

# ∞ READING ROUND ∞

## My Reading Habits

---

Shanta Everington

**M**Y READING HABITS have changed a lot over the years. As a young adult, I would devour novels in one sitting, staying up into the small hours until I found out how my heroine's journey ended. When my babies came along, I found that the fragmented, episodic nature of poetry better suited my mood, and better fit with snatches of time between feeding, changing, amusing and comforting small people. I no longer seemed to have the attention span required to read a whole novel, and certainly not in one sitting. The power of poetry, with its charged and lyrical nature, resonated with my own heightened emotions, and I found myself experiencing waves of writing poetry too. When I returned to working part-time, the train commute provided a much-welcomed space for reading; forget bedtime when it was hard to keep my eyes open with the exhaustion of juggling life's demands as a working parent! As my children grew – they are now ten and sixteen – I became able to read longer forms again, and found myself increasingly drawn to creative nonfiction, particularly memoir. Why read made-up stories when real people had such fascinating true-life stories to tell? I can only have one novel on the go at any given time but with creative nonfiction, I often have up to ten books that I dip in and out of! One day I might read from a prison memoir, the next an essay on Buddhist meditation, followed by a chapter on parenting a gender-creative child. It all depends on what I want and need from reading at that particular time. When I experienced secondary infertility and was considering adoption, I sought out memoirs by adoptees, birth mothers and adoptive parents to help me understand adoption from all sides of the triangle. Finding a lack in the literature

## ∞ READING ROUND ∞

prompted me to embark on a PhD in Creative Writing after I became an adoptive parent, with a life-writing project, 'Other Mothers; Curating and Creating Voices of Adoption, Surrogacy and Egg Donation'. I read a great many books for the purposes of PhD research — poetry, fiction and nonfiction, some to learn more about the background of adoption, surrogacy and egg donation, and others to explore the craft of life-writing, reading as a writer, with close readings analysing stylistic devices and literary approaches taken in shaping life stories. I read critical texts too, on literary theory, feminist ideas about writing women's lives, and critical debates about the ethics of life writing. As a woman now entering my fifties, I find myself reading widely on menopause and aging, listening to the voices of other women who have walked this path before me. As a lecturer in creative writing, teaching across fiction, nonfiction, poetry and script, I like to stay up to date with what's current. I read for work, for teaching purposes, for connection and understanding, and for pleasure — for the thrill. Reading is so many things to me.