THE LITTLE SHACKS OF LIFE

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Creative Writing and Script Writing

by

Gillian Eaton

September 2011
SUMMARY

Entitled THE LITTLE SHACKS OF LIFE, this dissertation contains poetry, prose and an essay describing the methods and philosophy of the creative work contained herein. The title is taken from a quote by the African American novelist Edward P. Jones and refers to how Mr. Jones discovered he was a writer.¹

Included in this presentation are 6 short prose pieces and 12 poems. The poems are all in free verse and represent a personal journey from death to life. The short prose stories reflect my curiosity with the small ways in which we deal with large events. All these written pieces were created within the last year (2010-2011) and represent endeavor in both artistic and technical enquiry. More importantly they also represent how this author found a new means of creative expression along with a vital practice and process.

As imperative as it was to discover HOW to write and what form could best serve the creative process, it was also important to adapt any personal methodologies to achieve this dissertation in the relatively short time period. What I know about the rhythms of Japanese Noh Theatre and Shakespeare became unexpectedly helpful in formulating a creative writing life.

After forty years of work in professional theatre experience, I had expected to write a play for this dissertation, so it was a surprise to find that my own ‘little shacks’ became the poetry and short prose contained in this dissertation. They were not just the vehicles for my own growth as a writer, but important temporary shelters along a new and unknown path.

¹“It is amazing the little shacks of life we can build when it seems that so much is at stake.”
## CONTENTS

### POETRY:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only Dealing With</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward Facing, Quiet Carriage</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Poet</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Stranger at the Poetry Café</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Detroit in April</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget Tours to Auschwitz- Birkenau</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deluxe Group Tours to Cambodia and Vietnam</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love Is The Reason Is</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Morning in December</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirty Thousand Years of Wall Art</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjugation</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At This Moment of Enquiry</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PROSE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Forest</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving to Detroit</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossing the Lines</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind Date with William</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Patara Beach</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another Thing That Happened in 1957</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### THE LITTLE SHACKS OF LIFE, a Critique                              | 61   |

### BIBLIOGRAPHY                                                      | 78   |
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The gratitude I owe my sons Tristan and Matthew, my sister Lesley and my brother in law Peter is boundless. Without their support, love and generosity I would never have been able to do this.

Also, to Bonnie and Bruce Bishop for being the best friends in the world and the ladies of the Supper Club for being who they are.

Thanks also to Dic Edwards for his wit and guidance and my fellow writers in Lampeter, Detroit and Long Beach.