

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL, UNIVERSITY

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PROPOSAL FOR CREATIVE THESIS

ASH

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ASH, a historical novel set during World War II, explores the relationships of the Coutiere, Ledoux, and Cantara families in Collins, a Southern Maine mill town. The novel depicts their economic hardships, French-Canadian heritage, and strict religious beliefs. The protagonist, Lorraine Coutiere, leaves Collins for Boston, only to return unwed and pregnant. She is ostracized by her family and turns to her recently married best friend, Mary Beth Cantara, to save her, and is forced to give up her son. When Mary Beth's own secrets, having to do with the paternity of the new baby, push her husband, Richard, away and into the arms of her cousin, Micheline Ledoux, whose own husband is fighting in Europe, the consequences ripple through the three families and change them forever. ASH focuses on characters in search of redemption, including Lorraine's boyfriend Lucien, whose brother takes his place in the war, and Micheline's brother Paul, the draft dodger. Other main characters include Richard, the husband who cannot provide for his family; Micheline, the mother who blames herself for the death of her infant child; Mary Beth, the wife who cannot have children; and Lorraine, who must sacrifice one love (Lucien), to attain another (her son).

The novel employs multiple points of view presented in the third person. Letters add first person voices to the text. Through these devices we are able to follow simultaneous actions and misunderstandings that take place as the plot moves forward in multiple locations. Like Ian McEwan's *Atonement* and Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams*, ASH uses mistaken identities, secrets, and discoveries through tokens for

dramatic effect. In the end, Lorraine learns a mother's love for her child is greater than any other, and is redeemed when she takes action to get back the son she gave up.