

# Loss in Film:

## A Study of Manchester by the Sea (2016)

Calum Hodges, AHVS 498, University of Victoria

### Introduction

This project serves to present the role that film, specifically Manchester by the Sea (2016), plays in coercing viewers toward difficult discussions regarding loss, grief, and trauma. I chose this topic because I believe that films are both a useful tool for understanding our own hardships, as well as a reflection of society, such as how we tackle one of the hardest things a human can experience: Loss.

### Research Questions

- How does the film Manchester by the Sea portray and loss, grief, and trauma both individually and in their interconnected dynamics?
- In what ways do cinematic elements, specifically narrative structure and character development, contribute to the audience's emotional engagement and understanding of loss, grief, and trauma in Manchester by the Sea?
- What can we learn from films such as Manchester by the Sea about loss, grief, and trauma that can be applied to real life? Why is it important?

### Visual Analysis



Fig. 1 Randi (left) and Lee (right) talk about the tragedy for the first time. This marks the beginning of Lee's redemption.



Fig. 2 Joe (left) and Lee (right) share a moment of love before Joe's eventual passing.

### Key Words

Film Analysis  
Comparative Analysis  
Loss, Grief, Trauma  
Intersectionality



Fig 3. Lee (left) and Patrick (right) attending Joe's funeral at the end of the film.

### Research Method and Theory

- Narrative Analysis
- Character Development
- Scene Analysis
- Comparative analysis with personal loss

### Conclusions

Manchester by the Sea portrays grief, trauma and loss in a variety of ways, most notably through the character development of protagonist Lee as well as embedded in the narrative structure. It is a hyper-realistic approach that showcases many of the real stages of grief.

By understanding a general visual analysis of the most pivotal scenes in the film, viewers can connect deeper with the trauma experienced by Lee, as well as tie in their own feelings with the on-screen representation.



Fig 4. Patrick (left) and Lee (right) spend time together on the late Joe's fishing boat.

### Bibliography

Angeli, Silvia. 2017. An unfinished mourning: Kenneth Lonergan's Manchester by the Sea (2016). Angeli, Silvia. New Cinemas. 15. 141-155. 10.1386/ncin.15.2.141-1.

De Semlyen. Phil. 2017. "Manchester By The Sea Review | Movie." Empire. <https://www.empireonline.com/movies/reviews/manchester-sea-review/>.

Goodman, Shirley, and Leonard Lee. n.d. "Casey Affleck and Michelle Williams in Manchester by the Sea (2016)." IMDb. Accessed February 28, 2024. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4034228/>.

Nelson, Derek R. 2018. Loss and trauma in Le Fils and Manchester-by-the-Sea: Redemption as resilience. Dialog : a journal of theology, Vol.57 (4), p.308-313

Scott, AO. 2016. "Review: 'Manchester by the Sea' and the Tides of Grief (Published 2016)." The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/18/movies/manchester-by-the-sea-review-kenneth-lonergan-casey-affleck.html>.

Zhang, Siyu 2020. Analysis of Traumatic Narrative Style in Movies—Take Manchester By the Sea as an Example by Zhang, Siyu. Atlantic Press.



#### Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and respect the Lək'wəjən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək'wəjən and WSÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

#### Contact Information

CalumHodges22@shaw.ca  
236-888-8125  
Vancouver, BC