



"Narrating Lives" International Conference on Storytelling, (Auto)Biography and (Auto)Ethnography

**Cagliari, Sardinia (Italy) / Online
30 May-1 June 2025**

Programme & Abstracts

London Centre for Interdisciplinary Research
in collaboration with
Italian National Research Council (CNR) –
Institute of History of Mediterranean Europe (ISEM)
under the patronage of
Talented Italians in the UK

Conference Committee:

- Dr Olena Lytovka, LCIR/University of Bedfordshire (UK)
- Prof. Gianluca Sardi, LCIR/University of Teramo (UK/Italy)
- Dr Annabel Kay Ruiz, LCIR/Florida State University, Valencia (UK/Spain)
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Opening Remarks:

- Dott.ssa Paola Avallone (Director at CNR-ISEM)
- On. Presidente Dott.ssa Alessandra Todde (President of the Autonomous Region of Sardinia)
- On. Presidente del Consiglio Regionale Dott. Piero Comandini (President of the Regional Council of the Autonomous Region of Sardinia)
- On. Presidente della Commissione Cultura presso il Consiglio Regionale Dott.ssa Camilla Soru (Chair of the Culture Commission of the Regional Council of the Autonomous Region of Sardinia)
- Dott.ssa Maria Francesca Chiappe (Culture Councillor at Cagliari Council)
- Dr Olena Lytovka (LCIR)
- Prof. Avv. Gianluca Sardi MRi (LCIR)

Programme

Friday, 30 May
(In-person Sessions)

9:00-9:15 Opening Remarks

9:15-10:45 Session 1. Journeys of the Self: Storytelling, Return and Identity

Chair: Matthew Tyne

Christakis Peristianis, University of Cyprus (Cyprus)

Crossing the Unbridgeable: An Autoethnography of Return

Anne Bradley, Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology (New Zealand)

The Letter That Cannot Be Sent: Exploring Fiction as a Means of Truth-Telling and Sense-Making in Life Writing

Tamta Turmanidze, Shota Rustaveli Theatre and Film Georgian State University (Georgia)

Childhood Landscapes: The Geography of Rezo Gabriadze's Creative Universe

Stephen Tapscott, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Cambridge (USA)

Percival Everett's Double James: Code-Switching, Genre-Busting, and Narrative Self-Creation

10:45-11:10 Tea/Coffee

11:10-12:00 Session 2. He Takitoru (a trio) – a Collision of Māori Histories and Screen Technologies

Chair: Jani Wilson

Zak Waipara, Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland University of Technology (New Zealand)

Hoki Mai, Hoki Atu: Guides for the Future from the Prophecies of the Past

Jani Wilson, Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha, University of Canterbury (New Zealand)

When Kapa Haka and Sports Collide: Whakataetae Kapa Haka

12:00-13:00 Lunch

13:00-14:15 Session 3. Biographical Landscapes: Memory and Creative Lives

Chair: Annette Kappert

Maria Grazia Cantoni, University of Birmingham (UK)

Walking in Flow: Phenomenology, Subjectivity and Rhythm

Zofia Hałęza, University of Lodz (Poland)

Swallows Herald Spring: Stories of the First Polish Female Students Studying Abroad

Theresa White, California State University, Northridge (USA)

Narratives of Black Life – College Student Success Stories

14:15-14:30 Tea/Coffee

14:30-16:00 Session 4. Teaching Through Story: Pedagogy, Leadership and Social Justice

Chair: Christakis Peristianis

Matthew Tyne, University of Sydney (Australia)

‘...a Little Story So Beautiful I Fear It May Well Be True’: Personal Narratives and Embodiment in Teaching Cultural Competence in Higher Education

Annette Kappert, SRH University of Applied Sciences Heidelberg (Germany)

Dig Deep: Introducing Autoethnography in Leadership Education

Tara Goldstein, University of Toronto (Canada)

Léa Roback: Social Justice Activist: Storytelling for Education

Tracy Moniz, Mount Saint Vincent University (Canada)

Learning Through Stories: How Written First-Person Narratives Enrich Medical Education

16:10-17:25 Session 5. Life Writing: the Borders of Identity

Chair: Maria Grazia Cantoni

Marta Sikorska, University of Lodz (Poland)

The Memoirs of Aleksandra Pilsudska and Their Role in Shaping Her émigré Identity

Gianluca Sardi, LCIR (UK) / University of Teramo (Italy)

“Varcare Le Frontiere” (Crossing the Borders): Far More Than an Autobiography of a Jurist

Franciscu Sedda, University of Cagliari (Italy)

Grazia versus *Grazietta*, *almost Cosima*. Forms of Autobiography and Identification Conflicts in Deledda

Saturday, 31 May

(Zoom Sessions)

11:30-13:00 Session 6. Testimonies and Memory: Communities, Conflict and Occupation

Chair: Gianluca Sardi

Călin Andrei Olariu, Babeş-Bolyai University (Romania)

The Use of Genre in Roma Oral History Accounts. Memory, Narrative and Heritage in a Gabori Community from Romania

Natasha Mayo, Helen Walsh, CJ O'Neill, Cardiff Metropolitan University and the Centre of Ceramic Art, York (UK)

Occupational Folklore: Archiving Embodied Encounters

Sara Arroja-Schürmann, University of Geneva (Switzerland)

Vassili Grossman: War Correspondent and Author of Historical Testimonies

Konrad Gunesch, Woxsen University, Hyderabad (India)

Academic, Artistic and Athletic Bestsellers Narrating Protagonists' Autobiographies and Autoethnographies: Print-Page-Tuners via Multiple and Interconnected Media

13:15-14:45 Session 7. School and Leisure? Images of Past Female Childhood Education as Projected in (Auto-)Biographical English Texts

Chair: Eleonora Savvidou

Paloma Tejada-Caller, Universidad Complutense Madrid (Spain)

Home Education at the Turn of the 19th Century. An Analysis of Female Childhood Accounts in English Biographical Discourse

Julia López Narváez, Universidad Complutense Madrid (Spain)

To Be Educated or to Attend School: Agency in Female Childhood Education in Biographies from 1891 to 1900

Blanca Fernández-Soriano, Universidad Complutense Madrid (Spain)

“Literate and Intelligent”?: The Concept of IL/Literacy in Biographical Discourse Between 1750-1900

Nuria Calvo Cortés, Universidad Complutense Madrid (Spain),

Marina Dossena, University of Bergamo (Italy)

Visions of Late Modern Girls' Education in Women's (Auto)Biographies: The Case of *The Earnest Christian* (1858)

15:00-16:15 Session 8. Rewriting Womanhood: Gendered Identities in Life Writing

Chair: Maria Grazia Cantoni

Eleonora Savvidou, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (UK)

Performing Lives: Socially Contingent Re-Imaginings of the Life of Jacqueline du Pré

Irina Kovalenko, York University, Toronto (Canada)

Femininity, Modernism and Subversion in Women's Visual and Verbal Life Writing

Petra Bozsoki, Eötvös Loránd University (Hungary)

The Concept of Wifhood in Emília Kánya's Memoir

Sunday, 1 June

(Zoom Sessions)

10:00-11:30 Session 9. Reframing the Personal: Cultural Displacement and Fragmented Identity

Chair: Konrad Gunesch

Vikram Bhardwaj, Government College Sanjauli (India)

Narrating Lives Across Continents: The Story of Satyanand Stokes (1882-1946)

Nesrine Youssef, The High Institute of Social Sciences and Education of Gafsa (Tunisia)

“A Masterpiece of Nothing”: The Subversion of Autobiographical Narratives in Jonas Mekas' *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (2000)

Wei H. Kao, National Taiwan University (Taiwan)

Frustrated Men and Post-dramatic Narratives in Conor McPherson's Three Irish Monologue Dramas

Eva Patsovska-Ivanova, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski (Bulgaria)
Life-History as an Adventure Gamebook: On a Narratological Strategy in Saša Stanišić’s Novel *Where You Come From*

12:00-13:30 Session 10. Narrating the Researcher: Reflexivity and Identity in Practice

Chair: Vikram Bhardwaj

Gareth Davies, Jon Hall, The Open University (UK)

Reflexive Narratives of Impact: Leveraging Autoethnography to Illuminate Research Outcomes

**Merve Eryoldas, Georg-August-University of Göttingen (Germany),
Pauline Schöning, Free University of Bolzano (Italy)**

Opportunities and Limitations of the Narrative Interview for the Research Practice

Barbra Wallace, Independent Researcher (UK)

Narrative Research as Agentic Enchantment

Katie Crompton, Alessandra Fasulo, University of Warwick (UK)

Teacher; Mindfulness Instructor; Researcher. My Multiple Identities at School

Friday, 30 May
(In-person Sessions)

9:15-10:45 Session 1. Journeys of the Self:
Storytelling, Return and Identity

Christakis Peristianis

University of Cyprus (Cyprus)

Crossing the Unbridgeable: An Autoethnography of Return

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This autoethnographic presentation recounts my first and only crossing to my mother's village, from which her family was displaced during the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus. Reflecting on the symbolic and emotional weight of this journey, I explore how (post)memory and displacement shape perceptions of distance, space, and (dis/re)possession. In 2018, 14 years after the first checkpoint openings, I crossed the Green Line with my uncle, an act that revealed how personal and collective histories of displacement manifest in seemingly ordinary encounters with space. On one hand, the crossing exposed the tension between *political and geographical perceptions of distance*. Having grown up with Cyprus as a politically divided space, I never fully grasped the proximity of my father's and mother's villages. On the day of the journey, and having slept the night at my father's family home, this imagined distance collapsed within minutes, which profoundly changed my perception of distance and space. On the other hand, the journey revealed the emotional weight of *property and (dis/re)possession*. As we passed my family's former home, the current tenants closed the door—an act that physically and emotionally reinforced our dispossession. Later, at the family's former orange groves—now pomegranate orchards—my uncle stepped out, picked fruit, and declared: "Well, they are ours after all." This simple yet profound gesture asserted a bond with a space materially changed and politically severed, highlighting how refugees engage in acts of symbolic resistance against their displacement.

Anne Bradley

Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology (New Zealand)

**The Letter That Cannot Be Sent: Exploring Fiction as a Means
of Truth-Telling and Sense-Making in Life Writing**

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Writers of women's literary fiction often draw from life experience in their creative process. Self-referential narrative captures memories, events and relationships in order to create meaning rather than recount facts. Truth becomes a flexible concept as the writer merges fact and fiction to recreate lived experiences. Readers of these works are able to examine our own lives in a new light, engaging in a

kind of reciprocal therapeutic process in which we see ourselves differently as we connect with others' experiences.

On a quest to make sense of my past, I employed principles of narrative research and autoethnography to explore my own life experiences, influential characters and relationships, and express them in a work of fiction. I found that writing my life as a fictional narrative offered a means to explore and express my own truth in a creative, meaning-centred way, uncluttered by date and detail. It became a transformational process of increased self-knowledge and emancipation from the obsolete values and traumatic events of my past, and uncovered their impacts on my present. I also wanted to tell my story. I wanted others to know. I wanted to relegate the events to the past, understand my present and take control of my future. Turning my past into a fictional narrative was an exercise in hope. It enabled me to make sense of myself in new ways. Piecing myself together, viewing my life as a story whose ending I can change brought healing, relief, clarity: A narrative cure.

Tamta Turmanidze

Shota Rustaveli Theatre and Film Georgian State University (Georgia)

Childhood Landscapes: The Geography of Rezo Gabriadze's

Creative Universe

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Rezo Gabriadze's artistic world springs from the warm memories of his childhood in Kutaisi, Georgia, where ordinary moments transform into magical creative expressions. As the founder of Tbilisi Marionette Theater, Gabriadze created an intimate space where his personal vision breathes life into everything—from handcrafted puppets to heartfelt plays that he wrote and directed himself.

Before his theater days, Gabriadze left his mark on Georgian and Soviet cinema, writing screenplays for beloved films of the 1960s-70s while also creating memorable works in literature and painting. His rare gift allowed him to move effortlessly between these different arts, always carrying the same emotional thread: the small town where he lived for just 17 years but from which, as he himself said, "he never mentally left."

The everyday elements of Gabriadze's childhood—neighbors, animals, and familiar objects—gently transformed into the characters, stories, and places that populate his work. Through his plays, performances, and paintings, a special poetic universe took shape, with its own rules and quiet wonders.

In Gabriadze's creations, it's fascinating to see where real life softly blends into imagination—to follow the map of his invented city and discover connections between actual Kutaisi residents and the characters they inspired. His work shows how a beloved place can forever nourish creativity when seen through the eyes of a storyteller whose heart remained always connected to the landscape of his youth.

Stephen Tapscott

Massachusetts Institute of Technology Cambridge, MA (USA)

**Percival Everett's Double James: Code-Switching, Genre-Busting,
and Narrative Self-Creation**
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Percival Everett's *James* [2024] recasts the story of "Jim," from Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* [1885], which itself was a sequel to Twain's *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* [1876]. *Huck*, the original Twain-sequel, reframes the relationships of three characters --two that white boys, Tom and Huck, and Jim, an enslaved adult--while shifting the narrative voice and moral point-of-view. What had been Tom's narrative becomes Huck's; with that change in point-of-view come differences in tone and language, in vocabulary and speech-rhythm, in perception and sense-of-humor and moral acuity, in class and in metaphor-systems. *James* does not so much "complete" a trilogy (three novels about three young men and their changes) so much as it completes what had been left unsaid, revealing the invisible--and shifting (once again) the moral valence. It does so largely by emending the story's genre--from adventure to comedy to farce to satire and *Bildungsroman* to meta-fiction and back, in the end, to wish-fulfillment adventure--but for a different-character, with different purposes. *James* deftly shifts from strategies of code-shifting and verbal disguise (strategies of comedy) through narrative scenarios and identity-(strategies of farce), to wilder structural displacements associated with action-narratives. Shifting genres, the novel permits the central character to "invent" himself, literally writing a new life-narrative and working through some of the paradoxes of the "burden/skill" of the problem, familiar to members of racial and social minorities, of "double consciousness."

**11:10-12:00 Session 2. He Takitoru (a trio) – a Collision of Māori
Histories and Screen Technologies**

Zak Waipara

Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland University of Technology
(New Zealand)

**Hoki Mai, Hoki Atu: Guides for the Future from the Prophecies
of the Past**

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At first glance, the medium of animation, being both a modern and introduced artform, might not seem to have much in common with traditional Māori art making. But given the ways in which Māori have innovated with introduced artforms and technology, animation also offers the same opportunities for Indigenous cultural expression. Animation is primarily about movement. This is prevalent throughout *te ao Māori* (the Māori world), from *mau rākau* (martial arts with weapons) to *kapa haka* (forms of dance), to many sports and physical past-times, including a type of

puppetry known as *karetao*. And while it's not necessary to prove the legitimacy of animation as a valid means of expression for Māori, it's valuable as an exercise to find comparisons, and thereby establish a kind of genealogy or *whakapapa* in which to ground one's practice.

Examination of these traditional art practices in conjunction with significant and relevant historical cultural events also offer meaningful ways to think about animation inside a Māori worldview.

In this presentation, using case studies from my work as a practitioner, including *The Hunter* (2014), *Ohako* (2017) and *Tiwha Tiwha te Pō* (2018), I aim to provide examples in which all these possibilities are explored.

Jani Wilson

Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha University of Canterbury (New Zealand)

When Kapa Haka and Sports Collide: Whakataetae Kapa Haka

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Te Matatini's live-streamed coverage displays competitive kapa haka performances by the crème de la crème of Australasian kapa haka (Māori performing arts). After several iterations and a fair amount of experimentation, Te Matatini, literal translation the many parts/faces, is the pinnacle of competition, frequently referred to as the Olympics of kapa haka, where teams vie for the Duncan McIntyre trophy and the much-coveted title of champions for two years. This presentation is a historical overview of the twenty-year roadmap (2004 – 2024) that led to the now fully developed screened competitive kapa haka production 'style', where kapa haka - which pivots on the utmost in Māori storytelling - palpably metamorphoses with the production of screened sport, and is fundamental to how the art now appeals to a widening global audience. At the same time, competitive kapa haka projects a kind of 'post-New Zealand' popular Aotearoa culture. Attached to a much wider research project, I will focus on unpacking and demonstrating the significant elements adopted by the production style that includes crowd involvement, multilingual running narration, ongoing 'behind the scenes' commentaries, and many dynamic but structured techniques to ensure kapa haka is increasingly produced, performed and choreographed for screens of all sizes.

13:00-14:15 Session 3. Biographical Landscapes:
Memory and Creative Lives

Maria Grazia Cantoni

University of Birmingham (UK)

Walking in Flow: Phenomenology, Subjectivity and Rhythm

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As part of my PhD thesis in progress called 'The Theology of The Mountain', this paper investigates mountains and walking, specifically examining their roles in producing sacred spaces and spiritual experiences. Considered both an embodied and contemplative activity, the autobiographic praxis of walking is investigated as a way to interact with these sacred spaces (Eliade, Knott) and encounter subjective spiritualities. Mountains, seen not merely as physical landscapes but as dynamic, spiritual, and cultural symbols, capture the junction of the human search for the divine and the natural world, are archetypal images of transcendence throughout many religious and spiritual traditions. Walking, hence walksapes (Careri), allows an experiential link to the holy by means of motion, rhythm, and effort, therefore acting both practically and symbolically in the process of meaning-making. Under the positive psychology framework of the Flow theory, as articulated by Csikszentmihalyi, the focus of the research is both the researcher and mankind's collective yet subjective relationship with mountains through walking. Starting from the auto-ethnographic diaries during the lockdown (2020) to high altitude treks (diaries, audios, photographs), the research has been conducted in the last four years among the areas of Tibet, England, and Italy, stressing the complex relationship between the mind and body, embodied cognition and spirituality, revealing parallels between "mindful" walking and meditation. Drawing from Husserl's subjective experience of the body ("Leib"), the paper combines philosophical, phenomenological, and religious points of view to question dualistic paradigms that separate the body from the mind, therefore challenging their objective, physical nature "' Körper'."

Zofia Haleza

University of Lodz (Poland)

Swallows Herald Spring: Stories of the First Polish Female Students

Studying Abroad

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From 1870, Polish female students began to appear at universities in Europe. Universities in Poland remained closed to women, so they decided to take such a bold step. Moving to a foreign country independently, taking up their studies and living independently were signs of great courage. The Polish female students knew they were part of a huge change, so they tried to record their memories. They left behind letters,

memoirs, and books or essays published in the press. Newspapers were very keen to cover the subject. The difference between autobiographical notes and the voice of public opinion is drastic. I would like to talk about how the first Polish female students saw themselves, their roles, and how others portrayed them. Using archival documents, I will trace the epistemological shift evident in the narrative. In addition to the characteristics of this phenomenon itself, I will analyse how society perceived it. I am also interested in the female students' situation - how were they treated, in what conditions did they live, did they feel lonely, and could they count on any support? The final element is the impact of these journeys on the development of Europe and universities. Did their courage encourage women citizens of other European countries to pursue higher education?

Theresa White

California State University, Northridge (USA)

Narratives of Black Life – College Student Success Stories

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The California State University (CSU) is the nation's largest and most diverse four-year public university system. Yet the CSU faces the challenge of recruiting, retaining, and graduating Black students. In the fall of 2021, the university provided funding to create a Black Scholars Matter (BSM) Program---a creative and collaborative enterprise that involves university community partners, as well as partnerships with three high schools from three geographic locations in Los Angeles. The project established a new pipeline of students of African descent to the campus, supports a diverse culture of academic success and aims to increase enrollment and retention of Black students at CSUN. BSM focuses on advancing a culture of inclusive excellence; closing student equity gaps, while improving retention and graduation rates. It is a transformative, tuition-free college program aimed toward Scholars of African descent with the goal of inspiring Black Excellence by connecting students to essential resources, providing academic and career support, and promoting community engagement. The program takes a holistic approach to educating the “whole” person, and provides support that aligns with student’s mental, intellectual, physical, and spiritual well-being.

Utilizing interviews, focus groups, photography and videography as tools for studying their social reality, the results will be used to create a digital oral history project to document the firsthand experiences of the second and third cohort of freshman students in the program. The project will amplify student voices, and highlight a model of success that illuminates best practices that help African/Black students succeed.

**14:30-16:00 Session 4. Teaching Through Story:
Pedagogy, Leadership and Social Justice**

Matthew Tyne

University of Sydney (Australia)

**‘...a Little Story So Beautiful I Fear It May Well Be True’:
Personal Narratives and Embodiment in Teaching Cultural
Competence in Higher Education**

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This presentation employs critical autoethnography to explore the effectiveness of using personal narratives as part of pedagogical practice to facilitate the development of cultural competence within a higher education setting.

Using personal stories in cultural competence education may augment teaching in two significant ways. First, they provide applicable, concrete examples to help learners grasp abstract concepts. Second, the teacher’s inclusion of personal narratives may foster empathy by allowing learners to glimpse a situation through another’s eyes, while simultaneously positioning the teacher as a flawed, fellow cultural being. Frizelle (2020: 17) suggests that ‘if approached strategically and with an ethic of care, infusing personal stories and embodiment into educational content is pedagogically performative with the potential to challenge dominant cultural ideologies like heteronormativity.’ However, there is a risk of sharing too much personal information or relying upon what Salverson (1999) calls an ‘aesthetic of injury’ to elicit empathetic responses from participants. To allay this, it is desirable to curate personal stories deliberately and reflexively, selecting entertaining and stimulating stories, while retaining boundaries.

This presentation offers a critical reflection on the inclusion of the author’s own stories of growing up and living as a queer person as part of my teaching about cultural competence at the University of Sydney. What stories have been included and which stories have been excluded, and for what reasons? Is it time for new stories, and do I possess the capacity to retell such stories within the context of cultural competence education?

Annette Kappert

SRH University of Applied Sciences Heidelberg (Germany)

Dig Deep: Introducing Autoethnography in Leadership Education

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This paper explores the integration of autoethnography into undergraduate leadership education, emphasizing the role of vulnerability in fostering authentic leadership development. Traditionally, leadership courses have focused on established theories, which may not fully resonate with Generation Z students. By incorporating autoethnographic methods, students are encouraged to reflect deeply on their personal experiences, connecting them to their leadership journeys. This approach allows

students to confront and share their vulnerabilities, leading to a more profound understanding of themselves and their leadership styles. The paper discusses the challenges and benefits of implementing autoethnography in the curriculum, highlighting how digging deep to find and embrace vulnerability can enhance leadership authenticity and effectiveness.

Tara Goldstein

University of Toronto (Canada)

Léa Roback: Social Justice Activist: Storytelling for Education

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In this presentation I will discuss the data collection, analysis and writing methods I used to produce a biography of Léa Roback, focusing on the writing method of “story merging” which connected my own contemporary queer and trans educational activism with my Auntie Léa’s seven decades of workers’ rights and women’s rights activism in the 20th century. The concept and practice of “story merging” involves connecting autobiographical and biographical narratives to create a particular kind of story. In biography, the storytelling is about a subject, another person. In autobiography, the storytelling is about the self, which requires the creation of an autobiographical persona. When a life writing project combines both, a third story emerges. This presentation will discuss the possibilities a third story might have for meeting the writing goal that underlies my biography of Léa Roback – the goal of sharing Roback’s life of past activism with contemporary activists and educators

Tracy Moniz

Mount Saint Vincent University (Canada)

Learning Through Stories: How Written First-Person Narratives

Enrich Medical Education

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Stories are avenues toward ‘telling’ and ‘knowing’ the self and others. Writing and sharing stories about illness and care experiences may have implications for communication, collaboration, and advocacy in clinical and educational settings within medicine. These lived experiences become stories with potential to shape, challenge, and construct how humanistic care is practiced and taught. For instance, narratives about attitudes and behaviors toward death and dying have potential to make visible norms and values communicated through medical culture, triggering more compassionate patient- and family-centered care as a result. Thus, stories can become vehicles for transformation.

So, too, can studying them.

16:10-17:25 Session 5. Life Writing: The Borders of Identity

Marta Sikorska

University of Lodz (Poland)

The Memoirs of Aleksandra Pilsudska and Their Role in Shaping Her éMigré Identity

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Aleksandra Pilsudska (1882- 1963) was the second wife of Marshal Jozef Pilsudski, founder of the independent Polish state in 1918. Her memoirs were first published in London in 1940 in English and entitled *Memoirs of Madame Pilsudski*. They were written under circumstances that very often become the motivation for writing down the events of one's life. The outbreak of war, the dramatic experiences of fleeing Poland, life in exile, the lack of material resources, anxiety about family and co-workers who remained in the country, became the justification for writing memoirs. Arlette Farge points out that suffering, anxiety and the disruption of everyday life cause people to choose to describe their lives, and the narrative is built around current events. It was the case of Pilsudska; the traumatic experiences of 1939 became an impulse to memories. The writing strategy she adopted was the position of a witness who participated in great historical events.

This raises questions about the identity of the heroine of the biographical narrative. The identity of the author of a memoir often changes during the writing of an autobiographical text - sometimes several times. The protagonist often creates her own identity, and this is the most essential element of biography, as well as a challenge for the historian. Autobiography is not a static phenomenon, it is not merely the completion of a message with subsequent events that occur during a person's life. Instead, it involves a constant restructuring of past events within the framework of the present.

Gianluca Sardi

LCIR (UK) / University of Teramo (Italy)

“Varcare Le Frontiere” (Crossing the Borders): Far More Than an Autobiography of a Jurist

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The book *"Varcare le frontiere"* (Crossing the Borders), which was recently published by Sabino Cassese, is far more than an autobiography of one of the most important Italian jurists of the 20th and of the 21st centuries. In fact, in the aforementioned publication, Prof. Cassese, who was also a Constitutional Court Judge, offers an interdisciplinary approach towards the most problematic legal challenges of the national and international scenario, and in many occasions highlights the importance of the comparison of different (and also opposite) opinions in the constitutional debate. Furthermore, he also mentions the importance of constitutional reforms - with particular reference to the Italian panorama - where necessary.

Franciscu Sedda
University of Cagliari (Italy)
Grazia versus Grazietta, almost Cosima. Forms of Autobiography and
Identification Conflicts in Deledda
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This talk draws a parallel and comparison between two mutually significant semiotic formations, which represent two different forms of autobiographical writing: the *correspondence between Deledda and De Gubernatis*, and the testament-novel *Cosima*. These dense texts reveal a complex web of personal, cultural, and political identifications—simultaneously evolving and conflicting: a web that unfolds through the texts and is continually reshaped within them. Taking the theme of the *name* (and *self-definition*) as a key to access individual and collective subjectivity, we will explore the various meanings, values, and potentialities embodied by the use of the names “Grazia Deledda,” “Grazia,” “Grazietta,” “Grassia,” and “Cosima” in Deledda’s life-work.

Saturday, 31 May
(Zoom Sessions)

11:30-13:00 Session 6. Testimonies and Memory:
Communities, Conflict and Occupation

Călin Andrei Olariu
Babeş-Bolyai University (Romania)
The Use of Genre in Roma Oral History Accounts. Memory, Narrative
and Heritage in a Gabori Community from Romania
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The basic assumption of my presentation is that the “past” does not exist apart from the form of representations of past events, presented in a narrative form. Therefore, making a narrative analysis of an oral account, including an analysis of the genres employed by witnesses, will allow for a more complex analysis of the meanings attributed to a biographical narrative.

To exemplify this, I will make an analysis of the life story told by a Gabor interviewee, a member of a traditional Roma community in Romania. The Gabori consider themselves to be distinct group, clearly different from other Roma or the non-Roma. In spite of the policies of the communist state, and the post 1989 transformations in the Romanian society, they try to maintain a clear group identity, described as being based around: kinship relations, a dialect of Romani language heavily influenced by Hungarian, and a set of values/ ways of behaving like a “true Gabor”. A very distinct transformation in the community is conversion to the Adventist church, a process which started during the communist period, and accelerated after the fall of the regime. In his account, the interviewee was very skilled in making use of

literary devices, and genres, including an oracy genre well known in the Gabori Adventist community, that of the “religious testimony”. My analysis will show how this very specific narrative can be linked to larger social phenomena, collective memory and cultural heritage.

Natasha Mayo, Helen Walsh, CJ O'Neill
Cardiff Metropolitan University and the Centre of Ceramic Art, York (UK)
Occupational Folklore: Archiving Embodied Encounters
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There is an embodied choreography that takes place in the practice of ceramics, a tacit knowledge honed through repetitive and focused activities that can inform an artist's subsequent encounters, weaving experiences in the studio into the life that surrounds it. Herein lies the discipline's occupational folklore, stories held in fingertips and extended through the body's movement into the world.

This presentation identifies examples of occupational folklore told through two key sources: WA Ismay's historic correspondence from Wakefield to the potter Michael Cardew in Abuja, Nigeria, and the Flightlines oral histories project, contemporary stories told by women in the wider field of ceramics. They are brought together to demonstrate continuity in behaviors, actions and beliefs surrounding clay practice.

Both sources capture life stories through the intimacy of conversation, a distinct mode of telling, where two people come together not simply to record life narratives but foster a relationship over time. With familiarity, their thoughts become increasingly shorthand due to the lessening need for fuller explanations, and a co-construction takes place, where the transference of ideas can be seen as playing a compelling role in constructing meaning.

Sara Arroja-Schürmann
University of Geneva (Switzerland)
**Vassili Grossman: War Correspondent and Author
of Historical Testimonies**
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Vasily Grossman, full name Vasily Semyonovich Grossman, was a Soviet Jewish war reporter and writer. Born in Berdichev (in present-day Ukraine) in 1905 and died in Moscow in 1964, he is best known and recognized for his novel *Life and Fate*, which, completed in 1962, was initially censored by the Soviet regime.

However, this presentation will focus on his journalistic activity that allowed him to become the first person to publicly describe and condemn the Nazi extermination camps.

In 1943-44, when he accompanied the Soviet Red Army in its attempts to liberate Eastern Europe (*Operation Bagration*) from the Nazis, he was among the first war correspondents to enter the Majdanek camp (present-day Poland) as well as what remained of the Treblinka extermination camp (also in present-day Poland) destroyed by the Nazis.

It is in his poignant essay, *Треблинский ад* (=The Hell of Treblinka), that he brought together several testimonies of victims who managed to survive. By transcribing those testimonies into writing, he became a symbol of truth and justice for all victims of Nazism, in general, and the Shoah, in particular.

Although traumatized for life by what he himself witnessed, his courage and his determination to have the truth recognized in the world have made it possible to assert a historical reality and bring evidence for the *Nuremberg Trials*.

The confessions of such violence and atrocities made the reality almost unbelievable. As Grossman himself said: *"I could not believe the unthinkable things I was told. But when I heard these stories repeated by eyewitnesses, when I realized that these witnesses saw them as mere details, entirely in keeping with everything else about the hellish regime of Treblinka, then I came to believe that what I had heard was true"* (from *The Hell of Treblinka*).

Konrad Gunesch

Woxsen University, Hyderabad (India)

**Academic, Artistic and Athletic Bestsellers Narrating Protagonists'
Autobiographies and Autoethnographies: Print-Page-Tuners via Multiple
and Interconnected Media**
konradgunesch@hotmail.com

Three American, Australian and European bestsellers that fuse their protagonists' academic, artistic and athletic life story aspects, are analyzed as instances of autobiographical and autoethnographic narration techniques within their main storylines. Erich Segal's *The Class* (1985) traces five 1958 Harvard graduates, uniting their life stories across all three of those story aspects. Tom McNab's *Flanagan's Run* (1982) fictionalizes a Trans-America three-month marathon prize race amidst the Great Depression, the running protagonists adding academic and artistic abilities to their athletic moves. And Sophie Gallois's *Genius* (1995) anticipates modern searches for human ingenuity across those three aspects of human endeavor. All three novels narrate their main protagonists' lives in other media that are then described in the books, such as newscasts, television programs, diary entries, phone conversations, and letter correspondences, and even prominent historical voices when interacting with politicians or actors. This approach is original, since 1) rarely are academic, artistic and athletic pursuits combined within several characters of one novel; 2) such pursuits usually form the core story, while here they are narrated as autobiographical and autoethnographic experiences of the characters via other print, film, or music media, that the protagonists partly produce themselves; 3) the limited number of protagonists,

across three novels, their tripartite areas of noteworthiness, and the multiple-media reporting of their achievements makes for focused contrasts and comparisons across novels and personas. My analysis reveals that the autobiographical and autoethnographic elements are all the more impactful and memorable due to their mix of personal voice, omniscient author, and reported-media-narration, rather than following just one of these styles. This technique is thus recommended for novelists, playwrights, and screenwriters, and in extension thus also for actors, directors and producers, since the added layers of media can be easily described, produced, and enacted within the respective artworks and genres, and with minimal added financial and organizational investment.

13:15-14:45 Session 7. School and Leisure? Images of Past Female Childhood Education as Projected in (Auto-)Biographical English Texts

Paloma Tejada-Caller

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Home Education at the Turn of the 19th Century. An Analysis of Female Childhood Accounts in English Biographical Discourse

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The aim of this contribution is to analyze the representation of past female education emerging from real biographical discourse. More particularly, focusing on the childhood stages of late eighteenth-century British women's lives as narrated in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB), four key issues of historical home education (requiring further study, according to Bellaigue, 2018:6) will be linguistically addressed: 1) the impact of the large family on educational practices; 2) the question of agency and autonomous learning; 3) the educational and authorizing role of mothers; and 4) the existence at the time of a flexible and inclusive conception of instruction and learning. After a detailed analysis of the collective picture deriving from ninety-eight ODNB biographies of women born during the decade 1791-1800, results seem to suggest that education was not a mandatory theme in the narrative of late eighteenth-century women's lives (only 60% of biographies in the corpus include relevant information); and second, female home education rarely constitutes an unproblematic alternative to school education. Moreover, specific findings reveal significant data referring to issues 2 and 3 above. Transitivity patterns seem to indicate the active role of fathers over mothers in the education of daughters and the active role of girls themselves in their learning process. Both lines seem to deviate from conventional assumptions. Lastly, a lexical approach to variation in educational terms, mostly focused on the opposition between *education* and *upbringing*, along with a frame semantic analysis of the corpus may also throw some light on the wider historical definition of girls' education.

Julia López Narváez

Universidad Complutense Madrid (Spain)

**To Be Educated or to Attend School: Agency in Female Childhood
Education in Biographies from 1891 to 1900**

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Considering that education constitutes one of the main trajectories that shape a life (Entwisle et al 2002), this contribution has the main objective of analysing female education in biographical discourse of female childhoods. The corpus gathered for this objective contains the 382 biographies of women subjects included in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB) for the last decade of the 19th century. The contribution focuses on the projection of two main aspects in biographical discourse: the agency factor in female childhood education at the turn of the century and the potential impact on female education derived from the 1870 Education Act regarding institutionalisation of instruction.

Through a deep scrutiny of keywords and transitivity patterns in the narratives (Halliday, 1985; Idrus et al. 2014; Nuttall, 2019), this contribution provides a linguistic analysis focusing on the agents in education discourse, paying special attention to the social implications in the conceptualisation of female childhood education. Findings seem to imply that education is a central theme in the biographical discourse of female childhoods. The Education Act also seems to alter the education discourse, with an increase of keywords related to institutions. Additionally, results suggest a change of agency in higher education institutions, revealing a correlation between agents and the level of education. Subsidiarily, the analysis also reveals that the First World War shaped—and changed—the education of female narratives from the end of the 19th century into the beginning of the 20th century.

Blanca Fernández-Soriano

Universidad Complutense Madrid (Spain)

**“Literate and Intelligent”?: The Concept of IL/Literacy
in Biographical Discourse Between 1750-1900**

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This analysis aims to explore in linguistic terms the concept of *illiteracy* in the biographical entries of women from the Oxford National Biography Dictionary, the Australian Dictionary of Biography and the Dictionary of Irish Biography between 1750 and 1900, comprised by the research project FemChildLing (PID2020-117973GB-I00). In Australian press, the term *illiteracy* was rarely used until the early 1970s; instead, educators talked about the ability to read and write (Green et al, 1994). Meanwhile, by 1800, only around 40% of the female population in the UK were considered “literate” (Cressy, 1980; Schofield, 1973). Thus, this paper analyses the definitions of *illiteracy* and *literacy* in biographical discourse, and explores, through the use of corpus analysis tools, the ‘aboutness’ of the concepts comparing them to the use of “could (not) read”

or “to be (widely/well) read”, among others. It is suggested that, even though a high percentage of women at the time were illiterate, this conception is not really present in the entries. This might be due to the fact that this information was not collected by biographers as well as to the fact that many of the women portrayed in the entries belonged to higher classes who had more access to education, illustrated by the high frequency of the token “read”. Besides, the concept of *illiteracy* seems to be very close in biographical discourse to the element of “uneducated”.

Nuria Calvo Cortés

Universidad Complutense Madrid (Spain),

Marina Dossena

University of Bergamo (Italy)

**Visions of Late Modern Girls’ Education in Women’s (Auto)Biographies:
The Case of *The Earnest Christian* (1858)**

Nuria Calvo Cortés

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While women’s (auto)biographies do not often include much information regarding their girlhood years, the Late Modern English text analysed in this study (*The Earnest Christian; Memoir, Letters and Journals of Harriet Maria, Wife of the late Rev. Mark R. Jukes*, first published in London in 1858, compiled and edited by the subject’s cousin, Mrs H. A. Gilbert) is uncharacteristic in that respect. The biographical account is interpolated with documents authored by the woman whose biography is presented. In addition, the sections pertaining to childhood and schooling describe both the education that Harriet received and her role as an instructor towards her younger siblings and other children that she taught in a Sunday school and as a governess.

Our analysis will focus on expressions of stance and appraisal, in order to see how the readers’ interpretation of concepts and events is guided in more or less explicit ways. Our preliminary findings suggest that although the two voices in the biography are well intertwined, the biographer tends to be much more evaluative than Harriet herself. The close relationship between the two women appears to have given those evaluations a personal character that may be less frequent in accounts drawn up by biographers who did not know their subjects personally. That is an avenue of further research worth pursuing in future, in order to see if the tendencies observed here are also present in those texts and, if they are, to what extent the gender of the subjects affects such linguistic choices.

**15:00-16:15 Session 8. Rewriting Womanhood:
Gendered Identities in Life Writing**

Eleonora Savvidou

Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama (UK)

**Performing Lives: Socially Contingent Re-Imaginations of the Life
of Jacqueline du Pré**

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Examinations of life writing from the 19th century to the present day reveal that lives of the past are (re)imagined in relation to the socio-cultural context of the time in question. Following the chronological tradition of 19th century accounts, the 1980s biographical turn led to the abandonment of metanarrative approaches. Concerning the present day, Alan Kirby's concept of pseudo-modernism marks a shift from author-centric to audience-centric narratives, denoting a return to the cohesiveness of grand narrative structures (Kirby, 2013). Taking the opening scenes from Cathy Marston's ballet *'The Cellist'* as case studies, I aim to examine the social implications of narrating Du Pré's life through audio-visual narrative structures.

Marston's production, which thrives on the seamless merging of the past and the present, the fictional and the historical, evokes interrelations between life writing and social transformation. Not only does it resonate with features of Kirby's pseudo-modern age, placing it within the context of our own culture, but also demonstrates how the narration of lives through performance can imbue social consequences. I argue that *'The Cellist'* offers an example of how audience members can participate in a receptive process through structures of narrative empathy evoked by features of the production. In line with the early modern concept of the 'self' as a communal, rather than autonomous, construct, I suggest that through an intricate synergy between audio-visual re-imaginings and historical undertones Marston's production can be conceived as an amalgamation of the past and present with regards to both the re-telling of du Pré's life and life writing as a genre.

Irina Kovalenko

York University, Toronto (Canada)

**Femininity, Modernism and Subversion in Women's Visual
and Verbal Life Writing**

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The aim of the presentation is to examine verbal and visual media employed by artist women in their life writing and to analyze how they used it to disrupt the canon to create their visual and verbal self-portraits. The paper will offer an interdisciplinary analysis of the autobiographical sources and visual arts to explore the changing notions of femininity and self-representation at the turn of the century, associated with Modernism, when new art forms, media and avenues became available to women. By

studying the ways that artistic women represented themselves in their life writing, it will discover their contributions to Modernism and subversion of existing hierarchies and traditions. The dissertation will examine how these women stood out among their contemporaries as remarkable contributors to Modernism and how they achieved success and world renown despite the societal barriers and obstacles they had to face.

Petra Bozsoki

Eötvös Loránd University (Hungary)

The Concept of Wifehood in Emília Kánya's Memoir

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Emília Kánya's name (1828–1905) holds a significant place in both women's and press history of 19th-century Hungary. She was the first woman editor of a periodic in the Habsburg Empire: she succeeded in publishing and managing her weekly, *Családi Kör* (Family Circle) through a twenty-year long period (1860–1880). As a result, she became the first middle-class woman in the country to earn a livelihood in the literary and editorial field. Meanwhile, she had eight children and divorced her first husband, an act that was unusual in that period.

The presentation analyzes her autobiography, *Réges-régi időkről* (On Age-old Times), focusing on the construction of her role as a wife. This interpretation does not seek to establish an image of the wife Emília Kánya may have been, nor does it aim to enquire the nature of her marriages to her two husbands. Instead, the analysis remains text-centred, with a particular focus on its rhetoric, and adopts a gender-specific approach from a feminist perspective.

First the purpose and genre patterns of the memoir are examined in the paper. Second, it explores how the autobiographical narrator constructs her role as a wife. Finally, the findings are situated within the broader context of the author's oeuvre. The presentation argues that while motherhood is emphasized, wifehood is notably understated in Kánya Emília's life writing. Its taciturnity on this subject carries particular significance and frames the autobiographical self as a solitary fighter in both her marriage and in the broader context of her life

Sunday, 1 June
(Zoom Sessions)

**10:00-11:30 Session 8. Reframing the Personal:
Cultural Displacement and Fragmented Identity**

Vikram Bhardwaj

Government College Sanjauli (India)

Narrating Lives Across Continents:

The Story of Satyanand Stokes (1882-1946)

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This paper explores Asha Sharma's biography "*An American in Gandhi's India: The Biography of Satyanand Stokes*" as a powerful narrative of cross-cultural identity, political commitment, and transformative personal journeys. Satyanand Stokes, an American who renounced his Western privileges to embrace Indian life, became a pivotal figure in India's independence movement. His story serves as a compelling case study of how individual experiences intersect with collective historical narratives.

Through the lens of storytelling, biography, and (auto)ethnography, this paper examines how Asha Sharma reconstructs Stokes' life, highlighting the nuanced dynamics of identity formation and resistance. The biography not only chronicles his transition from a privileged American to an Indian nationalist but also captures the socio-political complexities of colonial India. By engaging with primary sources, including letters, diaries, and interviews, Sharma employs narrative strategies that foreground Stokes' voice while framing his experiences within the broader context of Gandhian activism.

Furthermore, the paper investigates how the act of storytelling has contributed to preserving Stokes' legacy, particularly in Himachal Pradesh, where he championed the welfare of apple growers and rural communities. His contributions to agricultural reform and local development continue to resonate in the region's cultural memory.

This study situates Stokes' biography within the discourse of life writing, emphasizing the significance of individual narratives in understanding historical transformations. By analyzing the intersections of personal agency and collective resistance, it underscores the role of storytelling in preserving and interpreting the past.

Nesrine Youssef

The High Institute of Social Sciences and Education of Gafsa (Tunisia)

**"A Masterpiece of Nothing": The Subversion of Autobiographical
Narratives in Jonas Mekas' *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw
Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (2000)**

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In *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (2000), Jonas Mekas challenges the conventions of self-writing by reconfiguring the conventions of

autobiography-writing. This paper argues that Mekas' rejection of chronology, as visible in splicing decades of footage "by chance, the way [he] found them on the shelf" challenges Philippe Lejeune's "autobiographical pact," and points to the illusion of a coherent written/filmed self. In his rejection of a chronological narrative, Mekas splices together his footage based solely on its placement on his shelves. In here, Mekas's method subverts Philippe Lejeune's autobiographical pact and thus challenges the notion that personal memory can be ordered in a linear progression. In fact, Mekas constructs a selfhood of gaps and traces, wherein his identity emerges not through chronological narrative flow but through the recollection of ephemeral moments. Moreover, Mekas's editing process, dictated by whim and chance, echoes Paul de Man's notion of autobiography as "de-facement," which not only emphasizes that meaning is fluid and perpetually deferred but also highlights the artifice of autobiographical writing, for it is a mere act of editing. By dismissing the need for dramatic events and proclaiming his film "a masterpiece of nothing," Mekas valorizes the mundane and the everyday, and thus suggesting that life's ordinary moments are imbued with their own aesthetic and existential significance. The film's focus on "*nothing very important*" becomes an ethical stance, which resists the grand narratives' demand for unity and cohesion. For Mekas, displacement, his exile from Lithuania, has made his life a palimpsest of provisional belonging. Thus, his camera does not document grand events but "*little daily scenes*," where Paradise flickers in the mundane. Indeed, Mekas refuses to consider himself a filmmaker in the process of cinematic creation but he rather views himself as an immigrant with a camera. Mekas often breaks the fourth wall and thus implying a sense of immediacy. Indeed, Mekas' direct address to viewers "*you have to know how to read these images*" and ironic nod to "*all those French guys*" expose the artifice of autobiographical writing and authority, and undermines the conventional authority of cinematic narration. Furthermore, his persistent self-reflection and uncertainty about his origins, coupled with his sense of displacement, articulate the immigrant experience. In brief, Mekas uses film not as a tool for constructing seemingly authentic self-narratives, but as a means of reclaiming identity amid exile. In doing so, he challenges established cinematic and autobiographical theories, urging a re-evaluation of what constitutes authentic self-representation.

Wei H. Kao

National Taiwan University (Taiwan)

**Frustrated Men and Post-dramatic Narratives in Conor McPherson's
Three Irish Monologue Dramas**

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Conor McPherson (1971--), known for his prolific writing of monologue dramas and the recipient of many prestigious awards in his theatre career, has been praised by Emilie Pine as "perhaps the most internationally recognized of Ireland's monologist playwrights." The attention he garnered was partly due to the number of monologue plays he wrote since studying at University College Dublin, but more significantly, because of his unceasing exploration of the emotional trauma experienced by middle-class or working-class men who are expected to be the stronghold of their family and society. These men may put on a brave face in public, while their wounded masculinity, sometimes unnoticed, may result in their being alienated, lonely, silent, or falling to pieces.

Research on McPherson's works, including his monologue, chamber, and screenplays, has been extensive. However, his plays deserve more attention for how they present diverse masculinities—whether unfulfilled, injured, or overbearing—through detailed delineations of interior mental activities. In particular, his monologue dramas differ from traditional storytelling, which usually focuses on personal points of view and experiences. Instead, the interior monologues illuminate the complexity of masculinity experienced by the protagonists themselves, yet observed—with a certain distance—by the audience. This essay will apply Hans-Thies Lehmann's theory of post-dramatic theatre to analyze McPherson's narrative strategies. It will explore how, following Brian Singleton's argument, monologue plays serve as a mirror reflecting contemporary Irish masculinities in crisis, while also shedding light on how McPherson's works represent a radical departure from existing conventions. The three plays include *Rum and Vodka* (1992), *The Good Thief* (1994) and *St Nicholas* (1997).

Eva Patsovska-Ivanova

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski (Bulgaria)

**Life-History as an Adventure Gamebook: On a Narratological Strategy
in Saša Stanišić's Novel *Where You Come From***

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Autobiographical writing has always played an important role in literature. A very popular form of temporary autobiographical writing is autofictional writing, which enables the author to blur the lines between personal biography and fiction and to create a kind of story that challenges the reader to rethink their reading of reality. An important part of this approach represents the art of narrating, that is to say, the narratological frame and perspective of the text.

In his autofictional novel *Where you come from* (2019) the Bosnian-German author Saša Stanišić uses many different approaches to narration, including the embedded gamebook *Dragon's Hoard*, which has a crucial role in the novel. By using this method of narration Stanišić adapts the features and means of expression typical of gamebooks to the autofictional search for origins and identity of the narrator's story in order to show how subjective the view on biographical facts and the identity question can be.

The proposed report aims to examine Stanišić's narrative strategy in his novel *Where you come from* and to find out how it corresponds to the author's goals, while at the same time focusing on its influence on the autofictional text itself. The study is based on some fundamental narratological texts (Genette, Altmann, Nünning etc.) as well as on some new studies on the influence of gaming on writing (Albrecht/Conrad etc.).

12:00-13:30 Session 9. Narrating the Researcher:
Reflexivity and Identity in Practice

Gareth Davies, Jon Hall

The Open University (UK)

**Reflexive Narratives of Impact: Leveraging Autoethnography
to Illuminate Research Outcomes**

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Autoethnography – a method in which researchers critically examine their personal narratives – has recently gained traction as a means of evidencing "impact" in academic and practice-based research. Yet the literature highlights a gap in practical frameworks and best practices for using autoethnographic techniques to demonstrate how scholarship influences individuals, communities, and policies. This paper situates autoethnography within (auto)biographical and (auto)ethnographic traditions, arguing that researchers' first-person accounts can vividly capture often-overlooked dimensions of change, including personal transformation, emergent community engagement, and shifts in organisational culture.

Drawing on life-history perspectives and reflexive writing practices, the paper explores how embedding oneself in the evaluation process generates a deeply situated understanding of a project's social, cultural, and emotional outcomes. It also examines methodological and ethical tensions: critics dismiss autoethnography as too subjective, while proponents highlight its capacity to expose nuanced causal pathways that standard metrics or large-scale evaluations might miss.

By surveying existing studies and foregrounding the experiences of scholar-practitioners, the paper introduces the "Impact Engineer's Logbook" – a systematic reflection tool for capturing real-time narratives whenever researchers engage with stakeholders. The logbook compiles a living record of how research activities shape diverse audiences, offering tangible evidence of ongoing beneficial change. Ultimately, this inquiry calls for a broader recognition of narrative-based impact measurement – complementing quantitative approaches to illuminate the lived resonances of scholarly work. It contributes to ongoing discussions at the intersection of life writing, reflexive inquiry, and storytelling, expanding the toolkit for capturing and communicating the significance of research.

Merve Eryoldas

Georg-August-University of Göttingen (Germany)

Pauline Schöning

Free University of Bolzano (Italy)

**Opportunities and Limitations of the Narrative Interview
for the Research Practice**

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"Openness in the researcher is a willingness and ability to go through a learning process, to change one's knowledge (and oneself?)" (Kleining 2001: 30). This attitude

is essential for reconstructive interpretative researchers. It requires putting aside scientific assumptions and everyday prejudices and shaping the research process through the relevance systems of everyday actors in order to understand new social phenomena. The biographical-narrative interview consistently implements the principle of openness. It allows scope for creativity and gives interviewees a sense of control and security. However, openness applies not only to the content of the interview, but also to the entire research process - from the choice of interview location to the timing and duration of the interview. In practice, this orientation reaches its limits. Especially when interviewees have experienced a loss of control, openness can lead to methodological adjustments. On the one hand, relinquishing control triggers irritation and queries; on the other hand, too much pre-structuring leads to distortions of knowledge. How do we deal with this dilemma? Is it one at all or is it already an initial realization of the process? And what does this mean for us as researchers? How far should we take a step back and where are the limits? In this article, we reflect on our experiences and propose an expanded understanding of openness in order to provide impulses for research practice.

Kleining, G. (2001): Offenheit als Kennzeichen entdeckender Forschung. In: Kontrapunkt, Vol. 1: Methodologie qualitativer Sozialforschung. Münster: Kontrapunkt, 27–36.

Barbra Wallace

Independent Researcher (UK)

Narrative Research as Agentic Enchantment

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This paper depicts the beginning of my transitional journey - of leaving my role as a lecturer in higher education. I depart with a desire to become a writer of creative nonfiction.

Rather than commencing with a pre-determined research question, gathering data, analysing that data, and drawing conclusions, the process I cultivate resembles the notion of '*backward*' research. The latter begins with a desired outcome, reveals information required to achieve that outcome, and designs the research accordingly.

In the paper I depict the initial stage of the research process. It draws learning from the narrative approach adopted in my doctoral thesis, my lecturer experience, and an enduring commitment to promoting social justice. The paper encapsulates how, I am pursuing my desire of becoming a social justice writer.

The methodology that emerges embraces Foucauldian thinking on power and discourse fused with Michael White's narrative therapy conceptualisation of 'problem' narratives, counter narratives, and external / internal witnessing. It also envelops principles that often typify elements of creative nonfiction – such as the blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction.

Stories are a fundamental constituent of our human experience. I have been fascinated by their power from an early age. By engaging storytelling in various guises, (including dance, song, film and letter writing), the artistic performances encapsulate and elicit metaphors that challenge 'problematic' narratives and embolden nascent rich

counter-narratives. External witnessing involved reinforces such counter-narrative development.

The paper seeks to inspire students, researchers, educators, and those interested in harnessing storytelling in political activism.

Katie Crompton, Alessandra Fasulo
University of Warwick (UK)
Teacher; Mindfulness Instructor; Researcher.
My Multiple Identities at School
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This paper documents and reflects on the personal experience of researching and teaching mindfulness in schools. An autoethnographic journal, produced in the form of recorded field notes and written reflections of these field notes, developed over the course of several months of my PhD, during which time I was researching and teaching the mindfulness programme, Paws b, in two junior schools in the United Kingdom (UK). These subjective journal entries explored factors I felt shaped my delivery. I explore the conflicting roles I experienced as a researcher and mindfulness teacher, alongside my identity as a former primary school teacher. This paper demonstrates a journey of self-discovery through the experimentation and adaptation of how I presented myself to staff and pupils. I explore the challenges which arose from being an external mindfulness teacher, the isolation I experienced and the conflicting priorities between teaching staff and myself. My journal entries documented my observations of children's varying engagement in the course, and how this engagement changed, as I became more comfortable and confident in my role as the mindfulness teacher.

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