Writing Women’s Lives: Women’s Autobiographies

Exegesis and Accompanying Creative Work

Memory and Memorialisation

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Abstract

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This thesis consists of two parts—a creative work, Memory and Memorialisation, and an exegesis, Writing Women’s Lives: Women’s Autobiographies, that documents the writing process and the theoretical perspectives informing it at various stages. It is the result of a twelve year investigation into the writing process; the nature of memory, death and desire in objects and places; and their role in personal representation.

The exegesis highlights the difficulties encountered in simultaneously writing and critiquing one’s own autobiographical works. As autobiography is also written ‘in relation to’ significant others, the emotional, ethical and legal issues inherent in the writing and publication of autobiographical works are explored.

The creative work is not a unitary text and comprises a collection of fragmented yet connected autobiographical stories that experiment with form using archival collections—a blending of memory with family and local history—the results of excavating the past to make meaning in the present. Images are used singly and in collages to signify the temporality and intertextuality of these auto/biographical acts.