people, the objects, and reveals the society in which The Grafton Light is set in.

Setting also provides the reader with the physical boundaries of the world the story is set in. In this way, understanding can occur. Understanding of the world the characters live in, and as a result the world that the reader will experience as they read this story.

The Grafton Light is set in Auckland, New Zealand. From my time living in Grafton I attempted to capture not only physical landmarks but the mood of Grafton, Karangahape Road, and the nearby city at different times of the day.

This was hampered by my weakness when it comes to writing descriptive prose. It does not come easily and I have to work hard at it. To counter this weakness, when writing descriptively I try do so in terms of the ‘five senses.’

The importance of the five senses in establishing setting for the reader is used not only as a technique for description but also in evoking emotion. There are times in
the book where I approach the senses of touch, taste, smell, hear and feel on a literal level.

For example in the following all five senses are represented:

At night Kate cannot sleep.  
Closing her eyes she sees things, beings that scare her.  
She hears her name at night though no one has spoken it.  
The smell of cat urine comes and goes.  
Sometimes it’s so strong she can taste it.  
On the back of her neck, down her spine, and across her shoulders there is a darkness she can feel.

(The Grafton Light, Sleep, p. 215)

Dialogue

The main characters speak in the colloquial language of well-educated New Zealanders.

The main characters, Kate and Josh, as well as Tristan and Emilia, are all intelligent in their own right. They are highly educated but live grounded lives with constant exposure to all echelons of society. Their academic prowess however is not altogether evident in their manner of speech, although the content of what they say at times is a clear indicator of their education, level of intelligence and life experiences.

Unspoken Language In The Grafton Light

In The Grafton Light sex is used, along with other expressions of physicality, as it’s own language.

Examples of physicality outside sex are the affectionate gestures and hugs between characters, as well as larger statements made. For example Josh and Tristan wrestling.
While the physical act of wrestling is occurring there is also an unspoken
conversation taking place, which pulls into focus the level of understanding always
present between the brothers. This is evident in the way Josh easily interprets what just
took place to Kate.

‘What was that about?’ says Kate when Tristan has left the room, his footsteps
heavy on the wooden floor in the hall.
‘He’s pissed off,’ says Josh pulling his t-shirt back over his head and then
sitting down on the couch.
‘Are you okay?’ says Kate coming and sitting down beside him.
‘Yeah. Fine. And for the record,’ says Josh with a grin, ‘He’s not stronger than
me.’
‘Was it because I asked you to stand beside each other?’
‘No. It’s other stuff.’
(The Grafton Light, Well, p.183)

Sex is a prominent element in The Grafton Light.

Renni Browne and Dave King (2004) have this advice to give writers about sex,

This is an area where it might be a good idea to bring back an old-
fashioned narrative convention: sexual encounters that take place in linespaces. After
all, if you leave the physical details to your reader’s imaginations, they are likely to be
far more engaged than if you spell it out. (para. 3, p.204)

This may or may not be sound advice for writers seeking to titillate their readers
but that is not the purpose of the sex which takes place in *The Grafton Light*.

To begin with Josh’s character is in many ways defined by sex. He uses it to
distance himself from woman, although remaining physically close.
Like the wrestling scene, the act of sex in itself is a conversation between Josh and Kate.

When Kate tries to help by undoing one of his shirt buttons he uses his forearm to push her hand away... They kiss, but there’s an edge to it, and when Kate places a hand on his arm, her fingers closing around his bicep, Josh immediately moves his arm above her head.

(The Grafton Light, Some of the Ways, p. 55)

Despite Josh and Kate becoming sexually involved early on in the story, it is not until Josh realises he has an emotional connection to Kate that there is any involved illustration of their sexual relationship.

Characters – Jung’s Archetypes

It is only in the process of researching the concept of a critical interpretation of The Grafton Light that I have discovered academic philosophy.

This indicates that prior to writing The Grafton Light I had no real knowledge of history’s ‘great thinkers.’

Keeping that in mind, imagine my surprise, when I discovered Jung.

The characters in The Grafton Light, as well as myself, are the perfect example of the concept of archetypes. As Boeree (2006), says, “An archetype is an unlearned tendency to experience things in a certain way.” (n.p)

While writing The Grafton Light I had no idea of archetypes, and yet, I wrote characters that either embody many of them, or whose belief systems are based on them. This would signify that I too am part of Jung’s ‘collective unconscious.’

Boeree’s (2006) explanation of Jung’s concept of the archetypes, anima and animus, are particularly relevant in regard to Josh. The idea that Josh, under Jung's collective unconscious of men, has anima, the female aspect present is intriguing.
In the development of Josh’s character we see him as someone motivated by his career, sex, and constantly reaching for perfection. By the end of the book Jung’s notion of anima, is more present in him. The reader is left with the impression that Josh won’t just take up the traditional role of a male in which a man may provide for a woman. Instead Josh is viewed in a comforting and nurturing capacity. He has given up the career opportunity he most wanted to take care of Kate.

The notion that Kate, under the collective unconscious of women, has animus, the male aspect present in her is not as obvious. Tristan’s girlfriend, Emilia Mantelli, is a better example of this. She has logical and also aggressive qualities about her.

Following on from Jung’s notion of animus and anima the quote below is of interest in regard to the first time Josh saw Kate.

(Anima and Animus)… is also the archetype that is responsible for much of our love life: We are, as an ancient Greek myth suggests, always looking for our other half, the half that the Gods took from us, in members of the opposite sex. When we fall in love at first sight, then we have found someone that "fills" our anima or animus archetype particularly well! (Boeree, 2006).

Having discovered this idea post-writing of The Grafton Light it is possible that the “unlearned tendency to experience things in a certain way,” (Boeree, 2006, n.p). influenced how the opening of The Grafton Light was presented to me by the ‘creative spark.’

Looking back from the end of the book to the beginning it is entirely possible that Josh fell in love with Kate at first sight. In fact his words when he and Kate reconcile would indicate this to be the case:

‘I’ve never meet anyone before, the way I met you. I mean, I couldn’t even get you to look at me, Kate. I put myself in your way every time I saw you, and you would just look right through me. That’s why I did what I did to meet you. In the end I was like fuck it, I’m not letting you go’-
(The Grafton Light, Closer, p.81)
The written absence of certain archetypes in *The Grafton Light*, such as that of the mother archetype, also goes that much further to illustrate Jung’s collective unconscious.

The only two characters in the book, who truly experienced the mother archetype, are Victor and Kate. Though motherless in *The Grafton Light* they have the memories of nurturing and care. Meanwhile those that physically have mothers in the book are aware that the archetype of a mother is missing.

The Argaint family is an example of this:

> At this point their mother’s phone rings. It’s the first time she speaks, saying a civil, ‘Excuse me.’
> All five of her children watch her leave the room to take the phone call.
> ‘That’s great, Dad,’ says Samuel.
> ‘Lets just get on with this,’ replies their father.
> *(The Grafton Light, Adelia Mary Argaint, p.165)*

Later in the same chapter the following is stated:

> ‘She also said she’s realised that her mother is never going to truly love her.’
> …… ‘Bloody Mum,’ says William. ‘I swear, the more of the world I see, the more I think she is the strangest woman I know.’
> *(The Grafton Light, Adelia May Argaint, p.167)*

Lastly, in regard to this discovery of Jung and his philosophies, I would like to draw attention to his concept that differing attitudes toward life can be divided into “two differing attitudes toward life – two different modes of reacting to circumstances.”

*(Jung’s Psychological Types, Intro, para 2)*

These are the extroverted and introverted attitudes.

Some of the characteristics of the extroverted are depicted as *(Jung’s Psychological Types, para 3):*

- motivated by outside factors
- thought and facts are used in making decisions
- the importance of personal relationships

Of these characteristics
- Josh scores 3/3
- Tristan scores 3/3
- Emilia scores 2/3
- Kate scores 1/3.

The lowest score in this particular extrovert grouping is Kate. The characteristic she exhibits is the importance of personal relationships.

Some of the characteristics of Jung’s introverted are depicted as (Jung’s Psychological Types, para 4, para 6):
- content in own company
- highly sensitive and imaginative
- not governed by facts, more concerned with abstract concepts

Of these characteristics
- Kate scores 3/3
- Josh scores 1/3
- Tristan scores 1/3
- Emilia scores 2/3

These characteristics are but a small sample that Jung provides in regard to extroversion and introversion. However, they are enough to demonstrate to myself as an author that the main characters in The Grafton Light are real. They’re believable. Under Jung’s
notion of the collective unconscious, (as cited in Boeree, 2006) the main characters of The Grafton Light (and I believe the same would be true of the minor characters, although for the purposes of this exegesis the theory has not been applied) are so real that Jung’s archetypes, his notion of anima and animus, as well as his philosophy regarding introversion and extroversion are not only applicable to humans living in the world, but are also applicable to them; Josh, Kate, Tristan and Emilia.

Genre

Throughout the writing of The Grafton Light I have attempted many times to discover what specific genre the story belongs to. The closest I have come is not in a definition of a literary genre, but instead a definition of a film genre; Drama.

“Dramas are serious, plot-driven presentations, portraying realistic characters, settings, life situations, and stories involving intense character development and interaction (Dirks, 2011).”

The Grafton Light is a story of love and therefore could come under the category of a Romance, albeit, not of the Mills & Boon variety but rather the old definition before such formulaic chains of books were sold widespread through the novel. However, I don’t believe this to be the case.

Jane Austen (1816), considered by many a romance writer, had this to say about romance and her writing.

I could no more write a romance than an epic poem. I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or at
other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter. (as cited in Lombardi, 2011)

This notion of her not writing romance is supported by Karen Newman (1983),

She takes woman’s exclusion from political power and action as she finds it…. She is also revolutionary in her determination to change our ideal of what power is by arguing that woman can not be excluded from power by the limits society places on them. (p. 706)

I find Austen and I similar in this:

I also strongly oppose the notion of *The Grafton Light* as a romance.

Although the book begins with all indications of a love story, the ideas that the characters, and as a result, the story, demonstrate as being the greatest importance are desolation, both mental and physical, and that of accountability.

Desolation comes up time and time again. The K-Rd chapter particularly focuses on this in terms of the homeless, and the disenfranchised,

You can see tattered converse shoes that can’t beat a straight line because they began spiralling out of control last year and now they’re not just a car crash, they’re even more than a train wreck. They’re a measuring cup for the humanity that passes them by.

*(The Grafton Light, Victor, p.349)*

This notion of desolation is applied repeatedly to Kate; the loss of her mother, the loss of her childhood, the loss of Victor and the loss of safety within her own mind.

When Kate stands on the street, drunk and distraught and repeatedly telling Josh she wants to go home, she is not telling him she wants to physically go to where she lived with Victor. It’s not even that she’s saying she wants Victor back. What she’s really saying is she wants herself back. She wants her mind how it was, because without it she’s compromised in her ability to judge what is true and what is not. Further to this without her mind she’s lost the foundation from which she lived her life.
The notion of accountability applies to almost every character in the book, which is in itself a reflection of New Zealand society.

- Josh is accountable, not just to his patients, but to his feelings for Kate.
- Emilia is accountable for her betrayal of Tristan.
- Tristan is accountable for the initial betrayal of Emilia.
- Adelia is taking no accountability for her illness.
- Victor was accountable to himself for his health, and the price of not facing up to it wasn’t just the loss his life, but the detrimental impact it had on Kate.
- Kate’s father refuses all accountability for his illegitimate daughter.

The following quote was made by New Zealander Brad McGann (1998) in relation to the short film Possum. McGann then went on to write the screenplay for, and also direct, the award winning In My Father’s Den. Deceased at a young age I believe McGann’s words carry value not only in regard to film, but also the novel, and indeed any story that is ever told.

The story doesn't really belong to you; it's the characters' story. But the subtext of the story is very much the filmmaker's story. So I would say: Know your subtext. Know what you are trying to express. And if you're unsure of it, it's really good just to think in terms of your own emotional space. Don't intellectualize it. Just register it at an emotional level. Because there's so much academia surrounding film. And I think it's very important to keep that spark of life within it, where you go with gut instinct. (Raskin, 1998, concl, para. 38)

My final comment in relation to The Grafton Light and genre is that although I place it under Drama, as film defines it, and though the content is heavy, its presentation is not.

The Grafton Light is an accessible read. In many ways it is a light read. The written and spoken language is colloquial. The characters sooner or later become
likeable. I would like to think that if a reader was drawn in by the story, they could easily finish it in a day.

**Art for Art’s Sake**

Culler (2009) tells us this, “(Hermeneutics)..starts with texts, and asks what they mean, seeking to discover new and better interpretations” (p.84).

A more definitive description comes from the Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms (2010),

hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation, concerned with general problems of understanding the meanings of texts... the term has been extended since the 19th century to cover broader questions in philosophy and criticism, and is associated in particular with a tradition of German thought.... in this tradition, the question of interpretation is posed in terms of the hermeneutic circle, and involves basic problems such as the possibility of establishing a determinate meaning in a text, the role of the author's intention, the historical relativity of meanings, and the status of the reader's contribution to a text's meaning. (as cited in answers.com. n.p)

The writing of *The Grafton Light*, was an organic, creative process.

As stated near the beginning of the exegesis my philosophy in regard to a story is that it should first, and foremost have a beginning, a middle, and an end. In addition to this I relied on a four-act structure, and then subsequently a three-act structure, to construct the plot.

Somewhere, possibly from primary school, or otherwise just by osmosis I picked up notion of the beginning, middle and end. It was while researching this exegesis that I discovered the original idea of a story as a beginning, a middle and an end came from Aristotle (as cited in Cinemoose, 2007).

It is from the same source (Cinemoose, 2007) that I read the argument against Aristotle inventing the three-act-structure.
Regarding Aristotle.

Not only did I have no idea he didn’t invent the three-act structure, I also had no idea he might have.

Further to this, *The Grafton Light* was written without consideration of literary movements, or knowledge of the history of literature. When I was writing the book I had no concept of Existentialism, or Romanticism, or Post-Colonialism, let alone sociology, psychology or any real knowledge of any philosophers and their teachings.

Jung I discovered after I’d finished the book. His archetypes were applied to my characters and their beliefs after their story had already been told.

When detailing myself, and my current surrounds at the beginning of this exegesis, I made clear the technological revolution taking place not just in New Zealand, or amongst my peers, but within the close network of my own family.

Not even the influence of this made it into my book. Certainly there’s mention of mobile phones and the use of the Internet, but technology has moved far beyond this. It would be near impossible for me to go through a day without the digital age influencing or affecting me in some way. MySky for a start.

And yet, it’s of little consequence regarding *The Grafton Light*. This has made me question whether, if I was writing fiction while New Zealand was at war, I would even mention the war in my story. Another scenario could be that the New Zealand National Government is overthrown by the one-member United Future Party, and yet this extraordinary event does not signify in any story of mine because my characters aren’t into politics.

This above is of course the point in regard to *The Grafton Light* and hermeneutics.

As previously stated *The Grafton Light* is a character driven novel. I have attempted to give an insight into the way I write but it is difficult to accurately describe
the process, let alone interpret the result. Changes do take place when re-drafting, but more often than not this is because the characters give you more information about themselves, and that in turn has an effect on what they may or may not do. The other scenario in which changes occur is when as outside party, such as one’s mentor, advises both myself and thus the characters what is and isn’t working.

I’m aware that an in depth critical explanation of *The Grafton Light* has not taken place. Fortunately for me, I discovered Susan Sontag so I have a reasoned response to this: Don’t interpret *The Grafton Light*. Let it be what it is. Let it evoke emotion, take you on a journey, allow it to be a holiday from your own world into that of Kate and Josh’s.

Sontag (1966) tells us in her essay *Against Interpretation*,

In modern instances, interpretation amounts to the philistine refusal to leave the work of art alone…. For decades now, literary critics have understood it to be their task to translate the elements of the poem or the play or novel or story into something else. (para 1, p. 8)

Later in the same essay Sontag (1966) writes, “A work of art is a thing in the world, not just a text or commentary on the world” (para. 2, p.21).

This is in keeping with the French notion of ‘art for arts sake.’ When applying Sontag’s (1966) theories in *Against Interpretation* to *The Grafton Light* I am in agreement with her in that there is no benefit to me in applying critical theory to the story. I never had the intention to write a book fitted for such analysis. In fact, one of my goals prior to beginning *The Grafton Light* was to write a good beach read.

I am not of the opinion that hermeneutics are irrelevant, and indeed I think it is vital that critical theory is applied to some books, some film, some art, some poetry, some short stories and to some music. However, I would not apply hermeneutics to everything.
As Edgar Allen Poe so eloquently wrote in his essay *The Poetic Principle* (1850),

We have taken it into our heads that to write a poem simply for the poems sake [...] and to acknowledge such to have been our design, would be to confess ourselves radically wanting in the true poetic dignity and force: — but the simple fact is that would we but permit ourselves to look into our own souls we should immediately there discover that under the sun there neither exists nor can exist any work more thoroughly dignified, more supremely noble, than this very poem, this poem per se, this poem which is a poem and nothing more, this poem written solely for the poems sake. (as cited in Art for Art’s Sake, 2008, n.p)

At the beginning of the quote Poe acknowledges that to write a poem “simply for the poems sake ” (Art for Art’s Sake, 2008, n.p) would mean he’d be found wanting, not just by his peers, and society, but also by himself. And yet he seems to refute this so passionately when he says, “…thoroughly dignified, more supremely noble, than this very poem, this poem per se, this poem which is a poem and nothing more, this poem written solely for the poems sake” (Art for Art’s Sake, 2008).

Walt Whitman (1855) encapsulates this same ideal a little more succinctly, “What I tell I tell precisely for what it is.” (Sontag, 1966, para 3, p.16)

These quotes represent an alternative view to critical interpretation and explanation.

For those who would attempt to interpret *The Grafton Light* I would not object but I would make the point that the interpretations drawn, the theories recognised and the conclusions made are provided by the interpreters own experiences, history, education and morality.

My interpretation of *The Grafton Light* is this:

It is a story.

I am well aware that this exegesis is a requirement of the Auckland University of Technology, Masters of Creative Writing.
I recognise that the lack of philosophical, or psychological, or historical, or sociological thought contained in *The Grafton Light* is perhaps in many ways to the story’s detriment. That, had I been more knowledgeable in regard to this, *The Grafton Light* could have been a better story.

But then it wouldn’t be what it is, and I stand by what it is.

An accessible read that has a beginning, a middle and an end.


