

SEMINAR SERIES 2007

Tuesday, 27 March 2007

Dr Shady Cosgrove

University of Wollongong, HRC Visiting Fellow

'She Played Elvis' and storytelling the (auto)biographical - a journey to Graceland

This paper will explore how narrative fiction techniques can be incorporated into creative non-fiction, using 'She Played Elvis' as a case study. 'She Played Elvis' is a non-fiction work-in-progress that chronicles Shady Cosgrove's pilgrimage to Graceland to honour the 25th anniversary of Elvis Presley's death. The memoir addresses themes of nationhood, family, pilgrimage, absence and performance. This discussion will also address how narrative techniques can implicate ideas of 'truth'. Since the advent of autobiography studies in the 1970s with Elizabeth Bruss and Philippe Lejeune, many theorists have explored ideas of 'truth' in self-narration. Of particular interest here will be the tension between 'fitting' a narrative structure and negotiating 'truth(s)' within non-fiction, especially (auto)biography and memoir. That is, how does the positioning of events and their temporality impact on the way they are read? How can flashbacks and juxtaposition influence the 'essential truth' of the work? How culpable should authors be in light of structure when all of the events recounted are 'true'?



Biographical information

Dr Shady Cosgrove is a lecturer in Creative Writing in the School of Journalism and Creative Writing at the University of Wollongong. With writing interests in fiction and non-fiction, she is currently researching how narrative fiction techniques can be incorporated into creative non-fiction and how this affects popular and theoretical understandings of the two genres. She graduated from Vassar College, New York (1996), with departmental and general honours in Women Studies and English before completing her doctorate at the Australian National University in 2002. She also worked for John Fairfax Holdings at the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Illawarra Mercury*, covering the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games and specialising in feature writing and sub-editing. Her creative work has been published in *Overland*, *Southerly*, *Antipodes* and *Best Australian Stories 2006*.

Venue: Theatrette, Old Canberra House, Lennon Crossing, ANU
Inquiries: Email: administration.rsh@anu.edu.au. Phone: 612 52700

