

Research Statement for Peer Review of Creative Works for the HCA Cluster

Title of Creative Work:	Devotion (novel)
Creator (s):	Ffion Murphy

Research Background

Devotion engages with feminist, literary, psychoanalytical and philosophical research, and theory and debate concerning the politics of writing, reading and interpretation; trauma, memory, and testimony; truth, construction, and narrative; health and illness; sexuality and gender; love and desire; mind and body relations, and the potent figure of the invalid woman.

Research Contribution

Devotion questions prevailing views and assumptions concerning the efficacy of 'writing the self' by illuminating a complex and shifting interplay of seduction and resistance in confessional discourse, the power of delusion, motives of evasion and self-preservation, as well as problems of privacy and its invasion, voyeurism and its technologies, and gender dynamics in medicine. It also contributes original representations of female friendship, parenting, postnatal depression, suicide, disability and suburban family life.

Research Significance

The novel is a sophisticated and unsettling contribution to literary fiction and feminist, therapeutic, and medical discourses. The *Australian Women's Book Review* noted that the 'personalised and up-to-date scientific knowledge Murphy draws on is a compelling legitimating device of the entwined narratives, whose credibility is reinforced by the contemporary structure of the language: short sentences and a profusion of colloquialisms. Yet this language is also laden with poetic images and is grippingly beautiful.' The *Australian Book Review* regarded the novel 'a stunning debut' that 'explores the psychological complexities of intimacy, fidelity, sexuality and language'. The novel was also positively reviewed by other national media, including the *API Review of Books*, *The Courier Mail*, *The Bulletin*, *Westerly*, *TEXT*, and *The Australian*.

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