

JOY

Original feature screenplay

by

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Where Do Butterflies Go When It Rains?

On ordinary artists and everyday displacements

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Abstract:

The major creative work written for consideration here takes the form of a feature length screenplay, entitled *Joy*. Set over a period of a week, *Joy* tells the story of fading jazz musician Joe and his painter girlfriend Mary, a couple who have just had their first child. The vicissitudes of Sydney real estate are forcing Mary and Joe to uproot from the small apartment and creative community they have lived in for some years. But rather than move to an outer-western suburb of the city, Mary has determined that they should create a familial/artist's idyll in the semi-rural town of Bellingen, northern NSW. Mary's dreams are tested with the unexpected arrival of Joe's three children to his former wife, and when the six decamp in the inadequate hippie shack, collective discontent escalates to breaking point.

The exegesis (*Where Do Butterflies Go When It Rains? On Ordinary Artists and Everyday Displacements*) accompanying this work moves beyond the immediate tensions that characterize the drama – specifically step-family antagonisms and infidelity – to examine the underlying causes of discontent: geographic upheavals, unstable incomes and the tension between the practicalities of family and the will to create. The result is a fictocritical rumination on the experience of belonging to a family comprised of one or more professional artists in contemporary Australia, and the kinds of displacement(s) that such an experience might involve. Via a concatenation of personal biography, research and a thematic investigation of the screenplay, the exegesis examines the problems related to creative commitment in a culture that does not necessarily validate the choice to be an artist, and the private crises induced by the oppositional forces of familial responsibility, ego and meagre financial dividends. The work also considers the manner in which art produced under these conditions might owe a debt to its means of 'displaced production' – defined primarily here as actual, physical relocation because of unavailable affordable housing, but in a secondary way also defined by the more imperceptible actuality of lives that are lived under the same roof/within a

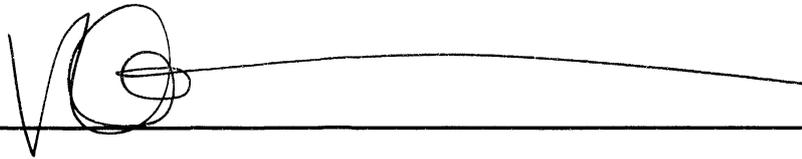
community, but are at the same time psychologically vexed by the threat of poverty. The exegesis also engages with the issue of authentic representation; whether it is valid, or possible to show the artistic family paradigm without drastically reducing its meanings. Finally, the exegesis explores the capacity the screenwriting undertaken as part of this project has to resist totalities and enable ambiguities, thus to provide some insight into the paradoxical nature of family life for struggling Australian artists.

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student



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