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**“Drawing a Daisy on a Post-it”: Expressions of the
Phenomenology of Illness in Literary Fiction set in 1956 and the
Present Day**

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of

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Abstract

This thesis explores representations of the experience of illness in literary fiction. It argues that the portrayal in literature of an imagined character's subjective experience of illness constitutes a phenomenological perspective on the illness experience, and that literary fiction's performance of a phenomenological approach offers important insights to a holistic understanding of illness. Section One is a critical essay which examines two contemporary literary texts by the light of recent scholarship in the areas of medical philosophy and medical sociology. A concern frequently expressed by writers in these areas is that the modern biomedical paradigm, while increasingly sophisticated in its science, risks neglecting its art, and that this, in turn, dehumanises medicine in a manner that is fundamentally harmful to the lived experience of illness. Modes of talking about illness which encompass subjective, phenomenological, experience offer a way to rectify this. I argue that creative fiction is therefore a powerful form in which to explore the lived experience of illness. I apply this notion to a close reading of two literary texts, one set in 1956 and one in the present day. By its very nature, however, literary fiction's power lies in its effects on the imagination, and is only clumsily explained by analytic argument. Thus Section Two of this thesis is a creative partner to the critical essay and aims to demonstrate, or perform, the thesis. This creative section is an extract from a novel called *Strip*, set in present day New Zealand and told from the perspectives of a mother and a father whose teenage daughter has a terminal illness.

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