Friday 26 August at 3pm in Napier 618

Katherine Arguile, ‘Melancholic Things’

How do the bereaved deal with objects once owned by loved ones? What does the way they deal with them reveal about their grief processes?

Acknowledging that traumatic loss shatters the worldview of the bereaved, requiring a reconstruction of identity to help find new meaning in a forever-changed world, this paper seeks to fill a gap in research by exploring the way objects in fictional grief narratives can be used as markers to reflect the different stages of identity reconstruction in a protagonist that has suffered such a loss.

Siri Hustvedt’s What I Loved and my own novel manuscript, “The Things She Owned”, will be examined together through the lenses of grief theory (particularly that of sociologist Margaret Gibson), Thing Theory and psychoanalytical theory, incorporating in particular the idea of the cathexic object. A new schema for the categorization of such melancholic objects in grief literature will be proposed and applied to the chosen texts, grouping them into loose categorisations of fossil-objects, relic-objects, totem-objects and fetish-objects.

This paper will also examine how using the real in fiction — real objects, in the case of “The Things She Owned” — helped to mitigate difficult feelings that arose during the writing process.

Joy McEntee, ‘Trauma, Shame, and Men’s Tears in The Manchurian Candidate (1962)’

In the context of the history of male weeping, this paper examines the representation of masculine traumatic symptoms in Richard Condon’s 1959 novel The Manchurian Candidate and Frankenheimer’s 1962 cinematic adaptation. In a period of national shame about the unwon Korean conflict, Frankenheimer first feminizes his protagonists by rendering them ‘hysterical’, and then allows them to redeem themselves through heroic deeds of masculine role-fulfillment. As a melodramatic enactment of masculine roles in the late 1950s and early 1960s, The Manchurian Candidate is both a trauma film and a ‘male weepy’.

All Welcome

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