

JUDAS HOLE: TRAUMA AND THE UN/MAKING OF AN AMERICAN FAMILY

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This dissertation contains three sections: a critical introduction focused on trauma theory; a collection of creative non-fiction essays that constitute a partial memoir, referred to throughout this dissertation as *The Work*; and a chapter that addresses pedagogical concerns related to teaching creative writing in contemporary academic settings.

The collection of essays referred to as *The Work* contains both linear and traditionally narrative pieces of text, and non-linear and therefore disruptive pieces of text. Overall the partial memoir represented in *The Work* relays the life story of this author from about the age of nine through the present time. The essays combine the early death of the author's parents with images of religion and sexuality that are important to the author with assorted explorations into how the above have influenced the author's attempt to form, nurture and maintain a 'gay' family in defiance of a hetero-normative society that has continuously worked to either negate or destroy that family.

The critical introduction discusses how *The Work* can be read through a trauma theory lens. A secondary focus of the critical introduction relates *The Work* to the idea that peeping into the lives of gay men in particular and specifically into the forbidden world of gay sexuality combine with the inherent trauma contained in the essays that

constitute *The Work* to provide a framework through which hetero-normative society can view the more challenging pieces in *The Work* in ways that both entice and repulse the reader.

The pedagogical essay that completes the dissertation focuses on the ongoing trauma that faces the entire field of creative writing as that field struggles to relate itself to English Studies, Composition, and questions about who should or should not be allowed to teach creative writing at the college level. The central argument in the pedagogical chapter is that creative writing must seek to intellectualize and theorize current teaching practices and thereby move those practices away from rewarding publication as the central passport into teaching if creative writing is going to continue to hold the special place within English Studies it currently occupies.