

IABA World 2024 Conference
in collaboration with The Centre for Studies in Memory and Literature (UI)
with the assistance of Reykjavík City of Literature (UNESCO)
and EDDA: Centre of Excellence (UI)

Fragmented Lives

University of Iceland, Reykjavík

Location: Ceremonial Hall in Main Building (Aðalbygging)
and rooms in Veröld hús Vigdísar (V)

Programme

12 June

8.30 Registration

Main Building – in front of Ceremonial Hall
(Registration desk will be in Veröld Ground Floor after 10.30)

9 Welcome and Keynote:

Main Building – Ceremonial Hall

Welcome by Ólöf Garðarsdóttir, Dean of Humanities

Chair: Gunnþórunn Guðmundsdóttir

Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir

Assembling a Life: Writing Auto/Biography from Fragmentary Stories

Abstract:

Letters and correspondences of 19th-century women have been the core of my studies since the late 1990s. On the one hand, they have been my venue for women's voices and experiences when exploring their perception of female education, equality, politics, and gender in 19th-century Iceland. As other contemporary auto/biographical writings from the 19th century are scarce letters and correspondence are of great importance. On the other hand, I have used correspondence as core texts when writing about individual women, the most extensive being the biography of Sigríður Pálsdóttir (1809–1871) that will be published later this year. Sigríður Pálsdóttir is neither a known person in Icelandic history nor is she the usual protagonist for biographical writing. She did however write 250 letters to her brother for more than half a century, 1817–1871. These letters are the core of the biography.

However, the letters alone do not suffice to write her biography. The surviving correspondence with her brother is one-sided and fragmentary, it has gaps and silences. The same is true with several hundred letters from other family members to her brother. Furthermore, historical (scholarly) biographies of Icelandic women are still very few, and hardly any about women who lived during the first part of the century.

I have theorised Sigríður's letters as an unforeseeable narrative, life as it passed by. It is I, the historian, who create the coherent life story by assembling not only her letters but also other correspondences (especially women's), various types of memoirs, official documents, and eulogies of women (printed as well as manuscripts) that have, unexpectedly, turned out to be an important source on women's lives in 19th century Iceland.

When thinking about the sources I have been using I find useful the concept of *archival assemblages*, as theorised by Maria Tamboukou (*Epistolary Narratives* 2024), in the sense of being the creation of researchers: "when they bring together documents, objects, as well as various user-generated materials from diverse archives" (55). Hence, in my talk, I will discuss the challenges of assembling a woman's life from fragmentary sources and in particular the *archival assemblages* I have created to construct the life of Sigríður Pálsdóttir.

Bio:

Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir is a Professor of Women's and Gender History at the University of Iceland. She has published works on women's and gender history, biography, correspondence, and (women's) historiography. Among her works in Icelandic is the monograph *Nútímans konur* (Women of Modernity, 2011) in which she relies heavily on correspondence when exploring women's education and the construction of gender in late 19th century Iceland. In 2020 she co-authored the award-winning book *Konur sem kjósa. Aldarsaga* (A Centenary of Women Voters, 2020) in which the authors study women's citizenship and agency in 20th-century Iceland. Among her works in English are articles in *Life Writing* (2010, 2015) and *Women's History Review* (2018). She co-edited *Biography, Gender, and History: Nordic Perspectives* (2016) and wrote a chapter in *The Palgrave Handbook of Auto/Biography* (2020). Erla Hulda is now working on two projects related to correspondence and life writing. First, it is the publication (2023) of 50 love letters written by an Icelandic student in Copenhagen to his fiancé in Iceland, 1825-1832 – before and after he betrayed her. Second, for publication in 2024, the biography of Sigríður Pálsdóttir (1809-1871) who wrote 250 letters to her brother for half a century but did otherwise nothing that, until recently, made her worthy of a biography. For both these cases only one side of the correspondence has survived.

10-10.30 Coffee

Main Building – in front of Ceremonial Hall

10.30-12 Parallel Sessions:

P1: Potentialities of Narrative Self-Fragmentation

V023

Chair: Alexandra Effe and Regina Fabry

Melissa Schuh: *Asian American Voices: (Dis)Affection, Self-Fragmentation and Form*

Abstract:

Alongside popular media representations of Asian American lives, such as the 2018 blockbuster romantic comedy *Crazy Rich Asians*, life writing by Asian American authors has garnered critical interest and acclaim in recent years. The particular experiences of racism, discrimination, and othering that Asian Americans face are often addressed in such writing, for example in the context of the model minority myth of Asians as supposedly more successful and hard-working immigrants which places Asian Americans in a racial hierarchy towards other racially minoritised groups.

Taking the essay collection *Minor Feelings* (2020) by Cathy Park Hong and the graphic memoir *In Limbo* (2023) by Deb JJ Lee as case studies, this paper will explore the relationship between a sense of self-fragmentation and the affective experiences of immigration and racial othering due to related trauma and mental illness. While the essay and the graphic memoir engage in different formal and generic conventions of contemporary life writing, the examples of Hong's and Lee's work serve to illustrate how Asian American authors use forms of life writing that provide narrative possibilities of representing lives that challenge expectations of autobiographical unity and cohesion of the self. Rather than adhering to such conventional tropes of autobiography, Asian American life writing foregrounds the difficulty, ambiguity, and disruption of lives through narrative representations of self-fragmentation, thus making readable otherwise overlooked or neglected experiences of othering and self. Drawing on theories of orientalism and Xine Yao's concept of disaffection (2021), this paper will discuss the specific affordances that the essay form and the graphic memoir offer with regard to rendering fragmentation as well as dissolution and loss of self in the face of anti-Asian racism and trauma.

Bio:

Melissa Schuh completed her PhD titled 'The (Un-)Making of the Novelist's Identity' in the English department at Queen Mary University of London in 2019 and is a lecturer in English Literature at Kiel University. She's deputy editor for *C21 Literature: Journal of 21st Century Writings*. Her research interests include English and German contemporary fiction, autobiography and life writing, Brexit in literature as well as seriality and Modernism. Recent publications include a book chapter, co-authored with Ricarda Menn, on 'The Autofictional in Serial, Literary Works' in *The Autofictional* (Palgrave 2022), edited by Alexandra Effe and Hannie Lawlor (Palgrave, 2022) and a book chapter on 'Fictionalisation of Testimony', co-authored with Carmen-Francesca Banciu and Alexandra Effe, in *The Palgrave Handbook of Testimony and Culture* (2023), edited by Sara Jones and Roger Woods.

Alexandra Effe: *Self-Fragmentation as Therapy: Christine Brooke-Rose's Life, End of (2006) and Methodological Implications for the Medical Humanities.*

Abstract:

In medical practice, self-fragmentation is usually conceived of as an ailment or deficiency to be remedied and therapeutic measures primarily aim to preserve or restore a patient's psychological (and physiological) unity. Important questions have been raised, however, in philosophy, narrative theory, and also by a range of literary texts, about whether coherent and linear self-experience are inherently valuable. These questions are particularly pertinent in the context of the medical humanities, and within this field for approaches like narrative therapy and creative writing for therapeutic means.

This paper focuses on Christine Brooke-Rose's literary experiments with self-fragmentation in order to explore new methodological directions for the medical humanities. In the 1990s, Brooke-Rose develops a narrative mode void of personal pronouns and possessives for an unconventional autobiographical book published under the title *Remake* (1996). In the early 2000s, when she suffers from a degenerative disease of the nervous system, she writes about herself in the same distancing and fragmenting narrative voice—as "the old lady," "the invalid," even "the cripple," and also as "the author" and "the character." What starts as a private writing exercise, and what she speaks of as a "therapeutic memoir," is in 2006 published under the title *Life, End of*. Based also on an analysis of manuscript revisions, the paper shows how Brooke-Rose's book formally reflects a split in self-experience

brought about by her disease, and suggests that, in her case, self-fragmentation in writing constitutes a productive way of engaging with her illness. Taking its departure in this insight, the paper ends on a methodological reflection, from which it derives tentative suggestions for productive cross-transfers between literary studies, cognitive sciences, and medical practice.

Bio:

Alexandra Effe is Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Oslo, where she teaches anglophone and comparative literature. She is the author of *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Narrative Transgression* (Palgrave, 2017), co-editor of *The Autofictional* (Palgrave, 2022) and of *Autofiction, Emotions, and Humour* (Routledge, 2023). She has published articles and book chapters on narrative and cognitive theory, twenty-first-century literature, postcolonial literature, and testimonial writing. As Visiting Scholar at the Oxford Centre for Life-Writing, she co-convened the project “Autofiction in Global Perspective.” At the University of Oslo, she leads an interdisciplinary project on “Creativity and Crisis.”

Hanna Meretoja: *Fragmented Life-Writing in Counter-Narratives of Cancer*

Abstract:

This paper explores how counter-narratives of cancer problematize dominant illness narratives not only by questioning certain tropes and metaphors, such as the widespread metaphor of battle, but also through narrative forms that challenge the expectation of a linear and coherent narrative that proceeds from the beginning through a middle to an end. In this paper, Meretoja analyzes fragmented illness narratives, such as Annie Ernaux’s *L’usage de la photo* and Anne Boyer’s *The Undying*, which resist a coherent narrative form by blending prose to lyrical fragments and autobiographical essayistic reflections. Meretoja also discusses her own process of writing a fragmented counter-narrative of cancer, which she sees as part of this tradition. Her novel *Elotulet (The Night of Ancient Lights, 2022)* examines getting a cancer diagnosis as a trauma that is difficult to locate in time and space as it does not concern a specific event but rather the possibility of a lost future. She discusses the importance of narrative self-fragmentation for example in relation to the need to move away from the neo-liberal idea of atomistic individuals fully in charge of their lives towards acknowledging our shared vulnerability and interdependency. The paper addresses the need for narrative imaginaries that might help us accept that we are all destructible embodied beings who are neither fully transparent to ourselves nor in control of our lives and life-stories. It suggests that fragmented life-writing can be an act of resistance, connection, and hope – particularly insofar as it holds open possibilities linked to laying bare our shared vulnerability and accepting the fundamental randomness of life.

Bio:

Hanna Meretoja is Professor of Comparative Literature and Director of *SELMA: Centre for the Study of Storytelling, Experientiality and Memory* at the University of Turku, and she runs the research project *Counter-Narratives of Cancer: Shaping Narrative Agency* (Academy of Finland, 2023–2027). Her monographs include *The Ethics of Storytelling: Narrative Hermeneutics, History, and the Possible* (2018, Oxford UP) and *The Narrative Turn in Fiction and Theory* (2014, Palgrave Macmillan). She has co-edited *The Use and Abuse of Stories: New Directions in Narrative Hermeneutics* (2023, Oxford UP), *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma* (2020), and *Storytelling and Ethics: Literature, Visual Arts and the Power of Narrative* (2018, Routledge).

Regina Fabry: *Grief and the Prospects of Narrative Self-Fragmentation*

Abstract:

For several decades, philosophical research has developed the view that self-narration contributes to an integrated and unified sense of self by establishing coherent connections between personal past experiences. Arguably, it would be particularly important to actualise the integrative and unifying potential of self-narration in cases of grief. In these cases, the bereaved's relational sense of self needs to be re-negotiated and re-structured as a result of the irrevocable loss of a significant person. Indeed, recent philosophical accounts of grief highlight the important role of coherent self-narration for maintaining a diachronic sense of self after transformative loss experiences. Against this view, I question that coherence is an attribute of self-narration that is appropriate to the re-negotiation of self-world entanglements after the death of a significant person.

In this presentation, I will seek to establish three interrelated claims. First, grief experiences are often fragmented, confusing, and blurry and therefore defy the possibility to be represented in coherent narrative form. Second, autobiographical memories of the relationship between the bereaved and the deceased often remain fragmentary, incomplete, and associative. Accordingly, practices of remembering and commemorating the deceased require acts of self-narration that do not gloss over their fragmentary and associative character. Finally, it follows from these two claims that modes of narrative fragmentation offer rich opportunities for making sense of grief experiences and practices of remembering and commemoration. At the same time, narrative self-fragmentation helps negotiate cultural norms and expectations about grief, commemoration, and the importance of a robust diachronic sense of self. I will illustrate these considerations about the fragmentary characteristics of grief narratives by considering Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's (2021) *Notes on Grief* as a case study. Together, these three claims, if successful, advance the view that narrative self-fragmentation is appropriate, perhaps even beneficial for practices of grieving.

Bio:

Regina Fabry is a philosopher of mind and cognition with expertise in empirically informed research on 4E cognition and enculturation. She is a Lecturer and ARC Discovery Early Career Research Awardee in the Department of Philosophy at Macquarie University. Her research interests include narrative practices, literacy, sense of self, mental disorders, grief, mind-wandering, mathematical cognition, and human-technology interactions. Currently, Regina works on her ARC DECRA project "Living to tell, telling to live: Experience, narrative and the self." In this project, she explores the relationship between lived experience and self-narrative by integrating work in philosophy, the cognitive sciences, and cognitive narratology. Recent publications include the peer-reviewed journal articles 'What Is Self-Narrative?' (*Inquiry*, 2023), 'Distributed Autobiographical Memories, Distributed Self-Narratives' (*Mind & Language*, 2023), and 'What Is the Relationship between Grief and Narrative?' (*Philosophical Explorations*, 2023).

P2: The Diplomat, the Historian, and the Dancer: Fragments of Lives and Performance in the Cold War

V007

Chair: Victoria Phillips

Ingibjörg Björnsdóttir: *Ingibjörg Björnsdóttir: Autobiography of a Teacher, Biography of Icelandic Dance*

Abstract:

Ingibjörg Björnsdóttir, ballet dancer, historian, former headmistress of the National Theatre's Dance Academy, and one of the founders of the National Dance Academy of Iceland will discuss memoir and history. Starting her career at eleven years old in 1953 at the National Theatre's Dance Academy, Ingibjörg became one of the first Icelandic dancers to go abroad to study ballet. Ingibjörg attended the Scottish Ballet School in Edinburgh and passed the Royal Academy of Dance advanced examination in 1962.

After passing the stage branch examination from the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing in 1963, she moved back to Iceland and started teaching at the National Theatre's Academy. After three decades teaching for the Academy, she helped to found the National Dance Academy of Iceland. Alongside her teaching, Ingibjörg was the house choreographer of the National Theatre where she choreographed a number of Icelandic stage productions throughout the years as well as danced in the occasional production for the Iceland Dance Company.

As a member of the board of Theatre and Dance in the Nordic Countries as well as the board of Nordic Council of Dance Research, Ingibjörg has had a tremendous impact on dance research not only in Iceland but also in the Nordic countries. Ingibjörg has always incorporated dance history in her teaching—it was not much of a jump for her when she decided to study history at the University of Iceland. Ingibjörg is currently collecting her life's work on the history of Icelandic dance in the 20th century combined with a collection of interviews with her fellow dancers and dance teachers that she has worked with over the span of her career in the Icelandic dance world. She is working towards publishing this monograph.

Bio:

Born and raised in Reykjavík, Ingibjörg Björnsdóttir has devoted her entire life and work to dance and the advancement of dance education in Iceland. Ingibjörg began teaching in 1965 and in 1985 she became headmistress of the National Theatre's Dance Academy, and the National Dance Academy of Iceland after it was established in 1991. In 2012, Ingibjörg received the Knight's Cross of the Order of the Falcon for her pioneering work in the sphere of dance in Iceland. Ingibjörg received a lifetime achievement award for her work at the 2020 Gríman – the Icelandic Performing Arts Awards organized by the Association of Performing Arts. Despite being past the age of retirement, Ingibjörg's appeared on at the Reykjavík City Theatre during the 2022-2023 season with the Iceland Dance Company in *Ball* by Alexander Roberts and Ásrún Magnúsdóttir.

Veronika Guðmundsdóttir Jónsson: *Dancing on Thin Ice: American Culture for Export and the 1959 'Ballets: USA' Tour in Iceland*

Abstract:

In "Dancing on Thin Ice: American Culture for Export and the 1959 'Ballets: USA' Tour in Iceland," I analyze the political and military situation in Iceland during the 1950's to shed light on the late addition of Iceland to Jerome Robbins's Ballets USA European itinerary, a country of 150,000 people. Sold-out performances demonstrate the positive reaction of a nation that was no stranger to the difficulties of American cultural and political influence. The United States (US) Department of State used Ballets USA and the fame of Jerome Robbins, choreographer of the famous musical *West Side Story*, as Cold War strategy to win over the "hearts and minds" through culture.

The 1950s were a turbulent time in Iceland's relationship with the US following the signing of the 1951 defense agreement and an increased American presence at the Keflavík

air base. Although the Americans sent cultural ambassadors of music and literature, their presence in the Icelandic dance world was virtually non-existent. This is especially interesting considering their ideological Cold War rivals in the USSR did not hesitate to represent their own cultural values through numerous showings and performances of Soviet ballet companies, most notably the Bolshoi Ballet. Following a leftist, anti-American turn in politics in 1956, as well as heightened Cold War tensions all throughout Europe, this imbalance on the cultural front provided an opportunity.

The State Department had already created *Ballets: USA* with Robbins for the specific purpose of furthering American ideological aims in war-torn Europe. Although confused by this late addition, Robbins' enjoyed his time in Iceland and remarked on how well his company was received by the locals. Even some of the Americans' biggest detractors were impressed. Robbins' mission was a success, and despite a continuing fluctuation in sentiment about the United States military presence and politics in Iceland, Robbins made an enduring impact on Icelandic dance.

Bio:

Veronika Guðmundsdóttir Jónsson is a graduate of the London School of Economics' and Columbia University's dual MA/MSc in international history with a focus on dance diplomacy in Iceland during the Cold War. Her dissertation, "Dancing on Thin Ice: American Culture for Export and the 1959 'Ballets: USA' Tour in Iceland," earned distinction. Since graduating, Veronika has been working part-time for the Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís), and as a research assistant for Ingibjörg Björnsdóttir's book. Veronika is currently pursuing a post-graduate diploma in international relations at the University of Iceland to prepare for the pursuit of a PhD.

Victoria Phillips: *Modern Cold War: The Martha Graham Dance Company's 1962 State Department Tour to Finland and the Problem of Martha Graham*

Abstract:

In 1962, modern dancer Martha Graham and her company set out on a United States (US) State Department European tour. Like Iceland for *Ballets: USA*, the State Department added Finland at the last minute. These additions not only beg the question, "Why Iceland?" or "Why Finland?" but also, "Where ballet?" and "Where modern dance?" to reveal US psychological warfare strategy. Yet in addition to the geography of and genre of cultural diplomacy, this paper uses biography to understand "Why" or "Why not" Martha Graham. The paper argues that geography and genre must also be understood in the context of biography to fully unpack the US project of cultural diplomacy and dance as psychwar.

Finland, like Iceland, was a last-minute addition because of Washington's realization of its strategic import, despite its smaller population. Because of Finland's push-me|pull-you political stance towards USSR, and its location on the border, Graham's repertory shed pro-US Americana, and emphasized works that communicated "universal" and humanist tenets. This technique came to be known as "Finlandization."

Where did modern dance fail where could a modern approach to ballet triumph? In 1959, the Soviet Bolshoi Ballet took the West by storm, and the US needed to respond. With less technically advanced classical productions and dancers, the US found sure footing with the creative, individualist approach to ballet and modern dance, thus making Robbins and Graham ideal. Through the modernist approach, the US married ideology with genre as it sought to promote itself as the new, modern state as opposed to the Soviet, with only ballet, steeped in tradition. Yet Graham failed, unlike Robbins.

Martha Graham and Jerome Robbins brought modern approaches to dance with their companies, however as ambassadors they also brought particular attributes to each country. The exploration of Graham's biography demonstrates that the artists as representatives of the US complicate diplomatic histories and the analysis of outcomes.

Bio:

Victoria Phillips is the author of *Martha Graham's Cold War: The Dance of American Diplomacy* (OUP, 2020), which explores political life of modern dancer Martha Graham to promote the United States for every presidential administration from Franklin D. Roosevelt through George H.W. She is a Global Fellow at the Wilson Center, Visiting Fellow at the London School of Economics (LSE), and a graduate of the City University of New York program in Biography and Memoir. At the Oxford University Centre for Life Writing, she is working on her next book under contract, a biography of Eleanor Lansing Dulles. At LSE, Phillips won the 2020 university award for Innovation and Excellence in teaching, and had the honor of supervising dissertations including, "Dancing on Thin Ice: American Culture for Export and the 1959 'Ballets: USA' Tour in Iceland."

P3: Excavating Fragmented Lives in Diaries

V008

Chair: Charles Reeve

Sonia Wilson: *Discarded Diaries and their Afterlives*

Abstract:

Personal diaries are not objects that are meant to have social biographies. Often written in solitude and kept in places to which, the diarist hopes, others have limited access, the diary's value as technology of the self is intimately linked to the monitoring and curtailing of its mobility. Yet, a diary is a thing and things, as John Frow has so neatly put it, "are naturally shifty."¹ Often small and relatively lightweight, the materiality of the diary enables it to leave the context of its keeping with or without the diarist's consent. Upon the diarist's death, shiftiness increases as the diary changes hands and moves to less visited domestic spaces (cellars, garages). Since the turn of the century, diaries have also begun emerging in new and often unexpected places: dumpsters, ebay, piles of confiscated objects at border crossings. This paper will focus on two contexts of finding and the memory work performed by the cultural forms generated by each: *A Life Discarded*, (2016) narrates Alexander Masters' encounter with 148 diary notebooks found in a street skip; Tom Kiefer's photographic project, 'El Sueño americano' (ongoing) displays the pages of a diary recovered from the bins into which guards at the US/Mexican border threw confiscated objects. What new forms of relationality are made possible by these projects? How does the new context of their display intersect with the regimes of value previously accrued to complicate understandings of transmission and social obligation?

Bio:

Sonia Wilson is Senior Lecturer in French Studies and International and Comparative Literature at the University of Sydney. She has published a monograph and numerous articles on late nineteenth and twentieth-century women's diary writing (French language). She is chief investigator for French-language material on the collaborative ARC grant "Opening Australia's Multilingual Archive" (2021-2024).

Davíð Ólafsson: *The Fragmented Identity and Disrupted Life of Jósafat Jónasson*

Abstract:

The National Library of Iceland's Manuscript Collection houses approximately 250 diaries written by individuals from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. While predominantly male, these diarists come from diverse backgrounds, representing various ages, social classes, and economic statuses. These diaries, ranging from a few weeks to several decades in duration, offer insights into different life experiences.

Within this collection, the longest continuous diary was penned by Jósafat Jónasson (1876-1966), known by his pen name Steinn Dofri. Jósafat's early life was marked by significant poverty in the late 19th century. Despite enduring lifelong hardships in Iceland and later in Canada, where he spent most of his adult years, he was a self-taught individual deeply committed to genealogical and historical research. His efforts resulted in a substantial collection of manuscripts and printed materials in these fields. One of the distinctive features of Jósafat's diaries is that he uses various different names for himself and eventually becomes known under one such name, Steinn Dofri, the genealogist. The presentation explores these shifts in names in light of fragmentation of identity, of life and of narrative.

Bio:

Davíð Ólafsson is an associate professor of Cultural Studies at the Faculty of Icelandic and Comparative Cultural Studies, University of Iceland. His primary research interests encompass post-medieval manuscript studies, literacy studies, and contemporary popular culture. He has co-authored notable publications with Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, including 'Minor Knowledge and Microhistory: Manuscript Culture in the Nineteenth Century' (London: Routledge, 2017) and the Icelandic work 'Frá degi til dags: Dagbækur, almanök og veðurbækur 1720–1920' [Day by day: Diaries, almanacs, and weather journals in Iceland 1720-1920] (Reykjavík: University of Iceland Press, 2021). Recently, he edited and contributed to two collections of essays: 'Paper Stories: Paper and Book History in Post-Medieval Europe' (in English, co-edited with Silvia Hufnagel and Þórunn Sigurðardóttir, Gruyter, 2023) and 'Heimsins hnoss: Söfn efnismenningar, menningararfur og merking' (in Icelandic, co-edited with Kristján Mímisson, Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 2022).

Małgorzata Litwinowicz: *Struggling with Yourself: Diaries of Jewish Youth from YIVO Competitions in the Interwar Period*

Abstract:

In the years 1928-1939, YIVO in Vilnius organized three competitions for diaries of Jewish youth. The incoming autobiographies were written by people aged 16-22, in Yiddish and Polish.

The speech focuses on selected autobiographies from post-competition collections in Vilnius (Jakub Bocian, Icchak Rozebaum, Izabela Szejnmanówna, Lila Polakówna and others). The paper will discuss topics present in the autobiographies themselves: the experience of changing identity (from teenagehood to adulthood), relationships with the local environment (Orthodox community, assimilation, Polish neighbors), the experience of the economic crisis of the 1930s (recorded by teenage diarists). The male and female authors of the diaries in question are very different people: some came from relatively well-off families, some experienced extreme poverty and many years of homelessness. These social differences, however, do not invalidate the common experience of young memoirists struggling with questions about their own identity - the affective "I".

In my speech I will also focus on the materiality (explored while working with sources) and recording of selected diaries. The notebook, handwriting, struggling with writing standards, using school and literary clichés will also be the subject of the presentation.

Bio:

Assistant Professor at Institute of Polish Culture (University of Warsaw, Poland). Primary fields of research include 19th century history of Polish and Lithuanian cultures, problems of modernity and modernization, in particular issues related to media transformations and inventiveness. Her research interests include also traditional stories but above all, telling literature. Currently working on a project devoted to “domestication” of the Baltic Sea in Polish culture and the middle-war period and cultural history of national parks in Poland in the same period.

P4: Fragmented Tales of Travels

V107

Chair: Gillian Beattie-Smith

Kevin James: *The Grand Home Tour: Emily Trevenen’s Narrative of Anticipation and Travel*

Abstract:

In August 1817, Emily Trevenen set out from Helston, Cornwall, for a six-week tour in the company of two cousins. The tour took in many districts of England and Scotland. Trevenen, a well-educated and well-connected woman, kept an extensive manuscript diary of her travels, as well as a very different, private journal in which she anticipated her travels. The diary of her tour reveals a style of travel in which the influence of the Grand Tour was in strong evidence. Trevenen gained privileged access to sites and people through letters of introduction and through personal acquaintances, and often invoked formal aesthetic codes in evaluating sights. The tour diary mapped out her primary social and cultural interests and connections. Through journal writing, Trevenen handled her Scottish travels in a manner that defies generalisation; she assimilated elements of travel there into the wider narrative of a British tour, while demarcating some districts of Scotland as distinctive places whose foreignness was narrated in emphatic ways. Read in conjunction with the private diary that prefigured her travels, the account of her tour constitutes part of a complex textual web in which travel motivations, religiosity, and geographies of familiarity and foreignness are handled in nuanced ways.

Bio:

Kevin James holds the Scottish Studies Foundation Chair and is Professor of Modern Scottish History at the University of Guelph. Author of three books including, most recently *Histories, Meanings and Representations of the Modern Hotel* (2018) and co-editor, with Eric G.E. Zuelow, of *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Tourism and Travel*, he has held national and international grants and fellowships, including major grants on Victorian travel writing and on hotel histories. A specialist in modern Scottish tourism and travel history, Kevin James is also Director of the University of Guelph’s Centre for Scottish Studies—the largest such research centre outside Scotland.

Emily Lethbridge: *‘All we saw now was a fragment’: May Morris and her (Icelandic) Travel Journals*

Abstract:

May Morris (1862-1938) is gaining growing recognition for the significant professional achievements of her lifetime. For many decades, her professional successes (e.g. as designer, embroiderer, teacher, writer and editor, and founding member of the Women’s Guild of Arts)

were eclipsed by fanatical interest in her father – poet, socialist and Icelandophile William Morris (1834-1896). Morris's personal life, too, has been invariably presented as an extension of her father's life, perhaps inevitably given that she dedicated much of her lifetime and energy to preserving her father's memory and commemorating his achievements. The longest biographical treatment of her life to date – Jan Marsh's *Jane and May Morris: A Biographical Story, 1839-1938* – was published in 1986. The recent discovery of a series of handsome, hand-written volumes containing accounts of annual summer expeditions that Morris and her partner Mary Frances Vivian Lobb embarked upon from 1919 to 1937, however, add enormous nuance and detail to Marsh's narrative of the last two decades of Morris's life, and unequivocally underline the fragmented nature of any biographical writing project. These expeditions were made to locations around Great Britain (Wales, Lancashire, the Hebrides, Orkney, Herefordshire, Dartmoor, the Scilly Isles) but also, on three occasions in 1924, 1926 and 1931, to Iceland. Singly and collectively, these remarkable volumes communicate Morris's own voice with a sustained focus that was previously unimaginable. Nevertheless, there are still lacunae in them – in their own narrative, as well as in their physical preservation – that cannot be filled. I will endeavour to do two things in this paper. Firstly, I will examine the value of Morris's travel journals as evidence for the last 20 years of her life, taking into account the circumstances of the journals' production and the role that memory played in their writing, as well as considering the ways that travel provided Morris with the freedom to assert herself and her identity on her own terms, out of her father's shadow. Secondly, focusing on the Icelandic volumes, I will consider how Morris positioned herself in the context of a bigger tradition of travel-writing on Iceland (with specific reference to her father's accounts of travel to Iceland in 1871 and 1873), and what consequences lack of knowledge about her travels up until now has had with regard to the fragmentary nature of attention paid to women and travel writing in Iceland and beyond in general.

Bio:

Emily Lethbridge is an associate research professor at the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Research in Reykjavík. She is Principal Investigator of the Icelandic Research Council-funded project "Kvennaspor: Unearthing and Foregrounding Women in Icelandic Saga Landscapes" (2023-2026). Her research explores the role of landscape in medieval Icelandic narrative traditions, as well as 19th- and 20th-century travel-writing about Iceland as responses to and rewritings of these narratives.

<https://www.arnastofnun.is/is/stofnunin/starfsfolk/emily-lethbridge>.

Ingibjörg Ágústsdóttir: *'But amid thy snowfields singing / Still my memories roam': The Diverse Fragments of Isobel Wylie Hutchison's Travel Writings about Iceland*

Abstract:

The Scottish writer Isobel Wylie Hutchison (1889-1982) was a woman of many talents. In addition to writing poetry, fiction, travel books and journal and newspaper articles, she was a botanist, photographer, filmmaker, and watercolour artist. Hutchison went alone on several journeys into the Arctic in the 1920s and 1930s; out of these, her extensive travels in Greenland, Alaska, and the Aleutian Islands, often in precarious conditions, have drawn the greatest interest among scholars.

However, the beginning of Hutchison's Arctic adventure was marked by a journey to Iceland in the summer of 1925, and it was soon after this that she decided to travel further north, travelling to both the Lofoten Islands of Norway and to Greenland in the next few years. Then, in the summer of 1930, she again returned to Iceland. Hutchison's two Iceland journeys

have received little critical attention, but they clearly left a mark on her and were the source for a great deal of her writing in the following years, as she published numerous newspaper and journal articles on Iceland, as well as wrote some poetry and short stories inspired by her Iceland travels.

Hutchison left behind a big archive of material which is comprised of her different writings, her photography, watercolour art, personal diaries, correspondence and more. Here, various diverse fragments can be found relating to Hutchison's experiences of Iceland. To this day, Hutchison remains quite understudied, the major scholarly focus thus far resting on her journeys further north. These journeys are possibly seen as more adventurous and more exotic, part of a larger narrative of Arctic exploration and attracting increased attention today due to her gender. However, scrutinising the fragments of her travel/life writing (including visual art and photography) pertaining to Iceland adds a new dimension and contributes to a more complete understanding of this fascinating woman traveller. Based on extensive archival research, this paper discusses some aspects of Hutchison's Iceland experiences as reflected in these travel/life writing fragments.

Bio:

Ingebjörg Ágústsdóttir is Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor in English at the University of Iceland and holds a Ph.D. in Scottish Literature from the University of Glasgow. Her main research interests are in historical fiction and Scottish literature and she has published on Scottish writing, historical novels and fictional representations of the Tudors and Stuarts in literature and film. Her current research is focused on women's historical fiction alongside working on a funded research project on the Arctic in Scottish literature.

Agnieszka Irena Kaczmarek: *The Fragmented Life of Wanda Rutkiewicz: What is Missing in Her Mountain-Travel Autobiography Na jednej linie (On One Rope)*

Abstract:

In 1986, Polish climber Wanda Rutkiewicz, whose actions altered the history of male-dominated mountaineering, published her first edition of *Na jednej linie* [*On One Rope*], an autobiographical text co-penned by Ewa Matuszewska, without whom the book had not probably been written. In 2017, Anna Kamińska published an extensive biography of the icon of Polish mountaineering, providing answers to some of the questions the readership may ask when perusing the 1986 autobiography that was crafted to produce a given image of the mountaineer Rutkiewicz herself had intended to create. Given that, the original manuscript of *On One Rope* was initially an over three-hundred-page work, "a very personal text, sometimes even exhibitionistic, not hiding the bad sides of mountaineering and the people who practice it" (1982, p. 199). Nevertheless, the final published version of Rutkiewicz's life narrative numbers approximately two hundred pages, so even if one takes into account a different layout or font, it may be claimed that some sections of the final manuscript had been omitted in the final printed work. As Matuszewska testifies (2007, p. 97), "when we were working on the book together, she [Rutkiewicz] wiped out everything in the text that seemed intrusively sentimental".

Thus, by researching first-hand accounts, official reports, interviews, informal notes, and other documents not translated into English, my presentation aims to uncover the fragmented passages of Rutkiewicz's story about her life as a mountaineer, parts that she omitted in the official autobiography, which the mountaineer did not intend to become her legacy.

Bio:

Agnieszka Kaczmarek, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Applied Sciences in Nysa, Poland (UAS). Her current interests concern twentieth- and twenty-first-century Polish and American literature, with a focus on nature and mountain-travel writing. In 2013, she published her doctoral dissertation entitled *Little Sister Death*, which constitutes the analysis of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* while bearing in mind the philosophies of death as presented by Max Scheler, Martin Heidegger, and Emmanuel Levinas. She has also published articles on Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Harold Pinter, Thomas Merton, Edward Abbey, Eva Hoffman, Wanda Rutkiewicz, Arlene Blum, Bill Bryson, and Cormac McCarthy. Since 2018, Coordinator for the International Book Club, a reading promotion project. She has also received a Fulbright Senior Award (2020-2021) to conduct research at California State University, Bakersfield.

P5: Queer Bodies and Ecologies

V108

Chair: Leigh Gilmore

Erin La Cour and **Vailiki Belia**: *Shira Spector and the Queer Feminist Politics of Graphic Medicine*

Abstract:

In this paper, we elaborate the intersectional considerations of graphic medicine (Williams, Czerwiec et al., La Cour and Poletti) through a close reading of Shira Spector's *Red Rock Baby Candy*, a comics memoir about her struggles with conception. In her work, Spector, a self-described "infertile, high-femme, low income, non-biological Jewish mom, dyke drama queen, and ectopic pregnancy survivor" (Fantagraphics), attests to the need to give voice and cultural legitimacy to the experiential reality of conditions often relegated to silence (Murali and Venkatsan, 1-2). The silence that has long surrounded the challenges of infertility is not only the result of the difficulties inherent in communicating intense pain and loss, but also reflects the role infertility itself plays as an aporia at the center of a number of discourses: infertility both defies easy accommodation in discourses of illness or disability, as it is not always attributable to a dysfunction of bodily parts or a cultural stigmatization of a bodily variation (Shigley), and also sits uncomfortably among feminist desires for reproductive control and critiques of conventional understandings of motherhood as natural (Loughran).

We argue that Spector's pushing the boundaries of the comics medium—through fragmentary and spiraling artwork, collages, and storylines; graphic renditions of physical and psychological pain; and grappling with the cultural taboo of (discussing) infertility, normative gender roles, and questions of queer parenthood—not only adds to these discourses an experience from the frontlines, but also illuminates how the poetics of comics allows for a particular visual and visceral exploration of ineffable experience. Using seminal discourse from feminist-, queer-, disability-, and life writing studies, we analyze how Spector pieces together elements of her life that show the complexity of her identities, desires, and the ways she navigates the contradictions inherent in her position.

Bios:

Erin La Cour is Assistant Professor of English Literature and Visual Culture at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Her research focuses on the mediality, intermediality, and affect of comics in several sociohistorical cultural milieux, with a particular attention on graphic medicine. She has co-edited four comics studies collections, including *Key Terms in Comics Studies* (Palgrave Macmillan 2022) and the CELJ and Eisner Award nominated "Graphic

Medicine” (*Biography* 2022). She is also a Comenius Fellow of The Netherlands Initiative for Education Research (NRO), for which she conducted the project “Opening a Dialogue about Mental Health through Comics and Creative Writing” and is co-founder and co-director of Amsterdam Comics (www.amsterdamcomics.com).

Vasiliki Belia is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Maastricht University, The Netherlands. Her research focuses on the ways contemporary comics remember the feminist movements of the past, renegotiating their meaning in the present and future. On the one hand, she inquires into the affordances of the medium that make it an apt tool for telling feminist stories. On the other hand, she examines how historical feminist figures, debates, and events are imagined, and which role they play in the construction of feminism as a political project in the present. She has published articles in journals *MAI: Feminism and Visual Culture* and *Memory Studies* (forthcoming).

John Zuern: *‘A Fragment of Home’: Resource Extraction and Queer Ecology in Taylor Brorby’s Boys and Oil*

Abstract:

In his memoir *Boys and Oil: Growing up Gay in a Fractured Land*, published in 2022, the environmentalist Taylor Brorby recounts his upbringing in the deeply homophobic culture of rural North Dakota, his development as a writer, his work as a journalist covering the North Dakota oil boom, and his activism against the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. While *Boys and Oil* exhibits the features of a queer bildungsroman, including narratives of coming out to family and friends, tentative early relationships, and ultimate self-acceptance, the memoir is distinctive for its sustained alignment of a gay man’s vulnerability to homophobic violence and the natural environment’s vulnerability to destruction by the fossil-fuel industry. Brorby’s book is particularly timely, as reactionary changes in US public policy are now imperiling both the LGBTQIA+ community and natural environment.

My examination of *Boys and Oil* focuses on its structure—short chapters composed of vignettes looping through time—to show how the memoir’s form captures the tension in Brorby’s adult life between a profound attachment to the prairie landscape of his birthplace and his irreparable separation from his unaccepting community. Moreover, I argue that by repeatedly drawing metaphors from the prairie’s ecosystem to convey his sense of displacement and longing, Brorby reflects the critical orientation Mel Y. Chen, Catriona Sandilands, and others have elaborated as queer ecology, asserting that divisions between embodied human desires and more-than-human entities and processes are not only artificial but promote a ruinously extractive relationship with nature. The writing of memoir, I will suggest, might itself be seen as a form of “resource extraction,” excavating a personal past to construct a coherent—and marketable—product, and *Boys and Oil* extends this analogy in its narrative form; Brorby’s fractured life story, like the despoiled land of the oilfields, is never fully reclaimed.

Bio:

John David Zuern is a Professor of English at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa and a co-editor of *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*. His work on life writing, electronic literature, and visual art has appeared in the journals *Comparative Literature*, *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, *Life Writing*, and *Visible Language* and in the volumes *The Profiling Handbook*, *Cultural Critique* and the *Global Corporation*, and the *Electronic Literature Collection*. With Laurie McNeill, he co-edited the 2015 special issue of *Biography*, *Online Lives 2.0* (2015) and *Comic Lives* (2022), a special issue of *a|b: Auto/Biography Studies*.

Leandro Arsenio Hernandez: *The Queer Ill Body is Writing about Desire: Metafiction and sidentidad [AIDS-identity] in Pablo Pérez's Correspondence*

Abstract:

Pablo Pérez's life writing (diary entries, letters, and chronicles) speaks to his experience as a queer man living with HIV/AIDS. This paper focuses on *Querido Nicolás* (2016), a compilation of letters Pérez wrote from 1989 to 1992 to a dear friend. Though this genre is necessarily fragmented, a sense of unity is constructed not only through the passing of days and the shared addressee, but also through the constant reflection on the act of writing itself, and the manifestation of strange symptoms on Pérez's body that feel in conflict with his sexual desire. I argue that through these elements of Pérez's letters –the representation of the body and metafiction– a new type of identity emerges: *sidentidad* [AIDS-identity]. This identity is rendered in dynamics like a survival plan that involves community building with other ill bodies, and not forgoing exploration of sexuality. I argue that by capitalizing on *sidentidades*, the queer, ill self finds alternatives to the marginal status and the victimization imposed by societal stigma and the awareness campaigns against HIV/AIDS from his time that nullified desire. The fear of death never wholly fades around a new illness, its uncertainty, and its devastating biomedical effects. Still, in Pérez's letters, knowledge of the body becomes power as the self explores new sexual practices that emphasize protecting others and that go beyond penetration. By publishing these letters, Pérez goes public and abandons the safety of his private tragedies. His exploration of subjectivity through writing leads to the determination to live with the queer ill body, among other bodies, and not necessarily be at constant odds with it, rejecting the image of the depressed, lonely AIDS-ridden male that Douglas Crimp, and other critics, have identified as archetypes in cultural representation of ill-bodies.

Bio:

Leandro Arsenio Hernandez is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of California, Los Angeles. As the Editor-in-Chief of *Mester*, the departmental academic journal, he published the volume "Bodies in Culture," followed by a special supplement on the relationship between illnesses and discourses. He is interested in 20th and 21st century Hispanic literature and cultures, and the impact of chronic diseases in artistic production. His dissertation covers queer Argentine literature, with a focus on how the HIV/AIDS pandemic changes the way the ill body is narrated in life narratives. Leandro has taught courses on Latin American and Iberian cultures, political violence in the modern world, and Spanish. Currently, he is developing a seminar on Latin American queer experiences and culture in contexts of violence, to be taught at UCLA.

Hannah Jakobsen: *Liver, Lungs, Intestines: Fragments of the Body in I Await the Devil's Coming* by Mary MacLane

Abstract:

Mary MacLane, one of the first apparently queer American women to write openly about sexuality (Faderman 113), published her autobiography in 1902. In *I Await the Devil's Coming*, MacLane describes aspects of her temperament as mannish and her desire for another woman as "a masculine element" (62), at the same time as she extols her own "admirable young woman's-body" (15). Sensational upon publication, the book remains compelling. One of its most striking elements is MacLane's writing about her body, which often is not explicitly linked to her discussions of sexual desire. She frequently describes the body in fragments: her

“liver rests gently with its thin yellow bile in sweet content,” “lungs...expand in continuous ecstasy,” “intestine...basks contentedly,” and so on (21-2). As some have argued, MacLane sensualizes parts like her intestines (Croft); but what she focuses on are not sexed parts in the sense of being sex organs, nor are they male- or female-coded. MacLane feels alive, and in illustrating her body parts’ workings, she conceives a physical manifestation of a sense of vitality that is both physical and not. In this presentation, I draw a connection between MacLane’s treatment of her body, her sense of vitality, and her navigation of gender and sexual norms. I argue that not only do MacLane’s descriptions of her body’s vigorous inner workings give shape to the vitality on which she elsewhere insists, but also that they allow her to develop a sensuality outside of gendered desire, and to locate outside of gender and sexual norms the surging aliveness that characterizes her lived experience. The presentation will bring philosophical work on the experience of felt vitality (Fuchs) to bear on life writing, contributing to discussions on the body and life writing and on gender and sexual identities in life writing.

Bio:

Hannah Jakobsen is a doctoral student in the Department of Comparative Literature at UCLA. They work in Life Writing Studies and Memory Studies, across Anglophone and Francophone contexts. Their writing and academic work have been published in *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, and *Electric Literature*.

P6: Writing Fragmented Trauma

V103

Chair: Emilie Pine

Catherine Brist: *‘True but not believable’: Readers’ Expectations of Fragmented Narration in Trauma Memoir*

Abstract:

Traumatic memory is often fragmentary and chaotic, a fact that leads some readers to dismiss narrators of trauma as unreliable. In other instances, however, narrators of trauma are considered unreliable because their accounts are not fragmentary *enough*. Drawing on reviews from professional critics and from lay readers on Goodreads, this paper analyzes the deeply critical reception of the 2017 memoir *The Incest Diary* as one such case study. Considering the implications of this controversy for scholars of traumatic life narratives, this paper asks: what might readers’ demands for fragmented narration illuminate about cultural understandings of trauma? What might they indicate about readers’ beliefs in the transparency of life narratives? The narrator of *The Incest Diary* adopts a variety of strategies to convey the fragmented and recursive nature of her memories, organizing her narrative as a series of non-chronological vignettes. However, many lay and professional readers have criticized the memoir’s artful prose style, arguing that the narrator’s lack of a raw, fragmented style indicates an inappropriate distance from her trauma and renders her memoir inauthentic. Because the memoir was published anonymously, some readers have also suggested that this “literary” prose style indicates that the memoir is exaggerated or wholly fabricated. Critiques of *The Incest Diary* on the basis of its narrator’s “literary” prose suggest that readers both expect trauma narratives to offer unmediated representations of fragmented memory and understand the value of such narratives as primarily documentary in nature. Ultimately, this paper contends that an ethics of reading that values trauma memoirs only for their documentary power elides much of the transformative potential of life narratives.

Bio:

Catherine Brist is a PhD Candidate in English and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Michigan. Her dissertation analyzes the reception of contemporary life narratives about sexual violence. She has published reviews in *Biography*, *Life Writing*, and the *European Journal of Life Writing*.

Silvia Ammery: *Fragmentation, Trauma, and Bibliotherapy in the Modernist American Novel*
Abstract:

Modernism has now become a term which refers to any kind of literary production in the interwar period that deals with the modern world, and it represents the fragmentation of traditional society under pressures of modernity. Much modernist literature of this sort is anti-modern, in the sense that it interprets modernity as an experience of loss. Modernism is an international movement which reached coherence and momentum in response to the effects of World War 1. After World War 1, the ideas of the younger generation and of those who outlived the war became altered by the destructive war. It was the first time that the world ever experienced such a globalized and destructive war that the whole generation became lost afterwards. At the heart of Modernist aesthetics is a first-person narrator who tries to piece together the fragmented aspects of his or her life out of memory. Paradoxically, the recollection of a fragmented traumatic past provides a therapeutic outlet for those traumas. That is why in most Modernist American novelists, especially in Hemingway and Fitzgerald, fragmented writing and traumatic memory are inextricably linked. When analyzing the psychological and social aspects that deal with trauma in Modernist American novels, there emerge certain forms that are applicable to most American Modernist writers: first, the trauma victim often may not understand the significance of the event until later years. Secondly, that the traumatic event is not fully assimilated as it occurs, which suggests there is no concrete accessible memory of the event if formed, and that is why it appears in a fragmented fashion, haunting the victim later. Thirdly, for the traumatic memory to lose its power, a form of narrative construction must occur, even if it is fragmented, disconnected, and too elusive to be pinned down. The paper will deal with many examples from American Modernist novels, mainly written by the masters of Modernist American fiction: Faulkner, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald.

Bio:

Silvia Ammary has a Ph.D. in American Literature. She did her MA in American drama (the drama of Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller) and her PhD in American poetry (the influence of Futurism on the poetry of e.e.Cummings). Ammary has published books on teaching writing, international education, and American literature. Among her publications are the following two books on writing: *Practice Make Perfect* (2005) and *Top Twenty Writing Flaws* (2008). She also published a book on Hemingway's fiction entitled *The Influence of the European Culture on Hemingway's Fiction* (2015). The book is an essential companion to Hemingway's scholars and students as it deals with the way Hemingway depicts Europe in his fiction, the way he assimilates to the European culture, and his portrayal of the different aspects of that culture in terms of food, music, customs, architecture, and literature. Ammary is currently teaching at John Cabot University in Rome, Italy, as an adjunct assistant professor of American Literature and writing. She is also the Director ENLUS: English Language for University Studies. Ammary has attended numerous international conferences around the world. She speaks five languages, and has an international experience in teaching.

Leena Käosaar: *From Fragment(s) to Narrative(s): The Lifelong Storying Project of an Estonian Child Deportee*

Abstract:

The fragmented nature of manuscript life records documenting limit experience of the past – as is the case of scant diaristic notes of Uno Mell (1930-2021) from the period of deportation – may, in concord with theoretical frameworks of trauma – attest to the traumatic nature of the experience. At the same time, it may also point to the familiarization process with one self-representative genre – the diary – of a young boy in circumstances of grave loss and extreme material deprivation. Furthermore, it may also highlight the unique value of the life record – celebrating its preservation over time as a textual-material memorial object. Uno Mell was deported with his family was deported in June 1941, during the first wave of Stalinist mass deportations from the Baltics when he was 11 years old. He wrote his first diary entries in July 1942 after witnessing his mother and younger sister dying of hunger in the remote Siberian village of Kammenoe.

I met Uno Mell on February 05, 2021. He generously granted me access to his private archive containing parts of his manuscript diary that he could bring with him upon his return to Estonia at the age of 16. In his interview with me, as well as in his amateur films documenting his attempts to locate his mother's grave in the deportation site and several versions of his life stories, he makes visible the lifelong effects of the tragic and traumatic loss of his whole family, his cherishing of the few immediate textual records from the period, and his lifelong journey of storying his life experience. The diary fragments serve as a starting point for this process, including the return to the deportation site in his later life and amateur cinematographic capturing of the journeys in search of a life narrative. In my presentation, I will attempt to address the (life writing) fragment via an elaboration of the three functions of Uno Mell's diaristic notes. I will also outline his life storying oeuvre as an example of extraordinary resilience, determination, and resourcefulness in coping with the trauma of deportation and loss of all family members that, throughout his life, can be viewed as a continuous process from a fragment toward a story.

Bio:

Leena Käosaar is an Associate Professor of Cultural Theory at the Institute of Cultural Research at the University of Tartu in Estonia. Her research interests include the tradition of Estonian life writing and post-Soviet life writings, Baltic women's deportation and Gulag narratives, women's diaries and family correspondences, self-representational writing of traumatic experience, relationality, the mobility of memory as well as creative nonfiction (life story writing) that she teaches at the University of Tartu alongside courses on literary and cultural theory, gender studies and Estonian literature. She was the PL of the project "Taking Shelter in Estonia: the Stories of Ukrainians Fleeing from the War" (supported by Tartu University, 2022-2023) and "Teaching Nordic and Baltic Lives" (funded by Nordplus, 2022-2023) and the fall 2023 Juris Padegs Research Associate at the MacMillan Center for European Studies at Yale University.

Launa Linaker: *Reconstructing Humanity: Memoir as a Narrative Response to Fragmentation and Care in the Aftermath of the 2016 Nice Terrorist Attack*

Abstract:

In the intricate tapestry of human existence, the self is not a monolithic and static entity but a dynamic construct continually shaped by our interactions with the world and others

(Gilmore, 2001). However, when these interactions are marred by acts of terror, the very fabric of the self can unravel, leading to fragmentation and a deep loss of coherence. Terror can lead to traumatic stress when safety and stabilization are not immediately restored, which was my experience. Drawing from personal experiences, this research unfolds against a fateful day – July 14, 2016 – when I, as a faculty member, accompanied a group of students to a summer program in Nice, France. Tragically, we bore witness to the 2016 terrorist attack that killed 86 people and claimed the life of one of my students, shattering my assumptions about humanity. The echoes of that traumatic event reverberated through my life, cloaking my once clear path in uncertainty. The subsequent isolation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic intensified the inner turmoil concealed beneath a veneer of resilience. In a society that champions self-sufficiency and personal responsibility, I was muzzled by internal voices of self-critique, exacerbating the fragmentation of my educator identity. I draw upon the insights of Bruner (1994), who postulated the existence of multiple selves and the intricate interplay of memory in the (re)construction of identity. Embracing this perspective of multiple selves, I follow St. Pierre's assertion that writing serves to unveil and discover what we know, as delve into the complexity of selves and memory while considering the sociocultural environment in which these memories form. I will read from my memoir and discuss the experience of writing as a pedagogical tool, in this context. In the crucible of education, my narrative weaves threads into a textured and layered tapestry highlighting the challenges of educator traumatic stress, vulnerability, resilience, recovery, and renewal that emerges from reconstruction of identity after crisis, loss, and grief.

Bio:

Launa Linaker is a devoted full-time Ph.D. Candidate in Secondary Education at the University of Alberta. Her academic pursuits revolve around exploring the intricate connections between school crisis and grief, traumatic stress, and recovery and renewal through the lens of care. Her ongoing autobiographical research seeks to illuminate the nuanced experiences of educators who have courageously safeguarded students amidst crises and distress. She is an inaugural leadership fellow for Student Crisis Recovery and Renewal project that aims to develop crisis leadership capacity within educational systems. With a rich academic background, Launa previously held a faculty position at MacEwan University's School of Business, sharing insights on Organizational Behavior, Management, and Entrepreneurship.

12-13 Lunch

Veröld Ground Floor

13-14.30 Parallel Sessions:

P7: Roundtable: Fragmentation and the Function of Criticism

V023

Leigh Gilmore (chair), **Cynthia Franklin** and **Gillian Whitlock**

Abstract:

What is the function of criticism in contexts of violence, trauma, and resistance? What is the role of the critic working in archives shaped through suppression, whose objects of study are denied legitimacy, and whose histories are purposefully distorted? Renewed interest in the role of the critic in culture underscores the timeliness of this question. In life writing scholarship, three books published in 2023 provide an opportunity to engage an international life writing audience in a conversation about the role of the critic and the function of criticism on the subject of crisis and legitimacy: Cynthia Franklin's *Narrating*

Humanity: Life Writing in Movement Contexts from Palestine to Mauna Kea (Fordham 2023), Leigh Gilmore's *The #MeToo Effect: What Happens When We Believe Women* (Columbia 2023), and Gillian Whitlock's *Refugee Lives in the Archives: a Pacific Imaginary* (Bloomsbury 2023). How does life writing criticism speak to urgent political and cultural events and with what constraints? In light of the theme of fragmentation, we propose a roundtable discussion of how, in our recent books, we navigate the constraints on our archives, subjects, institutional contexts, and communities. Rather than assert a need for individual authority, we hope to explore a more collective history of life writing scholarship as it informs our work. We will each offer 15 minute presentations addressing the issues above, with time for directed conversation among the panelists, and Q and A.

Bios:

Leigh Gilmore is Professor Emeritus of English at The Ohio State University and core faculty in Project Narrative. She is the author of *The #MeToo Effect* (Columbia 2023); *Tainted Witness* (Columbia 2017), a 2018 Choice Outstanding Academic Title; *Witnessing Girlhood* (co-authored with Elizabeth Marshall, Fordham 2019); and *Autobiographics* (Cornell 1994). Her pathbreaking book on trauma, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (Cornell), was reissued with a new preface in 2023. Her research appears in numerous scholarly journals, including *SIGNS*, *Feminist Studies*, *Women's Studies Quarterly*, *Biography*, and *Profession*, and in edited collections. She has been Professor of English at Ohio State, Backstrand Chair of Women's and Gender Studies at Scripps College, and has held visiting appointments at UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz, Northeastern, Harvard, Brown, and Wellesley College. Her public feminist scholarship appears regularly in WBUR's *Cognoscenti* and *Public Books*.

Cynthia G. Franklin is Professor of English at the University of Hawai'i. She coedits the journal *Biography*, and is the author of *Narrating Humanity: Life Writing and Movement Politics from Palestine to Mauna Kea* (2023), *Academic Lives: Memoir, Cultural Theory, and the University Today* (2009), and *Writing Women's Communities: The Politics and Poetics of Multi-Genre Anthologies* (1997). Essays appear in venues including *American Quarterly*, *Auto/Biography*, *Biography*, *Cultural Critique*, *Gay and Lesbian Quarterly*, *Life Writing*, *LIT*, *MELUS*, *The Contemporary Pacific*, *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, and in Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating's *This Bridge We Call Home*. She has also coedited a number of special journal issues, including, for *Biography*, "Life in Occupied Palestine." She is part of the Editorial Collective for the newly constituted initiative EtCH (Essays in the Critical Humanities), and cofounder of Students and Faculty for Justice in Palestine at UH (SFJP@UH) and of Jewish Voice for Peace-Hawai'i.

Gillian Whitlock FAHA is an Emeritus Professor in Communication and Arts at the University of Queensland and a Fellow of the Academy of Humanities in Australia. Her book *Refugee Lives in the Archives. A Pacific Imaginary* is forthcoming in the Bloomsbury Academic New Directions in Life Narrative series. This archival project turns to object biographies to narrate the testimony of things left behind by asylum seekers in detention in the Pacific camps. She is the author of *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography* (Bloomsbury, 2000), *Soft Weapons: Autobiography in Transit* (Chicago, 2007), and *Postcolonial Literature: Testimonial Transactions* (Oxford, 2015) Her most recent book is *Life Writing in the Anthropocene* (Routledge, 2021), co-edited with Jessica White. She has co-edited special issues of *Biography* (on 'Autographics' and 'Posthuman Lives'), of *Life Writing* ('Trauma Texts') and *a/b: Autobiography Studies* ('Life Writing in the Anthropocene').

P8: Historical Women's Lives I

V007

Chair: Ingibjörg Ágústsdóttir

Gillian Beattie-Smith: *Lenses and Performativity: Writing the Life of Catherine Helen Spence*

Abstract:

My paper looks at the identities created by the fragments of life and narrative selected and drawn in both the autobiography of Catherine Helen Spence (1910), and the biography, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women*, by Susan Magarey (1985 and revised in 2010).

C.H. Spence was born in Melrose, in the Scottish Borders in 1825, and emigrated with her family to Australia, when she was 13. She was a proponent of women's rights and proportional representation, and was the first woman to stand for election to political office in Australia. She travelled the world giving lectures, and meeting, such as Thomas Hare, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Harriet Tubman. She was also an author of eight works of fiction, which illustrate women's lives within the prevailing social norms and which also indicate potential alternatives. The political and feminist philosophies foremost in Spence's life are foregrounded as themes in her novels, such as *Clara Morison*, and *Mr Hogarth's Will*, which deal with women's rights in marriage and inheritance. *Handfasted*, the last of her novels, which is partly set in a hidden Scottish feminist utopia, was submitted for a novel writing competition in 1879, but was rejected on the grounds, "it was calculated to loosen the marriage tie – it was too socialist and consequently dangerous".

Literary critique and biographical record have begun to create discourses of settler women writers, such as Spence, as cultural agents in transnational history. Spence was known as the 'Grand Old Woman of Australia'. She was held in high esteem nationally, has been memorialised in statues, stamps, and sculptures, and her image was on Australian currency. This paper considers the selection of some of the fragments in the life writing produced both by herself and by her biographer, and reflects on their impact in the creation of Spence's public identity.

Bio:

Gillian Beattie-Smith lectures in linguistics at the Open University in Scotland, and guest lectures in women's travel writing at the University of the Highlands and Islands. Her PhD, from Aberdeen, was in literature and gender, and examined the creation of relational identity in women's travel writing about Scotland. Gillian's research and published work continues to be concerned with identity creation and performance in women's personal narratives of the nineteenth century.

Orlaith Hickey: *Marginalised Lives: Women in Irish-Language History as Seen in the Aínm Biographical Database*

Abstract:

Based principally on the *Beathaisnéis* ['Biography'] series (1986-2007) by Diarmuid Breathnach and Máire Ní Mhurchú, Aínm (www.aínm.ie) ['Name'] is the Irish Language Biographical Database. The database contains biographies from all areas of Irish-language history, i.e., biographies of individuals who made an impact within the world of the Irish language, a lesser-used language which has been the focus of revivalist efforts since the late 19th Century. At present, 10.31% of the 1,794 biographies on the database are of women, less than the Oxford Dictionary of Biography (12%) and the Australian Dictionary of Biography (18%). The transition to an online database has provided an opportunity to analyse the situation and recover stories of women.

This paper provides an overview of the biographies of women currently in the database, highlighting those who broke social norms and made an impact in areas of the language community more commonly associated with men. The women who contributed academically, creatively, publicly, or politically to the record, particularly before 1850, dealt with a vast array of issues including gender, identity, economic and cultural barriers. Work through the medium of Irish, as a minority language, has long been under-documented in comparison to English, meaning evidence of these women's lives is scattered and, in some cases, lost. This PhD research aims to add new female biographies to Ainm, piecing their stories together using both field and desk research.

This paper discusses the obstacles we as researchers face in presenting stories of women whose contributions to the Irish language have not received the recognition they deserved. This includes a discussion on the importance of criteria in biographical databases and will provide samples of the new biographies to be written as part of this research. Using these case studies as a base, the paper will examine the solitary circumstances under which some of these women worked, consider the impact of Irish history on the fragmentary nature of the biographical evidence, and draw attention to the ongoing research at Ainm which seeks to rectify the record.

Bio:

Orlaith Hickey is a 3rd year PhD student in Fiontar & Scoil na Gaeilge, Dublin City University, Ireland. Her current research focuses primarily on the representation of women on the national biographical database of the Irish language, Ainm. Her research is funded by The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, and is being completed under the supervision of Dr Úna Bhreathnach and Dr Pádraig Ó Liatháin. She completed a BAMUS with Irish and a MA in Modern Irish from University College Cork, where she was a Quercus Academic Scholar. She is particularly interested in Irish folklore and the oral tradition as well as both the representation of women in the Irish written record and their depiction in literature.

Paula Vene Smith: *Reconfiguring the Fragment: Body and Language in Diaries of Ordinary Life*

Abstract:

A discourse of fragmentation presumes the loss of something that once was whole, something that (at a certain moment) exploded or fell apart. To look afresh at life writing in the context of shattered worlds, identities, time frames, or memory requires us to ask, "What was the whole?" Are we engaged in a project of repair? Will such moves, steeped in nostalgia, take us back to the past? Did wholeness ever exist, or is it a dream projected backward? It is in diaries, and especially in what scholars call the diaries of ordinary lives—their dutiful and discrete entries marked by episodic production and paratactic style—that fragmentation emerges most clearly as fundamental to the life writing genre. By examining in detail the nineteenth-century diaries kept by American women like Susan Gillespie Huftalen, Annie Ray, and Emilie Davis, feminist scholars have constructed a durable theory of the fragment in life writing as a structural feature generated not by catastrophic or extraordinary events, but out of the tensions and even silences in a diarist's everyday life.

Insights from this model developed by Bunkers (1993), Sinor (2002), Whitehead (2014), and others gain even more power when joined with recent scholarship that places the "history of the body" in dialogue with diary studies. The four co-editors of a special 2022 issue of *Life Writing* base their introductory essay, "Dear Diary, Dear Body" on the simple yet powerful

premise that every diary has a body—namely, its diarist’s body, as both source of the writing and site of the lived experience the diary records. My work uses an interdisciplinary perspective to reconfigure the body’s linguistic fragmentation as central to life writing. In its corporeal integrity as boundary between a diarist’s interior and exterior, the body nominates itself as that unreachable “whole” which fractures into multiple socially determined and unreconcilable identities as the diarist prepares to write.

Bio:

Paula Vene Smith is a professor of English at Grinnell College, Iowa (USA). She teaches both literature and creative writing, including courses on the diary. Her recent work includes “Refashioning Diary Studies: The Tradition of Black Women’s Diaries” in *a/b: Auto/biography Studies* 38:1 (2023) and “Day Today: Circadian Rhythms and the Sense of Unending in Poetic Diaries by Gertrude Stein and Harryette Mullen” in the *Journal of Modern Literature* (JML’s fall 2023 issue, to be published early in 2024). Shorter pieces for a more general audience include a review of Alice Walker’s journals for *Salon*, an essay on handwritten diaries for *The Conversation*, and an essay in *Ms. Magazine* on the long tradition of imagining the future in Black women’s diaries.

P9: Reconstructing a Fragmented Life

V008

Chair: Melissa Tombro

Adrienne Angelo: *Shattered Innocence: Eva Ionesco’s Reconstructions of a Fragmented Life*

Abstract:

Perhaps most publicly recognized as the eroticized child model in her mother’s semi-pornographic arthouse photographs, Eva Ionesco has, since 2011, turned to filmmaking and writing to recount her traumatic past. In her two films—*My Little Princess* (2011) and *Une jeunesse dorée* (2019)—and two autobiographical novels—*Innocence* (2017) and *Les enfants de la nuit* (2022), Ionesco narrates her childhood and teenage years in two different modalities: image and text. In as much as these echoic narratives may afford a degree of catharsis, their very repetition also suggests a degree of unresolved anguish. In fact, following her mother Irena Ionesco’s death in July 2022, Eva Ionesco wrote a piece for *Les Inrockuptibles* in which she states rather tellingly: “...ma mère est décédée, elle n’est pas morte.”¹ This ongoing process of working through and puzzling out a crisis of identity leads us to ask how Ionesco sees and, even more significantly, represents herself.

This presentation considers Ionesco’s crisis of self-representation as suggested by her (re)writing and (re)staging of her life story. If the *récit d’enfance*, remains an already complex subset of autobiography, due in part to the fluid and fragmented nature of memory work, writing about a traumatic childhood presents its own unique set of challenges to the autobiographer. In *Contesting Childhood*, Kate Douglas asserts that, “[t]raumatic autobiography has had a radical effect on the way childhood can be depicted autobiographically.”² As these life narratives explore memories of a child-as-victim while bearing witness to the adult-as-survivor, writers are faced with questions of self-representation in the textual modalities they choose to frame their stories, particularly when such self-disclosure is open to public scrutiny. Moreover, remembering the scars of childhood inevitably places the story of self in dialogue with the story of the (abusive) other. These narratives must therefore navigate ‘the contradictory but necessary forces of blame and forgiveness’ which ‘coexist in much autobiographical writing about childhood.’³ We shall consider, too, how Ionesco engages with this aspect of articulating suffering in her visual and

textual life-writing projects and, importantly, how she (as childhood victim and adult survivor) struggles to find a place for her mother in these narratives of a fragmented self.

Bio:

Adrienne Angelo is a Professor of French at Auburn University and Distinguished Visiting Professor of French at the United States Air Force Academy. Her research examines memory, trauma, family, childhood, and exile within the scope of women's life writing in contemporary France. Her work also explores autobiographical and autofictional accounts of survivors of sexual violence. She has published on writers including Nina Bouraoui, Camille Laurens, and Marie Nimier, among others. Most recently she has contributed an entry to The Literary Encyclopedia on Camille Laurens as well as a book chapter on Ananda Devi's *Le Rire des déesses*, which is forthcoming in the collection *Disruptive Discourses in Francophone Women's Writing*. At present, she is completing an article on queer praxis in Constance Debré's autofictional writings.

Terri Tomsy: *Reconstructing an ISIS Life in Josh Baker's 'I'm Not a Monster – The Shamima Begum Story'*

Abstract:

This paper addresses the public fascination with the Islamic State (IS) and the incomplete stories and snippets we hear about the IS foreign fighters and their "Jihadi brides." In northern Syria's Al Roj Refugee camp, one such life narrative emerged in a BBC long form podcast by British journalist, Josh Baker. His 2023 podcast, titled "I'm Not a Monster – The Shamima Begum Story" traces the fragments of a life of a so-called "ISIS bride," a British citizen, who secretly left her London home as a fifteen-year-old to join the Caliphate in Syria. Described as a "national hate figure" in the UK, Begum was a notorious figure in the British press due to her apparent lack of remorse in joining IS (Murphy 2021). Serialized over nine episodes, Baker's podcast features interviews with Begum and other witnesses to elaborate her life story in the Caliphate. In doing so, the podcast facilitates Begum's testimony and so reconstructs her voice, which had been silenced for the eight years she spent in IS territory and her subsequent detention in the Al Roj camp.

This paper examines the storytelling techniques of Baker's podcast, including what we might call the 'emotional truths' that elaborate Begum's life to reframe her for a skeptical audience. How does the serialized mediation of Begum's life in podcast form reconstruct and authorize her story? What critical and public engagements does such a genre open up in relation to questions of race, gender, and Britishness? This paper explores how Baker's podcast affirms the importance of life narratives in shaping public opinion and facilitating historical accountability in relation to marginal (youth/ racialized/ female) subjects. Thinking through these ideas, I suggest, holds a particular significance in light of the government's 2019 decision to strip Begum (and others like her) off her British citizenship.

Bio:

Terri Tomsy is an Associate Professor of contemporary literature in the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta, Canada. Her research examines memory politics and memory economies in postcolonial and post-socialist literatures. She has published in the areas of human rights literary studies, life writing, cultural memory, and the Global War on Terror.

Melissa Tombro: *Destroying the Object: Fragmentation as Legacy*

Abstract:

My mother was a poet. One day when she was 16, she gave her entire book of poems to her father, a writer and head librarian for IBM, so he could read them and help her publish. Instead, he burned them in a fire. This is a story my mother has told me time and again, about this book that contained her most tender emotions as well as her hopes to be a writer, one that her father solicited just to destroy. It is hard to imagine a crueler act. My mother still writes in spurts and fits, in a longhand cursive scrawl on random pieces of paper that are casually abandoned around the house. Years ago, I found a box of writings from when she was younger. When I showed her my find, I thought it might make up for the destruction. Instead, she burned the rest herself.

There is a long history of writers discarding their own writing to protect the self and control their own literary legacy. There is also a history of family members discarding the writing of loved ones to alter or control their own legacies and/or those of the writer. Why do we seek to destroy writing to protect the writing self? How does this act of destruction induce fragmentation as a writerly legacy? Fragmented writing as a reaction to loss and circumscribed spaces and also as an inherited legacy has a long and gendered history. Carolyn Heilbrun documents such patterns in *Writing a Woman's Life*, and writers from Margaret Walker, to bell hooks, Joan Didion and Sylvia Plath focus on the benefits and pitfalls of fragmented expression, destruction, and legacy. Women use fragments to create a cohesive writing self despite destruction, lack of space and time, and circumstances that suppress self-expression.

In this presentation, I analyze a history of destruction and fragmentation in women's writing using autoethnography to examine its relation to my own family legacy.

Bio:

Dr. Melissa Tombro is Professor of English at The Fashion Institute of Technology – SUNY. Her work focuses on personal writing and autoethnographic inquiry. Her book, *Teaching Autoethnography: Writing in the Classroom*, has served as curriculum for first-year writing and advanced research classes across the country. In her community work, scholarship, and classrooms, she encourages other writers to use self-reflection and community engagement as a way to create meaningful, informed, and inspiring prose. Her current book-in-progress, *Intentional Objects: Writing About Things*, focuses on how special objects inspire imagination and evoke admiration and how what is collected, valued, and discarded is culturally and personally significant.

Francesca Cricelli: *The Narration of Self Beyond a Search for Belonging: Igiaba Scego, Claudia Durastanti and Ewa Marcinek*

Abstract:

Although from very distinct backgrounds and cultures, the fragmented narratives of three contemporary women writers: Igiaba Scego, Claudia Durastanti and Ewa Marcinek have in common the use of self-narration to go beyond a search for belonging. In their recent works *Cassandra a Mogadiscio*, *Strangers I know* (originally published in Italian as *La straniera*) and *Polishing Iceland* (originally titled *Ísland pólerað*) the search for one's place and identity is not only intermingled with memory, but with the reconstruction of social and political issues. Igiaba Scego is a writer known for employing autofiction in her work. She will often blur the lines between autobiography and fiction. Scego uses elements of her own life experiences, but shapes them into fictional narratives. This allows her to explore themes of identity,

migration, and the complexities of belonging in a way that feels both personal and universally relatable. However, her latest novel is solely a work of memory, a long interview with her mother organized as a novel or letter, addressed to her niece Soraya. Claudia Durastanti's autobiographical book, titled *Strangers I Know* delves into her experiences as a child of deaf Italian immigrants raised between Brooklyn and Italy. It blends memoir with fiction, blurring the lines between truth and storytelling. The book explores themes of language, family, and the feeling of being an outsider in both cultures she straddles. Ewa Marcinek's book, *Polishing Iceland* is a collection of short stories, poems, and anecdotes that offer a humorous and insightful look at life as a Polish immigrant in Iceland. The title itself is a clever wordplay, referencing both the author's nationality and the idea of manual labor, which is a common starting point for many newcomers. In this paper we will explore how these authors have intertwined elements of history, social and political issues in their writings in order to reflect on the fragmented aspects of their lives bridging the particular with the universal.

Bio:

Dr. Francesca Cricelli is currently a visiting fellow at the Institute of Cultures and Languages at the School of Advanced Studies at the University of London doing research at the Centre for the Study of Contemporary Women's Writing. She has a PhD in Comparative Literature and Translation Studies from the University of São Paulo, Brazil. She is a poet and a literary translator. Her works have also been published in Iceland, such as her book *17 + 1 Ljóð* (Sagarana Forlag, 2017), she has a poem featured in the anthology *Póllfónía af Erlendum Uppruna* (Una Útgáfuhús, 2020) and an essay in the book *Skáldreki / Writers Adrift* (Una Útgáfuhús, 2023), her work has also been featured in the journal *Tímarit Máls og menningar*.

P10: Fragmentation and Generational Memory

V107

Chair: TBA

Jasleen Kohli: *Fragmented Lives through Generational Memory and Forgetting*

Abstract:

Immigrants telling their stories find cultural adaptations of telling their stories: I found my grandfather's writings in forms of letters and personal narratives decades after his passing. The impetus of his self-referential writings was that he simply wished to write about his 'ordinary life' so that his children may have a written record of his journey. The tone of his writing was shy though the details he provided were robust and engaging. He had made the harshest journey of his life as he migrated from Pakistan to New Delhi, India during the Partition of the two countries in 1947 – one of the largest historical events in the Indian subcontinent that displaced millions of people. It continues to mark ways in which many families live, forget and remember in contemporary Northern India. His collection of personal writings, newspaper clips and epistolary narratives cover a period of over two decades have created a narrative identity that was fragmented by physical, financial, familial loss and continued to be created in the way in which he extended his sense of self and identity through his children and the growing family. As an academic and a scholar of life-writing, my research has been driven by a personal sense of identity is deeply rooted in ancestral history. I am an immigrant to the United States and my sense of an autobiographical identity is intrinsic to the way in which I engage with the world around me. I have continued a sense of movement and displacement, as previously experienced by my grandfather decades earlier. In my paper, I propose to present the multiple ways in which the construction of an extended 'autobiographical self' finds itself mirrored in disruptive, non-linear lived experiences that

have been reconstructed through memory both personal as well as extended through generational parallels. The sense of identity will be re-constructed through the sense of the ecological selves, the extended selves and their relationship with material memory as well as historical memory. I will further present the recreation of narrated selves marked by spaces that have been left behind how a sense of loss and gain were in constant interplay with each other in our life narratives till this relationship turned one-sided with the deep sense of alienation and loss caused by the pandemic. The parallels between two generations and times will also be marked by the many linguistic ways of being as remembering and forgetting traverses a multiplicity of languages.

Bio:

Jasleen Kohli teaches Spanish in the Department of Department of Languages & Literature at Johnson C. Smith University, Charlotte, USA. She holds a Ph.D. in Twentieth Century Spanish and Mexican literature from the University of California, Riverside and a M.A. degree in Translation Studies from Complutense University, Madrid, Spain. Her current areas of research are Memory Studies, Digital Narratives and Literary Translation. Her most recent work explores the interplay of utopian spaces and dystopic realities and masculinity issues in Latino literature. She enjoys teaching courses on Life Writing, Latin American women writers, Translation Studies, Latin American literature and gender Studies. Jasleen has been involved in creating digital story-telling narratives with Latino students on the JCSU campus. She has, post the pandemic, taught a seminar at the Charlotte Teachers' Institute titled 'Life Writing in the Classroom and Beyond.'

Marta Straznicki: *The Fragmented Archive of Intergenerational Memoir*

Abstract:

Writing intergenerational memoir involves a process of construction based in an inherently fragmentary archive: family documents, inherited stories, photographs, oral testimonies, mementoes, newspapers, film footage, public history, and the memories of surviving relatives all have some bearing on one another and can complete, compete with, validate, or challenge the narrative stance of the writer. This paper will offer a personal and theoretical reflection on my own navigation of this process as I write a memoir about my family's escape from Czechoslovakia following the 1968 Russian invasion and our resettlement in Canada as Prague Spring refugees. *Letters Across the Iron Curtain: A Memoir in Letters* is based on a memoir written by my father documenting his plan for and escape from Communist Czechoslovakia in 1969, and on a series of 89 letters he and my mother wrote to their parents over our first five years in Canada. In addition to these two major documentary sources, my father's own memoir has embedded within it correspondence with a friend in Paris, transcriptions of my mother's memories, and documents testifying to the oppression suffered by his family in the 1950s. In addition to the 89 letters, there are photographs, his passport, enclosures sent with the letters, air tickets, and two suitcases; and then there are my mother's memories, shared in conversation, and my own, dug out of my childhood past. In this paper, I will ask whether and how authorial stance and narrative form can be used to both respect the necessarily fragmentary archive of intergenerational memoir and build something new from the pieces provided by memory, material documents, and investigative research. What specifically does intergenerational memoir offer us by way of thinking about the fragmentation of history, memory, and life writing?

Bio:

I am Professor of English Literature at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada. My teaching and research has focused on early modern women playwrights, the history of play reading, and the early modern book trade. More recently and in relation to the project described above, I have pivoted to teaching life writing, developing undergraduate and graduate courses on "The Diary: Time, Self, and Writing," "Memoir and Migration," and "The Literature of Walking." I am the author of *Privacy, Playreading, and Women's Closet Drama, 1550-1700* (2004), and editor of *The Book of the Play: Playwrights, Stationers, and Readers in Early Modern England* (2006) and *Shakespeare's Stationers: Studies in Cultural Bibliography* (2013). I have also co-edited *Women's Household Drama*, an award-winning collection of three plays by early modern women playwrights. Recent graduate supervisions have included studies in autofiction and memoir, both including creative non-fiction components.

Barbara Clough: *Reforming a Family from What Remains*

Abstract:

As part of the fulfilment of my PhD, I am writing an autobiographical-memoir with a working title of *From the mountains to the sea*. The creative work layers my memoir around my father's autobiography while incorporating numerous fragments of written and print documentation, photographs, emails, boat logs, and letters. I will use handwritten documents that he eventually excluded from the final version to better understand which of the fragments of his life he perceived as 'official' and my own reading of what he excluded. In the interrogation of his autobiography, how do I re-imagine the gaps that occur in his story and expand them with my own memories or those of family and friends? Although letters, journals, and similar have historically been used to write biography, autobiography and memoir, I will explore how these can be used to create a vibrant piece of life-writing that reflects changes in both a family and a society.

In addition, I examine how my individual past represents more than just my own family, and contextualizes the work as an historical document that reflects sweeping social changes in the twentieth century. By layering objective historical evidence over subjective memory (both mine and my father's) my life-writing work enables me to access multiple pasts and ultimately gain a greater understanding how we 'imagine' our own histories.

Bio:

Babz Clough is a former marketing and communications professional whose corporate work ended shortly after the pandemic. She has a varied background in writing fiction, nonfiction and poetry as well as grant writing and editing. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Creative Writing at Oxford Brookes University in the United Kingdom.

Her publications have appeared in HerStry blog, *Women Under Scrutiny*, *One Sentence Stories* (2 volumes), *Peach Velvet*, *MetroSports Magazine*, *RichardHowe.com* (*Voices from Lowell and Beyond*), and poetry in *Ireland of the Welcomes*. When she's not busy writing, she likes telling stories at *The Moth Story Slams* and anywhere else they'll put a mic in her hands.

P11: Queer Biographies and Archives

V108

Chair: Marleen Rensen

Ana Horvat: *'Someone should write a book about how some transsexuals use D.I.D. to survive being trans': Plural Selves in Emma Grove's The Third Person*

Abstract:

Emma Grove's *The Third Person* is a trans graphic memoir in which Grove chronicles coming to terms with having Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) instead of her transition. Even though Grove set out to write a more typical trans memoir, *The Third Person* ends up forgoing the "traditional trans narrative" of following gender dysphoria from childhood to transition. Instead, the memoir is focused on remembering the few months Grove spent in therapy. By "sketching at top speed," Grove was able to retrieve memories of traumatic events that occurred during the sessions, draw "emotionally," and tap her "unconscious" (866). The simple sketches spanning almost 900 pages are only seemingly chronological, but were actually "more like a gigantic jigsaw puzzle" remembered from three separate perspectives--Emma's, Katina's and Ed's (864). Unlike Eva Karpinski's view of "writing in fragments," which "contests boundaries, and presents the self as an unfinished work in progress," (45) Grove's aim is the opposite--to give her narrative more coherence and to show "that 'parts' 'work sometimes together, sometimes separately, sometimes share information, sometimes withhold it from each other'" (868). Grove's work is in line with what Meg-John Barker has noted as the Plural activists' call for depathologizing "those who experience themselves as systems" through the idea that "most – if not all – people experience themselves as plural to some extent" (363-364). These "radically different approaches to plural experience," Barker notes, "can be seen as analogous to the historical treatment of homosexuality and transgender experience" (364). While the popular genre of trans memoir is slowly starting to challenge narratives of pathology, Grove engages in the dual effort of depathologizing transness by dethroning the therapist as savior and refusing a neat ending of medical transition, while also challenging negative representations of D.I.D. by stressing the protective and functional roles of each of her "parts".

Bio:

Ana Horvat is Assistant Professor in the Department of Literary and Translation Studies at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China. Ana holds a PhD in English from the University of Alberta and their doctoral research examines sports and movement in trans performance art. Their current research projects involve trans graphic memoirs and Chinese trans life writing. Their work on trans autobiographical performance and memoir has been published in *a/b:Auto/Biography Studies* and *Gender Forum*.

Atul Joshi: *Beyond Trauma: Queering Biography and Finding Joy*

Abstract:

Writing the biography of trans family member Alison from Sydney's social housing estates who took the name of a daytime soap star at age fourteen, became fabulous by lip-syncing black divas, agitated for Australia's first HIV/AIDS memorial, has presented many challenges. Her twenty-six years of life exists as fragments: in the unreliable memories of family/friends, newspaper clippings, and scant primary sources consisting of photo albums, a video reel, a letter. How do I go about creating a biography that represent her essential queerness and activism? Inspired by Muñoz's 2009 notion of Utopia, how do I avoid the tropes of trauma and misery that feature in so much life writing about trans queers?

This paper seeks to present my creative journey and the touchstones that have guided it. Starting with Virginia Woolf; her novel *Orlando* (1928) and essay *The New Biography* (1958), I propose that a 'straight' account of a queer life cannot be written and remain true to that life's queerness. Woolf prefigures the work of Donna Lee Brien and Kiera Lindsey (2022) on speculative biography, in suggesting: "facts must be manipulated; some must be brightened;

others shaded,” through “writing about people... as though they were at once real and imagined” (Woolf, 1958, p. 150). But Alison is no Orlando, and her biography cannot be a modernist novel. To capture her life as a trans woman in the 1980s and to turn biographical writing into activism, I have drawn on Saidiya Hartman’s concept of critical fabulation (Hartman, 2008), and Anna Poletti’s argument that collage and ventriloquist aspects of queer autobiography are essential parts of its methodology (Poletti, 2020). All these elements have allowed me to envision Alison’s biography as defiantly queer in the face of normative rejection — a journey to her own Utopia. Informed by the above writers’ work, I reflect on an alternative model for queer biography — a collage of the real and speculative, the remembered and forgotten, the authentic and fabricated, the whole tending towards joy.

Bio:

Born in Myanmar of Indian parents, Atul migrated to Australia as a child. Since completing a Master of Arts in Creative Writing at UTS, he has been shortlisted for the Saturday Paper’s 2020 Donald Horne Prize, the 2022 Newcastle Writers’ Festival’s Fresh Ink Prize and long listed for the 2023 Mascara Varuna Residency. He has published in *The Big Issue*, *Westerly*, *Island*, *Seizure*, *Ricepaper Magazine*, *Portside Review*, *Peril Magazine*, *Sydney Review of Books* and *Growing up Queer in Australia*. He has also read at *Queerstories*. Atul is currently undertaking a PhD in creative writing focusing on queer memoir and biography at UTS under the supervision of Drs Sarah Attfield and Liz Giuffre. He completed Stage 1 in March 2023.

Astrid Joutseno/Swan: *Life Writing from the Fragmentary Archive: Narrating the Queer Lives of Pianist Astrid Joutseno (1899-1962) and Violinist Kerttu Wanne (1907-1963)*

Abstract:

In this paper I will present my ongoing research into two Finnish musician women (and life partners) from the 20th century who, like so many women, have been lost from the history of Finnish music. My paper asks how queer lives were presented and how they can be ethically reconstructed from fragmentary archives. First, I present newspaper examples from 1934, when Wanne and Joutseno were rising to fame, touring Europe and Finland as a duo. In the articles Wanne and Joutseno’s shared home and cottage life is elaborately depicted, yet their romantic partnership is concealed. Secondly, I present photographic examples from the Kerttu Wanne archive from Sibelius-museum, Turku, asking what kinds of narratives can be drawn from the fragmentary material, which directs attention to unexpected details while leaving much to the imagination. I propose the application of fabulation as presented by Saidiya Hartman in *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2020). With this method of reconstructive life-writing it may be possible to weave narrative strands between fragments of the past. Not so as to make truth claims, but to re-member and celebrate queer lives and kinships, women’s active role in the history of music and the potency of non-subsumptive narratives (Hanna Meretoja, *Narrative Ethics*, 2018).

Turku-born Violinist Kerttu Wanne was the first Finnish (and possible first European) woman concertmaster in 1927 in the Turku symphony orchestra. She studied in Berlin and Paris in the 1920s and then toured Europe, the USA and Finland from the 1930s until the late 1950s with Astrid Joutseno. Wanne was also a composer and an author who published books of poems, aphorisms, and essays. Pianist Astrid Joutseno studied music in Berlin and Paris. She then established her own piano school in Turku, as well as accompanying many famous classical musicians and singers in Finland and most importantly, touring as the accompanist

to Wanne for more than 30 years. Astrid Joutseno is my great great aunt, after whom I was named twenty years after her death.

Bio:

Astrid Joutseno/Swan currently conducts her postdoctoral research on grief of the dying and grief as an affect in intergenerational cultural memory. Her research interests lie in the crossroads of gender studies, cultural studies, music and literature as well as medical humanities. In 2023-2024 she is the Postdoctoral Fellow in Arts at the Helsinki Collegium of Advanced Study, University of Helsinki. Joutseno is also affiliated with SELMA, Centre for the Study of Storytelling, Experientiality and Memory, at Turku University. She is a researcher in the Academy of Finland project "Counter-Narratives of Cancer: Shaping Narrative Agency" (2023–2027). As Astrid Swan, she has published seven albums internationally between 2005 and 2021. She won the prestigious Teosto Award in 2018. The same year, her music was nominated for the Scandinavian Music Prize. In 2019 Swan published a memoir, *Viimeinen kirjani* (Nemo). In 2024 she publishes her first novel (S&S Kustannus).

Katri Kivilaakso and **Riikka Taavetti**: *Inconsistent Fragments of Queer Feelings: Methodological Perspectives on Personal Archives of Literary Authors*

Abstract:

This presentation addresses personal archives of literary authors as a source for queer history. In the presentation, we utilize queerness as a concept that refuses certainty and is fragmentary and fluid in its nature. We discuss the questions related to locating personal archives that may tell of queer feelings and experiences of the past. We analyze how even silences or active denials in (auto)biographies and published literary works may guide the researcher towards recognizing queer traces. We address the analysis of archival fragments and the methodological as well as ethical issues that arise when addressing past queer feelings and experiences. On a theoretical level, the presentation develops an approach that treats queerness as a category of analysis in historical research and takes into account the diverse ways in which same-sex desires could have shaped past lives.

In the presentation, we utilize these theoretical approaches when discussing the queer traces in the archive of writer Helvi Hämäläinen (1907–1998) as our example. Hämäläinen's vast collection available at the Finnish Literature Society archives, her published works as well as her biographical texts form a complex web of traces that opens for layers of interpretations. Moreover, Hämäläinen's archive and its history demonstrate how archival practices shape the reading of the queer traces. With the analysis of Hämäläinen's archive and its interpretations, we demonstrate the particularities of addressing literary authors and their archival collections in queer historical research.

Bios:

Katri Kivilaakso, PhD, works as the Head of the Collections at the Archives of the Finnish Literature Society. As a researcher her background is in literary studies, and she is interested in all kinds of research on personal archive materials, including queer history. Email: katri.kivilaakso@finlit.fi

Riikka Taavetti, PhD, works as a university lecturer in gender studies at the University of Turku. Her research interests include queer history, history of sexuality, oral history and cultural memory studies. Email: riikka.taavetti@utu.fi

P12: Fragmented Graphic Life Writing

V103

Chair: Eleanor Ty

Maheen Ahmed: *Lynda Barry's Lessons in Life Writing*

Abstract:

The multiple award-winning Lynda Barry (b. 1956) has established a distinctive in-between space that relies on fragments: building on the fragmentation inherent in the medium of comics, in collage forms, in memory work or generated through combinations of different genres. Her graphic novels such as *What It Is*, *Picture This*, *Syllabus* and *Making Comics* combine the teaching manual or how-to-guide with life writing. Other books such as *The Good Times Are Killing Me*, combine the children's book and the hybrid, imagetextual diary form with an autofictional mode.

Trouble, Hillary Chute reminds us in her landmark *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics* (Columbia University Press, 2010), lies at the heart of many of Barry's graphic and illustrated books, contrasting starkly with the light-hearted and humorous clichés comics evoke. *Trouble* also clashes against what is usually allowed for child figures, which abound in Barry's graphic novels. The messy selves that Barry creates of herself, including her child and teenage selves (and fictional characters), embody trouble through their anxious and vivid imagination. They co-exist within and through the unsteady textures of collaged elements and Barry's notion of autobifictionalography. Exemplifying the fragmented essence of life writing in comics and comics-like hybrid forms, Barry's books also activate 'ugly' aesthetics such as untutored drawings and uncomfortable memories.

For this anatomy of Barry's messy selves, which reflect both messiness of life, memory and the medium of comics itself, I combine insights on autofiction, graphic life writing in comics, especially concerning visual processes, such as Philippe Marion's notion of graphiation or graphic enunciation (see Baetens) and Thierry Smolderen's concept of polygraphy or the multiple graphic voices at work in visual storytelling.

Bio:

Maaheen Ahmed is an associate professor of comparative literature at Ghent University, Belgium. She is author of *Openness of Comics* and *Monstrous Imaginaries: The Legacy of Romanticism in Comics* (both published by the UP of Mississippi). In addition to editing several volumes on comics, including *The Cambridge Companion to Comics* (CUP) and *Comics Memory: Archives and Styles* with Benoît Crucifix (Palgrave), she has published in journals such as *European Comic Art*, *Children's Geographies* and *Comicalités*. She is currently working on *Lynda Barry: A Critical Guide* which is under contract with Bloomsbury.

Frederik Byrn Køhlert: *Zoned Out: Fragments of Time, Memory, and Narrative in Julie Doucet's Time Zone J*

Abstract:

In *Time Zone J*, her 2022 return to comics after several years exploring other approaches to visual arts, celebrated Quebec artist Julie Doucet reinvents the graphic memoir—and perhaps the medium of comics along with it—by thoroughly and playfully scrambling the various temporalities involved in memory, storytelling, and comics-making/reading. In military time zones, “J” indicates the subject's local time, and while Doucet's comic is a retrospective engagement with a romantic affair from her formative years, her narrative approach places both herself and the reader in a kind of fragmented perpetual present, from which experiences, conversations, and a freely associative sense of cultural context flows in every

direction. Visually, this narrative approach is represented by Doucet's innovative use of comics imagery and page layout, in which she eschews both panels and any separation of individual images, opting instead for a collage-like style that bleeds to the edge of every page while also asking to be unintuitively read from the bottom up. In this paper, I read *Time Zone J* as a radical reinvention of the comics memoir, one which provides yet another dimension to Doucet's continued and career-long examination of the fragmented visual comics self both as and in process.

Bio:

Frederik Byrn Køhlert is Associate Professor of Media and American Studies at the University of East Anglia. He is the author of *Serial Selves: Identity and Representation in Autobiographical Comics* and the editor of two companion book series for Routledge on Gender, Sexuality, and Comics. In addition to his work on comics and related visual media, he is also the author and editor of two books on the literary and cultural history of Chicago.

Simona Mitroiu: *Fragmented Memories and Vulnerability in Graphics*

Abstract:

In a text dedicated to excavation and memory, Walter Benjamin notes that when approaching one's personal past, one must proceed like a person digging in the ground, and not be afraid of returning repeatedly to the same matter. This method of inquiring into the past is characterized by 'fragmentation' and a 'return to marginalia' - the memories of ordinary details of life. As Benjamin emphasizes, the task of approaching one's past is not merely digging into it but, more importantly, establishing the place of memories. It involves the recurrent return to the same fragments of memories, making a comprehensive inventory of the memory layers crossed in this process, of their relations, and of the agents of memory involved. My presentation indicates that when intergenerational trauma is involved the process of excavating past histories and memories requires both to acknowledge the personal vulnerability and to document intergenerational transmitted memories, using also archival and cultural memory. I examine postmemory through looking at the intergenerational gap, and the vulnerability created by a breakdown in memory transmission and reception. Thi Bui's graphic novel *The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir* (2017) (re)creates the family history via an active process in which the author documents past traumas and supplements her own and her parents' memories with archival memories and cultural memory practices: 'Lacking memories of my own, I do research' (82). Sensing the intergenerational gap in terms of shared memories and emotional closeness, the author questions her family's story, defining her generation as 'the lame second generation' (29). The daughter of a couple who escaped VietNam before finally emigrating to the USA, the author cross-generationally connects histories and legacies of a personal and historical troubled past. My presentation demonstrates that the documentation of her parents' traumatic past, 'wounds beneath wounds' (93), fills the intergenerational gap, excavating memories of trauma through layers of interconnected histories.

Bio:

Simona Mitroiu is Senior Researcher at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Romania. She is the author of *Women's Life Writing in Post-Communist Romania: Reclaiming Privacy and Agency* (DeGruyter, 2022) and the editor of the volumes *Life Writing and Politics of Memory in Eastern Europe* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2015) and *Women's Narratives and Postmemory of Displacement in Central and Eastern Europe* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2018). She is also author of two other books and several papers in international journals, including *Memory Studies*,

Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity, Canadian Slavonic Papers and European Legacy: Towards New Paradigms. Her research focuses on memory, life writing, post-socialist re-interpretations of the past and gender studies in Central-Eastern Europe.

Valérie Baisnée: *Fragmentation and Reconstruction in Jennifer Hayden's graphic autobiography, The Story of My Tits (2015)*

Abstract:

The fragment is the quintessence of the graphic autobiography art form. As such, the graphic autobiography dovetails perfectly with the idea of the autobiographical self as being fragmented and multiple. The comic form also suits memory work, which is visual by nature and sometimes comes back in flashbacks. In particular, traumatic experience, which as psychologists have shown is fragmentary in nature, can be more easily represented and dealt with through the panel-to-panel form of the comic. (Chute 2010, 114). This paper examines the fragmentation of the artist's body in Jennifer Hayden's *The Story of My Tits* (2015), in which the narrator, who discovered her breast cancer at the age of 43, examines her life through her breasts. The paper analyses how Hayden represents and explores the female body in a patriarchal culture that fetishes the breast and makes it the symbol of female sexuality, drawing on feminist scholarship as well as "graphic body studies," a term invented by Martha Stoddard Holmes (2014) to refer to scholarship dealing with representations of the body in comics. In male dominated cultures the breast is the object of male gazing that affects female body self-image. Hayden resolutely resists this objectivation and fragmentation of the female body by foregrounding an image that epitomizes her vision: that of a goddess that has eyes instead of nipples. As in Hindu philosophy for which the chest is the center of the body and a source of power, the narrator's breasts stand at the center of her being-in-the-world, and it is through this interpretation that she resists fragmentation, the destructive side of the fragment: to counteract having body and self broken into pieces as well as her memories split into the separate panels of the comic form, Hayden uses the power of the narrative to coalesce memory against destructive fragmentation.

Bio:

Valérie Baisnée is Associate Professor of English at the University of Paris Saclay, France. She holds a PhD in English from the University of Auckland, New Zealand. Her research and publications address twentieth and twenty-first century women life writing and poetry, with a particular focus on New Zealand writers (Katherine Mansfield, Janet Frame, Selina Tusilata Marsh, Fiona Kidman). She co-edited the collections *Women's Life Writing and the Practice of Reading* (2018) and *Text and Image in Women's Life Writing: Picturing the Female Self* (2021) published by Palgrave Macmillan. She is also the author of *Gendered Resistance: The Autobiographies of Simone de Beauvoir, Maya Angelou, Janet Frame and Marguerite Duras* (1997) and *In the Long Corridor of Distance: Space and Place in New Zealand Women's Autobiographies* (2014) both published by Rodopi.

14.30-15 Coffee
Veröld – ground floor

15-16.30 Parallel Sessions:

P13: Fragments and Frescoes of the Human Condition: Auto/Biofiction's Transformative Truths
V023

Chair: Virginia Newhall Rademacher

Laura Cernat: *History as a Mosaic of Selves: Shaping Cultural Memory in Collage Biofictions*

Abstract:

A particularly interesting case is constituted by biofictions and autofictions that use the technique of collage, merging the lives of several figures to capture the spirit of broader historical periods as remembered by large communities. In "History as a Mosaic of Selves: Shaping Cultural Memory in Collage Biofictions," Laura Cernat extends Hywel Dix's very insightful connection between autofiction and cultural memory to biofiction, focusing on Olga Tokarczuk's *Flights* (2007, English translation 2017) and on Anne-James Chaton's *Elle regarde passer les gens* (2016). In both works there's a move beyond biofiction as individual narrative in two simultaneous directions, on the one hand towards the biographeme (a supreme fragmentation of the life story aspect at an individual level) and on the other hand towards the collective narrative, as if through these splinters of personal stories a broader truth about shared histories and identities can emerge. Chaton's book brilliantly illustrates the power of fragmentariness and of mosaic-like principles of composition to address collective experiences while remaining in the realm of concrete, relatable memories. True to detail and chronology but fictional through selection, arrangement, and form, Chaton's text reveals how the lives of its protagonists "can be articulated with a collective memory intertwining major historical events and central cultural figures" (Rigeade 2022: 381). Similarly, Tokarczuk blends several snippets of life stories in her novel, focusing not on continuities but on discontinuity, evasion, instability, and plurality, which in turn become springboards towards a new coherence, more dynamic and eclectic, constructing an improvised, pliable history of curiosities, more suitable for a fast-paced, uneven, conflicted twenty-first century.

Bio:

Laura Cernat is a Flemish Research Foundation postdoctoral researcher at KU Leuven, Belgium, who obtained her PhD in 2022 with a thesis on the portrayal of canonical authors in biofiction. She has contributed to the volumes *Virginia Woolf and Heritage* (2017), *Theory in the "Post" Era* (2021), and *Imagining Gender in Biographical Fiction* (2022), has published in the journals *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* and *Partial Answers*, and has guest-edited a special issue of *American Book Review* on autofiction and autotheory. In September 2021 she organized the hybrid bilingual conference *Biofiction as World Literature*.

Naomi Miller: *Piecing Fragments Anew: Biofiction about Shakespeare's Sisters*

Abstract:

Many scholarly studies and popular novels portray Renaissance women as being interesting primarily for their connections to powerful men rather than for their own contributions, in effect fracturing their connections to history, truth, and meaning, while reducing them to addendums to these more "substantial" lives. Naomi Miller's biofictions subvert the solidity of that male hegemony through a series of powerful women's authorial voices. These voices are not a chorus that affirms a dominant version of history, but instead they collaboratively and sometimes cacophonously open these narratives to alternative conceptions. In her paper, "Piecing Fragments Anew: Biofiction about Shakespeare's Sisters," Miller explores the process of creation that shapes her wider six-book biofiction series, *Shakespeare's Sisters*, as a process

of weaving together different threads so that the individual fragments— women authors' stories and the six novels themselves— can be “pieced” together into a biofictional quilt.

Bio:

Naomi Miller is Professor of English and the Study of Women and Gender at Smith College. An award-winning author of books on Renaissance women and gender, she teaches courses on Shakespeare and his female contemporaries, as well as on modern women's adaptations and reinventions of Shakespeare. Her debut novel, *Imperfect Alchemist* (Allison & Busby, November 2020), focuses on Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke. *Imperfect Alchemist* is the first in a projected series of novels centered on these authors called *Shakespeare's Sisters* celebrating Renaissance women not simply for their relation to men (like the wives of Henry VIII), but for their own voices.

Virginia Newhall Rademacher: *Fugitive, Fraud, Future: Biofiction in a Fragmented World*

Abstract:

While deriving from real sources, auto/biofictions liberate fiction from interacting only with invented worlds. Instead, these works invite us to experiment with our biographical lives and to use imagination to evaluate and shape real-world concerns. In “Fugitive, Fraud, Future: Biofiction in a Fragmented World,” Virginia Rademacher draws on her recent book, *Derivative Lives* (Bloomsbury, 2022), to consider the perils and possibilities of how we use fiction to respond to fractured certainties of truth and trust in contemporary life. Gabriela Ybarra's novel *The Dinner Guest* (2015) and Antonio Muñoz Molina's *Like a Fading Shadow* (2014) both combine the fugitive and the fragment, linking the unknowability of information and biographical knowledge with the actual, physical escape of the criminal. Muñoz Molina piles up forensic evidence that overwhelms to lead nowhere, and Ybarra encounters silence and fragmented details. As a different form of fracture, Javier Cercas' *The Impostor* (2014) and Adolfo García Ortega's *The Birthday Buyer* (2008) imagine lost stories of the Holocaust with very differing effects. Viewed together, they expose the critical importance of distinguishing legitimate, ethical uses of invention to which we consent from imposed, unauthorized fictions that deceive and divide

Bio:

Virginia Newhall Rademacher is Professor of Literary and Cultural Studies and Chair of the Arts and Humanities Division at Babson College. She has published widely on genre, identity, and new narrative formats, including the contemporary surge in biofiction. Her book *Derivative Lives: Biofiction, Uncertainty, and Speculative Risk in Contemporary Spanish Narrative* (Bloomsbury, 2022) places the biographical novel within the wider context of contemporary thought, exploring the rich field of biofiction in relation to concepts of uncertainty, speculation, and risk in a post-truth age. She is the recipient of Babson's College College-Wide Teaching Award.

Michael Lackey: *Fragmenting Biofictional Lives into Culture-Healing Metaphors*

Abstract:

Lastly, in “Fragmenting Biofictional Lives into Culture-Healing Metaphors,” Michael Lackey examines how authors of biofiction strategically select a significant fragment from a real person's life and then convert it into a metaphor that offers the possibility of a healthier and more just way of thinking and doing. This has been a consistent feature of biofiction from the 1880s, when Nietzsche published *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, to the early twentieth century, when George Moore published *The Brook Kerith*, to the end of the twentieth century, when

Penelope Fitzgerald published *The Blue Flower*, and then to the twenty-first century, when Emma Donoghue published *Frog Music*. In this paper, Michael Lackey will survey biofictions from the late nineteenth until the twenty-first century, clarifying how writers of biofiction fragment biographical lives in ways that visualize and focalize cultural forces that induce debilitating forms of fragmented psyches and mental illness. He will also clarify how those same authors use the lives of real people to chart strategies for combatting and overcoming variant forms of mental illness in both individuals as well as the culture more generally.

Bio:

Michael Lackey is Distinguished McKnight University Professor at the University of Minnesota, where he teaches course about twentieth- and twenty-first century intellectual, political, and literary history. He has published and edited twelve books, mostly about biofiction, and he is one of the managing editors of Bloomsbury Academic's series, *Biofiction Studies*. He is currently writing a book about German biofiction, which is tentatively titled *Exile Biofiction*.

P14: Historical Women's Lives II

V007

Chair: Emily Lethbridge

Petra van Langen: *Ruling from Beyond the Grave: A Special Kind of Fragments in the Archive of the Dutch Queen Anna Pavlovna*

Abstract:

Biographers of historical figures are always dealing with preserved fragments of the lives of the subjects of their research. These can be many fragments, as is the case with my research into the life of the Dutch queen Anna Pavlovna (1795-1865), but they never encompass all the time and every aspect of a life. Every biographer has to take into account the nature of the sources that are preserved, reflect on the reasons why certain archival pieces are available, and consider which or what kind of sources are missing. In the corpus of archival pieces of Anna Pavlovna in the Royal Archive, there is an interesting type of sources. Anna Pavlovna ensured that certain letters were preserved by making neat copies of them. And she often wrote above these copies why she thought it was important to preserve these letters. For example, 'historical letter' or 'Series of interesting letters of the king my husband'. In my paper I will take a closer look at these fragments to reconstruct (a version of) the story she wanted to tell with these sources and compare this story with her biography based on a much wider variety of sources.

Bio:

Dr. Petra van Langen is writing the biography of the Dutch queen Anna Pavlovna (1795-1865) that is part of the project 'The Cycle of Queenship. Four Dutch Queens in the 19th century' and whose publication is expected in 2025-2026. From 2017 until 2023 she was journal manager of the *European Journal of Life Writing* (ejlw.eu). Furthermore she conducts research into music history, catholic music culture and history of musicology. Besides her dissertation on Catholic musicians and the confessionalization of Dutch musical life between 1850 and 1948 in 2014, she published a history of the Catholic Society for Conductors and Organists on occasion of its centennial in 2017. She is also preparing a biography about Albert Smijers (1888-1957), the first Dutch professor in musicology. She has held board positions with several foundations and societies, including the Royal Society for Music History of the Netherlands.

Lisa Bennett: *Queen of Snippets and Strands: Writing a Speculative Biography of Gunnhild, Mother of Kings*

Abstract:

Viking Age women didn't knit as we do, with two needles and a ball of yarn, but instead created warm garments by nålebinding, a technique that involves binding short strands together with one needle and the crafter's own thumb. From these snippets of thread, wound around women's dextrous fingers, full and functional clothes were made. Writing speculative biographies about regular (but nevertheless remarkable) women in my book, *Viking Women: Life and Lore* (2023) often felt like literary nålebinding. To provide the most complete narratives possible, I gathered fragments of women's everyday lives from Old Norse-Icelandic manuscripts, particularly the "historical" *Íslendingasögur* (Sagas of Icelanders) and *Landnámabók* (Book of Settlements); lines of poetry and runic inscriptions; grave goods and other material evidence; and then wove passages of relevant historical context throughout my retellings of their stories. In writing about a wide range of women ¾ young, old, rich, poor, powerful and powerless ¾ I set strict parameters. My carefully researched accounts all depicted 'real' women who may reasonably have lived in 'real world' Viking Age Scandinavia (c.780s-1070s), and bore in mind the ethics of writing biographies of people with living descendants who still hold their memories dear.

My current book (in progress) moves beyond the confines of our ordinary world to retell stories of extraordinary ¾ even mythical ¾ women from Old Norse legends and sagas, whose natural and supernatural abilities were sources of inspiration, reverence and/or revulsion in the Viking Age. In this paper, I focus on the challenges of writing a 'true' story of Gunnhild konungsmóðir (Mother-of-Kings; c.910-980), wife of Eirik Blood-axe, Queen of Norway, the Orkneys and York, nemesis of saga heroes, possible witch, definite schemer ¾ and one of the most inconsistently represented figures in Old Norse-Icelandic history and literature. Can I bind together a biography of the 'real' Gunnhild based on these (often negative) snatches of evidence, or will my retelling simply unravel in the attempt?

Bio:

Lisa Bennett is an Associate Professor of Creative Writing and English at Flinders University. She is a specialist in Old-Norse Icelandic literature, the Viking Age, genre fiction, and creative practice. Her most recent books are *Viking Women: Life and Lore* (Thames and Hudson, 2023) and *Writing Bestsellers: Love, Money and Creative Practice* (with Kim Wilkins; Cambridge University Press, 2021). Under her pen name, Lisa L. Hannett, she is an internationally recognised, multiple award-winning writer of five collections, a novel, and over 80 speculative fiction short stories.

Cathryn Halverson: *'A Born Writer': Juanita Harrison's Beautiful World 1887-1967*

Abstract:

"A Born Writer": *Juanita Harrison's Beautiful World, 1887-1967* Juanita Harrison was an African American born at the height of Jim Crow in Mississippi. As a young woman she left the South to begin crisscrossing the United States, supporting herself with a series of short-term jobs as a domestic servant. She took this peripatetic lifestyle overseas in 1927, spending the next decade in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. She repatriated in Honolulu just as her travel letters to former employers in the U.S. were compiled into a pungent, best-selling book, *My Great, Wide, Beautiful World*. Written in vernacular, non-standard prose, its sales were unprecedented for a mid-twentieth-century African American author. However, after her burst of celebrity she moved on to South America and dropped out of public sight.

Reconstructing her life before and after authorship, this study seeks to answer the central question about Harrison: how and why did this disenfranchised laborer, born into an oppressive racial regime, travel the world and publish a book? I cannot account for all the events and locations in her life, and thus *A Born Writer* does not look like a biography as usually conceived: accounts of forebears; childhood influences; sunset years. But what is the alternative? To restrict life studies to those subjects with enough worldly achievement or access to power to generate copious records across decades? It is in large part due to her race and class status that Harrison's early years in the United States are so sparsely documented, and the same spurred the inveterate transiency that magnifies the dearth. To let her extraordinary story go untold because the record is incomplete is to perpetuate the cycle. Or more positively: the challenge impels us to create fresh scholarly genres. This presentation discusses one approach to writing a biography of a subject whose life events are only episodically in view.

Bio:

Cathryn Halverson is a Senior Lecturer (docent) in English at Södertörn University in Stockholm. She was the 2021-2022 Fulbright Distinguished Chair of American Studies at Uppsala University while serving as Associate Professor of English at Minot State University, North Dakota, and prior to that Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Copenhagen. In addition to her forthcoming biography with the University of Massachusetts Press, Halverson is the author of three monographs about women's life narrative. Most recent is *Faraway Women* and *The Atlantic Monthly*, 2019 winner of the Thomas J. Lyon's prize for best monograph in western literature or culture. She is the recipient of fellowships from Huntington Library, Massachusetts Historical Society, Charles Redd Center, American Heritage Center, and Wyoming Institute for Humanities Research. Her work has appeared in many scholarly journals, among others *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, *Arizona Quarterly*, *Legacy*, and *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*.

P15: Scrapbooks and Collages

V008

Chair: Craig Howes

Clare Best: *Patchworks, Puzzles and Mosaics: Bringing Form to Fragments*

Abstract:

My creative writing (poetry and memoir) has often been powered by a desire to recreate a sense of self, or selves, from a past shattered by intrafamilial childhood sexual abuse and later by family breast cancer and its fallout. Following my experimental memoir *The Missing List* (Linen Press 2018), I continue to develop new approaches to life writing, and am currently working on *The Many Might-Have-Beens* (working title) – a collaged memoir-in-flash with integrated photographs and facsimile documents, that examines accumulated loss and trauma across three generations of women in my family and attempts to disentangle individual lives from the weight of inherited narrative and grief. From half-buried familial narratives of breast cancer to silenced histories of coercion and abuse, from secrets around paternity to censored stories of suicides, I chart the effects of transgenerational trauma in my own family. Uncovering difficult truths and bringing them into the light, inventing and documenting rituals as I go, my approach stays alive to the infinite variety of ways in which storytelling (in the broadest sense) can help repair the damaged or broken self. By creating hybrid and layered forms of writing which specifically address the challenges of fragmented memories, and which acknowledge and honour the importance of gaps and interstices in

documentary evidence and in recall, I search constantly for new ways to express trauma, taboo and vulnerability in writing that is both engaging and literary. I propose for this conference short readings plus a commentary (solo or as part of a panel) presenting my life writing in these areas (particularly *The Missing List*), focusing on aspects of craft and form. There's an additional option for a workshop on finding literary forms for the layered and fragmented material that often comes from writing trauma and taboo.

Bio:

Clare Best (<https://clarebest.co.uk/>) is a British poet, memoirist, collaborative artist. *Breastless – Encounters with risk-reducing surgery*, published by the University of Sussex: <https://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/lifewritingprojects/body/breastless-encounters-with-risk-reducingsurgery-by-clare-best/> explores choices around genetic breast cancer, using poetry, photography, journals, plaster casts. Best has presented *Breastless* at Medical Humanities conferences and arts festivals across the UK, Ireland and North America. Her experimental memoir *The Missing List* (Linen Press 2018), written during the last illness of the father who abused her as a child, is a multi-layered work combining journal entries, verbatim material, lists, accounts of family ciné film footage and scraps recalled from childhood, to interrogate the fragmentary nature of memory. Her associated creative list-essay *Listing the Unthinkable* appeared in *a/b: AUTO/BIOGRAPHY STUDIES* in 2020. Best's third full collection of poetry *Beyond the Gate* was published by Worple Press, June 2023. She has taught Creative Writing for the Open University since 2006 and held a Fellowship at Guildhall School of Music & Drama, 2021.

Alfred Hornung: *Life Writing with Scissors: Cut-out and Collage for the Creation of the Self*

Abstract:

In "See the Moon?" Donald Barthelme's protagonist precedes the review of his life with the disappointing recognition that he would be unable to give a coherent account and concludes: "Fragments are the only form I trust" (1966). This practice of a postmodern form of autobiography reflects the fragmentary nature of literary characters in the equally fragmentary form of Barthelme's short stories in lieu of totalizing novels or complete autobiographies. These features of postmodern culture also guide earlier and later forms of life writing in which fragments constitute the basic building blocks of memory and narrative. In my paper I will focus on genres of self-representation which produce a textual network consisting of cut-outs and collages with the help of scissors.

My first example is the genre of the chapbook with a wide collection of poems, stories, newspaper clippings and personal memorabilia. None other than the first president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson engaged in cutting out relevant items of his time and arranged them in a specific order: *Poems of Nation, Family & Romantic Love (1801-1809)*. My second example are forms of Barthelme's postmodern life writing practices, in which a variety of fragments, cut-outs and collage determine the creation of selves. The simultaneous dissolution of the categories of time and space as well as the denial of political institutions result in reductive or expansive versions of a self. I will argue that these postmodern scissored excerpts of life in a diffuse social system prefigure the contemporary Internet variations and the possibilities and dangers of hyperconnectivity (Brubaker 2022). German Nobel laureate of Romanian descent, Herta Müller, exemplifies this current form of life writing with scissors in her recent work *Im Heimweh ist ein blauer Schal* (2019). In each of the three periods writers react to the fragmentary status of life in their unstable political and cultural environments.

Bio:

Alfred Hornung is Research Professor and Director of the Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz. His publications are in the field of modernism, postmodernism, ecology and life writing. He is editor-in-chief of *The Journal of Transnational American Studies* and on the editorial board of several journals, including *Atlantic Studies*, *Contemporary Foreign Literature (Nanjing)*, *Life Writing in Europe*, *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, and *Life Writing*. He served as President of MESEA, as President of the German Association for American Studies and as a member of the International Committee of the ASA. He is a founding member of IABA and of IABA-Europe, the recipient of the Bode-Pearson Prize of the ASA and an elected member of *Academia Europaea*, a member of the Advisory Board of the Institute of World Literature, and Honorary Chair Professor at the University of Shandong. Among his publications are the Chinese translation of *Ecology and Life Writing* (Beijing, 2016), *The Routledge Companion to Transnational American Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2019 (with Nina Morgan, Takayuki Tatsumi), and biographies of Jack London (2016) and Al Capone (2021). He is the co-editor of the *Handbook of Life Writing* (forthcoming).

Ivan Pope: *Attention Deficit and a Life in Fragments*

Abstract:

As Olga Tokarczuk said of her novel, *Flights*, “constellation, not sequencing, carries truth’ [2] What I have come to call constellation texts are composed of fragments arranged in a non-sequential structure. Looking for the origins or commonality of this fragmentary method while learning about my own neuronormality, I surmised that it may be a manifestation of attention deficit. Attention deficit (ADHD) is a confection of attributes that make sustained attention difficult while at the same time bringing occasional epiphanic insights. A life driven by impulsivity, epiphany, time-blindness, short attention span, constant search for stimulation, boredom, and distraction militates against the easy construction of a linear text and also, in itself, makes the writing of a long form texts difficult. To manage writing this chaos some writers break their memory into fragments and reconstruct them to reflect their life as they see it. The fragmentation and reassembly of memories allows a disordered life to make sense. The liminal nature of fragments allows, even demands, their assembly into a structure which replicates the chaos of that life. This is the constellation. As I have no right to diagnose, or peremptorily declare, ADHD in anyone, I call these manifestations ‘cultural adhd’. Writers who may be writing from this place include Olga Tokarczuk, Maria Stepanova, Jenn Ashworth, Walter Benjamin and W. G. Sebald. I read their work through this lens, not diagnosing them from a distance but recognising that ADHD may be manifesting itself in their memory space. This process sheds light on the fragmentary nature of neuronormality itself.

Bio:

Ivan Pope is a writer of fiction and non-fiction, artist and long distance cyclist. He is an artist who graduated from Goldsmiths College Fine Art BA with the YBA generation. As an entrepreneur he invented the cybercafe and founded the world’s first web magazine. He has taught at art colleges in London, Newport and Brighton. He has an MA in creative non-fiction from UEA and a PhD in creative non-fiction from Plymouth University. He is an Associate of the Centre for Memory, Narrative and History at Brighton University and his current interdisciplinary research examines the landscape as archive.

P16: Families and Fragmented Pasts

V107

Chair: Lisa Ortiz-Vilarelle

Lena Ahlin and **Maria Freij**: *From a Fragmented Past to a Coherent Future? Life Writing about Transcultural Adoption*

Abstract:

This paper centers on the question of whether the act of writing a fragmented past may create a narrative on which to construct a future. Beginning with a discussion of what happens when memories of the past are fragmented, or even absent, and investigating this in relation to Néstor Braunstein's assertion that "we are what we remember" (p. 22) we go on to explore the meaning of actual and fictional memories in the life writing of transnational/transracial adoptees. Drawing on the memoirs of American Jane Jeong Trenka (2003; 2009) and Nicole Chung (2018) as well as Swedish Sofia French (2005) and Linn Heed (2017), among others, we discuss autobiographical memory in relation to narrative form and suggest that the memoirs create what we call "prospective memories", that is, they complement the common autobiographical conventions of narrating the past with future-oriented narratives of the present. If "[t]o remember is to re-present" (Braunstein 2010, p. 12), then to remember is also to re-create. Examples of this process is the journey back to the writer's country of origin and the connection with family members and/or birth culture that become integrated into the writer's new sense of self, sometimes including the representation of the writer as parent or parent to be.

Bios:

Lena Ahlin (Ph. D.) is a Senior Lecturer in English and Head of English at Kristianstad University, Sweden, where she teaches literature and academic- as well as creative writing. Research interests include literary representations of adoption, memory, nostalgia, and autobiography. Her articles and book chapters on these topics have appeared in *Close Relations: Family, Kinship and Beyond* (red. Wahlström Henriksson & Goedecke, 2021); *Humanities* (2019), *History, Memory, and Nostalgia in Literature and Culture* (red. Rudaityté, 2018); *Once Upon a Time: Nostalgic Narratives in Transition* (red. Salmose, Sandberg & Granlund, 2018); and *International Adoption in North American Literature and Culture* (red. Shackleton, 2017). Together with Maria Freij she is writing the monograph *Transnational Adoption Memoirs: The Birth of a Genre?* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024).

Maria Freij (PhD) is a Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Kristianstad, Sweden, where she teaches creative writing, literature, grammar, and academic writing. Her research interests include representations of selves and identities through the imagery of childhood landscapes, metanostalgia, and melancholy, primarily in the poetry of Lars Gustafsson. Her articles and book chapters on these topics have appeared in *Humanities*; *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*; *History, Memory, and Nostalgia in Literature and Culture* (red. Rudaityté, 2018); and *Once Upon a Time: Nostalgic Narratives in Transition* (red. Salmose, Sandberg & Granlund, 2018). Her translation of Boris Vian's *Je Voudrais pas Crever* was published in *If I say If—The Poems and Short Stories of Boris Vian*. Her poetry has been published in journals including *Meanjin*; *Blue Dog: Australian Poetry*; *Southerly*; *Softblow*; and *Overland* and her book of poems *No Piece of String Long Enough* is forthcoming from Puncher & Wattmann in 2023. Together with Lena Ahlin she is writing the monograph *Transnational Adoption Memoirs: The Birth of a Genre?* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024).

Laura J. Beard: *Stitched Stories: Finding the Life Narratives in Samplers*

Abstract:

Anna Poletti affirms that “while putting life into a story is the most commonly studied means for people to reflect on their lived experience, objects also play a vital role in our experience of who we are. They connect us to the past and can provide a powerful sense of the continuity of our experience’ (Poletti 2020, 28). In this paper I discuss stitched samplers as family archives, looking at examples passed down from my ancestors in the Scottish Highlands and broadening the discussion to how samplers might serve to preserve stories of family and community in Sutherland and the Scottish diaspora. Samplers that have been passed down through families are particularly cherished not just as what Sherry Turkle calls “evocative objects” (2007, 5) but also as sources of genealogical information. I am interested in how samplers in family archives form part of ‘the legacies of the past, transmitted powerfully from parent to child within the family, [that] are always already inflected by broader public and generational stories, images, artifacts, and understandings that together shape identity and identification’ (Hirsch and Miller 2011, 4). Following Helen Wyld’s work on Scottish samplers as Embroidered Stories, I explore how samplers help to piece together fragments of personal, familial and community life narratives fragmented by the Highland Clearances.

Bio:

Laura J. Beard is a professor at the University of Alberta, Canada, a member of the steering committee of the IABA Chapter of the Americas, and a consulting editor for *a/b: autobiography studies journal*. A two-time Fulbright scholar, she has published *Acts of Narrative Resistance: Women’s Writing in the Americas* (University of Virginia Press 2009) and, with Ricia Chansky, *The Divided States: Unraveling National Identities in the 21 st Century* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2023). She is currently completing a book on the memoir of John S. McClintock, *Pioneer Days in the Black Hills*. When not working in Deadwood, she is studying Gaelic and dreaming of her next trip to the Highlands.

Lisa Ortiz-Vilarelle: *Fragmentation and Academic Motherhood: Working and Parenting in the Intersections*

Abstract:

When Sarah Blackwood asks in her LA review of books blog, “Is Motherhood a Genre?”, she is referring to a literary form that seeks synthesis of written experience that can be recognized under a single umbrella of “mom lit.” I would say that the genre of motherhood, if there is one, is much more fragmented than coalesced. This is particularly true of writing by and about academic motherhood and it may be because fragmentation is necessary and enabling in neoliberal times. In search of systems that make academic success possible while also raising a family, scholars have tended to identify with a conflation of terms, such as *mamademics* (Danielle Slaughter) and *Motherscholar* (Motherscholar Collective). But when it comes to academic motherhood, a role whose gendered script promotes boundless availability, self-effacing sacrifice of career time to family life, and legacies of aristocratic and colonialist moralism and demureness, can fragmentation be a form of resistance?

This presentation will consider two types of fragmentation experienced and documented by academic mothers: First, the discursive fragmentation of career development and personnel review in which mothers are compelled to document their present and aspirational selves in liminal terms between disciplines, ranks, projects, and work/life balance. Second, the fragmentation of physical spaces and embodied experience of working while parenting – in

cars, at family activities, while breastfeeding, during hospital care, in bedrooms, kitchen tables, and other domestic spaces versus locations considered ideal for work in the ivory tower, such as seminar rooms, department meetings, and spaces of remote teaching/learning in which academic motherhood has been performed in private spaces while captured in the frame of the institutional gaze. I will argue for a form of fragmentation that is enabling and empowering for academic mothers who are led to believe that fragmentary work and lives are compartmentalizing and incapacitating.

Bio:

Lisa Ortiz-Vilarelle is Professor of English at The College of New Jersey, in the United States. Her books, *Américanas*, *Autocracy*, and *Autobiographical Innovation: Overwriting the Dictator* (2020) and *Career Narratives and Academic Womanhood: In the Spaces Provided* (2023) are published with Routledge Press in its Auto/biography Studies Series. Her other work appears in critical collections and life writing journals, such as *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, *Life Writing*, *Biography Quarterly*, and *European Journal of Life Writing*. She was 2021–22 Fulbright Research Chair of Arts and Sciences at the University of Alberta, Canada. Her current project, tentatively titled *Life's Work: Career Narrative as Autobiography in the North American Academy*, is a study of functional forms of life writing in academic careers. She has been a Visiting Scholar at the Center for Biographical Research at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa, Honolulu (2018), and the University of Alberta, Canada (2020). She is Editor in Chief of *a/b: Auto/biography Studies*.

P17: Fragmented films

V108

Chair: Simona Mitroiu

Lioudmila Fedorova: *Sergei Loznita: Reassembling Fragmented Memories*

Abstract:

My paper explores the innovative use of fragmented cinematic language in the films of Ukrainian director Sergei Loznitsa. Loznitsa employs two types of documentary materials—archival footage capturing iconic Soviet rituals and events (*The Trial*, 2018, *State Funeral* 2019) and recordings of recent events marking the end of the Soviet era (*Maidan*, 2014, *The Event*, 2015). Correspondingly, he applies two distinct cinematic strategies. In the former case, through montage and sound enhancement, Loznitsa sutures footage from multiple perspectives, providing new angles and recontextualizing it, thereby questioning collective memory conventions. For instance, in *State Funeral*, he reveals the tragic absurdism of the crumbling yet powerful Soviet empire where even the victims mourn the death of the tyrant during Stalin's funeral procession.

In the latter case, he minimally edits footage shot from the same vantage points by unmoving cameras, allowing historical events to emerge as fragments of people's lives recorded objectively. Finally, in *Donbass* (2018), Loznitsa presents a synthesis of his works on the verge of feature and documentary films. He juxtaposes Internet clips from the self-proclaimed republics in Ukraine with his own film fragments based on witness stories, enhancing true events for added dramatism. I draw a connection between Loznitsa's approach and Svetlana Alexievich's literary genre exploration, juxtaposing multiple witnesses' voices in works like *Zinky Boys* or *Second-Hand Time*. The paper's introduction explores the origins of Loznitsa's approach, from formalist debates on catching life unawares to discussions on the end of documentary cinema in early 2000s Russian circles. The main section compares two strategies for assembling memories—using archival materials and recent visual

testimonials from “collective” witnesses. Finally, the paper discusses Donbass as a unique meta-film elevating documentary, fusing amateur reels and director’s adaptations of witnesses’ stories, illustrating fragmented narrators and identities in the regions and people portrayed.

Bio:

Lioudmila Fedorova is a professor in the Department of Slavic Languages at Georgetown University, specializing in twentieth and twenty-first-century Russian literature, including popular genres like sci-fi and crime fiction, film, and the Internet. Her courses cover contemporary Russophone literature, film, memory, culture, and Post-Soviet Identities. Her book *Yankees in Petrograd, Bolsheviks in New York* (DeKalb: NIU Press, 2013) explores the myth of America as the Other World in Russian literature and film. In *Adaptation as Symptom: Russian Classics on the Post-Soviet Screen* (New Literary Observer, 2022), she pioneers new interdisciplinary territories and offers a theoretical framework interpreting contemporary film adaptations of Russian classical literature as a litmus test for profound social and political changes in post-Soviet Russia. Currently, she is working on *Bodies of Flesh and Bodies of Text in the Windy City*, a book exploring Chicago urbanism in Russian and American literature.

Gabriele Linke: *Negotiating Fragmented Identities in Documentary Films on Vietnamese Contract Workers in the GDR*

Abstract:

The non-profit film project "Turn it around – Viet-German perspectives" in Berlin has been aiming to introduce young Viet-Germans to the processes of filmmaking through the production of short documentary films on the lives of people with Vietnamese roots in Germany. Since 2020, five films have been released memorializing the life stories of Vietnamese contract workers in East Germany (the GDR) and their children. About 60,000 young Vietnamese came to the GDR in the 1980s, of whom only about 20,000 were able to stay on after unification. In this paper, three films created within the framework of this project will be considered with regard to the strategies they use to assemble and reconcile fragments of memory and identity. "Only at night could we be sad" will be discussed with regard to the process of bestowing meaning on a life disrupted by migration. The film concentrates on one specific contradiction in protagonist Thi Le Nguyen's life, that is, on the contradiction between her deep commitment to her family in Vietnam and her belief in a self-determined life. In the short film "Temporary Living" (Wohnen auf Zeit), the residential halls for Vietnamese contract workers built in Berlin in the 1980s provide the framework for memories of arrival, of everyday life and the disruption caused by unification. The protagonist of this film, the former contract worker Thao Phan, sticks to factual memories rather than emotions but, in retrospect, assumes a critical perspective on the past. The third film, "Everything belongs to you" (Alles gehört zu dir), will be analysed to show how Yen Nguyen, daughter of Vietnamese contract workers, attempts to reconcile diverse experiences and phases of her life in search of wholeness and belonging. The final discussion will focus on the diversity of strategies for narrating stories of identity fragmented by migration, and also address the impact of gender and generation on the reconstruction of the personal past.

Bio:

Gabriele Linke is Professor emerita of British and American Cultural Studies at the University of Rostock, Germany. In her book on popular literature as cultural memory (*Populärliteratur als kulturelles Gedächtnis*, 2003), she examines contemporary British and American series romances with regard to the construction and memorialization of national history. Her

interest in Memory Studies has stayed with her and has also informed her involvement in Autobiography Studies since 2006. In Cultural Studies, she has focused on postcoloniality and transculturality in British and American film. Furthermore, she has co-edited five thematic volumes of interdisciplinary gender studies, the last of which, dealing with popular culture, gender and agency, came out in 2018. Her interest in contemporary autobiography in English has resulted in, for example, the collection *British Autobiography in the 20th and 21st Centuries* (2017), co-edited with Sarah Herbe. Previous research centred on the representation of Vietnamese German lives, especially Vietnamese contract workers' lives, in auto/biographical film.

Laura Wright: *'How superficial, how fragmentary': Breaking the Bones in Mrs Dalloway and Huesera: The Bone Woman*

Abstract:

Virginia Woolf's 1925 novel *Mrs. Dalloway* is a study in fragmented lives and the unattainable desire to find connection, both to other people and to the natural world. Woolf's exploration via stream of consciousness allows the reader to access the thoughts of the novel's characters – particularly those of its protagonist, British socialite Clarissa Dalloway, and traumatized World War I veteran Septimus Smith as they exist on a June day in London in 1923. The connections that exist – their status as citizens of the nation, their collective hearing of Big Ben's chime, for example – are exposed as, rather, evidence of their solitude. The narrator notes "how superficial, how fragmentary they are!" The "thin thread" that connects them always, in the end, snaps. Septimus experiences what his doctors call "a breakdown" and commits suicide, and Clarissa realizes that life only exists in fragments: "here was one room; there another. Did religion solve that, or love?" In this essay, I submit that the 2022 Mexican-Peruvian film *Huesera: The Bone Woman*, Michelle Garza Cervera's directorial debut, visually and thematically references Woolf's novel throughout and casts, via the genre of body horror, motherhood as a process that breaks and fragments the protagonist Val (Natalia Solián) who, according to, Katie Rife, is "a woman caught between what she really wants, what she thinks she should want, and what society wants for her." "Huesero," Spanish for "bonesetter," a folk healer who mends and sets broken bones. The name is, therefore, ironic, as bones snap and break throughout the film, illustrating the way that Val's body is broken into pieces – fragments – by her conformity that she realizes she despises.

Bio:

Laura Wright is Professor of English Studies at Western Carolina University, where she specializes in postcolonial literatures and theory, ecocriticism, and animal studies. Her monographs include *Writing Out of All the Camps: J. M. Coetzee's Narratives of Displacement* (Routledge, 2006 and 2009), *Wilderness into Civilized Shapes: Reading the Postcolonial Environment* (U of Georgia P, 2010), and *The Vegan Studies Project: Food, Animals, and Gender in the Age of Terror* (U of Georgia P, 2015). Her edited collections include *Teaching Coetzee's Disgrace and other Works* (MLA, 2014, lead editor with Elleke Boehmer and Jane Poyner), *Through a Vegan Studies Lens: Textual Ethics and Lived Activism* (U of Nevada P, 2019), *The Routledge Handbook of Vegan Studies* (Routledge, 2021), *The Edinburgh Companion to Vegan Literary Studies* (Edinburgh UP, 2022, lead editor with Emelia Quinn), and *Appalachian Ecocriticism and the Paradox of Place* (U of Georgia P, 2023, co-editor with Jessica Cory).

Isabel Smith and Paul Longley Arthur: *What is Left after Memory: Love, Loss and Identity in Little Fish*

Abstract:

Chad Hartigan's science fiction romantic drama *Little Fish* was released in 2020, soon after the start of the coronavirus pandemic. Scenes of the film are reminiscent of life during Covid-19 – alarming reports about the spread of a mysterious disease, hordes of people jostling for medical supplies and treatments, and conspiracy theorists declaring government culpability. Yet the disease plaguing communities in *Little Fish* is not affecting people's bodies but their minds. Those who have contracted Neuroinflammatory Affliction (NIA) are losing their memories. The story centres upon the experiences of one young couple as they anxiously witness the disease take hold of their community, loved ones, and eventually one another. It is seen and heard through the eyes and voice of Emma, a headstrong veterinarian from northern England, who meets and falls quickly in love with the quietly charming Jude, an American photographer. In many ways *Little Fish* resembles a typical indie romance. However, the film also makes use of its less typical dystopian material to explore relationships between memory, narrative, and identity, and poses significant questions about the ways these processes interact with those of love and loss. Who are we once we begin to lose memories of our histories and ourselves? Who do we then become to our loved ones, with whom we have shared these memories and selves? Is love based on the accumulation of cognisant memories and experiences with another person, or is there something innately felt beyond these conscious processes? The paper draws upon concepts from memory studies, psychoanalysis, philosophy, and cultural studies to explore these questions. We argue that although identity and love are deeply intertwined with conscious memory and narrative, they are also constituted by less tangible, inarticulable elements of the body and the unconscious – that continue on even when the conscious mind does not.

Bios:

Isabel Smith is a Research Associate in the School of Arts and Humanities at Edith Cowan University, Western Australia, with particular interests in digital storytelling and the relationships between memory, narrative and identity. She was previously a History Curator at major state museums in Australia and a social researcher in the UK.

Paul Arthur is Vice-Chancellor's Professorial Research Fellow and Chair in Digital Humanities and Social Sciences, at Edith Cowan University, Western Australia. He speaks and publishes widely on major challenges and changes facing 21st-century society, from the global impacts of technology on communication, culture and identity to migration and human rights.

P18: Roundtable: (Un)fragmenting Nordic and Baltic Lives: Notes Toward Creative Methodologies of Teaching

V103

Leena Käosaar (chair), **Maarit Leskelä-Kärki** and **Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir**

Abstract:

The roundtable brings together teachers and scholars of life writing who participated in the Nordplus Higher Education project "Teaching Nordic and Baltic Lives" (2022-2023). Our roundtable aims to share and to discuss curriculum development and teaching experience of the intensive course „Studying Life Writing in Nordic and Baltic Contexts. Creative Methods and Approaches“ that took place in June 2023 at the University of Tartu with the participation of students from Estonia, Latvia (University of Latvia and University of Liepaja), Lithuania (Vilnius University, Kaunas Faculty), Finland (University of Turku) and Sweden (Uppsala

University) with instructors from the Universities of Tartu, Turku, and Uppsala as well as Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore and Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia.

Bringing together a range of disciplinary backgrounds (literary studies, memory studies, ethnology, and creative writing) and research competencies (experience with different life writing and ethnographic genres and sources), the course sought to employ methods with an emphasis on creative approaches ranging from imaginative memory walks and creative nonfiction exercises to creative imaginative ethnographical methodologies such as ethnographic poetics.

In the title of the roundtable, fragmenting is employed figuratively, referring a) to the frequent interruption of more traditional lecture-based teaching where creative and practical tasks served as personalized fragments of knowledge-building complementing and shaping understanding of and engagement with life writing and b) to the process of weaving together (as the opposite of fragmenting) knowledge of different fields and disciplines in the building of inter/transdisciplinary knowledge of life record in the classroom.

Bios:

Leena Käosaar is an Associate Professor of Cultural Theory at the Institute of Cultural Research at the University of Tartu in Estonia. Her research interests include the tradition of Estonian life writing and post-Soviet life writings, Baltic women's deportation and Gulag narratives, women's diaries and family correspondences, self-representational writing of traumatic experience, relationality, the mobility of memory as well as creative nonfiction (life story writing) that she teaches at the University of Tartu alongside courses on literary and cultural theory, gender studies and Estonian literature. She was the PL of the project "Taking Shelter in Estonia: the Stories of Ukrainians Fleeing from the War" (supported by Tartu University, 2022-2023) and "Teaching Nordic and Baltic Lives" (funded by Nordplus, 2022-2023) and the fall 2023 Juris Padegs Research Associate at the MacMillan Center for European Studies at Yale University.

Dr Maarit Leskelä-Kärki holds a Title of Docent in Cultural history and life-writing (University of Turku, University of Lapland), and is a university lecturer at the Department of Cultural History at the University of Turku. Her research has focused on the cultural history of women's writing, autobiographical sources, methodological questions of life writing and biographies, and gender history. She recently led a multidisciplinary research project *Seekers of the New* (2018–2021) that dealt with the cultural history of Finnish esotericism from 1880 to 1930's. Currently, she works in the field of environmental humanities both in her recent book on *Sea and Tove Jansson* (2022), and in a new research project *A grove of stories – Sagalund*. Home museum and environmental biography.

Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir is a Professor of Women's and Gender History at the University of Iceland. She has published works on women's and gender history, biography, correspondence, and (women's) historiography. Among her works in Icelandic is the monograph *Nútímans konur* (*Women of Modernity*, 2011) in which she relies heavily on correspondence when exploring women's education and the construction of gender in late 19th century Iceland. In 2020 she co-authored the award-winning book *Konur sem kjósa*. *Aldarsaga* (*A Centenary of Women Voters*, 2020) in which the authors study women's citizenship and agency in 20th-century Iceland. Among her works in English are articles in *Life Writing* (2010, 2015) and *Women's History Review* (2018). She co-edited *Biography, Gender, and History: Nordic Perspectives* (2016) and wrote a chapter in *The Palgrave Handbook of Auto/Biography* (2020).

17-19 Reception

Hótel Borg

With readings by Ewa Marcinek and Francesca Cricelli

Bios:

Ewa Marcinek is a writer born in Poland. Since 2013, she has been living in Iceland, where she co-founded the Ós Pressan publishing collective and a series of literary events called Reykjavík Poetics. Ewa is the author of 'Polishing Iceland' (2022), an autobiographical collection of stories and poems about immigrant life in Iceland. Her writing has been published in magazines, literary journals, poetry and prose collections in Iceland and abroad. Additionally, her work has been adapted for the stage and presented in theatre performances, short films, visual art, and radio. In 2022 and 2023, Ewa received Listamannalaun, a prestigious Icelandic stipend from the government-funded Artists' Salary Fund.

Francesca Cricelli is currently a visiting fellow at the Institute of Cultures and Languages at the School of Advanced Studies at the University of London doing research at the Centre for the Study of Contemporary Women's Writing. She has a PhD in Comparative Literature and Translation Studies from the University of São Paulo, Brazil. She is a poet and a literary translator. Her works have also been published in Iceland, such as her book *17 + 1 Ljóð* (Sagarana Forlag, 2017), she has a poem featured in the anthology *Póllífónía af erlendum uppruna* (Una Útgáfuhús, 2020) and an essay in the book *Skáldreki / Writers Adrift* (Una Útgáfuhús, 2023), her work has also been featured in the journal *Tímarit Máls og menningar*.

13 JUNE

9 Keynote:

Main Building – Ceremonial Hall

Chair: Davíð Ólafsson

Anna Poletti

Joyfully Fragmented Selves: Autotextual Tactics for Writing Pleasure Across Media

Abstract:

"...I learned how to be a straight man fucking by listening to my inner girl. But in the rub, the selves disappear anyway. They don't exist. For a moment it all merges into a particular and fleeting splash into time of a universal animal." (McKenzie Wark, *Reverse Cowgirl*, 141).

In this presentation I will consider how life writing theory might engage with recent developments in queer, trans and black theory that attempt to re-think relationality. The idea of identity being formed through our interactions with others is a bedrock of how identity and textuality is understood in the field. By taking relationality as a concept, and the importance of the I/You relation in life writing texts as a methodological starting point, life writing studies has been central to deepening the understanding of the importance of relationality within the Humanities and Social Sciences. This, in turn, has led to a focus on relationality as a scene of recognition in which an "I" emerges in collaboration with a "You" (or a "we", "us" or a "them"). But can the You also satisfy the I's desire to disappear? The conceptual link between relationality and recognition establishes the centrality of life writing to sociality, politics and ethics. Yet, while theories of relationality and recognition guide politically and ethically

sensitive scholarship, some writers argue that these interlinked concepts oversimplify and sanitise the investments and energies that animate scenes of encounter. This presentation will focus on how recent attention to pleasure, and in particular eroticism, might productively interrupt our agreement that relationality in the service of recognition can always be assumed as an aim in the production or reception of life writing. Taking recent sex positive autofiction and autotheory as its focus, this presentation will explore how acknowledging that relationality can (and does) involve feeling overwhelmed, challenged, violated, misrecognised, fragmented or undone by the other might expand our field's engagement with emerging forms of life writing and reading.

Bio:

Anna Poletti is associate professor of English at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. They research life writing in contemporary Anglophone media and culture, and specialize in archival research, queer and feminist theory, and cultural studies methodologies. Anna's research explores two primary themes: 1) the variety of roles life writing plays in contemporary societies, politics and cultures, and 2) the way people use media technologies and material culture to attach meaning to lived experience. Exploring these themes, Anna has published on topics such as Andy Warhol's use of the cardboard box, digital storytelling, zines, selfies, graphic medicine, and youth-led climate activism. Their books include: *Stories of the Self: Life Writing After the Book* (New York University Press, 2020), *Intimate Ephemera: Reading Young Lives in Australian Zine Culture* (Melbourne University Press, 2008), and *Life Narratives and Youth Culture: Representation, Agency and Participation* (with Kate Douglas, Palgrave 2016). Anna co-edited the Eisner Award-nominated collection *Graphic Medicine* (with Erin La Cour, University of Hawai'i Press, 2021), and *Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online* (with Julie Rak, University of Wisconsin Press, 2014). Their first novel (*hello, world?*) explores online identity, sexuality and gender, and will be published by Semiotext(e) in 2024. With Kate Douglas and John Zuern, Anna is a Series Editor of the book series *New Directions in Life Narrative* for Bloomsbury.

10-10.30 Coffee

Main Building in front of Ceremonial Hall

10.30-12 Parallel Sessions:

P19: Women's Life Writing as a Transgressive Act: Exposing Missing Fragments through Self-Narratives in Popular Music

V023

Chair: Karen Fournier

Karen Fournier: *Gender Identity and Accounts of Transphobia in Punk Memoirs*

Abstract:

In this case study, the autobiographies of two transgender punks (Jayne County and Laura Jane Grace) illustrate how accepted histories of punk as a subculture that embraces difference have actually participated in the erasure of difference through their exclusion of important trans voices who helped to shape the scene at two points in its history. The recent proliferation of memoirs by female punk musicians has contributed to our understanding of female experiences in a subculture whose history has historically been recounted from the perspective of its male participants. Claims that punk histories are enriched by female voices that have been largely absent, while true, reinforce a gender binary that excludes other important voices from punk's historical narrative. This case study explores the contributions

to, and challenges faced within, the American punk subculture by two transgender participants whose careers are separated by more than three decades. In her autobiography, the punk pioneer Jayne County recounts how her career was stymied in the 1970s because of her transgender identity, while Laura Jane Grace's memoir exposes the lingering stigma that she felt within the subculture when she transitioned in 2012. Comparisons between these two accounts of punk raise important questions about inclusion and diversity in a subculture whose DIY ethos purports to empower and embrace all potential participants.

Bio:

Karen Fournier is an Associate Professor of Music Theory at the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance at the University of Michigan. Her research focuses principally on issues of gender, sexuality, and class through published work on British and American punk rock in the 1970s. She is currently completing a book-length project on women's responses to sexism and classism through British punk. Karen has also published the first book-length scholarly study of Alanis Morissette's work, *The Words and Music of Alanis Morissette* (2015), where she examines the artist's contributions to the "angry young woman" phenomenon of the early 1990s.

Amy McCarthy: *Queering Masculine Spaces in Music Memoirs*

Abstract:

Case Study 2 explores the presence of the cowboy figure in Patti Smith's memoirs. The cowboy traditionally represents the American individual and is the essence of hegemonic masculinity. However, the cowboy's image is unsolidified and has shifted across time. Across many of her creative endeavours, Patti Smith references and uses the image of the cowboy to construct versions of herself. This paper argues that Smith takes a conservative, masculine figure and usurps his mythical identity. The cowboy acts as a vessel for Smith to transcend consciousness. In *Just Kids* (2010) the cowboy is transgressive and his familiar outlaw tropes echo Smith's steps as an emerging artist. The cowboy holds a predominant role in *M Train* (2015) and appears as a character in Smith's subconscious, drifting in and out of the narrative. Dancing through literature, dreams, and personal milestones in her writing, Smith presents the layers of consciousness that create a person and place. Mixing fiction and reality in her memoirs mirrors the bricolage aesthetic of punk. In each memoir, Smith brings these elements together to curate a version of herself to present to her reader. In her memoirs, Smith takes fragments of the cowboy's identity and creates her own version who subverts patriarchal heteronormativity. Smith claims authority in male-dominated spaces, both in her art and who she classifies as her role models, therefore queers a masculine space. By using the existing masculine culture surrounding the cowboy, Smith tears it up and reattaches it to create a portal to her psyche.

Bio:

Amy McCarthy is a PhD student at York St John University researching women's indie music memoirs. She completed her Master's degree at the University of Sheffield in 2018, where she wrote her dissertation on the female body in women's music memoirs. In 2018, she won the Wilko Johnson Writing Award. Her work appears in *Venue Stories* (Equinox; 2023) and *Women in Rock Memoirs* (Oxford University Press; 2023).

Beatriz Medeiros: Authenticity as a Performance in Female Musicians' Writings

Abstract:

This case study discusses the performance of authenticity in the writing of Amanda Palmer's memoir, *The Art of Asking* (2015). Palmer employs two processes that historically speaking seem to come from opposed spheres: performance and authenticity. By showing parts of her intimacy, she shapes the construction of trust, resulting in her proximity to her fan base, legitimizing her work's credibility, and negotiating her truth in the self-narrative. Performing authenticity, in these terms, is a strategy that makes it possible for Palmer to maintain the fidelity of a group of people. The strategy comes from the understanding of trust a symbolic capital forming the foundation of a musician's relationship with their fan base. Palmer's memoir reveals how she leverages this trust to create a strong bond between herself and her audience. By sharing intimate aspects of her life and experiences, she invites readers into her world, making them feel like confidants. One of the remarkable features of Palmer's memoir is her ability to navigate the delicate balance between truth and self-legitimization. She openly acknowledges the contradictions in her life and the challenges she has faced, presenting a raw and unvarnished portrayal of herself. This demonstration, rather than diminishing her credibility, enhances it. By acknowledging her flaws and vulnerabilities, Palmer establishes herself as a relatable figure, someone who has grappled with the same issues as her readers. She artfully combines the performative aspects of her public persona with curated personal revelations by crafting a narrative that feels both emotionally honest and artistically compelling. Her memoir becomes a stage on which she acts out her truth, blurring the lines between her public and private self. The memoir serves as a case study for understanding how female artists can perform authenticity to cultivate trust, legitimize their work, and construct a compelling self-narrative.

Bio:

Beatriz Medeiros is a research assistant at the Brazilian and Latin-America Centre of the University of Tübingen. She's a doctor in communication and cultural studies at the University of Tübingen and the Federal Fluminense University, and a Master's in Media Studies also by the Federal Fluminense University. Her recent investigation tackled the networks formed by female musicians to survive and re-exist in the masculine spaces of punk and heavy metal in Brazil.

Wayne Heisler Jr.: 'Ain't there enough light for two people?': Sexism and the Fragmented Histories of Cyndi Lauper's *A Night to Remember* (1989)

Abstract:

Responding to an interviewer who interrogated his 2023 book *The Masters*, journalist Jann Wenner justified his exclusion of women and people of color because, in his view, black and female artists have not been articulate "philosophers of rock." The sexism and racism ingrained in Wenner's project predictably trades in hegemonic binaries: mind/body, whiteness/blackness, male/female. In terms of misogyny, much life-writing on the part of female rock artists during the memoir boom of the past several decades has located the sexism Wenner espouses at the core of their experiences. This case study focuses on Cyndi Lauper: *A Memoir* (2012), and particularly Lauper's account of the impact of the misogynistic music industry on her album *A Night to Remember* (1989). In her memoir, Lauper contradicted interviews from the time of the album's release, when she asserted her creative agency. Writing over twenty years later, Lauper detailed how sexism was at the root of what she experienced as troubled circumstances surrounding the writing, singing, recording,

producing, and marketing of *A Night to Remember*. Indeed, Lauper retrospectively dubbed it “A Night to Forget.” Remembering and forgetting are endemic to autobiography. Had Lauper originally championed her album to save creative face? Had she given voice to an industry script out of commercial necessity? Had she gained awareness of systemic inequities and modulated her self-understanding? The fragmented history of Lauper’s *A Night to Remember* is hardly mended by a close listening to its single releases, the remixing of which for Top 40 radio foregrounded the “masculinized territory” of recording studios, in which “the work of female vocalists is less important than the work of male producers” (Reddington 2021). Perhaps the case of Lauper reveals that survival is an important philosophical tenet of rock, although the cost of adhering to this philosophy has been higher for women.

Bio:

Wayne Heisler Jr. is a Professor of Historical and Cultural Studies in Music at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ). His primary area of research focuses on music and dance; recent publications include “Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal’s Dance Me and the Posthumous Theater of Leonard Cohen,” in *Naxos Musicology International* (2021), and “Choreographing Mahler Songs at the Centenary,” in *Musicology and Dance: Historical and Critical Perspectives* (Cambridge University Press, 2020). Wayne’s in-progress monograph is titled *Choreographing Song in the Twentieth Century*. He also researches and teaches on popular musics at TCNJ, including “Gender, Sexuality, and Pop Music in the 1980s” and a team-taught honors seminar (with David Ventura), “An Era of Opportunity and Crisis: The 1960s.”

P20: Roundtable: (Fragmented) Identity in Post-Communist Europe through the Lens of East-West Sentiments

V007

Chair: Ioana Luca

Simona Mitroiu, Marleen Rensen, Anna Seidl

Abstract:

The collapse of communism in Eastern and Central European countries led to significant social and cultural changes. One of the notable consequences was the emergence of fragmented identities affecting questions of memory, emotionality, values, and sense-making processes. Understanding the challenges of identity transformation is crucial for comprehending the rich tapestry that shapes European societies and the integration process today.

This panel investigates fragmented identities articulated in life narratives with a special focus on the role of East-West sentiments. Thirty years after the fall of communism and the subsequent integration of several East European countries in the EU, Eastern Europe is still often regarded as the ‘other Europe’. Against this background, we reflect on life narratives and strategies that deal with the fragmentation of the self, constructed in close proximity to East-West feelings. That is, 1) how do post-communist subjects define themselves in relation to the cultural frameworks and stereotypes associated with Eastern and Western societies, 2) how do they make sense of the ideological, political, and cultural divisions that characterized the Cold War era and its aftermath?

The panel is structured around the following thematic sections:

- “Encounters, Expectations and Intersections: Travelling Memories and Self-Expression” (Simona Mitroiu)
- “Literary Mediators of East/West Perceptions” (Marleen Rensen)
- “Emotional Dimensions of “East German Identity” (Anna Seidl)

Bios:

Simona Mitroiu is Senior Researcher at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Romania. She is the author of *Women's Life Writing in Post-Communist Romania: Reclaiming Privacy and Agency* (DeGruyter, 2022) and the editor of the volumes *Life Writing and Politics of Memory in Eastern Europe* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2015) and *Women's Narratives and Postmemory of Displacement in Central and Eastern Europe* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2018). She is also author of two other books and several papers in international journals, including *Memory Studies*, *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, *Canadian Slavonic Papers* and *European Legacy: Towards New Paradigms*. Her research focuses on memory, life writing, post-socialist re-interpretations of the past and gender studies in Central-Eastern Europe.

Dr Marleen Rensen studied Arts and Sciences at the University of Maastricht and took her PHD at the University of Amsterdam. Currently, she is a Senior Lecturer of Modern European Literature, teaching in the department of European Studies. She specializes in twentieth century literature and life writing, with a specific focus on France and Germany in 1900-1945. Other fields of interest are: transnational life writing; the artist's biography; ideas of Europe and European identities; cultural relations between France and Germany; literary engagement; literature and eurofascism. In her current research on French and German intellectuals (1870-1945) she studies the way in which artists' lives have been written to articulate European identities. m.j.m.rensen@uva.nl

Dr Anna Seidl is a former principal dancer of the HNB (Het National Ballet, Amsterdam) and assistant professor at the Department of German Language and Culture at the University of Amsterdam. After an international career that brought her into contact with leading choreographers and opera houses, her field of research encompasses various areas of cultural studies. She works on topics related to visual cultures, embodiment, life narratives, and narratological structures in political/cultural discourses that are published amongst others at Oxford University Press. Currently she is involved in an EU-funded Horizon project on East-West perceptions, with a particular focus on the emotion-based discourses and practices of Othering in East Germany. In her academic career, she has always been able to benefit greatly from her experience as a dancer. Many aspects, especially in relation to issues of corporeality, aesthetics, emotionality, tacit knowledge, etc., allow for a different perspective and point of view, which she brings to her research. (a.s.seidl@uva.nl)

P21: Fragmented Illness Narratives I

V008

Chair: Liz DeLisle Rodrigues

Eliza Maureen Altenhof: *'Unfinished' Life – an 'Unfinished' Text? Terminal Illness, Autobiography and Fragmentation*

Abstract:

In the context of my research on terminal illness narratives, fragmented lives are somewhat a given: the plans for life had been interrupted by an unforeseen diagnosis and life had been finalised by an illness or disease, resulting in death. But what does it mean – a fragmented life? And, while writers dedicate the remaining lifetime to their texts, what does a fragmented life become in text? Is there even an unfragmented life, and therefore an unfragmented text? Thus, questions around fragmentation raise more questions on identity and textuality. Final autobiographical texts by terminally ill writers not only address the perspective of dying, but also the life they have lived and the memories they have made. In the face of death many writers reflect on their life and their past, on who they have become and on what will remain.

The fragmented self remains through autobiographical illness narrative. It might be something of great difficulty to imagine one's own absence in a future world. This is, however, why writers have developed strategies to remain present through literature, for example with the concept of autothanatography: a writing of the self beyond death. This also reflects in form: the interruption of life with a terminal illness results in fragmented texts, online or print. And what does it signify if some texts remain unfinished: do they demonstrate in any way a notion of their author's fragmented life? In my paper, I will explore examples of autobiographical terminal illness narratives with hindsight to questions around theme and forms of fragmentation: German writer Wolfgang Herrndorf, who wrote an online blog and posthumously publicised book "Arbeit und Struktur" (Work and Structure), and British writer Jenny Diski's columns in the London Review of Books and her memoir "In Gratitude".

Bio:

Eliza Maureen Altenhof studied Cultural Studies, English/American Studies, and Comparative Literature and Arts in Potsdam, Germany. She is presently pursuing her PhD at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (and formerly at King's College London). She has published on illness and death in Christoph Schlingensiefel's late work and taught at King's College London. Her current project focuses especially on narratives of terminal illness and death. A key aspect of her research deals with writers affected by terminal illnesses who write about their experiences, as well as writers who witness the illness and death of others. She focuses on life writing, self-portraits and self-representation, and interdisciplinary aspects in post-modern and contemporary art and literature. Among other conferences, she has presented at IABA conferences in 2017 in London, 2019 in Marid, and 2023 in Warsaw.

Kellie Chouinard: The Cancerland Selfies: *Fragmentation to Excess*

Abstract:

"Sitting in your home somewhere, there's a cardboard box," writes Anna Poletti in *Stories of the Self*. 1 Cardboard boxes containing disconnected fragments of life invite rummaging, and they also invite excess and deny linearity. In my house, as in the homes of many other young women who have had breast cancer, there is a box containing pamphlets, soft breast forms, post-surgical drain bags, and various other paraphernalia of illness. We know from the wide range of voices talking and writing and illustrating and Instagramming their way through breast cancer that the experience is intensely fragmenting and traumatic, and that, after treatment, cancer survivors continue to feel as if we are leading fractured lives: we live simultaneously in the land of the sick and the land of the healthy; we inhabit multiple versions of ourselves, written by multiple people; and we recreate the appearance of wholeness through reconstruction or prosthesis, yet we feel disconnected from our surgically-altered chests. We are fragmented to the point of excess. Grounded in autobiography theory and responding to the self portraiture of Jo Spense and Hannah Wilke, both of whom used photography to process the fragmentation caused by cancer diagnoses, this presentation will invite participants to rummage through a digital cardboard box of excessive and fragmented facets of my own life writing and selfie-ing through/about cancer. Using my digital scrapbook project, *The Cancerland Selfies*, I'll suggest that, even when the story seems ordered from the outside – like a curated scrapbook – the massive amount of sensory information included in digital episodic life writing about cancer may be easier to read and process in fragments, like treasures discovered by rummaging through a cardboard box.

Bio:

Kellie Chouinard (she/they) is a PhD candidate in English Language and Literature at the University of Waterloo, where she studies life writing on the internet. Her dissertation research explores some of the ways in which young women use transmedia storytelling to share different and complex experiences of living with breast cancer. When she's not wrestling with complicated ideas about how to represent illness in digital spaces, she is sometimes also an artist and creative writer.

Anna Hollsten: *Cancer Narratives and Fragmentary Composition in Jörn Donner's Mammuten (the Mammoth)*

Abstract:

This paper analyses two cancer narratives in Jörn Donner's *Mammuten*, eller Jörn Donners efterlämnade handlingar (The Mammoth, or Jörn Donner's bequeathed documents). The first of them concerns Donner's prostate cancer and the second one his lung cancer. The author, director and politician Jörn Donner (1933–2020) was an influential figure in Finnish culture. He wrote fiction as well as various types of life writing. *Mammuten* (2013) is an autofictional novel with megalomaniac measures: it runs over 1000 pages and consists of 33 chapters called books. The novel begins with a fictive frame story: a person called Fredrik Kock accepts the task of writing a biography of his friend Jörn Donner. As the novel progresses, the voices of Donner, the protagonist, and his biographer, Kock, alternate and become frequently entangled with each other. The narrative is highly fragmentary. The novel consists mostly of Donner's short, impressionistic diary notes, quotations from his earlier published books, articles, letters etc. Additionally, the book includes a photo appendix with pictures from Donner's life. The paper analyses how the two cancer narratives, narrated in consecutive chapters of *Mammuten*, are composed of various kinds of textual fragments. In addition, the narratives are compared to three types of illness narratives formulated by Arthur W. Frank (1995): restitution narrative, quest narrative and chaos narrative. The prostate cancer narrative has features characteristic to a restitution narrative, while the lung cancer narrative resembles a quest story. In both cases, the protagonist is treated and cured, but in the latter case he is profoundly changed by the illness. However, this interpretation is perhaps too straightforward as the narrative contains cracks and loose ends. Accordingly, the paper discusses how the fragmentary composition affects the interpretation of Donner's cancer narratives.

Bio:

Anna Hollsten is a University Lecturer of Finnish Literature at the University of Helsinki. Her research concerns modern Finnish poetry, lyrical genres and modes, literature and emotions, as well as life writing. Her publications include articles on the dynamics between celebrity and confessional poetry, e.g. Hollsten, A 2015, "Celebrity, Confession, and Performance in Pentti Saarikoski's I Look Out Over Stalin's Head", *Life Writing*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1050623. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14484528.2015.1050623>. More recently, she has published articles on modern family elegies, grief accounts, and obituaries.

P22: Communicating Trauma

V107

Chair: Hannie Lawlor

Kätlin Koik: *Trauma, Obesity and Eating Disorders in Roxane Gay's Hunger*

Abstract:

Sexual trauma is linked as one of the possible causes of the emergence of eating disorders. The post-traumatic experiences result in a fragmentation of the self and food becomes a coping mechanism for the sense of loss. Feminist scholarship on eating disorders has predominantly focused on the intersection of an anorexic body and gender, but increasingly, included other than white heterosexual women's experiences, allowing a more inclusive framework of experiences of eating pathologies to emerge. At the same time, illness narratives have been critically scrutinised for the demands of narrative closure, meaning that the narrative is mediated from the point of compulsive recovery, recuperating neoliberal self-management ideologies. Yet, eating disorder memoirs shed invaluable light on how such demands are challenged. Since a large body of research has focused on anorexia nervosa, I suggest treating anorexia as a theoretical point of departure to elaborate on how the dominant body management ideologies are contested in various autobiographical writings on eating disorders. For example, while hunger has been analysed from the anorexic perspective, the obese body holds the same logic intact. In the presentation, I explore how Roxane Gay's *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body* (2017) evokes a multi-layered narrative of her body where bulimia and compulsive eating are enacted as modes of self-preservation. Sovereignty and individual responsibility are challenged through the embodied experiences of her obese body. The past is not constructed as enclosed from the point-of-view of a recovered self. Instead, I propose a reparative reading as a practice to initiate, on the one side, an ethical engagement with the text, but also as motivation for Gay's narrative drive.

Bio:

Kätlin Koik is a PhD researcher in English literature at Umeå University, Sweden. Her main research interests are contemporary American literature, illness narratives, autobiography studies, and Medical Humanities. In her monograph, she examines the representation of eating disorders in contemporary American literature. She holds an MA in English, with a specialization in American Literature and Culture, from Uppsala University, Sweden, and a BA in English Studies, from Malmö University, Sweden.

Nicholas Mohlmann: *Hypnagogic Statements: Dissociative Style and Inarticulation in Whitley Strieber's Communion*

Abstract:

This paper examines the linkage between narrative, style, and memory in Whitley Strieber's 1987 best-seller *Communion*. While Strieber was not the first to publish an alien abduction memoir, the success of his book granted it enormous influence on popular perceptions of alien abduction. Concomitantly, however, the book also contributes to popular understandings of the intersection of memory and selfhood, popularizing ideas about memory central to ufology, such as the notion of repressed memories recoverable through hypnotherapy and a paranoid orientation towards one's own life narrative. In *Communion*, Strieber relays a narrative of discovering that he is the recipient of nightly visitations by extraterrestrial "visitors." The narrative, however, is constructed around the emergence of ruptures in a previously seamless account of Strieber's happy, successful life. Indeed, the compelling aspect of his narrative is that the underlying experience he comes to discover

through interactions with ufologists, undergoing hypnosis, and scrutinizing his own life narrative is unsuspected. Once he entertains the possibility that he may have experienced traumatic events that he does not recall, the narrative of his life he previously believed begins to fragment, as memories take on new meanings and gaps appear. Crucially, Strieber refuses to stabilize the experience, instead developing a kind of dissociated style that foregrounds inarticulacy and the indeterminate nature of human memory as evidence of not only his own alien abduction experience, but potential evidence of an alien abduction epidemic. Ultimately, the paper argues that we must consider the alien abduction memoirs of the long 1980s as part of the United States' "memoir boom," promoting in U.S. culture a sense of life narrative as suspiciously complete, concealing hidden traumas that, if uncovered, promise the explanation of the ostensibly unlocatable unease that comes to underwrite white, heteronormative, upper middle class American life at the turn of the century.

Bio:

Nicholas K. Mohlmann is associate professor of English at the University of West Florida where he teaches courses in colonial American literature, life writing, and poetics. Author of *Trump and Autobiography: Corporate Culture, Political Rhetoric, and Interpretation* (Routledge), Mohlmann is currently working on a book project that examines how the use of auto/biographical discourse in British and American fortune literature has contributed to cultural strategies for representing our increasingly anomalous lives.

Sarah Klotz: *Louise Erdrich as Character in her Pandemic Novel/Memoir The Sentence*

Abstract:

While she is often considered the premier Native American novelist writing in the United States today, Louise Erdrich also writes poetry, children's literature, and memoir, crossing generic boundaries along the way. Her memoirs *The Blue Jay's Dance* and *Books and Islands in Ojibwe Country* explicitly engage the autobiographical, and her novels include elements of place, Ojibwe identity, and family relations that mirror her own life. Her most recent novel, *The Sentence* blurs the autobiographical and the fictional to make sense of the Covid-19 pandemic and the racial reckoning that followed the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis and across the United States.

Erdrich appears in the novel as a minor character alongside her real-world bookstore, Birchbark Books, which becomes haunted after the death of a customer. For Erdrich, the ghost story becomes a tool to make sense of the fragmentation of memory, community, and embodied experience brought on by world-shattering events. Her Ojibwe narrator Tookie has recently been released from prison and attempts to repair the ruptures in her own life while the world burns around her. As Katja Sarkowsky has articulated, Native American autobiography challenges the Euro-Western narration of the self. She writes that "the relation to place, land, and territory depicted in Indigenous texts is indeed an expression (as opposed to a construction) of a particular sense of self-in-place and self-in-relation" (105). This presentation will focus on place and relation through the novel's haunted bookstore, haunted text, and the haunting presence of the author herself. My aim is to explore how autobiographical elements allow Erdrich to imagine living past the traumas of racialized violence and incarceration by rebuilding place-based extended kinship networks in the urban environment of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Bio:

Sarah Klotz is Associate Professor of English and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts (USA). Her first book, *Writing Their Bodies:*

Restoring Rhetorical Relations at the Carlisle Indian School (2021) explores the strategies that Indigenous young people used to resist assimilationist education at the first off-reservation boarding school in the United States. She also writes about Native American literatures of the nineteenth century and anti-racist pedagogies.

P23: Digital and Online Lives I

V108

Chair: Karen Wade

Jihoon Kim: *East Asian Postinternet Art of the Moving Image and Fragmented Selves: Lu Yang and Kim Hee-cheon*

Abstract:

This paper discusses the ways in which moving image works by East Asian artists Lu Yang, (PRC) and Kim Hee-cheon (South Korea) engage the postinternet condition, a situation in which the internet and digital technologies are no longer perceived as new but as fundamentally restructuring our subjectivity and world. By opening a platform for intersecting the postinternet condition with a discourse on fragmented lives, a key specificity of the postinternet art of the moving image by contemporary East Asian artists lies in its attempts to create spreadable images of multiple political, aesthetic, and cultural layers. The two artists' rigorous aesthetic juxtapositions of virtual and physical spaces, their construction of online or 3D avatars that embody their own multiple fantasies and disorientations, and their strategies of fragmentary – even essayistic - storytelling, all should be seen not simply as indicating the artists' cosmopolitan postinternet sensibilities but also as expressing their engagement with the contradictory and unstable disjunctures of the global and local in contemporary East Asia. These disjunctures, I argue, lead to the construction of fragmented selves that lay claim to the fundamental dispersal and blurring of multiple identities as the hallmark of individual and collective lives in the East Asian technoscape, in which online audiovisual information and expressions increasingly infiltrate and transform subjectivity, memory, and the sense of physical space.

Bio:

Jihoon Kim is professor of cinema and media studies at Chung-ang University, South Korea. He is the author of *Activism and Post-activism: Korean Documentary Cinema, 1981-2022* (2024, OUP) and *Documentary's Expanded Fields: New Media and the Twenty-First-Century Documentary* (2022, OUP).

Milissa Deitz and Rachel Morley: *Digital Life Story Work: Linking Identity and Security for Young People in Out-of-home Care*

Abstract:

While every young person in Out-Of-Home Care (OOHC) has their own unique story, what they do have in common is the experience of a disrupted life. As they move through placements and assigned case workers change roles, young people frequently lack access to important records and memorabilia. A disjointed personal narrative can undermine a young person's sense of identity and, given this cohort is already at great risk of poor general outcomes when transitioning to adulthood, can put their physical and mental wellbeing at risk. This paper examines the role digital technology can play in supporting identity and personal narrative for young people in OOHC. It does so through consideration of a new Australian digital app called CaringLife and argues for the benefits of future Life Story Work (LSW) in a digital format in conjunction with more conventional formats. We argue that a

digital format for life storying has strong potential to address the higher than usual critical issues this group face: unemployment, homelessness, and mental illness. Keywords Out-Of-Home Care, proof of identity, belonging, digital life story work, apps, mobile media

Bios:

Dr Milissa Deitz is a Senior Lecturer in Communication and Writing and the Academic Program Adviser for the Creative Industries degree. Her scholarly interests include young people, wellbeing and technology; grief, identity and family; and voice and the marginalised within digital storytelling. Her latest book *Foster Youth in the Mediasphere: Lived Experience and Digital Lives in the Australian Out-Of-Home Care System* was published by Palgrave MacMillan in 2022.

Dr Rachel Morley is a Senior Lecturer in Communication and Writing, and the Associate Dean for Engagement in the School of Humanities and Communication Arts. As a lecturer, she teaches writing, media studies, and creative industries. Her engagement role sees her working closely with local and national arts and cultural institutions to build strong collaborative partnerships that are high on research, learning and creative outcomes. In research, Rachel has worked on participatory storytelling projects in communities across Western Sydney, Northern NSW, Central Australia and Taiwan.

Chi-Chieh Huang: *Interesting Things Happen Along Borders: Exploring Fragmented Identities and Life Writing in Computer Games*

Abstract:

This paper uses Gordon Calleja's framework of alterbiography (2009) to potentially map out a model for people's generation of experiential narratives in video games and consider the theoretical/societal relevance in studying experiential narratives in games in times of digital fragmentation. For the first part of the paper, a focused investigation into Pokémon Go was conducted owing to its particularly interesting absence of a scripted game narrative (thereby offering players freedom to create their own experiential stories). To appropriately describe how players compose experiential narratives in Pokémon Go, literature reviews, e.g., in the field of narratology, life writing studies, media studies, and game studies, were conducted in tandem with organising semi-structured interviews with players of the community.

For the second part, I discuss the application of this experiential narrative model to other similar virtual game environments and the connection between my model and past narratological conceptualisations of game narratives. Due to the proliferation of virtuality since the digital revolution, I am particularly interested reconceptualising these experiential narratives as people's life narratives in game environments. As a concluding note of this paper, I further propose an ethnographic study into players' identities/selves articulation in computer games/virtual environments and the bleeding of identity/selves (Stenros & Bowman 2018) occurring between virtual/physical world. Although past studies have examined how we write about our lives in the virtual/digital, we are still grasping how we talk/write about our virtual/digital lives. As researchers and producers of knowledge interested in narrative meaning making, we need to acquire a better understanding of how lives are lived and how identities are constructed in virtual/physical hybridity.

Bio:

Chi-Chieh (Jack) Huang is a doctoral student at Örebro University, Sweden. He has worked as a research associate at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences, National Taiwan University, Taiwan. He holds an MA degree (cum laude) in Arts and Media Studies from Tilburg University, the Netherlands, and a BA in English from National

Changhua University of Education, Taiwan. He published several articles (on video games, public intellectuals and television series) in Digg Magazine.

Karolína Zlámlová: *'How much change is too much change?': Vivek Shraya's Mediated Selves*

Abstract:

In her aptly titled 2022 essay *People change*, Canadian multigenre artist Vivek Shraya wonders, "how much change is *too much change*?" (69). This comment on the position of a celebrity artist today highlights the seemingly contradictory audience expectations of authenticity and novelty. Together with the requirement of frequent production, these expectations are characteristic of the relationships between audiences and creators in the digital age. As in other areas, they are only more demanding on intersectionally marginalized creators like Shraya. Drawing primarily on life-writing scholarship and persona studies, and with attention to the different media affordances, this paper identifies one strategy Shraya employs to navigate these pressures: the prolific production of digitally available, episodic, interconnected, and occasionally inconsistent life writing and "automedial" (Rak 2015). The paper traces how these life-writing fragments in various media, platforms, and modes (e.g., essays, a graphic memoir, a play, photography, Instagram) aid Shraya in creating her artist persona. With her autobiographical expression varying across these forms, the paper also demonstrates that fulfilling the expectations of frequent content production, self-commodification, and providing the audience with access to one's privacy appears to be prioritized over the conventional expectation of consistency. While adopting the artist persona allows for some challenges to this convention, Shraya's comment about change exemplifies the negotiations such persona nonetheless entails. Through the discussion of Shraya's autobiographical production, the paper exemplifies the impact of digital forms of self-representation on contemporary autobiographical expression.

Bio:

Karolína Zlámlová (she/her) is a PhD candidate in the program Literatures in English at Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. She holds a Master's degree in English Language and Literature from the same university. She is currently finishing her dissertation on contemporary Anglophone queer life writing and is involved in teaching BA-level literary courses. Her research interests also include narratives of queer childhood and parenthood, and the role of language in narratives by nonbinary autobiographers. Her articles were published in *Life Writing and Sexualities*.

P24: Archives, Ephemera and the Visual

V103

Chair: Charles Reeve

Suzanne Joinson: *Fragmented Archives of the Self: Life Books and Ephemera of Carolee Schneemann and Francesca Woodman*

Abstract:

In this paper I explore and contrast artists Carolee Schneemann and Francesca Woodman's extensive use of fragmented life ephemera as an interdisciplinary mode of visual self-evaluation and self-representation with artistic purpose. Schneemann maintained a decades-long practice of creating Life Books, 'photographs of herself and loved ones, notes, phone numbers, letters, receipts, exhibition reviews and flyers' pasted into sketchbooks (Barbican, 2022). 'I became obsessed with the image as something fractured in time, so that each page

was treated as a moment ...' she said. Works include London Notebooks, 1971-71 and sketchbooks combining drawing, text, scrapbooking and photography, creating a loop that embeds her 'life' within the processes of her artistic expression. Materials are autobiographical, but the autobiographical nature is fragmented, disjointed, unstable, and dependent on a range of framings and modes of self-display.

Woodman wrote 'on pieces of fur, on French fry bags, on backs of prints slipped through my door,' and, 'her use of anything as a writing surface suggests that there was little distinction between her creative pursuits and her life.' (Lange, 2018.) The brevity of her life meant that unlike Schneemann, who was an obsessive archivist of herself, Woodman's fragmented archive was inevitably managed by others. Ephemera available also show a fluidity from 'life' into 'art': film negatives become invitations, she plans installations in her diary. The interplay of text and image mapped into the borderlands of photography and auto-writing show complex relationships with the telling of, and making a display out of, their own 'stories'.

I move between Schneemann's Life Books and materials in Francesca Woodman Roma 1977-81 and Francesca Woodman Portrait of a Reputation (Burnett, Lange, 2018), paying attention to the ways in which fragmented archives of ephemera display versions of lives that intersect with public-facing exhibitions. Schneemann and Woodman sit within a wider context of feminist, female art of the pre-digital era of the 70s-90s, dovetailing with the DIY approach of Bea Nettles (*Flamingo in the Dark*, 1979) and long-term diary-writing practices of Rosemary Meyer (1971). Incorporating Life Writing and Visual Narratives scholarship (Smith and Watson; Solomon-Godeau), I establish a co-extensive activity loop: the collected materials are drawn from 'life' or the autobiographical matter of existence; the art created is shaped by, but not wholly defined by, the fragmented autobiographies of the two artists.

Bio:

Dr Suzanne Joinson is Reader in Creative Writing at the University of Chichester. She is an internationally published, award-winning writer and academic. She has published two novels (Bloomsbury, 2012, 2016), a chapter in *A History of English Georgic Writing* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), a wide range of articles, essays and reviews, and has a memoir forthcoming (The Indigo Press, 2024). Her research explores the intersection of life writing, fiction, creative non-fiction and visual narratives. She is a member of the Folio Academy, was awarded the Goodison Fellowship, National Life Stories, British Library (2020-2022) and the Gwyn E Jones Fellowship at the Museum of English Rural Life/University of Reading (2018). Her books are translated into fourteen languages, she was a National Bestseller in the US, won the New Writing Ventures Award and was longlisted for the IMPAC International Literary Fiction Award.

Kaitlyn Rich: *Lacunae: Memory Gaps in Personal, Institutional, and Imagined Archives*

Abstract:

The library and the archive are often seen as places of endurance, of futurity. Susan Orlean describes the library as a place "where we can glimpse immortality; in the library, we can live forever." Jacques Derrida writes that the archive "opens out of the future."² However, these sentiments are at odds with the impossibility of saving material for eternity due to time's inevitable damages, both mundane and disastrous. The disaster I examine here is our man-made climate crisis: the moving of 1,200+ libraries in the next century, the displacement of archival materials at Rutgers University Special Collection/University Archives⁴, and the futurity of material memory threatened by water rising. The mundane is memoir: the

everyday disaster of death, of time passing, of family photographs lost, and of stories misremembered. Yet, in the face of inevitable loss, we persist in saving even though we know we will fail. I consider what happens when we face that failure and what emerges from absence when the real and imagined overlap. The traditional focus of archival studies concentrates on tangible material: the physical object, evidence that can be retrieved and examined. In this project, I shift this approach to think between the real and the imagined, the lost and found, the retrievable and unretrievable, between the personal and institutional, and argue that accounting for our affective relationships to archives may help us attend to its gaps, its volatility rather than stability, and for loss as well as preservation.

Bio:

Kaitlyn Rich is a writer and researcher based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She received her MA in English and Media Studies from Rutgers University in 2023, graduating with distinction. Her fiction work is forthcoming in *Running Wild* Novella Anthology. Her scholarship has been presented at The 30th Annual Midwestern Conference on Literature, Language, and Media at Northern Illinois University and R-CADE (Rutgers-Camden Archive of Digital Ephemera) Symposium: Repair at Rutgers University. In her free time, she enjoys photography, collage work, (and attempting to incorporate both into her writing), traveling, being outdoors, and trying and failing to get her cat and dog to like each other.

Felisa Vergara Reynolds: *Marjane Satrapi's Evolving Selfie*

Abstract:

In 2000, Marjane Satrapi established herself as writer, illustrator and director with *Persepolis*, her breakthrough graphic novel. *Persepolis* is a selfie that captures moments/fragments of Satrapi's life. Across multiple volumes, Satrapi gives us pieces of herself through the character of Marjane, which is based on her. Marjane, gets older, evolves, and the selfies are fractions of her, which reflect the changes both physical and metaphysical which she undergoes. Thus, *Persepolis* is a snapshot in time. We see selected fragments of Satrapi's identity: first a young woman struggling to find herself in a theocratic regime, and later as a graphic novelist/ animator. However, therein lies the danger of the selfie, as it freezes Satrapi in time. Forever reduced to this moment, this selfie, and the subsequent animated adaptation that made her famous. But, since the publication of *Persepolis* and its film adaptation, Satrapi has continued to evolve. In 2014, she directed the film *The Voices*, based on a screenplay with seemingly no relationship to her. *The Voices*, starring Ryan Reynolds, is about a serial killer driven to murder by the voices of his pet cat and dog. This represents quite a departure from Satrapi's previous work. How is this relevant to the image we have of Satrapi? When interviewed about *The Voices*, and her move away from the auto/biographical graphic novel and animation, Satrapi replied: "as a matter of fact I'm not an animator. 1" In one fell swoop, she obliterated the identity we had taken as emblematic of Satrapi. Twenty-three years ago, before the word selfie existed, Marjane Satrapi provided us with one. Yet, today in the age of the selfie she appears to be pointing the focus away from her. In this talk, I will show how the fragments Satrapi provided were always meant to evolve and not freeze in time the work of this artist—starting with an analysis of her work *Persepolis* and concluding with her work on the film *The Voices*.

Bio:

Felisa Vergara Reynolds is Associate Professor of French for the Department of French and Italian at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her focus is on literature in French from the Antilles, West Africa, and North Africa. She primarily works on the legacy and impact

of colonialism on literature in French, from the former colonies, and is particularly concerned with the continued influence of colonialism in the post-colonial era, and how it is represented in cultural production. Her book *The Author as Cannibal: Re-Writing in Francophone Literature as a Postcolonial Genre (1969-1995)* was released in 2022 via the University of Nebraska Press.

12-13 Lunch
Veröld Ground Floor

13-14.30 Parallel Sessions:

P25: Roundtable: Fragments of Lives in Women in Rock Memoirs: Memory, Trauma, and

Aging

V023

Cristina Garrigós (chair), Marika Ahonen, Angel Chaparro, Abigail Gardner, Astrid Joutseno/Swan

Abstract:

This round table examines the role of fragmentation in women in rock memoirs when considered alongside memory, trauma, and aging. It is our purpose to discuss how these issues are expressed through fragments in life-writing. Many of these books address personal memories and traumas, difficult family, or emotional relationships—in the case, for instance, of composers such as Astrid Swan, Cosey Fanni Tutti, Alice Bag, Kim Gordon, and Christina Rosenvinge. The round table considers the interplay between narrative and fragmentation, where stories told via memoir collect, format, and archive fragments of lives remembered. We find that in some of these texts, there is a reflection on how memory tackles traumatic events, and how writing about one's life and music—becoming a musician and writing songs—helps to come to terms with the past. Also, most memoirs are written from the perspective of mature women who are looking back and reflecting on their current age and their younger selves. In Abigail Gardner's words, the authors explore the use of an older literary voice, from a different time and place, to reflect on the transgressive aspects of their youth. In some cases, the narrative voice is less distant, and then, the connection with trauma is different from those further away in time. Our panel will discuss the various narrative perspectives considering age, time, place, and how the texts articulate the fragments to fix often traumatic memories, give meaning to them, and represent the lives of these women through writing.

Bios:

Marika Ahonen is a doctoral candidate in Cultural History at the University of Turku, Finland. Her doctoral dissertation examines the construction of narratives in popular music and the ethical questions raised in this context through the authorship and music of Spanish singer-songwriter Christina Rosenvinge (b. 1964). Overall, her research interests include the connection between popular music and identity, the relation of gender to agency, and the fields of narrative ethics and power mechanisms. She is also drawn to the areas of phenomenology and hermeneutics. In 2022, Ahonen won the ISCH (International Society for Cultural History) essay prize with the article "Sirens, Narrative Ethics, and Christina Rosenvinge's *Mi Vida Bajo el Agua*," published in the journal *Cultural History* 12, no. 1 (April 2023).

Ángel Chaparro is an Associate Professor at the University of the Basque Country, Spain. He holds a degree in English Philology and a PhD in North American Literature from that same

university. He is a member of the research group REWEST. His book *Parting the Mormon Veil: Phyllis Barber's Writing* was published by the Biblioteca Javier Coy (University of Valencia) in 2013. More recently, he has coedited the volume *Transcontinental Reflections on the American West: Words, Images, Sounds beyond Borders* (2015). He has published in different collections and journals such as *Miscelánea*, *Lectora*, *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, and *Women's Studies*.

Abigail Gardner is a Professor in Cultural Studies at the University of Gloucestershire, UK. She writes on music, gender, and aging. Key publications include *Listening, Belonging and Memory* (Bloomsbury, 2023), *Ageing and Contemporary Female Musicians* (Routledge, 2019), *PJ Harvey and Music Video Performance* (Routledge, 2015), and, with Ros Jennings, *Aging and Popular Music in Europe* (Routledge, 2019) and *Rock On: Women, Ageing and Popular Music* (Ashgate, 2012). She has led European projects on music and listening and produces community film and digital storytelling.

Cristina Garrigós is a Professor of American Literature at UNED (National University of Distance Education) in Spain. Her research interests include US contemporary literature, film, music, punk, memory, and gender studies. She is coauthor of the book of interviews *God Save the Queens: Pioneras del Punk* (rpm 2019) with Paula Guerra and Nuria Triana. She is the editor of *Punk Connections: A Transcultural Perspective* *Lectora* 23, 2017) (University of Barcelona) with Nuria Triana-Toribio. She has published on authors such as Kathy Acker, Gloria Anzaldúa, Giannina Braschi, Don DeLillo, and Ruth Ozeki, among others. Her latest book is *Alzheimer's Disease in Contemporary US Fiction: Memory Lost* (Routledge, 2021). Her term as president of the Spanish Association for American Studies (SAAS) began in 2023.

Astrid Joutseno's PhD *Life Writing from Birth to Death: How M/others Know* analyzes life-writing on mommy blogs. As Astrid Swan, the author has released seven albums. In October 2021 she published *D/other*, examining mothers, children, and death within the structures of pop music. Dr. Joutseno/Swan was awarded the Teosto Award in 2018. She published a memoir, *Viimeinen kirjani: kirjoituksia elämästä*, in 2019.

P26: Fragmented Illness Narratives II

V007

Chair: David Lombard

Laura de la Parra Fernández: *Fragmented Lives in Illness Narratives: Crip Time in Alice Hatrick's Ill Feelings*

Abstract:

This paper will explore how "crip time" (Kapfer, 2013) is represented in Alice Hatrick's hybrid memoir *Ill Feelings* (2021) about living with chronic pain. Through a non-linear and non-normative understanding of time, Hatrick reconstructs their identity beyond markers of successful conventional adulthood, such as production and reproduction. Instead, their chronic illness enacts a sort of liberation from these demands while struggling with feelings such as grief, loneliness, and rage. At the same time, embracing their experience as a disabled person allows Hatrick to put forth a notion of living where life's worth is not dependent on a person's productivity or wealth, accommodating temporalities beyond the capitalist one. I will argue that Hatrick's use of crip time defies conventional temporalities in traditional life writing, allowing instead to understanding a life's story beyond ideals of progression and "normal" living, thereby flouting expectations in traditional illness narratives. Finally, Hatrick's "ill feelings" will be read through Sianne Ngai's theorizing of "ugly feelings" (2005)

to demonstrate how Hattrick's non-cooperative and denouncing tone about their illness challenges neoliberal notions of health and wellbeing.

Bio:

Laura de la Parra Fernández is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Complutense University of Madrid, where she obtained PhD in English funded by a Research Fellowship from the Spanish Ministry of Education. She is currently the Academic Coordinator of the MA in North American Studies at Complutense University of Madrid. She has been a visiting scholar at Birkbeck College, University of London, at Harvard University, and at Project Narrative, Ohio State University thanks to a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship. Her research focuses on modern and contemporary British and American literature by women, with a particular interest in the representation of illness and its pathologization, the history of emotions, and experimental writing.

Chloe Green: *'A body that is not to be trusted': Fragmented Ethnographies of Chronic Fatigue in Alice Hattrick's Ill Feelings*

Abstract:

"Ill feelings," non-binary author Alice Hattrick writes in her memoir of the same name, are experiences of illness which exist only in the realm of feelings, given that they have not been afforded legitimacy by medicine. These "symptoms of illness without any known cause" are ill feelings in that they denote illnesses that are commonly understood as psychosomatic, informed or produced by the emotions. By dint of having these ill feelings, Hattrick argues, people can find themselves inevitably fragmented, and by being excluded from medical care or given psychiatric diagnoses, struggle to find an environment in which the totality of their experiences can be understood. In this presentation, I will analyse how the structure of *Ill Feelings*, in its incorporation of fragments of many different types of narrative and its generation of a hybrid narrative form, permits new understandings of contested illnesses. I detail how Hattrick's archival and ethnographic reading, medical trials, doctors' memoirs, and the writings of ill women like Alice James, Virginia Woolf, Louise Bourgeois, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Susan Sontag, and Florence Nightingale, establishes a novel archive from the experiences of historically silenced women, and positions women's bodies as textual entities, subject to the same reading practices as narratives. By considering the emergent archive of chronic fatigue developed in Hattrick's memoir, I argue that affective contagion can also permit the formation of a community, which can repair the sense of fragmentation instilled by a contested diagnosis. I propose that, in removing these feelings from the province of the individual, as they are confined by the isolating qualities of modern medicine, and situating them instead in a commons formed in response to contestation, Hattrick's memoir shows how contestation can lead to a renewed sense of coherence.

Bio:

Chloe R. Green is an early-career researcher investigating the medical humanities, literary form and contemporary cultures of affect. She is an Irish Research Council postdoctoral fellow at University College Dublin, where she is currently researching the intersection of wellness and workplace fiction. Her monograph, titled *Reading Contestation in Women's Experimental Illness Narratives*, is forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press in 2025, and her work has been published in *a/b: autobiography studies*, *The Routledge Companion to Theatre-Fiction*, and *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*.

Katie Mitchell, Micheal Humphrey and Trinity Wilbourn: *Healing in Fragments: Narrative Deconstruction in a Women's Peer Community*

Abstract:

Arkitekt Circles are a nurturing space for self-exploration, community connection, and spiritual growth, intended for women feeling the disconnection between their longings and their lives. As part of an engaged research project, I as the Arkitekt founder in collaboration with Katie Mitchell and Michael Humphrey of CSU, am using interviews and thematic analysis to co-construct insights around the role of listening for narratives as a healing practice. This is informed by Cavarero's concept of "Relating Narratives," (2000) and "empathic and dialogic listening" (Stewart et al. 2009), where "meaning or understanding is collaboratively co-constructed" (p 235). Members of Arkitekt Circles go through a 12-step experience in 3-semester labeled Deconstruction, Reconstruction, and Integration. The curriculum calls for intensive personal reflection, followed by monthly small group meetings to reinforce the work within the community, meant to help in the process of "Coming Home To Yourself." Currently, there are twenty-eight women gathering in four different Arkitekt circles (three in-person in Colorado and one online with women from all over the United States). At the heart of this work is a process of narrative deconstruction, purposefully fragmenting life stories by meditating on the "shadow selves and slivers of identity" each participant has assumed as part of their performative personalities, which I conceive as a sum of fragmentations resulting from wise and necessary survival adaptations that became habituated and conditioned tendencies, moving the individual further away from their inherent wholeness. In this setting, fragmentation is part of a process of healing and freedom, whereas having "completely realized selves" are possible barriers to growth. I caution this process must be done in a purposeful, guided community, in which dialogic listening of narratives is essential, to avoid both conformity-to-belong and untethered individualism. In our study, we seek themes around the shared experiences of fragmentation, and the role of bearing witness to the process of deconstructing limited stories of self in service of remembering and reconstructing a more expansive and integrated narrative.

Bios:

Katie Mitchell has united her interest in connecting niche narratives to audience interest with scholarship in her return to Colorado State University. She is pursuing a master's degree researching storylistening and narrative identity theory after completing coursework toward an M.A. in Media and Communication Sciences at the Technische Universitat Ilmenau.

Michael Humphrey researches and teaches at the confluence of narrative and listening theory. As a researcher, he has recently embarked on a series of studies of "storylisteners," people whose vocations prompt them to listen for others' narratives, including healers, leaders, teachers, tellers, seekers, and more. He also researches how narratives emerge on digital platforms, from influencers of Instagram to former presidents on Twitter. He teaches graduate students communication theory and methods as well as specialty courses in narrative. He earned his M.A. in Journalism at New York University and his Ph.D. at Colorado State University.

Trinity Wilbourn has over 20 years combined experience creating and presenting curriculum, training facilitators, and coaching individuals, classrooms, and peer support groups, including 11 years experience in online, brick and mortar, and blended learning environments. Trinity works at the intersection of Social Emotional Learning, Mind/Body Coaching, Mindfulness, and the science of Regulation. She earned a Masters of Education in Secondary Education and Curriculum Development at George Mason University.

P27: Digital lives and Online Lives II

V008

Chair: Kimberly Hall

Craig Howes: *Facts and Signs of Life: Bits, Biographies, Life Writing, Biobits, and the Environment*

Abstract:

It is a critical commonplace that one of the biographer's greatest challenges is selecting from a formidable archive of documentation the facts that will make for an interesting and useful narrative. Ever-increasing access to source material online is granting biographers not only more data but a greater range of potential subjects, marked as well by a shift away from the individual birth-to-death life narrative and toward microhistories, in which the compiled life acts as a metonymy, viewpoint, or key in relation to larger social, cultural, or political developments.

This paper examines the consequences of another result of this huge increase in data—the emergence of facts about lives invisible to this point that will remain fragmentary, or even what Marlene Kadar has called “traces.” How do we recognize facts as signs of life narratives largely or entirely in darkness, and what can we do with such signs? My primary concern, however, is with genre. How do we distinguish between a handful of barely visible facts about a life, and the massive archive embodied in a full-length biography, and what affinities do these forms possess? Two concepts might help answer such questions. First, that facts offering indisputable evidence of a life narrative—what I have called biobits—can be profitably considered as analogous to morphemes. Second, that instead of thinking about biographical studies as a field, we should consider it to be the study of especially large entities within a lifewriting environment—an ocean of data in which various forms of life narrative, large and small, are constantly emerging, interacting, absorbing, or being absorbed into each other.

Bio:

Craig Howes has been the Director of the Center for Biographical Research since 1997, the co-editor of *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* since 1994, and a Professor of English at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa since 1980. He is the author of *Voices of the Vietnam POWs: Witnesses to their Fight* (1993), a Choice notable book, and the co-editor of *Teaching Life Writing* (MLA 2007). Commissioned to prepare the essay on life writing for *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Literary Theory* (2022), he has written extensively on lifewriting ethics and pedagogy, human subject research, biography and autobiography in the Pacific, and life writing in 19th century British, American, and Hawaiian periodicals. A past President of the Council of Editors of Learned Journals (1998–1999), he was a founding member of the International Auto/Biography Association (1999–present), and is the list manager for IABA-L, serving over 1,650 subscribers.

Julie Rak: *Affinity and Reading Memoir: Voluntary Online Connection as Repair*

Abstract:

The four-person research team for the Reading For Our Lives (R4OL) project is working on answering questions about memoir, and how it circulates today. For this talk, two of our questions are key: (1) why do readers turn to memoir to understand the world? and (2) how do readers present their reading of memoir on social media? The work of “turning” to memoir as a genre and the role that social media plays in the formation of reader communities connects reading studies and life writing studies in interesting and fruitful ways, as we learn

how reading communities form online, and share what they think about memoir's relation to truth claims, memory, experience and authenticity. But why that turn to memoir? And how exactly do online reading communities form in response to memoir's claims about the world? Our investigations so far show us that reading memoir to understand the world is a way to enact what we call "voluntary connection" to repair atomization and fragmentation and that reading communities centred on memoirs form on social media as another part of that repair. Working with data we have collected about reading communities on social media connected to recent two bestselling memoirs, Jeannette McCurdy's memoir *I'm Glad My Mom Died* and Maia Kobabe's graphic memoir *Genderqueer*, we suggest that affinity, a concept from chemistry, sociology and cultural geography, can explain how elements in systems voluntarily connect, and why readers collaborate in offline and online environments in open-ended ways. Affinity has the potential to explain how online systems stay social and depend on flow, and explain how affect and emotion work to create bonds between readers of memoir, a concept that we hope to show is useful for life writing studies, reading studies, and any study of social media and its communities.

Bio:

Julie Rak (FRSC) holds the Henry Marshall Tory Chair in the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta. She is a member of the Reading For Our Lives SSHRC-funded project with Danielle Fuller (Principal Investigator), Anna Poletti and DeNel Rehberg Sedo, and holds a SSHRC Insight Development Grant for "Paper Lives," an investigation of contemporary journaling and the post-digital. Her books include *False Summit: Gender in Mountaineering Nonfiction* (2021), *Boom! Manufacturing Memoir for the Popular Market* (2013) and *Negotiated Memory: Doukhobor Autobiographical Discourse* (2004). She is the editor of the *Identities* volume of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Literary Theory* (2021) and the collection *Autobiography in Canada* (2005). She has co-edited with Anna Poletti *Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online* (2014). With Sonia Boon, Candida Rifkind, and Laurie McNeill, *The Routledge Introduction to Auto/biography in Canada* (2022).

Max Saunders: *Whole Life Story?*

Abstract:

The discourse of life writing's fragmentation is compelling, in part because it summons up the idea – or is it fantasy? – of an *unfragmented* life. The paper will trace this idea in autobiographical material from foundational Romantic autobiographies (Rousseau, Wordsworth), through impressionist autobiographies and autobiografictions, to contemporary digital traces, arguing that the former already intimated what the increasingly granular latter forms confirm, namely that life experiences and stories were already/are always fragmented.

Drawing on research conducted for the digital publication *Ego Media* (SUP, 2023), the paper will take issue with Galen Strawson's argument 'Against Narrativity', to argue that narrative, instead of being opposed to episodic fragmentariness, is itself inherently patchworked from discrete elements, be they memories, thoughts, perceptions, feelings, sentences, words or (especially in online forms) images, animations, symbols etc. To submit one's experience to language and media and narrative is to engage in fragmentation in order to create an impression of totality. But to say that is not to argue for a pre-linguistic (or pre-semiotic) undivided being.

The experience of digital lives exaggerates another aspect of such fragmentation to the point of enabling us to see it better, earlier, elsewhere: increasingly the fragments of our

life assemblages are borrowed from others, whether posts we ‘like’ and repost, or emojis and Gifs we reach for to express emotions and tones. So it was always: an intimate style, whether in fashion or language, is intertextual. The words we use come to us as already used by others; neurological research on mirror neurons shows what we knew already: that our inner life too is a patchwork of gestural elements learned from the other.

From this point of view, perhaps fragmentation is the whole story: the flashes of insight and epiphany the key to the nature of existence as fragmentary – its truly authentic signature.

Bio:

Max Saunders is Interdisciplinary Professor of Modern Literature and Culture at the University of Birmingham. He directed the Arts and Humanities Research Institute at King’s College London. He studied at the universities of Cambridge and Harvard, and was a Fellow of Selwyn College, Cambridge. He is the author of *Ford Madox Ford: A Dual Life* (OUP, 1996); *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (OUP, 2010); *Imagined Futures: Writing, Science, and Modernity in the To-Day and To-Morrow Book Series, 1923-31* (OUP, 2019); and *Ford Madox Ford: Critical Lives* (Reaktion, 2023). He co-edited, with Sarah MacDougall, *Alfred Cohen – An American Artist in Europe: Between Figuration and Abstraction* (Alfred Cohen Art Foundation / Ben Uri Gallery and Museum, 2020), and, with Lisa Gee, the digital publication *Ego Media: Life Writing and Online Affordances* (Stanford University Press, 2023).

P28: Fragmentation, Feminism, Fissures

V107

Chair: Louise Kari-Méreau

Hannie Lawlor: *Narrative Fissures and Socio-Historical Blind Spots: Strategies of Fragmentation in 21st-Century Spanish Women’s Writing*

Abstract:

In recent autobiographical experiments by Spanish women writers, fragmentation emerges as a key strategy to cut through the façade of cohesion that obscures the power dynamics behind writing lives. Rosa Montero’s *La ridícula idea de no volver a verte* (2013) and Cristina Fallarás’s *Honrarás a tu padre y a tu madre* (2018) shatter singular modes of storytelling as they entwine disparate histories in the same textual space. Montero blends autobiographical and biographical modes as she retells the life of Marie Curie in the context of her own life and loss and that of the wider effacement of women in socio-historical narratives, while Fallarás’s self-labelled ‘faction’ draws into dialogue the incompatible halves of her family history, the victors and the vanquished of the Spanish Civil War. The considerably different content of the two texts makes the correspondence between their fragmented form all the more striking. Montero and Fallarás enmesh narrative modes, styles, and a hotchpotch of sources from different media to deliberately disconcerting effect, jolting the reader between multiple and ever-partial points of view. Through a shared sporadic, and often strange, use of images, they underscore the mismatched pieces and the many gaps of which the accounts are comprised. The authors unpick, in this way, the collective histories with which they grapple, using fragmentation to lay bare the process of their construction and the partiality of their composition. They expose the blind spots that are created by, and that we create in, socio-historical narratives with the lives we choose to write and the angle from which we write them. In so doing, this paper proposes, Montero and Fallarás foreground both the necessity and the possibility of finding a different position in twenty-first-century life-writing from which to ‘contarnos a nosotros mismos’ (Montero), to tell ourselves the stories of our lives.

Bio:

Hannie Lawlor is Lecturer in Spanish at University College Dublin. She holds a PhD from the University of Oxford, where she was supervised by Dr Daniela Omlor and Professor Marie-Chantal Killeen. Her comparative doctoral project focused on twenty-first-century Spanish and French women's life writing in response to traumatic loss, and her broader research interests include autobiographical and autofictional practices, intergenerational transmission of memory, the staging of dialogue, and narrative perspective in twentieth and twenty-first-century prose and film in Spain. She is co-editor of the volume *The Autofictional: Approaches, Affordances, Forms* (Palgrave Studies in Life Writing, 2022) with Dr Alexandra Effe, and her thesis monograph, *Relational Responses to Trauma in Twenty-First-Century French and Spanish Women's Writing*, is forthcoming with Oxford University Press (2024). Rachel Sykes: 'I had refused (again) to tell my story': Popular Fictions of #MeToo and the Cultural Fragments of Testimony.

Lynley Edmeades: *Incomplete and Ongoing: Autotheory and the Fragment in the Work of Kate Zambreno*

Abstract:

American writer Kate Zambreno regularly upsets the boundaries and limits of genre: while some texts are called "novels," they are drawn directly from her life without recourse for any fictionalising; other texts are more consciously autobiographical, and yet we frequently brush up against ideas that may or may not be "fiction." Zambreno herself says that her ongoing project is a way to "keep gesturing to [the work's] incompleteness and ongoingness, which connects ... to the fragmentary project of literature, that which I long for in writing" (Zambreno). At the same time, the idea of the fragment is a mainstay of what has recently become known as autotheory, a form that is increasingly practiced by contemporary feminist writers such as Zambreno. The autotheoretical mode allows the writer to "flourish in the liminal spaces between categories, that reveal the entanglement of research and creation, and that fuse seemingly disparate modes to fresh effects" (Fournier, 2). Autotheory relishes in the fragments of life and genre; in Zambreno's work in particular, we can read fragments of a life, while we also experience these as exemplified via her conscious fragmenting of normative life-writing genres, such as memoir or autobiography. By looking at Zambreno's various autotheoretical modes, I interrogate the fragment as lived experience and as deeply rooted in contemporary feminist practice, whereby the form "reveals the tenuousness of maintaining illusory separations between art and life, theory and practice, work and the self" (ibid, 3).

Bio:

Lynley Edmeades is an author, poet and scholar. She is the author of three books, *As the Verb Tenses* (Otago UP, 2016), *Listening In* (Otago UP, 2019) and *Bordering on Miraculous*, a collaboration with painter Saskia Leek (Massey UP, 2022). She is the current editor of *Landfall: Aotearoa Arts and Letters*, New Zealand's longest-running, premier literary journal. Her current book project, *Hiding Places*, is an autotheoretical exploration of queer motherhood, and is due to be published in 2025. She is a Lecturer in English and creative writing at the University of Otago, New Zealand.

Louise Lurcin: *From the Fragmented Self to the Relational Self: Reading Susan Brison's Aftermath*

Abstract:

In 1990, Susan Brison, a philosophy professor at Dartmouth College, became a victim of sexual assault and attempted murder near Grenoble, France. Following this event, it took her ten years to write *Aftermath*, a first-person narrative that both chronicled and contributed to her healing process. The book attempts to phenomenologically and philosophically articulate the experience of rape and trauma and its repercussions, drawing from her exploration of her own personal experience as well as other literary and philosophical works. She thus analyzes the transition from a traumatized and fragmented self to a self that discovers itself as "relational" and she proposes to consider the narrative act, as an intersubjective event and a kind of social interaction, as a tool in this transition and reconstruction. She emphasizes the active role of listeners and readers in the reconstructive role of narratives.

This intervention would aim to address two problems : how does narration relate to trauma, considering it as the fragmentation of a self, of their experience, memory and identity, especially when trauma is defined as inexpressible and unthinkable? How can narration participate in the processes of healing and understanding trauma? Furthermore, because it relocates the self within a form of attentive and respectful intersubjectivity, narration enables the self to reconstruct itself and reveal the relational nature of it (we will study the definition that Susan Brison provides of the relational self). Therefore, we will explore the therapeutic, epistemological, political, and ethical values attributed to narratives by Susan Brison, stemming from her personal and philosophical exploration of the fragmentation of the self due to trauma. Our method involves a literary and philosophical analysis of Susan Brison's book, aiming to extract key concepts and ideas while considering them in rhetorical terms.

Bio:

Holding a Master's degree in Comparative Literature and Gender Studies from Paris 8 University, I am starting a Ph.D. in Anglophone Studies at Paris-Nanterre University this year under the supervision of Francois Cusset (Cultural Studies) and Cornelia Möser (Philosophy). My research focuses on the epistemological, ethical and political functions of autobiographical writing for the feminist movement in the United States from the 1980s to the 2000s.

P29: Post/Colonial Fragments

V108

Chair: Hannes Koberg

Paula Read: *Fragmented Whiteness: Perspectives of a White Settler Descendant*

Abstract:

Using my own white American family history of 19th century United States settlement and family "pioneer" publications as a starting point, this is an examination of how a white American narrative of female fortitude and virtue (sometimes known as the Sunbonnet Myth) has been repeated from the 19th century to present-day to silence the voices and narratives of women of colour. The ongoing reinforcement of a specific ideal of American womanhood centring white values has served to marginalise and appropriate the language and goals of women of colour. Pioneer historical societies and their publications created a new history in real time, one that excluded, erased, and silenced people of colour from the landscape. An important aspect of my work is the complexity and fragmenting of self-identity for progressive

white women raised in a tradition of historical whiteness. This paper will focus on the impact of this past on the present and how we explore this erasure in creative and academic work forms part of my thesis work in University of Bristol's Creative Writing department. My PhD project, part critical commentary and part novel, explores the depth to which this narrative indoctrinates and imbues white women raised in its tradition with a sense of righteous (racist) entitlement and with implicit assumptions that often resist explicit awareness. How does this continue to impact how we view issues like national and personal self-identity? By critically examining the outlines of this narrative and looking for the parts we have intentionally left out, white writers, readers, and researchers in particular can begin the inner dismantling of our own mechanisms of silencing and invisibility in our work.

Bio:

I am a fourth-year doctoral researcher and writer in the University of Bristol Creative Writing faculty. My critical and creative work explores an interdisciplinary approach to American Studies, feminism, creative writing, the identity of whiteness, and womanhood on the 19th American frontier. I am particularly interested in how whiteness and the continued impact of the frontier narrative limits imagination and a genuine discussion of racism in creative work, and what might be some possible mechanisms to approach that challenge.

I'm American, I now live in France. My family immigrated to the North American continent in the 18th century and settled on the West Coast in the mid-19th century. It is this personal family history that I explore for its lasting impact on identity and self.

I've given related talks at the Nouvelle Sorbonne (Paris), University of Alcalá (Madrid), and the University of Bristol.

Eloise Faichney: *'The Father of Protection': Navigating Fragmented Life Narratives, Ancestral Legacy and Settler Colonialism in Biofiction*

Abstract:

In 1851, David Syme (1827 - 1908), a young Scottish man fleeing his planned future as a clergyman, left North Berwick, site of one of Scotland's most infamous witch trials, and sought his fortune in Australia. He found it in the North of Victoria, promptly losing his panned gold to thieves. Upon returning to Melbourne, Syme reluctantly got involved in an outlet that would become one of the country's most prominent newspapers, *The Age*. Syme and his ten children, extensive landholdings, many published works, and involvement in Australian politics would shape the state and the nation over the next 100 years. His is a story of White settler success on stolen First Nations land.

This paper documents the process of writing a hybrid critical-creative work about my great-great-great grandfather, David Syme, and the lives of his children and grandchildren, including Kathleen Syme (1896 - 1977), a journalist, philanthropist and company director. There are many gaps and silences in the narratives of the at-once public and intensely private lives of the Syme family, whose archival traces and life writings contain deliberate omissions and erasures. The interpersonal conflict, grief, and shameful secrecy of the Symes echoed into my own family dynamics, over a century later.

In this work, I imagine the lives of the Syme family in biofiction, based on the scant and fragmented biographical details available, life writings, family mythologies, and rare recorded memories. I critically reflect on the deeds of my forebears, who burned letters, diaries, and records, buried indiscretions, and claimed Wurundjeri land as their own while First Nations people were displaced into missions. This work aims to reimagine the lives of the Syme family and their reverberations into my own life while interrogating questions of

settler colonialism, fragmented life narratives, White privilege, and reconciling the troubling legacy of one's ancestors.

Bio:

Dr Eloise Faichney is a writer, teacher, and researcher from Melbourne. Her PhD explored biofiction, authorial subjectivity and women's life narratives. Her latest publication, 'Undisciplined Creation: Poetry on Tumblr as Autoethnographic and Authorial Practice', appears in *Post-Digital Book Cultures: Australian Perspectives* by Monash University Publishing. Eloise's research interrogates historical and digital life narratives, creative writing across digital platforms, and critical digital pedagogies. She is a Lecturer in the Media and Communications program at the University of Melbourne.

Katrina M. Powell: *Poetics of Displacement: Narrating a Life as Collective Resistance*

Abstract:

When records are compiled in refugee intake lines, demographic information is collected to inform humanitarian statistical data and international court testimonials to determine war crimes. These enumerations, however, are also used to manage and regulate bodies. Life narratives, those that resist the narratives of displacement contained in ledger books, challenge and expand enumerations, letting us into the interior of these ledger line items, each revealing hypertextual narratives behind those numbers. Images of power convey certain kinds of narratives about the displaced: despair, victimhood, demand for proof of citizenry, a masculinized sense of the trajectory of the displaced, and a method of cataloguing with a long colonialist history. Colonialist enumeration systems serve to manage resources but also to control people, highlighting them as resources to be managed. A poetics of displacement, however, recognizes that the single refugee ledger entry, an institutional representation of displacement, could not possibly document all aspects of identity—the ledger is incomplete. Performative autobiographical narratives resist identity stasis by creating “alternative ledgers...fragments and hidden narratives not often included in historical archives,” counterparts to seas of white tents in a refugee camp, uniformed military moving civilian bodies, typed letters on government letterhead, and eviction notices. In this presentation, I outline a poetics of displacement, focusing on the interior, fragmented, and nonlinear methodologies that challenges us to consider what counts as an archive and who decides what's contained in it. Ledgers of memories suggest that there are ethical considerations to creating archival spaces, resisting documentation for scrutiny and purposes of control, and can mean the difference between asserting an identity and succumbing to labels for purposes of categorization and order. As such, narrating a life is an outlaw act, a resistance to containment, and an embodied narrative creating a transgressive archive challenging colonialist enumerations.

Bio:

Katrina M. Powell is Professor of English and founding Director of the Center for Refugee, Migrant, and Displacement Studies at Virginia Tech. She is the author *The Anguish of Displacement: The Politics of Literacy in the Letters of Mountain Families in Shenandoah National Park*, *Identity and Power in Narratives of Displacement*, and *Performing Autobiography: Narrating a Life as Activism*. She teaches courses in Feminist Autobiography, Rhetorics of Social Justice, and Feminist Research Methodologies. Her most recent project is an oral history collection, funded by Voice of Witness, *Beginning Again: Narratives of Movement and Migration in Appalachia*, forthcoming from Haymarket Books in 2024.

Yurika Tamura: *Brittle Lives: The Impossibility of Postcolonial Wholeness*

Abstract:

The paper I propose studies postcolonial writings that emerged after the Japanese Empire, and argues how fragmentation is not only the result of colonial violence but also a productive means of memory and political contests. This paper looks at several authors from two groups that were once colonized by the Japanese state: Zainichi Koreans and the Ainu people. The authors I chose mix personal autobiography and their ethnographic accounts on the colonial history of their people, both of which are fragmented and can only be told by nonlinear and partial accounts.

Seok Soon, a zainichi Korean scholar traces the scattered bones and narratives of Korean laborers, who engaged in indentured labor and whose corpses often reappear in the site of murders in Hokkaido, Japan, and Ishihara Mai traces the impossibility of a whole biographical account of her family which includes the stigmatized Indigenous identity of the Ainu people. Both of their writings hover between personal recollections and historical and ethnographical research, complicating the notion of genre, record, and auto-ethnography. I analyze these writings by citing other female Zainichi Koreans and Ainu writers, as well as using Asian American literary theory, and attempt to make somewhat congealed argument (if never a coherent narrative) that critiques the idea of wholeness that is aligned with the ideology of imperial ethnonationalism. Dictée by Theresa Hak Kyun Cha, *Imagine Otherwise* by Kandice Chuh, *Ainu Shinyōshū* by Chiri Yukie are diverse in forms but all express the impossibility of wholeness of the narrative after the colonial violence that had torn the colonized societies. This paper applies such Ainu, Zainichi Korean, and Asian American methodology of writing (productively) in fragments to understand the two strikingly similar narratives of women's accounts with colonial subjectivity and creativity.

Bio:

Yurika Tamura is assistant professor at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Her academic interests are Asian American literature, sound, media, and performance studies, Indigeneity and environmental humanities. She received my Ph.D. in Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers University. Her doctoral dissertation, guided by Professor Elizabeth Grosz, was about corpo-materialist ethics of sound and sensation in Ainu music activism. Her first monograph, *Vibration of Others: Resonance and Corporeal Ethics of Transnational Indigenous Soundscapes* (Wesleyan University Press, 2024) uses New Materialism and sound studies to understand Ainu contemporary music. Her articles on sexuality, ethnicity, and immigration in Japan have been published in several feminist journals, such as *Feminist Formations*, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, and *Meridians*.

P30: Translators' biographies and Everyday Aesthetics

V103

Chair: Ernestine Hoegen

Muireann Maguire: *The Lives Behind Live-Writing: Reconstructing Translator Biographies*

Abstract:

When a writer's autobiography or correspondence is translated into international languages, it is a signal of cultural canonization, assuring symbolic capital for decades to come (Casanova 1999). The reverse is often true for the translators of that writer's autobiographical texts. Their invisibility (Venuti 2017) is actively exaggerated to preserve the illusion of direct narrative, and their names are frequently minimized or even omitted from paratextual apparatus (on the book covers and front matter, for example). Yet their importance for

cultural historians is twofold: first, because their labour as translators facilitates the assimilation of life-writing into global language networks; and secondly, because their own professional and personal networks are revelatory about the cultural milieu in which literary translation became established as a profession, and the degree of prestige it conferred. Gender, class, ethnicity, and education have historically created (or foreclosed) opportunities for non-professional linguists and scholars to take up literary translation. Writing the lives of these translators of life-writing is therefore an important aspect of the new subdiscipline of Translator Studies (Chesterman, 2009; Kaindl et al., 2021). Precisely because these translators were often female, worked freelance and/or without formal training, their lives are challenging to reconstruct from conventional records. This paper will draw on several sources (including fiction and personal letters) to reconstruct the lives of two of the earliest English-language translators of influential Russian writers Maksim Gorky and Dostoevsky respectively: Gertrude M. Foakes (née Foxe), a novelist who translated Gorky's memoirs *My Childhood and In The World* in 1915-17, and Ethel Colburn Mayne, an Anglo-Irish writer who translated *Letters of Fyodor Michailovitch Dostoevsky to His Family and Friends* (1917), both part of a dispersed cohort of female intellectuals actively, if inconsistently, engaged in translating Russian prose for British readers in the early twentieth century.

Bio:

Muireann Maguire is Professor in Russian and Comparative Literature at the University of Exeter, UK. During 2019-23, she led the ERC-funded Horizon 2020 project 'RusTRANS: The Dark Side of Translation: 20th and 21st Century Translation from Russian as a Political Phenomenon in the UK, Ireland, and the USA,' exploring the dynamics of Russian-English literary translation through a series of historical and/or contemporary case studies. She is currently completing a monograph on literary translation from Russian in the US during the twentieth century. Her other research interests include gender studies, specifically the depiction of pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding in Russian and Western literature; her book *Hideous Agonies: Myths of Maternity in Russian and Comparative Literature* is in progress.

Bruno Barretto Gomide: *Boris Schnaidermann and the Fragments of Odessa: Writing the (Auto)Biography of a Translator*

Abstract:

Boris Schnaiderman (1917-2016) was the foremost translator of Russophone literature in Latin America. At the University of São Paulo, he translated and promoted Grossman, Bakhtin, Jakobson and Ivanov, among others. Schnaiderman began writing an autobiography when he was over ninety years old. It is a rich material for biographical studies and for exilic, Slavic and Jewish studies. All these themes are interwoven in the image of the city that gives his autobiography its (provisional) title: "Odessa, mists, Eisenstein". The port city of Odessa produced a form of cultural cosmopolitanism based on the hybridization of the multiple languages (Russian, Ukrainian, French, Italian, Polish, Greek, Yiddish and Hebrew) that made it up. This mixture of cultures has already been described in "kaleidoscopic" terms (Richardson, *Kaleidoscopic Odessa*, 2008), or as a city "text", in the famous formulation by Lotman and Toporov, originally applied to Petersburg. Kataev, Ilf and Petrov, Bagritski and the "primus inter pares" Isaak Babel were writers launched into Soviet culture by Odessa. Initially grouped by Shklovski under the rubric of "the south-western school", they are today studied as representatives of a special strain of Russophone modernism (Stanton, *Isaac Babel and the self-invention of Odessan modernism*, 2012). The mythology of Odessa underwent metamorphoses, both in the USSR and in emigration. I intend to comment on how

Schnaiderman adapted this mythology in his unfinished autobiography and in his 1967 translation of two short stories by Babel ("Gedali" and "Guy de Maupassant"). Babel's poetics, exuberant with paradoxes, functioned as a laboratory that Schnaiderman used to acclimatize himself to the São Paulo intelligentsia. I also hope to comment on some of the difficulties involved in writing the biography of a translator situated on the periphery of world Slavic studies.

Bio:

Bruno Gomide is Associate Professor of Russian Literature and Culture at the University of S. Paulo. He holds a PhD in Literary Theory and History from Unicamp, with 1 year as a visiting student at UC Berkeley. Postdoctoral studies at the EHESS. Visiting researcher at the IMLI, Pushkinskii dom, Harvard, Iberoamerican Institute of Berlin, and the Universities of Illinois, Glasgow, London and Sofia. Author of, among others, *Ensaio sobre a guerra Rússia Ucrânia* (2022); *David Vygódski, um sismógrafo da crítica russa* (2021); *Dostoiévski na Rua do Ouvidor: a literatura russa e o Estado Novo* (2018; National Library Prize); *Antologia do pensamento crítico russo* (2013); *Da estepe à caatinga: o romance russo no Brasil* (2012; Jabuti prize). He has translated works by Livshits, Osorguin and Khodassevich. He is currently preparing an intellectual biography of Boris Schnaiderman.

Kimi Kärki and Maarit Leskelä-Kärki: *Voicing the Nordic In-Betweenness: The Musical Agency of Anna Järvinen*

Abstract:

In our research paper, we delve into the musical endeavours of Anna Järvinen, a Swedish-Finnish singer and songwriter born in 1970. Our study focuses on how she has crafted her public image within the cultural and social landscapes (in-)between two nations. Järvinen, born in Finland and living in Sweden, was honored as the Swedish–Finnish individual of the year in 2016. We are particularly intrigued by the autobiographical fusion of voice and language in her albums and live performances, as well as her collaborative ventures with fellow musicians. Preceding her solo career, she was a vocalist for the Swedish band Granada (1998–2004), and her inaugural solo album, *Jag fick feeling*, was published in 2007.

Notably, Järvinen has utilized both Swedish and Finnish in her musical creations, often releasing versions of the same songs in both languages. This bilingual approach extends to her latest album, which was released under the titles *Lila* and *Liila* (EAN, 2022). This album was loosely based on her autobiographical novel published in Swedish and Finnish *Dröm natten till idag* (Uni viime yönä, 2021 Teos/Förlaget). Our paper's focal points encompass the narrated experience of occupying an intermediate space between two nations, experimental bilingualism, nuanced expressions through language and voice in multimodal settings, and an exploration of stardom from a research perspective. We argue that this combination might offer additional epistemological layers to the discussions on 'fragmented identity'.

Our primary source materials comprise Järvinen's albums, audiovisual recordings, Järvinen's novel and interviews, and other media appearances. Additionally, we aspire to conduct an interview with her, delving into these themes in depth before the conference.

Bios:

Dr Kimi Kärki is a Lecturer at Cultural Study of Music, Uniarts Helsinki (Seinäjoen kampus), and holds a title of Docent in Cultural Heritage Studies (University of Turku) and Area and Cultural Studies (University of Helsinki). He has mainly published on the history stadium rock spectacles, talking machines, future imagining, and fascist aesthetics in popular culture. He is the director of the project *Fascinating Fascism and its Affective Heritage in the Finnish Culture*

(Kone Foundation, 2021–2024). He is also an internationally touring musician, with more than 40 releases in heavy metal, progressive rock, ambient, and as a singer-songwriter. Homepage: <https://users.utu.fi/kierka/>.

Dr Maarit Leskelä-Kärki holds a Title of Docent in Cultural history and life-writing (University of Turku, University of Lapland), and is a university lecturer at the Department of Cultural History at the University of Turku. Her research has focused on the cultural history of women's writing, autobiographical sources, methodological questions of life writing and biographies, and gender history. She recently led a multidisciplinary research project *Seekers of the New* (2018–2021) that dealt with the cultural history of Finnish esotericism from 1880 to 1930's. Currently, she works in the field of environmental humanities both in her recent book on *Sea and Tove Jansson* (2022), and in a new research project *A grove of stories – Sagalund. Home museum and environmental biography*.

Yuliia Kulish: *'Aesthetic Experience of the Everyday' as a Cohesive Element of Life Narrative*

Abstract:

Autobiographical texts transcend mere reiteration/representation of the past (Gusdorf, 1980), involving a nuanced process of its reinterpretation/transformation shaped by factors like memory intricacies, intentional omission of specific subjects, and the ongoing construction of the author's identity. Consequently, the life narrative becomes a complex puzzle, woven from life events, retrospective insights, and the writer's (sub)conscious literary choices. In this paper, I propose that the cohesive element binding this fragmented life narrative is the writer's "aesthetic identity," meticulously crafted from aesthetic experiences rooted in the everyday. These experiences are defined as individual, situationally restricted encounters with an object characterized by specific temporality, "the absence of meaning" (Barthes, 1970), shortened distance towards the object leading to "disappearing in focused intensity" (Gumbrecht, 2004), and the actualization of disinterested pleasure (Kant, 2000). Within the writer's body of work, spanning both fiction and autobiography, discernible traces of everyday aesthetic experiences—represented through recurring motifs, consistent metaphors, and haunting images—serve as crucial elements countering fragmentation and assembling the life story. Employing comparative and distant reading approaches, this research traces the representation of aesthetic experiences of the everyday in literature from the 1960s—a period marked by a notable surge in autobiographical writing. Specifically, the study examines both autobiographical and fictional works of American writers such as Diane Di Prima and Richard Brautigan, French authors like Violette Leduc and George Perec, and Ukrainian literary figures including Iryna Zhylenko and Vasyl Stus. The overarching claim asserts that identifying aesthetic experiences within the everyday not only illuminates the mechanisms involved in the construction of "aesthetic identity" but also reveals a comprehensive snapshot of an epoch.

Bio:

Yuliia Kulish, a Ph.D. student at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Ukraine, is currently researching the role of autobiographical discourse in 1960s fiction (American, French, Ukrainian). Her primary scientific interests span life studies, comparative studies, literary theory, aesthetics, and critical theory. Yuliia works as the managing editor for *Kyiv-Mohyla Humanities Journal* and holds the position of editor-in-chief for *Kontur*, an online edition focusing on philosophy and culture. Beyond her institutional roles, she curates the philosophy podcast *Navskis* and organizes the annual festival of psychogeography, *Drift!*

14.30-15 Coffee
Veröld Ground Floor

15-16.30 Parallel Sessions:

P31: Roundtable: The Practice of Movement: Journals, Fragmentation, and Travel

V023

Julie Rak (chair), **Sergio Barcellos**, **Kimberly Blockett**, **Babs Boter**, **Angela Hooks**

Abstract:

Fragments of a vessel which are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another.

--Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," *Illuminations*

This roundtable proposes to think of Benjamin's idea of fragmentation as the invitation to repair differently. The practice of travel journal making is well-suited to thinking through such a vision of fragmentation and difference as a practice, a narrative technique and as a trace of a life during travel. Each panellist addresses different aspects of writing, making and reading or viewing travel journals, and the political possibilities inherent in respecting fragmentation as a practice and a way to make sense of movement in time and space.

Bios:

Sergio da Silva Barcellos: received his Master and Ph.D. degrees in Literary Studies from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro in 2004 and 2009, respectively. He teaches an annual seminar on Auto/Biographical Studies at the Rio de Janeiro State University, since 2009, and developed a postdoctoral research project on *Time, Memory and Diary Writing* cosponsored by Hofstra University and the Capes Foundation. Barcellos was granted an award from Fundação Nacional de Artes, Brazil to organize, classify and publish a guide to Carolina Maria de Jesus' archival collection. He is the author of the biography *Toque de Silêncio* (1997), and academic titles *Armadilhas para a narrativa* (2006), and *Escrita do eu, refúgio do outro: Identidade e alteridade na escrita diarística* (2019). In 2014 he organized the volume *Vida por Escrito - Guia do Acervo de Carolina Maria de Jesus*. He is a founding member of IABA-Américas.

Kimberly Blockett is Chair and Professor of Africana Studies at the University of Delaware. She is a literary historian interested in cultural geography, travel, and recovering the life and labors of 19th-century Black women creatives. Blockett is the recipient of multiple fellowships including the Ford Foundation, Harvard Divinity School, Smithsonian, and NEH to support archival work around the globe. Her publications include *Race, Religion, and Rebellion in the Travels of Zilpha Elaw* (Duke UP, 2025), a scholarly edition of the *Memoirs of Zilpha Elaw* (West Virginia UP Regenerations series, 2021), *Mapping Black Women's Geographies* (Routledge, 2024), and chapters and articles in *Cambridge History of African American Literature*, *MLA Approaches to Teaching Hurston*, *MELUS*, *African American Review*, and *Legacy*.

Babs Boter: is Assistant Professor at the Humanities Faculty of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. She teaches in the fields of life writing, travel writing, diaspora literature, (trans)nationalism, world literature, and ecocriticism. Boter is writing a biography of the Dutch travel journalist Mary Pos (1904-1987). She is convener of the expert group *Unhinging the National Framework: Platform for the Study of Transnational Life Writing*, which is VU-based and affiliated with CLUE+, Research Institute for Culture, Cognition, History and Heritage. Boter has a background in history (Leiden University), American studies (University of Minnesota) and cultural studies (Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, University of Amsterdam).

Angela Hooks: is an independent scholar. She earned her Master of Divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary in 2023 and a doctoral degree in English literature from St. Johns' University in 2018. She serves on the planning committee of The Emerging Scholars and Practitioners of the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality. She is the author of the interactive journal *Make it Happen-A Journal to Identify and Actualize Your Goals* (2021) and editor of *Diary as Literature: Through the Lens of Multiculturalism in America* (2020). Her essay "Bring the Diary into the Classroom: Ongoing Diary, Journal and Notebook Project," appeared in *Currents in Teaching and Learning, Academic Journal* (2020). As an adjunct lecturer of over fifteen years, she has taught writing life writing and literature in community colleges and universities.

Julie Rak: (FRSC) holds the Henry Marshall Tory Chair in the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta. She is a member of the Reading For Our Lives SSHRC-funded project with Danielle Fuller (Principal Investigator), Anna Poletti and DeNel Rehberg Sedo, and holds a SSHRC Insight Development Grant for "Paper Lives," an investigation of contemporary journaling and the post-digital. With Sonia Boon, Candida Rifkind, and Laurie McNeill, she wrote and edited *The Routledge Introduction to Auto/biography in Canada* (2022). Her books include *False Summit: Gender in Mountaineering Nonfiction* (2021), *Boom! Manufacturing Memoir for the Popular Market* (2013) and *Negotiated Memory: Doukhobor Autobiographical Discourse* (2004). She is the editor of the *Identities* volume of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Literary Theory* (2021) and the collection *Autobiography in Canada* (2005). She has co-edited with Anna Poletti *Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online* (2014).

P32: Fragmented Illness Narratives III

V007

Chair: Simona Mitroiu

Meg Jensen: *Writing, Reading, Teaching, Mapping: The Intimate Geographies of the (Fr)agile/Fragmented Self*

Abstract:

The typical relation between a memoir of a self that identifies as chronically ill, disabled or impacted by traumatic experience(s) tends towards a mapping of fragility and fragmentation: a chronicle of difficulties imposed by a condition or conditions understood as a deficit. At the same time, a skill set referred to by the buzzwords 'agility' and 'resilience' has become a seemingly standard requirement for personal and professional success in much of the industrialised world. Indeed as Neus Lorenzo Galés and Ray Gallon argue in their recent work on "Educational Agility": "We are building a world where we face the evolution of information and communications technologies into 'smart', hyper-connected autonomous systems driven by artificial intelligence"(99). And in this so-called "age of agility" we must "develop an economy of flexibility and dynamic change" in order thrive and indeed survive. In this paper, I will consider what kinds of mapping an asset-based approach to writing, reading and teaching the self might produce. To do so, I will analyse recent work of this kind written by my students and by me, and reflect on how far such an approach might lead to intimate geographies of 'agile' rather than 'fragile' self, one who creatively and critically creates spaces of possibility and new directions, open to the demands of the agile future, rather than mere fragments of some imaginary normative "whole" self. I will examine passages from Joanne Limburg's *Small Pieces: A Book of Lamentations* (2018); Anna Johnson's *Objects of a Maternal Haunting*, an autocritical memoir in manuscript draft form; and my own memoir *Because Sisters*.

Bio:

Dr Meg Jensen is Professor of English Literature and Creative Writing at Kingston University in London. She has published widely on trauma, literature, the autobiographical and the advancement of human rights, including *The Art and Science of Trauma* and the *Autobiographical: Negotiated Truths* (Palgrave 2019). Her key research and knowledge exchange interest is in identifying and testing innovative approaches to the development of communities of practice to promote collaborative and transformative social change. Recent applied projects, funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the UNDP, assessed the effectiveness of Expressive Writing methodologies in supporting the well-being of women victims of sexual violence in conflict in Iraq and AHRC funded work with communities in crisis across Lebanon. Her practice-based research takes the form of creative non-fiction and autocritical memoir concerned with representations of traumatic experience.

David Lombard: *Clinical and Cultural, or 'Fixed' and Fragmented Selves: A Rhetorical-Narratological and Materialist Analysis of Schizophrenic Identity in Contemporary Memoir*

Abstract:

"Schizophrenia is probably the most misused psychological term in existence," both in science and in culture (Carlson 1990). As part of the dynamic and contested history of the term, memoir and autobiography played a key role in the development of the diagnosis and cultural constitution of schizophrenia. Inspired by Louis Wolfson's *Le Schizo et les langues* (1970), Deleuze and Guattari, for example, influentially opposed the "clinical"—the schizophrenic patient—to the 'cultural' schizophrenic—"schizophrenia as a process" of countering capitalism and "any notion of a fixed identity," thus showcasing schizophrenia not as a disease but as an individual response to greater socio-cultural pressures (2000, 379; Roberts 2007, 123–24; Granger and Naudin 2022, 99–100). While the twenty-first-century memoir and contemporary life writing theory have become more "resolutely focused on the self" and on its relationality to others rather than on truth and factual details (Yagoda 2010, 2), schizophrenia memoirs have proliferated since the 2000s and approaches to schizophrenia diagnosis and treatment which explore the relationship between the patient's story, his self, his environment, and others (e.g., phenomenological psychopathology) have recently gained popularity. This paper proposes to analyze two schizophrenia memoirs in these cultural and diagnostic contexts: Kristina Morgan's *Mind Without a Home* (2013) and Marin Sardy's *The Edge of Every Day* (2019). Mainly armed with insights from rhetorical narrative medicine (Phelan 2022), new materialism and affect theory, it will examine the author/patient's self as constructed in a state of constant physical/affective interconnection with "material agencies" (Alaimo 2010, 17) such as diagnosis, treatment, therapy, and their consequences (e.g., social exclusion and hospitalization). Building on these analyses, this paper will discuss and interrogate the various (experimental) ways through which the contemporary schizophrenia memoir can corroborate, complicate and/or challenge ideas of a stable or curable self and of schizophrenic identity as fragmented.

Bio:

David Lombard is a research fellow at the Belgian National Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS) and a PhD candidate in literary studies at the ULiège and KU Leuven (joint degree), where he is a researcher at the Interdisciplinary Center for Applied Poetics (CIPA), Intersections, and the Leuven English Literature Research Group. Besides, he was a visiting scholar at UT Austin (fall 2022) and OSU/Project Narrative (spring 2023). He is the author of the book *Techno-Thoreau: Aesthetics, Ecology and the Capitalocene* (2019), which served as an extended pilot

study for his PhD project titled “American Anthropocene Sublimes: Rhetorics and Narrations of Self and Environment in the Contemporary Ecobiographical Memoir” (2020-2024). His essays have been published in academic journals such as *Épistémocritique*, *Miranda*, and the *Journal of Arts and Media Studies* and his editing work includes a co-edited special issue on “The Pastoral: New Trajectories in the Anthropocene” (*Ecocene*, 2021).

Vanessa Smith: *Fragmented Identity in Marion Milner’s Hands of the Living God*

Abstract:

Marion Milner’s Hands of the Living God, first published in 1969, detailed the breakdown and recovery of a young woman, named in the book ‘Susan’, who came to Milner for analysis after a disastrous experience of ECT. Part of the aim of my paper is to consider where the case history, of which the book is an example, sits on the spectrum of biography/autobiography. Susan felt that her identity had been irrevocably fractured by the ECT. The book details her gradual reconnection to both conscious and unconscious memory through a dialogic practice of exchange with Milner. Susan brought thousands of drawings to her consultations, which Milner took seriously as symbolic communications. These drawings themselves will be considered in my talk as autobiographical fragments embedded within the published text of *Hands of the Living God*: signature works of a fragmented subject. By the end of the book, Susan is able to declare herself to be back ‘in the world’, reexperiencing an ‘awareness of a reality that I have not been in contact with for sixteen years.’ I have recently been privileged to view an archive of Susan’s own letters, in which, post analysis, she told Milner that she was beginning work on an autobiography. Milner enthusiastically supported this idea, as a continuation of the dialogic mode in which they had conducted the analysis: now Susan would publish her patient’s perspective on the work they had done together. However, Susan’s letters, with their repeated accounts of deferred or destroyed beginnings and writing blocks, remain all that survive of this project. These too will be considered in my talk as fragmentary life writing: gestures towards an unfinished project.

Bio:

Vanessa Smith is Professor of English at the University of Sydney. Her most recent monograph is *Toy Stories: Analyzing the Child in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Fordham University Press, 2023). She is author or editor of five books focusing on intercultural contact in the Oceania of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and has published widely on the British and American novel. Professor Smith is one of the co-editors of the Oxford University Press series *Approaches to the Novel*.

P33: Women’s Careers and Activism

V008

Chair: Aneta Ostaszewska

Kimberly Hall: *Fragmented Identity in the Woman’s Work Memoir*

Abstract:

The last ten years have seen a significant surge in the number of memoirs by women about one particular fragment of their lives, their careers. From Kate Beaton’s 2022 graphic memoir, *Ducks*, about her years working in the Canadian Oil Sands to Kristi Coulter’s 2023 *Exit Interview: The Life and Death of My Ambitious Career*, recounting her time in the high-pressure corporate world of Amazon, the woman’s work memoir has become a significant subgenre that explores a fraught dimension of female life. Despite this growth, writer Vikki Warner laments that women are still significantly underrepresented in the work memoir

genre, and this gap means “we miss out on the opportunity to show the world that a successful woman is not an aberration” (2019). Despite Warner’s exhortation, most women’s work memoirs highlight not success, but failure. These failures are most often on the part of the employer and the close examination afforded by autobiographical writing highlights larger structural inequalities that typically cause the author to abandon that career path. Whether it’s Anna Weiner’s decision to leave her successful start-up career after becoming disillusioned in Uncanny Valley, or Susan Fowler’s decision to out the toxic culture at Uber in Whistleblower, this paper argues that the contemporary woman’s work memoir is often a story of calling out and opting out. These accounts illustrate how an author survives in some of the most demanding or prestigious careers and finds herself in the process. This recentering of identity away from the workplace signals a refusal of the “hustle culture” ethos that dominated Post-Recession American discourse and instead underscores how women are championing a new relationship to work in which a job is merely what a woman does rather than what a woman is.

Bio:

Kimberly Hall is an Associate Professor of English and Digital Media Studies at Wofford College. Her research has appeared in *Television and New Media*, *Women & Performance*, *Amodern*, *Modern Language Studies* and *Social Media + Society*. Her current book project, “Women’s Work: Career and Identity in the Contemporary American Career Memoir” explores how the work memoir genre has allowed women to challenge and critique the opaque gendered norms of high-pressure careers.

Sigríður Matthíasdóttir and **Þorgerður J. Einarsdóttir**: *Fragments of a Conscious Female Entrepreneurship: The Personal Documents of Pálína Waage (1864-1935) Read through the Lens of Lived Experience*

Abstract:

Research on the history of women entrepreneurs is still scarce and it is for example unclear whether women who ran small-scale enterprises did so merely to deal with the daily struggles or if they possessed a conscious entrepreneurial identity (Aston and Bishop 2020). The problem is furthered by the fact that small scale, family-owned companies which women often ran “seldom leave any archival material, let alone written histories” (Kieding Banik and Ekholm 2019). In this paper we will discuss an Icelandic female entrepreneur Pálína Waage (1864-1935) who has in fact left personal documents, for example an autobiography which she finished writing in 1924. Waage ran a family based restaurant and store in the town of Seydisfjörður in East Iceland. On a bases of an analyses of Waage’s personal material we propose that although she ran a small company and although her main objective was likely to support the family she did indeed possess a conscious entrepreneurial identity. Pálína Waage did not simply “buy and sell things” in order to survive, without a relation to a more ideological entrepreneurial framework. And we will propose that Waage used autobiographical writing to construct herself as an entrepreneurial subject. At the same time we also claim that her entrepreneurial identity can not be understood as an “essential identity”, something which she intended to do from a young age, or always regarded as the “essence” of her identity. Waage entered entrepreneurship through a series of coincidences, without intending to go into business. We propose that her entrepreneurial identity may have been an “outcome” of her life, rather than something which she set out to do. And we will interpret this process, how Pálína Waage became a “conscious entrepreneur” through

the concept of lived experience (Kivimäki, Suodenjoki and Vahtikari, 2021, see Summerfield 2019).

Bios:

Sigríður Matthíasdóttir is a Ph.D from the University of Iceland and an independent historian at the Reykjavík Academy (www.akademia.is). Her research has covered gender history, nationalism, university history, emigration and female entrepreneurship and she has published widely on these issues. She is a co-author of *Aldarsaga Háskóla Íslands 1911-2011* (The Hundred Year History of the University of Iceland 1911-2011). She has been a Fulbright visiting researcher at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) in 2007, a visiting researcher at the Historical Faculty of University of Stockholm in 2017 and a visiting researcher at the Historical Faculty of University of Tampere, Finland 2020. Since 2013 she has been doing research on the theme of single women who emigrated from Iceland to North-America 1870-1914. She is now writing a biography about a female migrant and merchant, Pálína Waage (1864-1935), which will be published by Palgrave in the series *History of Experience*.

Þorgerður J. Einarsdóttir is Professor of Gender Studies at the University of Iceland. Her background is in sociology and the social science. Her research has a strong interdisciplinary approach and covers a broad range of topics, more specifically equality policies, labor market issues, masculinities, gender and academia, and LGBTQI and transgender issues. She has been involved in a number of European projects, funded by EU FP7 and H2020. During the last years, her research has revolved around gender and academia, with a special focus on gender budgeting. One of her most recent research areas is a historical study with dr. Sigríður Matthíasdóttir on Icelandic women emigrants to North America, focusing on entrepreneurship and agency.

Margaretta Jolly: *Beyond the Fragments: Braiding Feminist Lives in the Backlash*

Abstract:

The 1979 book and conference *Beyond the Fragments* by legendary UK women's liberation activists Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, proposed a coalition of social movements and class struggle to challenge the ascendancy of a new Right with Margaret Thatcher's election that year. They called allies to overcome differences, to recognise the subjective in political organising and to combine participatory with representative democratic methods. Today's activists face a far greater fragmentation of interests where such ideas are reinvented as tools of a post-democratic right. The representation of activist women's lives in the 2020s is shaped within these shifting contexts, where the power of portraiture and charismatic biography has also been used in a so-called 'anti-gender' backlash. In this difficult arena, I will explore the structure and ambitions of activist life narratives which 'braid' or weave together hitherto separated histories and sometimes opposing causes. My examples include the tv mini-series *Mrs America* which dramatised Phyllis Schlafly's campaign against the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s, the BBC's *Banned! The Mary Whitehouse Story*, *Misbehaviour*, a comedy-drama on the 1970 Miss World protest in London and the children's book – plus spinoffs – *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls*. I will conclude by reflecting on the uses of remediation for political mediation, particularly in light of my work with *Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project*, which included oral histories with both Rowbotham and Segal. How can curation, institutionalisation, genre, media, work to remember a formative feminist generation's lives – and deaths – in times of backlash? How can we today go beyond the fragments?

Bio:

Margaretta Jolly is Professor of Cultural Studies in the School of Media, Arts and Humanities, University of Sussex and directs the University's Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research. Her work has focused on auto/biography, letter writing and oral history, particularly in relation to women's movements. She is the editor of *The Encyclopedia of Life Writing* (Routledge, 2001) and the author of *In Love and Struggle: Letters in Contemporary Feminism* (Columbia, 2008). She directed *Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project*, partnered with The British Library, 2010-2014 and is currently Principal Investigator for *The Business of Women's Words: Purpose and Profit in Feminist Publishing*, also partnered with The British Library. She also hosted IABA-World in 2010 at the University of Sussex.

P34: Fragments of Pre-Modern Biographies

V107

Chair: Lynn Domina

Matthew Wells: *A Recipe for Biography: The Alchemy of Textual Construction in Early China*

Abstract:

The late Tang (618-906 CE) and early Song periods (960-1279 CE) of premodern China saw the creation of multiple, large-scale bibliographic projects intended to edit and codify the cultural heritage of the previous millennium. Scholars produced new, supposedly more authentic, and authoritative editions of poetic works and essays of individual authors, while imperial projects such as those of Song Emperor Taizong 太宗 (939–997 CE) and Song Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (968–1022 CE) collected and collated vast numbers of texts into large, canonical bibliographies. For this work, scholars relied on a variety of fragmented sources ranging from imperially sanctioned histories, regional accounts, popular narratives, religious texts, autobiographical statements, and collections of anecdotes. The *Inner Tradition of Tao, Hermit of Huayang* by Jia Song is one example of this editorial process. Jia Song's dates are uncertain, but he may have lived as early as the late Tang empire, during the late 9th or early 10th centuries. The subject of his "inner tradition" — a biographical form that contained esoteric material intended for a limited readership — was the alchemist and bibliographer Tao Hongjing (456–536). Tao was a brilliant scholar who retired from public life to devote himself to esoteric pursuits, and in 499 CE he collected and collated the revelations of the Shangqing (Upper Purity) tradition of Daoism. Jia Song used a variety of fragmentary sources to reconstruct Tao's life narrative. This paper demonstrates how these textual fragments not only raise questions about the date of composition for Jia Song's text, but also illustrate the ways earlier texts were tortured and fit together to create biographies during the 10th and 11th centuries that served new agendas as China's collective cultural memory was reconstructed by scholars and the imperial state.

Bio:

Matthew Wells is Associate Professor of Chinese Literature at the University of Kentucky. His research focuses on life narratives in early China, particularly autobiography, biography, and hagiography from China's early medieval period (ca. 200-600 CE). His first book, *To Die and Not Decay: Autobiography and the Pursuit of Immortality in Early China*, focused on the autobiographical writing of Ge Hong (283-343 CE), an early medieval alchemist and scholar official. He has also written extensively on biography and historiography in the early Tang period (618-906 CE). His latest project concerns the 4th century auto-hagiographies of the Shangqing (Upper Purity) pantheon and the process by which these texts were transmitted,

edited, and transformed during the 11th century. A complete translation and annotation of these texts will be released with Oxford University Press in late 2024.

Kristof Szitar: *The Sum of All Parts: The Fragmentary and Interwoven Sources of 'Unsuri's Life*

Abstract:

This paper examines the fragmented memories of the 11th-century Persian litterateur 'Unṣurī (i.e. 'elementary'), based on the commemorative textual tradition, chronicles, intertextual references and later pictorial representations. As his pseudonym suggests, the four elements (i.e. fire, water, wind, earth and their four associated bodily fluids) feature prominently in his works. Despite his importance as the poet laureate of his age, our current knowledge of his works is based on scattered texts, which raises serious literary historical problems. His collected poems were lost for centuries as a result of the Mongol conquest, and in their absence his life and work are known mainly from fragments scattered in various dictionaries (e.g. *Lughat-i Furs*), literary handbooks (e.g. *Tarjumān al-Balāgha*), commemorative texts (e.g. *Lubāb al-Albāb*, *Tazkirat alshu'arā'*) and mirrors for princes (e.g. *Qābūs-nāma*). The paper will show how the poet's memory was linked to other leading literary figures of the period and how the surviving memories provide insights into the socio-cultural stratification of the period. I argue that, regardless of the chronological accuracy and authenticity of the statements and fragmented memories of the poet's life, these memories played a significant role in shaping of the Persian literary canon. While major studies on the subject have previously been published only in Russian and Persian, this study is an extract from the first book-length study of the poet's reception and memory in English.

Bio:

Kristof Szitar is a PhD candidate at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, and a historian of medieval Central and South Asian literatures, interested in the social, cultural and literary traditions of the Caucasus. His dissertation is an intertextual study of the works and medieval reception of the eleventh-century poet 'Unṣurī, whose work was imitated and widely disseminated in medieval Ghazna (present-day Afghanistan), Punjab (present-day Pakistan and India) and Shirvan (present-day Azerbaijan). To reflect the religious and cultural complexity of the period, his dissertation engages with approaches and concepts drawn from literary criticism, memory studies, art history, symbolic anthropology, and gender studies. He has published in English and French in the journals *Acta Via Serica* and *Études Asiatiques*, and has examined the literary portrayal of infidels and heretics in a peer-reviewed book chapter. He has published and annotated partial translation of the first Persian language work on "comparative religions" titled *Explanation of the Religions* (*Bayān al-Adyān*). Currently he is working on a recently unearthed Persian pornographic manuscript, focusing on the epidermization and ethnicization of the character of the beloved.

Gabrielle Roehr: *Mythopo(et)ia: Constructing Sappho from Fragments*

Abstract:

She was the Tenth Muse, said Plato. She was "The Poetess," counterpart to Homer "The Poet," whose lyric poetry was beloved and revered in antiquity. The Roman love poets of the first centuries BCE and CE refer to her as a teacher of love and poetry on the island of Lesbos, and her name today is synonymous with romantic love between women while Anne Carson's 2002 translation of her poetry, *If Not, Winter*, is critically acclaimed and remains immensely popular. And yet, so little of Sappho survives. What we know of her life comes from elusive

allusions in the works of others and her poetic corpus is entirely fragmentary; quotations by later authors and critics and a particularly fortunate pile of papyrus scraps preserved in an ancient garbage heap in Middle Egypt. How, then, has she achieved such immense fame and acclaim in antiquity and modernity? This paper questions how it is we build a portrait of a poet from pieces, when we have almost nothing of her biography and little of her work. In it, I explore the particular poetic allure and frustration of the fragment and how it is that a beloved poet almost entirely lost to the literal sands of time has come to grace the bookshelves and bodies of the twenty-first century. Further, I treat the relationship of the fragmented body of the poet and the fragmented corpus of the work, and how the spaces between biographical details echo the gaps of missing lines and have offered an ancient poet a new life.

Bio:

Gabrielle Roehr is a doctoral candidate in Classical Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research interests include narrative and storytelling in Greek and Latin poetry, the relationship between weaving and poetry, and contemporary reception of ancient myth. Her in-progress dissertation (working title: "A Thousand Stories: Helen and the Tension in the Narrative Landscape) examines Helen of Troy as narrator and object of narrative in Homer, Attic tragedy, and Latin poetry as well as in twentieth and twenty-first century anglophone adaptations of the Helen myth.

P35: Fragmentation and the Stages of Life

V108

Chair: Brynjarr Þór Eyjólfsson Mendoza

Marina Deller: *Talking to My (Teenage) Self: A Dialogical Approach to Grief Bildungsroman*

Abstract:

Loss is a destabilising experience which changes how we view ourselves, our relationships, and the world at large. Grief, following loss, is similarly shattering for our self-concept. Many bereaved people describe viewing themselves as split in two; a defined self 'before' the loss and a self 'after' the loss who is forever altered by the experience. I, myself, experienced this fragmentation of self during a period of traumatic loss as a teenager. I lost my mother to cancer, my best childhood friend took her own life, and I became estranged from my father within the span of a year. I wrote about these experiences in my recent practice-led PhD as part of a memoir about coming of age while grieving. My identity was split both by both and by the act of growing up, and I necessarily wrote about my teenage self ('before') from the perspective of my present self (after). Upon reflection I realised that while writing about my teenage self, I'd neglected to write with them. Despite writing from first-person perspective, and inhabiting the past self creatively, I'd neglected to allow their authentic experiences to emerge through the haze of my present self's knowledge and biases. Life writers who attempt to write from their child-self's perspective face the dual blessing and curse of hindsight. Embarrassment and a sense of 'knowing better' than my past self barred me from entering honest self-representation in my writing. This paper thus details my response to this realisation; a dialogical methodology of self-representation for grief bildungsroman wherein I invite my teenage self to 'converse' with my present self. I reconsider what relationality and Couser's concept of vulnerable subjects might mean in the context of a fragmented, grieving self, and consider traditionally psychological 'inner child' work as a creative approach.

Bio:

Dr Marina Deller is a writer and researcher at Flinders University, South Australia. Their research concerns grief and trauma life narratives, material storytelling, and pedagogy. They write creatively about identity, bodies, grief, and public/private spheres. Marina also teaches Creative Writing and English Literature and is an active member of the Flinders Life Narrative Lab.

Ioana Luca: *Autobiographies of Childhood in the Wake of Post-Socialism*

Abstract:

My paper examines post/socialist memory in the life writing of Lea Ypi and Vasile Ernu, who are part of the 1.5 diasporic generation of socialism in Britain and Romania. I discuss how they remember their lives under state socialism and in its immediate aftermath, and how they make them legible to present-day transgenerational and transnational audiences. While the two writers' personal histories and migration trajectories vary widely, the autobiographical narratives they produced share powerful features. They offer a portrayal of childhood and coming of age during state socialism and its immediate aftermath. *Free* (2021), and *Sălbaticii copii dingo* (*The Wild Dingo Children* 2021) are autobiographies of displacement, whose authors reconstruct their countries and fragmented histories in writing through a child's perspective, trying all along to explain and translate them to an international audience.

My argument has a two-thronged direction. First, I illustrate how diasporic life writing by the 1.5 generation of socialism points to the increasingly global trajectories and transnationalizing processes of post/socialist memory. I focus on their entanglement with the failed global neoliberal project and show how they challenge us with the many opportunities this opens as well as the limitations it poses. Second, I argue that by remembering their young lives and their native countries' past, these writers also attempt to explore the ruptures of history and personal experience and reactivate forgotten legacies of socialism for transnational audiences. My paper shows how they posit the relevance of socialist ideals in providing alternative imaginaries for an equitable future and the global neoliberal present. I claim that their work points to a new direction in remembering post/socialism and transnationalizing its memory. This direction is future-oriented, focused on solidarities and global coalition building, and derives from the very socialist ideals the autobiographers were brought up with.

Bio:

Ioana Luca is a Professor in the Department of English at National Taiwan Normal University. She has published on life writing, American literature, memory studies, and transnational American studies. Her publications include articles in *Social Text*, *Rethinking History*, *Prose Studies*, *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, *Slavic and East European Journal*, *Journal of American Studies*, and chapters in several edited volumes, including *Cultures of Mobility and Alterity: Crossing the Balkans and Beyond* (2022) and *Remembering Transitions* (2023). She also co-edited several special issues, most recently *Postsocialist Literatures in the US in Twentieth Century Literature* (2019) and *The Cultures of Global Post/socialisms in Comparative Literature Studies* (with Claudia Sadowski-Smith, 2022).

Kate Douglas: *Only Fragments: Reading Biographical Anthologies for Girls from the mid-20th Century*

Abstract:

Biographical anthologies aimed at girl readers have been a visible subgenre of children's literature for as long as books have been written for children. From girls' own adventure stories; within annuals; through historical tales; to stories of inspirational women from the margins; biographical anthologies for girls have been discernible in particular locations and at certain historical moments during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, these anthologies necessarily, and deliberately, offer only fragments of a life. These books function as indicators of what was considered important for girl readers to see and know at the time. But these texts also reveal the beginnings of biography becoming a 'rebel girl' genre of life narrative, one that seeks to offer a diverse and developing set of social roles for young women.

My broader study is the first to trace the development and impact of the biographical anthologies for girls as a subgenre of children's literature and of life writing. What themes and patterns emerge in these anthologies? Has their purpose and impact evolved over time? In this paper I focus on a selection of mid-20th century biographical anthologies for girls that I have found in Australian library collections over the past 12 months. What vision of girlhood do these books promote and what are the implications of these representations for biography studies and beyond?

Bio:

Kate Douglas is a Professor of English at Flinders University. She researches and teaches contemporary modes of life storying with a particular interest in children's narratives and narratives of childhood. Her latest book is *Children and Biography: Reading and Writing Life Stories* (Bloomsbury, 2022). Kate is the co-convenor of the Life Narrative Lab, an executive member of IABA, and the convenor of IABA Asia-Pacific.

P36: Digital and Online Lives III

V103

Chair: Craig Howes

Caroline Zuckerman: *Digital Personal Essays: Construction of Patrilineal Jewish Identity through Life Writing*

Abstract:

"Why," writes Adrienne Rich, "does this question of Jewish identity float so impalpably, so ungraspably around me, a cloud I can't see the outline of?" (100). In "Split at the Root" (1982), Adrienne Rich uses the personal essay form to parse her patrilineal Jewish identity, describing the "many disconnected angles" that she will "never...bring whole" (122). For Rich, the child of a non-Jewish mother and Jewish father, sources of fragmentation include intergenerational silences and traumas, anti-intermarriage rhetoric within the American Jewish community, and the matrilineal principle, which recognizes only the child of a Jewish mother as a Jew.

In this presentation, I explore how the personal essay enables patrilineal Jews—often labeled "half Jewish," or not Jewish at all—to assert their own Jewish identities against the backdrop of exclusionary institutional protocols and community recognition practices. Given rising rates of Jewish intermarriage in the last decades of the twentieth century, I connect "Split at the Root" to more recent examples of patrilineal Jewish life writing, with a focus on digital personal essays published on the progressive Jewish cultural site Alma. Sample essays include Gabrielle Siegel's "I'm a Bisexual Patrilineal Jew – and I'm Both 'Queer Enough' and

‘Jewish Enough’” and Emily Cohen’s “I’m Done Passing as a Matrilineal Jew.” I examine how millennial and Generation Z writers construct and contest their intersectional Jewish identities online through the personal essay, a form that resists linearity and resolution. My work is grounded in life writing scholarship on subjectivity (Smith and Watson; Gilmore) and online self-representation (Poletti and Rak; Cardell), with an emphasis on the affordances of the Alma platform in the creation of Jewish identity and community. Through the digital personal essay, patrilineal Jews offer testimony against institutional practices that result in fragmentation, while powerfully claiming their own Jewish identities, experiences, and family histories.

Bio:

Caroline Zuckerman is a PhD student in the Department of English at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, where she also serves as an Editorial Assistant and the Reviews Editor of *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*. Prior to her PhD program, Caroline completed a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship at the Universidad de Málaga in Spain.

Kylie Cardell: *‘Your Internet Mum’: Tracing the Feminist Personal Essay as Genre on Instagram*

Abstract:

Perhaps unsurprisingly, but not without controversy, personal essays have flourished online. This paper explores how the personal essay – already considered characteristic as a genre of disruption and fragmentation (Freeman and Le Rossignol; Dillon)¹ – has continued to evolve in the digital sphere. My focus on the personal essay as life writing engages diverse issues, including the challenge and limits of genre in talking about and discussing the range of narrative that clusters around the concept of the essay as a form. In this paper, I argue that social and collaborative content platforms like Instagram are fostering new modes and genres of essayistic discourse. What might be called the ‘insta-essay,’ then, both locates the essay within the specific affordances of the Instagram platform and recognises the hyper-mobility and ‘fastness’ of the essay online. Often seeming to have been produced ‘on the go’ and in medias res, the insta-essay offers the promise of ‘liveness,’ substitutes literariness for ephemerality, and firmly centre’s the ‘I’ of the narration as an authentic witness.

In tracing the ‘insta-essay’ in this case, my focus is Australian memoirist, journalist and ‘your Internet mum’ Clementine Ford. A well-known figure in Australian feminism, it is Ford’s presence on social media that has garnered her the most attention – and controversy. The presentation of self that Ford makes over social media is in part formed by the platforms and publics that she engages in and that in turn, produce and rely on autobiographical acts that are also ‘a condition of social media participation’ (Morrison, ‘Social, Media, Life Writing’ 46)². Ford’s presence on social media is characteristically intimate, deeply personal and ranging to confessional. As I explore in this paper, her use of essayistic form is one way of understanding how this performance is successful and why it is political.

Bio:

Kylie Cardell is Associate Professor in English at Flinders University. She teaches and supervises in the field of contemporary nonfiction and has a particular interest in emerging and experimental life writing. She is editor of the recent anthology *Essays in Life Writing* (2021), a director of the Life Narrative Lab, executive member of the International Auto/biography Association Asia Pacific (IABA AP) and is an Associate Editor for the journal *Life Writing*.

Liz Rodrigues: *Live Narrative and the Intentional Fragmentation of Computational Methods*

Abstract:

Computational literary studies uses digitized textual data to model linguistic, thematic, and spatial trends across multiple texts. Yet, these methods can produce a kind of encounter many scholars rooted in the practice of close reading would find alienating if not destructive: words become single countable units, seemingly wrenched from context and authorial intention. If, as Katherine Bode has argued, there is “critical potential in working across the divide” of the computational and the literary, what are the specific potential values for scholars of life writing? How do computational methods fragment our understanding of lives, and how could they reveal new connections and patterns? This presentation will discuss my ongoing project to develop a textual corpus for immigrant life narrative in the United States and explore computational approaches to modeling narrative form. Specifically, my talk will share:

1) The results of a survey of published bibliographies of US autobiography and the availability of digitized text for relevant titles: before we can even ask these questions, we must have adequate textual data to explore such methods. What text is already available, and what efforts would need to be made to meaningfully expand the existing corpus?

2) A discussion of methods of historical contextualization when working with textual data: if computational methods are to have a place in the field of life writing, rigorous practices of contextualization must be developed to remain in alignment with the ethical values of the field.

3) Initial results of experiments with modeling narrative through sentiment analysis: if the story of immigration is, at one level, a story of affective relationship to the nation, sentiment analysis offers a way of tracking that relationship across a text. It is also a method that allows intuitive forms of validation akin to close reading, so it makes a useful test case for methodological consideration of the gains and losses of this way of looking at a life narrative text.

Bio:

Liz Rodrigues is an Associate Professor and Humanities and Digital Scholarship Librarian at Grinnell College. Her book *Collecting Lives: Critical Data Narrative as Modernist Aesthetic in Early Twentieth-Century US Literatures* (University of Michigan Press, 2022) considers the data point and the data collection as epistemological and aesthetic forms in the life writing of W.E.B DuBois, Henry Adams, Gertrude Stein, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett. With the support of a Mellon New Directions Fellowship during 2023-24, she is moving from a conceptual to applied interest in data and life writing studies and exploring explicitly computational approaches. She has published in *Biography* and *a/b: Auto/biography Studies*.

Sophie Chapuis: *Looking for the Self: Noah Eli Gordon’s Autobiographical Project, Inbox, 2006*

Abstract:

Social media have considerably expanded the modalities of writing the self. Being a constant invitation to self-exposure, they have transformed life narratives. Online presence has shaken the foundation of autobiographical writing allowing narratives to stray away from a retrospective tradition to privilege a more immediate presentation of the self – or of the selves, as “online avatars” (Whitlock and Poletti) build up the digital persona of writers who engage with technology. Autobiographical writing often derived from a wish to look back and examine a life that was worth telling. Serge Doubrovsky even claimed that autobiography was a “privilege reserved for the important people of this world” and famously coined the word

“autofiction” back in 1977, the better to stress the fictional dimension of the self, forever attaching its search to a literary “adventure”. The post-digital environment seems to have proved him right for the core paradigms of autobiography have shifted: it is no longer about looking back, but rather looking forward, trying to cope with a multitude of fragmented selves. Exploring oneself through technology challenges retrospection, the self being heralded as a project to which anyone can participate in an ever-interactive dimension. Hence writing in the first person no longer is necessarily relevant, contemporary autobiography being “thou-rather than I-directed” (Robert McLaughlin). In that presentation, we will address a text written by American poet Noah Eli Gordon (1975-2022), *Inbox* (2006), which deeply reflects the new direction autobiography has taken in a post-digital context. This life-based entirely draws upon digital communication, being composed of a collection of emails Gordon received. Partly absent from his autobiographical project, the author questions subjectivity, its disappearance and fragmentation. We suggest his work, being radically relational, reads like an attempt at reaching out but also portends the exhaustion of the self.

Bio:

Sophie Chapuis is Associate Professor in American Literature and teaches at Université Jean Monnet, Saint-Étienne, France. She holds a Ph. D. from the Sorbonne Nouvelle (2012) and examined, in her doctoral work, the writing of the accident in the fiction of American writer Rick Moody. She co-edited *Representing the Contemporary North American Family* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing) in 2021, devoting a chapter to David Vann’s *Goat Mountain*. Over the past years, her research has focused on the mutations of life-writing. She has published on the rise of the failure memoir, addressing specifically Gary Shteyngart’s *Little Failure* (see *Revue française d’études américaines*, n° 163, 2020) and more recently written an article about cyber-consciousness in Tao Lin’s *Taipei* (see *Contemporary American Fiction in the Embrace of the Digital Age*, Sussex Academic Press, 2022).

16.30-17.30

V023

PhD students and PostDocs Training Session followed by drinks in the student bar

Julie Rak, Craig Howes, Emilie Pine and Erla Hulda Halldórsdóttir

14 JUNE

9 Keynote:

Main Building – Ceremonial Hall

Chair: Daisy Neijmann

Emilie Pine

After the Memoir: Life Writing, Silence and Noise

Abstract:

A few years ago, when I was turning forty, I published a collection of personal essays, a kind of memoir. In that book I recounted many experiences, but the one that stands out for me now is my description of being raped, twice, as a teenager. It was the first time I had been open about that history and it was hugely cathartic to be silent no longer about something which had been so destructive. After publication I encountered other people’s responses to my experience. These responses varied from the validating and affirmative feedback of

friends and strangers, to requests to talk about my experiences publicly in the media, to reciprocal descriptions of violence that other survivors communicated to me.

At the same time as learning to be public about something so private, I continued in my work as a drama lecturer to teach plays that depicted sexual violence against vulnerable people. Through this teaching I began to think about the kinds of care necessary to telling personal stories of violence. Many of these plays were verbatim works, based on real stories. I began to reflect on the processes not only of writing and speaking about such traumatic histories, but also of their reception, the expectations of the moral witness, and the connections between shame and bravery. Finally, I began to consider how one fragment of a life might shape the whole story.

This paper is a response to the aftermath of life writing. It is an attempt to think through the weight of silence, and the weight of noise. It is a reflection on the role of the moral witness and the role of the audience and, perhaps, the role of the critic. It is a work in progress.

Bio:

Emilie Pine is Professor of Modern Drama in the School of English, Drama and Film at University College Dublin. She has published widely as an academic and critic, including *The Politics of Irish Memory: Performing Remembrance in Contemporary Irish Culture* (Palgrave, 2011), and most recently *The Memory Marketplace: Witnessing Pain in Contemporary Theatre* (Indiana University Press, 2020). From 2015-19 Emilie was PI of *Industrial Memories*, an Irish Research Council-funded project to witness Ireland's historic institutional abuse (<https://industrialmemories.ucd.ie>), out of which she runs the ongoing oral-history project *Survivors Stories* with the National Folklore Collection. As a theatre-maker, Emilie collaborated with ANU Productions on the *Ulysses 2.2* project in 2023, creating *All Hardest of Woman* at the National Maternity Hospital; her first play, *Good Sex*, was a collaboration with Dead Centre Theatre Company, and was shortlisted for Best New Play and Best Production at the 2023 Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards. She is the author of the bestselling essay collection, *Notes to Self*, winner of the 2018 Irish Book of the Year award, which has been translated into 15 languages. Her debut novel *Ruth & Pen* (2022) won the 2023 Kate O'Brien First Novel Award. She is currently working on a second non-fiction essay collection.

10-10.30 Coffee

Main Building in front of Ceremonial Hall

10.30-12 Parallel Sessions:

P37: Black Lives Fragmented

V023

Chair: Gunnþórunn Guðmundsdóttir

Nadine M. Knight: *Puzzles for Survival: Contemporary Black Life as Fragmented Memoir*

Abstract:

From the development of the American slave narrative, the African American literary tradition has had its strongest roots in nonfiction and autobiography. Two of the most lauded recent contributions, Kiese Laymon's *Heavy: An American Memoir* (2018) and Damon Young's *What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Blacker* (2019), offer innovative challenges to the expected form and content of the African American memoir. Comprised of a series of essays, the memoirs of Laymon and Young resist linearity. Where the slave narrative as a genre emphasized authenticity and prized a linear narrative structure of captivity-escape-freedom, these

contemporary memoirs are instead fragmented in form, style, and content. The fragmented form of their memoirs reflects their personal traumas as well as the overarching, ongoing trauma of Black life in a white supremacist nation. Christina Sharpe's groundbreaking work, *In the Wake*, discusses how racial trauma is a disruptive force that breaches the delineation of past and present. She writes: "the past that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present" (Sharpe 9). Working from Sharpe's concepts, I consider the ruptures performed by Laymon and Young's fragmented memoirs as acts of resistance against the nation determined to kill them. Laymon confesses that his family is "a bent black southern family of laughter, outrageous lies, and books.... In that space, I learned how to assemble memory and imagination" (Laymon 9). With a similar emphasis on assembly, Damon Young writes his memoir to see his life as not "haphazard," but rather as "distinct pieces of a puzzle" (Young 13). Through the careful assembly of fragmented puzzle pieces into vignettes of their lived experiences, both Young and Laymon seek a new wholeness for themselves, one that allows them to find moments of humor, joy, and reconciliation during the ongoing past/present struggle for survival against antiblackness in America.

Bio:

Nadine M. Knight is a scholar of African American literature and American culture who teaches at College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts (USA). She is an Associate Professor of English, Director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, and is chairing the newly formed Department of Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, which will open to students in fall 2024. She has published articles and book chapters on topics including Civil War nostalgia, Black elevation in the works of Colson Whitehead and the HBO series *The Wire*, militancy in Black women's novels of the 1970s, and sci-fi reinventions of the slave narrative. She is a frequent guest speaker about African American literature and Black representation in popular American films.

Mrunmayee Sathye: *'This letter isn't for you': Fragmented Relationality and Volatile Selves in Akwaeke Emezi's Dear Senthuran*

Abstract:

Ever since Akwaeke Emezi's debut novel *Freshwater* was published in 2018, the Nigerian author has brought out at least one book every year across a variety of genres, each of which have been enthusiastically received. It is certainly interesting to look into the particular conditions of today's globalized and (at times cursorily) identity-obsessed world facilitating the author's meteoric rise to fame and success, and the ways in which they interact with the specific nature of their multiple identities, personality, and strategies of self-presentation. Taking the increasingly and intensely fragmented nature of selfhood, identity, and belonging in the volatile 21st century as a starting point, I would like to follow two distinct strands of thought in this paper: firstly, I would like to engage briefly with Emezi's career trajectory, multi-medial presence, and public persona, all of which are intimately intertwined with the author's Black, Nigerian, trans and non-binary identities. Secondly, I will employ the epistolary *Dear Senthuran: A Black Spirit Memoir* (2021) as a case study, in which the narrated 'I's multiplicity of identities is further fragmented irrevocably through their sweeping identification as an embodied Igbo spirit. Far from using the narrative to plaster over various experiences of difference and shards of multiple selves, or to occupy positions of solidarity or community, Emezi seems to deliberately fragment not only their self, life, and experience, but also the narrative itself, which but for its aesthetic literary style almost reads like a social media account. In the end there is only the 'I', reveling in its assumed uniqueness, desperate

to transcend not only the violent boundaries of identity categories but of human society itself; its contrived declarations of “I am a god” consistently contradicted by the autobiographical ‘I’ which openly longs for fame, money, and professional success. This self, refusing to be bound down in narrative cohesion, puts together an autobiographical mosaic of pain, loneliness, divinity, ambition, fame, and arrogance; all the while creating a severely fragmented relationality and temporality which renders the addressees of the letters and their perception irrelevant to its own aggrandized self-image. Delving into these various expressions of fragmentation, this paper seeks to engage with the question of how such a fragmented depiction of difference, experience, memory, and individuality can be brought into conversation with issues of relatability, relationality, and solidarity.

Bio:

Mrunmayee Sathye (she/her) has studied literature, philosophy, and history in Pune, India and Tübingen, Germany and is a PhD candidate at the University of Tübingen in the field of Literary and Cultural Theory. In her dissertation, she is engaging with auto/biographical narrative techniques and attempting to develop a dynamic, intersectional conception of the subject from the autobiographical I constructed in contemporary literary and graphic texts. Her research interests are located at the crossroads of intersectional, queer-feminist, post- and decolonial theories of identity.

Eric D. Lamore: *Editing a Fragmented Life from the Early Black Atlantic*

Abstract:

In this presentation, I will focus my remarks on an unauthorized, posthumous adaptation of Olaudah Equiano’s autobiography, *Life and Adventures of Olaudah Equiano*, published by Samuel Wood and Sons in New York in 1829. Abigail Field Mott, a Quaker, abolitionist, women’s rights activist, and author of children’s literature, adapted Equiano’s life story for Black children studying at the New York African Free Schools, one of the first educational institutions to teach individuals of African descent in the United States. Mott assembled the adaptation, a thirty-six-page book, from the unauthorized 1791 New York edition of Equiano’s life story, comprised of two volumes and published by William Durell. Having recently published a scholarly edition of *Life and Adventures of Olaudah Equiano* in the *Regenerations: African American Literature and Culture Series* at West Virginia University Press, I will argue that this fragmented version of Equiano’s life designed for Black children provides truly new insights concerning the transatlantic/transnational publishing history of the autobiography in the United States. Additionally, I will articulate what theories underpinned my editing of the adaptation to ensure that readers, including students enrolled in a variety of twenty-first-century classes, understand the full extent of Mott’s nonauthorial revisions along with the ethical implications of abridging the life story of this Afro-British writer over thirty years after his death.

Bio:

Eric D. Lamore is professor of literature in the Department of English at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez. He is the co-editor of *New Essays on Phillis Wheatley* and editor of *Teaching Olaudah Equiano’s Narrative: Pedagogical Strategies and New Perspectives*, *Reading African American Autobiography: Twenty-First-Century Contexts and Criticism*, and *Abigail Field Mott’s Life and Adventures of Olaudah Equiano: A Scholarly Edition*. His scholarship on early Black Atlantic lives/texts has also appeared in *A History of African American Autobiography and African American Literature in Transition*, vol. 1. Currently, he is working on a monograph, “Unstable as Water”: Early Black Atlantic Literature and Textual Fluidity, and

completing a fellowship at the American Antiquarian Society (Worcester, MA) funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

P38: Roundtable: Fragments in the Digital Mirror: Two Centuries of Irish Women's
Biomythography

V007

Claire Brophy (chair), **Karen Wade**, **Katie Mishler**, **Lauren Cassidy**

Abstract:

This panel will present new research on lost and little-known lives enabled by new digital resources and cultural analytics techniques. It will also reflect on the relationship between researcher, sources and subject, examining how fragmentation persists and resonates within that relationship.

Bios:

Claire Brophy is a post-doctoral researcher on *Victeur: European Migrants in the British Imagination: Victorian and neo Victorian culture*, an ERC funded project using literary criticism and cultural analytics to trace attitudes towards migrants into Britain, based in UCD. Research interests include intersectional feminist theory and Irish women's writing.

Lauren Cassidy is a final-year PhD student at University College Dublin in the School of English, Drama and Film. Her research explores contemporary Irish feminist writing, and its reproduction of a key figure from Ireland's cultural history: the sovereignty goddess. Lauren's project analyses novels by Iris Murdoch, Emma Donoghue and Anne Enright, as well as songs by Denise Chaila, arguing that their works queer and transnationalise the sovereignty goddess for a changing nation. Lauren is interested in feminist psychoanalysis, queer theory, postcolonial studies, chronopolitics and the digital humanities. She currently works as a research assistant on the ERC VICTEUR project.

Katie Mishler specializes in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Irish gothic writing, urban studies, and public humanities. Her current work employs the critical methodologies of geospatial analysis, text mapping, and cultural historicism to theorize a tradition of Irish urban gothic writing. She is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow on the VICTEUR project.

Dr. Karen Wade is Assistant Professor of Cultural Analytics at the University College Dublin School of English, Drama and Film, specialising in 19th century literature and publishing cultures. She is the Assistant Director of the Centre for Cultural Analytics and has been involved in the creation and running of a number of major digital humanities projects. She is currently a researcher with the ERC-funded VICTEUR project.

P39: Fragmented Ecologies

V008

Chair: Ioana Luca

Mia-Francesca Jones: *Memory and Place: Bridging the Human/Nature Divide in Eco-Autobiographical Life Writing*

Abstract:

Eco-autobiography is an under-researched genre of life writing that depicts how human selves are shaped by their environment by interweaving personal experience with 'the story of the fortunes, conditions, geography and ecology of a region' (Smith and Watson, 2010). My research takes a practice-led approach to understanding relationships between humans and their environment by undertaking field writing to record sensory, descriptive and subjective interpretations of place and space. Throughout this process, strong memories are often

activated. Drawing on Edward S. Casey's theory of place memory and body memory, this paper explores the dispersal of memories in eco-autobiographical personal essays as a way to draw together fragmented threads and to 'find the self in nature' (Perreten, 2014).

The creative component of my PhD thesis is a collection of eco-autobiographical essays titled *Somehow North* that braid together memories of place, extracts from weather watching diaries, literary references, scientific research, climate data and field observations to explore connections between humans and their environment. The collection is written from my perspective as an eco-anxious new mother with fears for our shared cultural and climate future. Each essay travels to vulnerable landscapes – such as a melting glacier in New Zealand, a coral reef post a mass bleaching event – and places of personal significance to explore these themes.

Memory contextualises how we perceive our environment and is an essential component of unpacking our relationships to place, and to call for an ethic of care for the environment. How does memory function in eco-autobiographical life writing to draw together fragmented threads, and to craft narratives that bridge the human/ nature divide? In this paper, I discuss how memory is employed in eco-autobiography as a tool to deconstruct, decolonise, and rewrite our disjointed relationships to place.

Bio:

Mia-Francesca Jones is a writer and researcher living on Dja Dja Wurrung Country. She is currently undertaking a PhD at James Cook University in creative writing and ecocriticism, and her research explores how climate change is shaping the way we tell our personal stories. In 2022, she was awarded the William Thomas Williams Postgraduate Scholarship for a creative scholar. Mia is a member of the Flinders Life Narrative Lab and the Blue Humanities Lab, and the themes in her creative work are homesickness, climate change, motherhood and meteorology.

Clare Brant: *Eel Appeal: Fragmentation of Ecologies, Migrations and Imaginings in Eel Life Stories*

Abstract:

The life cycle of eels is a fragmented story. Born in the Sargasso Sea, drifting to Europe or America, making their way up rivers to live in pools, marshes and wetlands for years before then heading back to sea to gather in their birthplace where they spawn and die: this much we know. But their narrative still has mysteries: nobody has seen eels spawn, or knows quite where they do so. This gives eels an allure which has attracted life writers including Rachel Carson in *Under the Sea-Wind: A Naturalist's Picture of Ocean Life* (1941); Patrick Svensson in *The Gospel of the Eels: A Father, A Son and the World's Most Enigmatic Fish* (2019); Steve Ely in 'The European Eel' (2021) and others. Biography, grief memoir and epic poem take up eel life, eel life cycles and the struggles they now face. Human-made obstacles like dams block their route to a home; human-fouled water – pollutants, chemicals, sewage – contaminates their lives. I read a selection of eel literature for fragmentation of three kinds: the story about eels, both scientifically and imaginatively fragmented; eco-tones, natural environmental shading now subject to brutal fragmentation; human fragmentation of their migration stories, including overfishing and eel-smuggling which destroys their relationship with place and community and makes them ecologically placeless subjects. Eels now inhabit fragmented ecologies, both physical and imaginative. Ever an elusive subject, the eel intrigues and concerns a growing number of admirers, even as eel populations dwindle to near-extinction. 'We cannot know if 'memory' or 'familiarity' have any meaning in the experience

of an eel. What is certain is that science can add little to this story', says author Stewart Bullen. What can life writing add?

Bio:

Clare Brant is Professor of Eighteenth-century Literature and Culture at King's College London. She is co-General Editor of the Palgrave series Studies in Life Writing, and has published on numerous life writing topics, focusing recently on marine life in the Anthropocene. She currently has a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship for her forthcoming book, *Underwater Lives: Humans, Species, Oceans*.

Mathilda Slabbert: *Fractal Fragments: Reflections on Perspectives of Human and Other-than-human Matter(s) in the Kogelberg Biosphere, South Africa*

Abstract:

This paper takes an experimental form. It incorporates fragments of auto/biographical narratives (written and visual), archival and contemporary (social) media material, and draws on critical ideas from environmental humanities (e.g.: new materialism, vitalist politics, socio-environmental justice) to narrate and explore experiences and perspectives of human and other-than-human lives, rights, values, and agency in a particular geographical region of South Africa. My creative nonfiction, critical paper focuses on human and other-than-human interactions in the lower southwestern—terrestrial and marine—area of the Kogelberg Biosphere, a fractal landscape. I consider the history of the area, narrate my (puzzling) experiences of living in “the richest, most complex biodiversity on earth” (koggelergbiosphre.org), and examine a trajectory of regional socio-environmental activities, discourses and narratives to comment on aspects that reveal ideas of, for instance: ecofascism, ecocide, omnicide, solastalgia, taxonomies of agency, and visions of the future in a context demonstrating the “challenges of the Anthropocene” (Ghosh; Bennett; Albrecht; Nixon; White and Whitlock 10).

Bio:

Mathilda Slabbert is Senior Lecturer in the Department of English Studies at the University of Stellenbosch. Her research focuses on life writing, literary-cultural productions of the environment, and gender/queer studies. She has published articles in journals such as *Safundi*, *Literator*, *Acta Academica* and *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, and contributed chapters to academic books, including: *Locating Life Stories: Beyond East-West Binaries in (Auto)Biographical Studies*; *Britain and the Narration of Travel in the Nineteenth Century*; and *The Natures of Africa: Ecocriticism and Animal Studies in Contemporary Cultural Forms*. She is co-author (with Dawid de Villiers) of *David Kramer: a Biography*. She is co-founder of the IABA Africa chapter.

Ricia Anne Chansky: *The Fractured Witness: Reading Death in Disaster Narratives*

Abstract:

A majority of climatologists agree that data-driven reports are not enough to move a reading witness to take action against the climate emergency. Political activist and public relations guru, David Fenton, however, offers a solution: “embed facts and data in... ‘moral stories that tug at the emotions.’” Or, as I interpret that missive, record and disseminate as widely as possible life narratives shared by survivors of climatological disasters that highlight the personal and specific costs of the climate emergency. In other words, shift the global to the local in a way that personalizes these events on a very human level—something that auto/biographical narratives are historically and contemporarily well-versed in doing.

However, there are concerns and cautions related to such a policy. In our haste to position climate stories as part our response to the climate crisis, we cannot lose site of the narrator in the life narrative. While I posit that the “I” narrative is uniquely positioned to resituate storytellers as agential beings through the emphasis on retelling active responses in the face of disaster and trauma, it is important to direct our attention to the possibility of further harm to the storyteller.

This presentation discusses two life narratives from the collection *Mi María: Surviving the Storm* Voices from Puerto Rico—those of Zaira Arvelo Alicea and Miliana Montañez León—which share eyewitness accounts of death in the aftermath of Hurricane María in various stages of fragmentation. In the hopes of beginning a larger conversation related to the ethics of recording, preserving, and amplifying life narratives of climate survivors, this talk focuses on elements of narrative transaction, witness intent, listening to trauma, editing fragments, and narrative dissemination through data curation, all of which must be of service first to storytellers and local communities, and then the larger groups of stakeholders in the climate crisis.

Bio:

Ricia Anne Chansky is a Professor in the Department of English at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez and the Director of the Oral History Lab @UPRM where she leads projects funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the American Council of Learned Societies. She is a Fellow at the Interdisciplinary Center for Innovative Theory and Empirics (INCITE) at Columbia University, the codirector of the Archivo de Respuestas Emergencias de Puerto Rico, and the Senior Climate Justice Fellow at the Humanities Action Lab at Rutgers-Newark. Her recent books are *The Divided States: Unraveling National Identity in the Twenty-First Century*; *Mi María: Surviving the Storm, Voices from Puerto Rico*; and *Maxy Survives the Hurricane / Maxy sobrevive el huracán*.

P40: Hybrid Genres and French Fiction

V107

Chair: Barbara Kosta

Emelyn Lih: *From Totality to Fragment: Abandoning Mastery in Postwar French Autobiography*

Abstract:

This paper traces a significant pattern in the work of several major French-language autobiographers of the postwar period: after undertaking long-term, multi-volume life-writing endeavors that express an ambition to narrate the totality of their authors' existence, they bring the enterprise to a close with a volume marked not by exhaustiveness but by a dispersal into fragments. The discourse of control over the autobiographical subject's represented life gives way to a relinquishing of mastery and an acceptance of the role of contingency and fragmentation in any attempt to tell a life. Three works will serve as examples of this development. The Swiss poet and novelist Blaise Cendrars wrote a series of autobiographical works in the late 1940s. In contrast to the densely structured construction of the first two such works, *Bourlinguer* [Knocking About] (1948) is a sequence of loosely connected vignettes organized around eleven port cities. The surrealist and ethnographer Michel Leiris's tetralogy *La Règle du jeu* [The Rules of the Game] ends with *Frêle bruit* [Faint Noise] (1976), in which the endless paragraphs and lists of the earlier volumes are replaced by brief reveries and reflections. Finally, the New Novelist Claude Simon's last major work, *Le Jardin des Plantes* (1997), adopts a similarly changed aesthetic, transforming the Proustian

sentences of his earlier novels into a terser, more fragmented account of a life of travel and tragedy. This progressive dismantling of narrative coherence gives more distinct shape to the challenge these works pose to the posture of autobiographical mastery and the mystifications such a posture produces. I hope to place these authors in a different lineage than the one in which they are typically situated and examine the effect of this late turn to fragmentation on their philosophy of life-writing.

Bio:

Emelyn Lih is completing a PhD at New York University's Department of French Literature, Thought and Culture, under the direction of Denis Hollier. Her dissertation, "Writing Oneself into the World: Narratives of Self Confront the Twentieth Century," examines a series of formally innovative autobiographical projects in twentieth-century French prose, focusing on the relationship between biographical and historical temporalities in the work of Blaise Cendrars, Michel Leiris, Claude Simon, and Annie Ernaux. She holds degrees from Columbia University and the École normale supérieure de Paris, and her work has been supported by grants from the Quebec and Canadian governments as well as from the Phi Beta Kappa society. She has published multiple articles on the work of Claude Simon, and she is also active as a translator.

Marieke Mueller: *Violence, Narrative and the Fragmentation of Selfhood in Edouard Louis's Fiction*

Abstract:

Edouard Louis's widely successful auto-fictional writing exposes his readers to what he repeatedly calls 'the violence of the world'. He addresses the structural inequalities affecting rural areas in Northern France in which he grew up, the experience of homophobic abuse and exclusion, and instances of traumatic interpersonal violence such as an act of rape in *History of Violence* (2016).

Against this background, his texts trace the possibility of transformation and identity construction (*The End of Eddy*, 2014; *Change*, 2021), through a form of writing that relies heavily on fragmentation. My paper is going to examine the interrelated levels at which this fragmentation operates: first, Louis's texts rupture any unity of the narrative voice by alternating perspectives and presenting to the reader fragments of discourses that often stand in conflict with the first-person narrator's own perspective. Second, Louis frequently ruptures the fictional world of his texts by inserting a sociological perspective aimed at framing the characters' actions. And finally, Louis's body of work is itself fragmented, scattering episodes from the narrator's life across different texts, constantly re-examining them and highlighting the incompleteness of the narrator's own assessment of events.

Louis's writing therefore refrains from papering over cracks in both individual trajectories and communal lives but accentuates them. My paper will conclude by placing the effect of this pluri-dimensional fragmentation in the context of the author's own claim that literature should play a political role of 'confrontation'.

Bio:

Marieke Mueller is a Lecturer in French Culture at Manchester Metropolitan University. She previously taught at King's College London, Aberystwyth University, and the University of Oxford, where she also received her PhD on Sartre's biography of Flaubert. She works on the intersection of theory and literature, especially existentialism and sociology, and on women's writing and gender. She has published on approaches to reading, Sartre's understanding of institutional violence, and on contemporary literature, especially Edouard Louis and Didier

Eribon. She is currently working on a project examining the relationship between narrative and violence, for which she has received seed funding from the British Academy.

Brynjarr Þór Eyjólfsson Mendoza: *Ontological Interruption and Narrative Fragmentation: The Narrative Hermeneutics of Loss in Hélène Cixous' Hyperdream*

Abstract:

Literary works such as Hélène Cixous' *Hyperdream* [Hyperrêve] (2006/2009) challenge and expand the idea of narratives and life-writing as cohesive modes of existential sense-making. By questioning the singularity and linearity of the conceptualisation of life, *Hyperdream* focuses on the intersecting life-narratives and tackles the event of loss as disruptive yet productive particularly through an understanding of writing not only as a safeguard against death and forgetfulness but also as a hermeneutic approach that allows for both self-understanding and narrative dialogicality.

As Eret Talviste writes, Cixous' "writing follows what Gilles Deleuze calls 'a life' – her writing is not engaged with individual linear life narratives of coherent characters but creates a sense of a book which lays everything out on a single sheet: affects, materiality, daily scenes, and philosophical musings" (2019, 143). Yet while Talviste focuses on the relationality of the self in Cixous's writing through affects, I would like to engage further with this relationality through theories of narrative hermeneutics. In this paper, I argue that loss in *Hyperdream* is understood hermeneutically through narrative dialogues that arise from and give way to affective encounters whereby the life-narratives formulated in the work become cornerstones of memory and sense-making against the processes of interruption and disappearance of modes of being in the wake of death. Indeed, the subject-object binary in such modes of being is blurred as dialogicality decentralises the prominence of a singular reference point for narratives. I propose that her way of describing and understanding affects as embodied narrative and interpretative models in *Hyperdream* allows for a rethinking of writing not only as a site for memory but also as a collective way of hermeneutic sense-making of life's fragmentary nature through expressions of embodied experience.

Bio:

Brynjarr Þór Eyjólfsson Mendoza is master's graduate from the University of Iceland and a doctoral researcher. His research areas are on affect theory, narrative hermeneutics, and aesthetics with practical applications particularly geared towards Nordic literature. He has presented on various conferences held by institutions such as the Centre for the Study of Storytelling, Experientiality and Memory (SELMA) at the University of Turku and the Centre for Interdisciplinary Narrative Studies (NARRARE) at Tampere University as well as published papers on Icelandic literature and culture.

Louise Kari-Méreau: *Beigbeder's Autofictions: From Fragmented Narratives to Fragmented Identity to Universal Cynicism*

Abstract:

In this paper I would like to study the use of the fragmented narrative in the construction of three novels by Frédéric Beigbeder: *L'Egoïste romantique* (2005), *Un roman français* (2009) and *Un barrage contre l'Atlantique* (2023) leading to a showcase of fragmented identity. The fragmented narrative (journal entries, maxims, anecdotes) allows the narrators to link French history and family history, fiction and faction, autofiction and autobiography, playing with the codes of diegesis. Indeed, *L'Egoïste romantique* is Oscar Dufresne's fake-private diary, *Un roman français* narrates his family's history in relation to that of France, and *Un barrage*

contre l'Atlantique can be read as a collection of maxims. His first novel was already set at the heart of History, with *Les mémoires d'un jeune homme dérangé* (1990) and the use of the term memoir, ("a book or other piece of writing based on the writer's personal knowledge of famous people, places, or events" *Cambridge dictionary*, memoir entry), set up the importance of fragmentation (which can be seen in the trope of memory) in Beigbeder's cynical writing.

Indeed, as Diogenes of Sinope and the cynics did in ancient Greece, Beigbeder uses anecdotes, jokes, maxims, punchlines, to challenge, question, and make his readers think and react. By fragmenting his reflections on contemporary French society, which he drowns in a plethora of factitious details (a mixture of fiction and fact), Beigbeder's narrator seems intent on assembling reminders for his readers. The fragmented narrative enables the author to generalize the lives of his narrators – through fragmented identity – and offer a reflection on the collective singular: he blurs the lines between individuality and community. Once again, Beigbeder's way of narrating to amuse and criticize brings the act of writing closer to the theatrical acts of Diogenes, who used short, funny and shocking stories to teach his contemporaries the way to happiness. In this sense, Beigbeder's fragmented novels echo the pedagogical codes of the ancient cynics.

Bio:

Louise Kari-Méreau did her PhD at Trinity College Dublin under the supervision of Dr Sarah Alyn Stacey (2016-2022) and continues to work there as a visiting research fellow. Her PhD research, funded by the Claude and Vincenette Pichois Award, focused on cynicism in the novels of Frederic Beigbeder and Virginie Despentes (1990-2010). She is currently working on the publication of her thesis and continues to explore cynicism in contemporary French novels.

P41: Archives and Histories

V108

Chair: Lynn Domina

Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon: *Life as a Counter-Archive: The Textual Embodiment of Bíbí in Berlín*

Abstract:

The source material that belonged to Bíbí in Berlín (Bjarney Kristjánsdóttir 1927–1999) is filled with personal descriptions of her life. For example in her autobiography she writes about the life on the farm, which was called Berlín, both her childhood and her adult years in another location (she moved into an old age home at the age of 30). She also writes about her family and neighbours with a great sense of humour and irony. Bíbí wrote her autobiography, keeping it secret from her family and neighbours. Very few of them even knew that she could read and write, because after all she was from an early age labelled an "idiot". The text is unusual and are mostly written in pencil and the words have been retraced so many times like she was trying to make sure that her story would not be forgotten. Bíbí's story, both her autobiography and other kind of sources, will be analysed based on two research discipline, the critical disability studies, and the methods of microhistory. I plan to treat a very diverse source material that was part of Bíbí's world as a counter-archive; political, resourceful, resistant, and community-based. Her counter-archive is embodied differently than regular archives and disrupt conventional national narrative. It is treated like a constructive critique that debunks hegemony and builds up or puts together a comprehensive understanding of the world. Her counter-archive is part of a defragmenting histories of her oppression. In the foreground will be the whole life span of hers, from the cradle to grave.

Bio:

Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon (Historian – Ph.D.) is currently Professor of Cultural History (see: www.sgm.hi.is). He is furthermore chair of the Centre for Microhistorical Research. He has been dealing with autobiographical sources (egodocuments) for over three decades. He has written twenty-nine books published in Iceland and abroad. His latest books in English are: *Minor Knowledge and Microhistory. Manuscript Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2017), co-authored with Davíð Ólafsson; *Emotional Experience and Microhistory. A Life Story of a Destitute Pauper Poet in the 19th Century* (London: Routledge, 2020); *Archive, Slow Ideology and Egodocuments as Microhistorical Autobiography: Potential History* (London: Routledge, 2021), and forthcoming in December 2023 is *Autobiographical Traditions in Egodocuments. Icelandic Literary Practices* published by Bloomsbury. He is a co-editor with István M. Szijártó of a book series, *Microhistories*, published by Routledge.

Lizelle Smit: *A Fragmented Biography of Akiga Sai: Afrikaans Missionaries' Perspectives*

Abstract:

The Nigerian Tiv auto-ethnographer, evangelist, politician, and translator, Akiga Sai (1898-1959), is heralded as one of the few indigenous African anthropologists of the early twentieth century. He collected and recorded the (oral) history of his people, and provided his own explanations of the Tiv's cultural practices and beliefs. More significantly, *History of the Tiv* (1939) was written in the indigenous Tiv language (completed by Sai in 1935 as *Histeri u Tiv*). Richard Fardon explains that despite the significance of Sai's life and work, "there is no full biography of the [...] writer" and this gap "deserves to be filled by someone able to research in both Tiv and Hausa". Though in complete agreement with Fardon, this paper illustrates that it is also important to conduct research in Afrikaans to include the abundance of information available in archival materials, housed at the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) Archives in Stellenbosch, South Africa, that relates to the life and work of Sai. The DRC Afrikaans missionaries from South Africa who worked in Nigeria amongst the Tiv are integral to Sai's story: they taught him to read, trained him as an evangelist and worked closely with him. They encouraged Sai to collect and record Tiv oral history, and employed him as a translator. Missionaries' diaries, letters, and official correspondence with the Mission's Synodal Commission, mostly written in Afrikaans, frequently mention Sai's activities at the various mission stations. Though these texts and descriptions of Sai are coloured by the missionaries' own biases, beliefs, and culture, and are embedded in complicated colonial discourses, they shed invaluable light on the fragments of Sai's life unavailable in any other archive. To write the "full biography" of Sai, inclusion of these sources is necessary.

Bio:

Lizelle Smit is a Research Associate of the English Studies Department at Stellenbosch University (South Africa) and a senior archivist at the Dutch Reformed Church Archives. She is the author of several articles relating to South African women's nineteenth and twentieth century life writing practices and lived experiences.

Julie A. Eckerle: *Competing Narratives in the Case of Alice Thornton's Domestic Dispute*

Abstract:

Seventeenth-century life writer Alice Thornton produced four manuscript volumes of autobiographical narrative and engaged in significant epistolary communication, with 35 of her letters extant. This life-writing archive, unusually abundant for an early modern

Englishwoman, provides a wealth of information about Thornton, her rhetorical style, and her tendency to return over and over again to the same key moments in her life. Not least of these moments was the domestic conflict that arguably launched her life-writing initiatives in the first place. This episode in 1668 involved female servants within Thornton's household spreading rumors about her fourteen-year-old daughter's engagement to the local minister and the various unsavory motives Thornton and her husband might have had for agreeing to it. Particularly upsetting to Thornton was the role of her niece Anne Culpepper Danby, who appeared to Thornton to side with and encourage the servants despite having been taken in by the Thornton family. Early modern women's life writing survives in fragments in the best of circumstances; rarely do we have the opportunity to actually compare narratives of the same event written by two different women. But in this case we do, since Danby also wrote a narrative account of the conflict in a letter to a Parson Farrer. These narratives, which have not been compared in any substantive way to date, offer a valuable opportunity to consider several topics pertinent to the theme of the 2024 IABA conference, including the role of memory in narrative re-constructions, the turn to narrative to make sense of familial ruptures, and the scholarly reliance on narrative fragments in order to access historical women's realities. In this paper, I will address these topics as I compare the women's efforts to defend their reputations in their complex local and familial contexts through life writing.

Bio:

Julie A. Eckerle is a professor of English at the University of Minnesota Morris with an expertise in early modern Englishwomen's life writing, romance, manuscript culture, and early modern Ireland. She has published the monograph *Romancing the Self: Early Modern Englishwomen's Life Writing* and the first print edition of seventeenth-century Englishwoman Dorothy Calthorpe's manuscripts: *News from the Midell Regions and Calthorpe's Chapel*. She has also published two co-edited volumes, *Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England* (with Michelle M. Dowd) and *Women's Life Writing and Early Modern Ireland* (with Naomi McAreavey). Her current work focuses on Alice Thornton's familial letters, Dorothy Calthorpe's textual literacy and authorial practice, and women's writing in and about seventeenth-century Ireland.

P42: Autofictions

V103

Chair: Leigh Gilmore

Douglas Morrey: *Fragmentation, Compartmentalization and Autofiction in the Work of Serge Doubrovsky*

Abstract:

The French novelist Serge Doubrovsky, famous for having coined the now ubiquitous term 'autofiction,' is known for his fragmentary style that mixes broken sentences, unpunctuated glimpses of streams of consciousness, snatches of dialogue, etc. This style can be understood as a response to the necessary refraction of the self through language – the troubling non-coincidence of the experiencing self and the narrating self – that Doubrovsky analysed in his psychoanalytic literary criticism, notably in his work on Proust (*Writing and Fantasy in Proust*, 1974).

In his novels, or more properly, his autofictions, Doubrovsky deploys this style to narrate his own intellectual and romantic life as a literature professor moving regularly between Paris and New York, but also to perform a kind of self-psychoanalysis through which he interrogates the traumatic history of his family and their experience of the genocide of

European Jewry during the Second World War. Doubrovsky's fragmented style becomes a means to grapple with an identity divided between languages and cultures, time zones and tastes, but also a way of seeking to acknowledge a past that has never been entirely integrated or reconciled.

More recently, however, Doubrovsky has become infamous for his misogyny, the neglect and abuse of his female partners, and particularly the suicide of his wife, that led him, crassly, to declare, in 1989, 'I kill one woman per book.' This paper asks how the fragmentary style of Doubrovsky's autofiction relates to this misogynist behaviour. Does the theoretically justified emphasis on the fragmentation of identity serve to enable a certain compartmentalization of domains of experience that allowed Doubrovsky's blithe cruelty towards his wife to become a celebrated literary phenomenon? More broadly, this paper asks: how far are the origins of autofiction complicit with misogyny, and how, in this light, should we interpret the increasing appropriation of the genre by women writers?

Bio:

Douglas Morrey is Associate Professor (Reader) of French Studies at the University of Warwick (UK). He is the author of *Michel Houellebecq: Humanity and its Aftermath* (Liverpool University Press, 2013) and of several works on French cinema, most recently *The Legacy of the New Wave in French Cinema* (Bloomsbury, 2020). His current project focuses on masculinity and the origins of autofiction in contemporary French literature.

Jennifer Cooke: *Alternative Autofictions: Nanny Narratives as Childcare Testimonies*

Abstract:

This paper focuses upon novels about nannying, written by nannies, a fact they explicitly acknowledge and advertise to enhance their authenticity. Marketed as literature, they are, I will argue, alternative autofictions: fictions informed by life, with common elements testifying to the exigencies of paid childcare, and attentive to the oddities of being at the centre of a family's life, often loved and valued by their infant charges, and, at the same time a precarious employee, frequently without contractual security.

Focusing on Nicola Kraus and Emma McLaughlin's *The Nanny Diaries* (2002) and Madeline Steven's *Devotion* (2019), both of which feature a young female nanny looking after a child for an extremely wealthy, dysfunctional New York couple, I am interested in the care work these stories document, including scenes common to both books, such a period of the child's illness, left to the nanny to care for, or the misrecognition of the nanny as the mother of her charge. The second feature I examine is the impact the role has on the identity of the nanny. In both stories, and common to nanny fictions more broadly, the nanny is not so much finding herself, like in a bildungsroman, as losing herself, engulfed by the family and their demands upon her, which tend to increase as their reliance upon her services deepen. Yet, Jonathan Gathrone-Hardy notes, the defining feature of nannies is that they leave, often abruptly 'let go' by their employer. Or, as the narrator of *The Nanny Diaries* describes the job of nannying: 'to do it well is to lose it', and to lose it, for both the nanny and the child she cares for, breaks a bond. In many ways, therefore, and as these autofictions testify, to nanny is to experience family life in fragments and affection as frangible.

Bio:

Jennifer Cooke is Reader in Contemporary Literature and Theory at Loughborough University, UK. Recent publications include the BACLS Best Monograph prize winner, *Contemporary Feminist Life-Writing: The New Audacity* (Cambridge University Press, 2020) and the double award-winning edited collection, *The New Feminist Literary Studies* (CUP, 2020). She's

currently writing her third monograph, entitled Gender, Care, and Outsourcing in Contemporary Literature and co-editing Intersectional Feminist Research Methods: Applications in the Social Sciences and Humanities. She is co-editor of the CUP series Elements in Feminism and Contemporary Critical Theory.

Philippe Rousseau and Karen Ferreira-Meyers: *Fragmented Autofictional Identity through Fragmented Literary Productions*

Abstract:

Rousseau inaugurated an autofictional posture in his works starting in 2003, but adopted a stance of hiding and distancing this autofiction in these latest texts. For *Je suis riche de mes vols*, a monologue of an incest survivor, the autofictional link was unconscious during writing as the author's own traumatic memories had not yet resurfaced. For *La personne qui te harr*, about a victim of workplace harassment, the autofictional link was hidden to avoid defamation. Rousseau argues these were pretexts to explore how poetry and epicene writing serve an individuation process and ethical purpose in texts about trauma. Drawing on Gilbert Simondon's concept of individuation, Rousseau shows how poetry creates encounters between the work, author and audience that transform all parties. Poetry expresses trauma's unspeakable effects rather than unethically depicting violent acts. Rousseau analyses his use of phonics, rhythm, repetition, synesthetic imagery, shamanic references and an unreliable narrator's voice in *Je suis riche de mes vols* to convey sensations over emotions and avoid pornographic representations of incest. In *La personne qui te harr*, epicene writing opens up the trauma, characters, and emotions expressed beyond a single gender. Rousseau observes poetry and epicene writing physically impact both the performer's body and audience during recitation. He concludes that poetry and epicene writing connected to literary genres can create another "self," express trauma ethically, open feminine perspectives and induce individuating encounters for creators and audiences.

Bios:

Karen Ferreira-Meyers: University of Eswatini, Eswatini, and Research Fellow, University of the Free State, South Africa) has a strong track record in research on life writing (autofiction, autobiography) and on teacher development in Southern African contexts. Her research interests are varied: from teacher training, ODeL, Open Education, Open Schooling, teacher professional development, online facilitation, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, self-directed learning, quality assurance in education to autofiction and autobiography, crime and detective fiction, African literatures in French, English, Portuguese and Spanish. She has published over 100 papers, various book chapters, two books and more than 100 book reviews. She enjoys working collaboratively and has been tasked with the leading of project teams on several occasions.

Philippe Rousseau: Since 2003, author of theater, songs, poems, travel diaries. Writing workshop leader in all types of cultural, educational, social structures, etc. Let us quote *Je me souviens mon père* (2003, ed Elytis), *Mes pas captent le vent* (adapted from *Passeport pour une Russie* - ed Elytis 2011 ; translated in russian by Elena Belyaeva : Шаги ловят ветер), *Feintes attentes* (2013), *Carnet de voyage en maison de retraite* (2014 ed CLEM and digital edition Raconter la Vie), *Je suis riche de mes vols* (CNL scholarship, Hypolipo residence, Ed Non-Verbal, 2020, english translation by K. Ferreira-Meyers : *Fleeing flights for freedom*) and *La personne qui te harr* (Ed Non-Verbal, 2020), and *Jetuielle*, (Ed Ex-Aequo, 2024). Since 1992, artistic director of the company Les Taupes Secrètes Artistes Associés which produces the majority of its productions. Associate professional of Bordeaux Montaigne University between

2005 and 2017, responsibilities for training, department, International Relations, numerous ERASMUS missions, research activities with participation in international conferences, then Culture Assistant since 2017 at the Culture Pole at the University of Bordeaux-Montaigne, organization of festivals, artistic practice workshops, etc.

Fabio Ramasso: *Fragmented Paris in Rainer Maria Rilke's The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*

Abstract:

The fictional – semibiographical – character of Malte is a paradigmatic example for a combination of disrupted memory and fragmented narration, regarding a complex reality difficult to decipher. The character lives in Paris like his author (since 1902) and he does not feel he belongs there. The notebooks are expression of a multiple fragmentation: The poetic self on the one hand, the metropolis torn between innovation and tradition, on the other hand. Events and tensions before the outbreak of the First World War are tangible but never clearly expressed. The existential anxiety is achieved through the confusion of the narrative passages and the sense of misperception that Rilke evokes is the same that the character and the author experience as they cross the streets of Paris.

The very form of the work is a disintegration of the usual narrative forms: it is not a novel, it is not poetry, and in some sense, it is both. In the sequence of impressions, Malte thereby sketches the image of a city that becomes a spiritual station and – at the same time – an obligatory hell for personal maturation. The purpose of my presentation is to highlight the narrative and metaphoric function of the city, within the work, as a machine of disruption on several levels.

The analysis reveals a particular role of the metropolis linked to the concept of literary memory. It allows the poet to connect his own experience with that of Malte and from this to obtain the poetic creativity needed to continue writing. Paris has obtained – through the Malte text – a double meaning, one in the text and the other outside – as personal Erlebnis – the text.

Bio:

Fabio Ramasso is research fellow at the University of Turin (Italy). He obtained a PhD in German Literature with a dissertation about Ulysses rewritings in Contemporary German Literature. His main research project deals with the role of myth in Rainer Maria Rilke's project. He is also interested in the role of metropolis in German Literature of Twentieth Century.

12-13 Lunch

Veröld Ground Floor

13-14.30 Parallel Sessions:

P43: Ruptured Memories in Asian American Graphic Narratives

V023

Chair: Eleanor Ty

Monica Chiu: *Fragmented Daughters; Fragments of Mothers: Vulnerability in Pieces in Lee's Graphic Memoir In Limbo*

Abstract:

Deb JJ Lee's graphic memoir *In Limbo* traces the familiar contours of a 1.5-generation Korean American teen who faces racism, microaggressions, and the challenges of not living up to the

model minority (myth). Deb's Korean immigrant mother adds verbal and physical insult to her daughter's school-based racist injury by demanding that Deb live up to that myth attributed to so many Asians. Using the work of Erin Khue Ninh and Eleanor Ty, both of whom examine the model minority structure from viewpoints that resist common assumptions about their origins and effects, I examine Deb's recurring mental health challenges against the missing explanation of her mother's history and possible traumas.

For Frederik Kohlert and Elisabeth El Refaie, comics "serial selves" (attributed to Kohlert) assist readers in viewing how selfhood is not unified, especially the selves of those who are mentally unhealthy, as visually expressed in Deb's fragmented self on the page. Whereas Deb's fragments collectively create a fuller picture, the reader sees only the fragments of Deb's mother, the pieces never create an understandable entity. What does the mother's missing history contribute to Deb's self-identity and illness? How does the graphic memoir toggle between Deb's vulnerability and the reader's engagement with it (per Esther Szep's *Comics and the Body*)? Can we have compassion for her mother without any supporting background history?

Bio:

Monica Chiu is Professor of English and American Studies at the University of New Hampshire, where she teaches courses in American Studies, Asian American Studies, and Comics and Graphic Narrative. She's a former Fulbright Scholar, 2011-12, at The University of Hong Kong, where she collaborated with colleagues from around the world for her edited collection *Drawing New Color Lines: Transnational Asian American Graphic Narratives* (2015). Among other publications, she is the author of the forthcoming book *Show Me Where It Hurts: Manifesting Illness and Impairment in Graphic Pathography*, Penn State UP's series in graphic medicine (2024). Her current work is a public engagement project with New Hampshire-based Indonesian Americans who tell their stories to cartoonists.

Eleanor Ty: *Food and Memories in Thien Pham's Refugee Graphic Life Narrative*

Abstract:

Thien Pham's graphic narrative, *Family Style* is subtitled "Memories of an American from Vietnam" rather than "memoirs" of an American from Vietnam. This distinction is important because, in today's society, writing a memoir, as Julie Rak argues, turns "one's life into a story for others' enjoyment, provocation, and education" (8). Smith and Watson note that memoir, "often signals autobiographical works characterized by density of language and self-reflexivity about the writing process" (4). "Memories" however, suggest a more fluid, unstructured, and fragmented set of recollected events that more suitably describes Pham's book.

The chapter titles in *Family Style* are all named after foods: rice and fish; bánh cuốn; steak and potatoes; strawberries and potato chips; Salisbury steak; ham and cheese croissant, etc. Each chapter is focussed on a particular memory to do with one or two foods, but Pham does not employ food in a sentimental way or always as a marker of his ethnicity. There are no loving and slow descriptions of cooking or recipes. Instead, food is used productively in different ways: as a way to recount the family's sometimes comic ways of acculturation into American society; to show his parents' resourcefulness; and his own efforts to reculturate as a Vietnamese American as an adult.

In the process of recounting his fragmented memories—including leaving Vietnam on a boat, living in a refugee camp, watching his parents work double shifts on farms, factories, and kitchens in California, learning English, going to Chuck E. Cheese, and falling in love, Pham, like Thi Bui, Viet Nguyen, and other recent Vietnamese American authors, rewrites the

refugee experience by representing the multi-faceted lives of the refugee. No longer is the refugee the desperate victim to be saved by the West, the “passive figures of social scientific data, policy, and ethnographic discourse” (Catherine Nguyen and Fung 3), but a figure of strength, adaptability, and complexity.

Bio:

Eleanor Ty, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and Fulbright Canada alumna, is Professor of English at Wilfrid Laurier University. She has published on life writing, graphic novel, Asian North American, and 18th -Century literature. She is author of *Asianfail: Narratives of Disenchantment and the Model Minority* (U of Illinois P, 2017); *Unfastened: Globality and Asian North American Narratives* (U of Minnesota P, 2010), and *The Politics of the Visible in Asian North American Narratives* (U Toronto P 2004). *Beyond the Icon: Asian American Graphic Narratives* (Ohio State UP, 2022) won the Comics Studies Society’s 2022 Prize for Edited Book Collection.

Rocio G. Davis: *Demons and Life Fragments: Lynda Barry’s Metanarrative Project*

Abstract:

Lynda Barry’s graphic memoir *One Hundred Demons* demonstrates how the graphic narrative “not only patterns the telling, and affects the form of individual autobiography, but that also serves as a cognitive structure for experience” (Feldman 132). Defining her projects as “autobiofictionalography,” Barry chooses to present her life through the (mostly/probably) true experiences of discrete “demons” — the objects, events, or concepts that marked difficult emotional stages of her young life as a biracial Filipino child growing up in San Francisco. Indeed, the first part of each chapter title reads: “Today’s Demon,” followed by a specific subtitle, including: “Head Lice,” “Dancing,” “Common Scents,” “The Aswang,” “Magic,” “Girlness,” among others. This kunstlerroman draws together fragments from her childhood in the context of a self-help project that involves drawing, and therefore controlling, your “demons.” These fragments are linked by and illustrate the issues of identity germane to her Filipino American identity, including race, class, and maternal legacies.

Barry’s project transcends the more traditional illustration-based graphic narrative. Each of her chapters opens with a highly elaborate double-page scrapbook-like collage, again foregrounding the fragments of memory preserved in physical objects (pressed flowers, bits of cloth, ribbons, film tickets, etc). This strategy enables her to demonstrate how distinctive sign systems can intersect and merge to signify meanings at which neither one could arrive alone. The process of memory, necessarily fragmented and episodic, itself is interrogated symbolically through the deployment of these artefacts.

By not only presenting her demons but also inviting readers to participate by “painting their demons,” Barry’s project becomes a multilayered metanarrative process of artistic awareness and maturation. In her dialogue with a community, she proposes this creative strategy for negotiating and managing even those circumstances that appear unchangeable.

Bio:

Rocío G. Davis is Professor of English at the University of Navarra, Spain. Her research interests include Asian North American writing, autobiography, life writing and history, and children’s literature. She has published *Relative Histories: Mediating History in Asian American Family Memoirs* (2011), *Begin Here: Reading Asian North American Autobiographies of Childhood* (2007).

Stella Oh: *Fragmented Memory and Narrative Time in Keum Suk Gendry-Kim's Grass*

Abstract:

Shame and the female body play a central role in the narrative and visual framework of Gendry-Kim's graphic novel *Grass*. It challenges us to reconsider our understanding of history by engaging with shame that disrupts history. Such alternative archives of memory are important in that they articulate exclusions that frame history, documenting stories about home, diaspora, displacement, and their aftereffects from the vantage point of women who are relegated to the haunting shadows left by the legacies of war. The opening chapter of Keum Suk Gendry-Kim's graphic novel, *Grass*, depicts Grandmother Lee Ok-sun's journey and "The Way Home."ⁱⁱ Home is a complicated topic for victims of Japanese military sexual slavery, often referred to as "comfort women." Many of these women were forcibly taken or coerced from their homelands as young girls and unable to return home. The survivors, many of them now in their 90s, are often referred to as grandmothers, *halmonis*, or *lolas*. Writing Granny Lee's experiences as it bleeds across the borders of time and space, Gendry-Kim attempts to retrieve memories from the fractures of history. Memory is framed as an embodied experience, "the old wound,"ⁱⁱⁱ expanding our understanding of historical elisions, obscene violence, and physical and psychic dislocations in the Korean diaspora. How does acknowledging marginalized stories entail a politics of mourning and memory? How do we witness grief and shame and ethically engage with others even in a state of displacement? Is there a "way home?"

Bio:

Stella Oh is Professor of Women's and Gender Studies and Director of the Peace and Justice Program at Loyola Marymount University. Her areas of expertise are Asian American literature, trauma studies, and gender studies. She has published her research in over thirty peer-reviewed academic journals and anthologies and has presented her work at several national and international conferences. Her research on ethics and feminist storytelling aligns with her role as a professor. She regularly teaches courses on narrative optics, human trafficking, and gender justice. She is a member of several academic associations and has served on the Board of the Association for Asian American Studies. Professor Oh's research is informed by and grows out of her training as both a literary critic and a scholar of ethnic and gender studies.

P44: Migrating Lives

V007

Chair: Ernestine Hoegen

Delia Grosu: *The Impossible Reliability: Adriaan van Dis and the Deceptive Aspects of Memory*

Abstract:

There's no falsier friend than memory (Van Dis 624). This is how Dutch author Adriaan van Dis starts his short story *Leugenland* (Land of Lies), in which he meditates on how memories have shaped his Indonesian-Dutch identity. Shifting from his remembrances to his parents', Van Dis recollects the moment when he arrived in the Netherlands as a child, after being born in Indonesia. His family's convoluted past, under the violent sign of colonialism and Japanese occupation during the Second World War, and his complicated present (a child of mixed origins) lead to the construction of a fragmented identity. The author looks at the past and retells it by drawing on memories that are constantly contradicted by an unreliable narrator, leading to a painful conclusion: there was no personal past in Indonesia, only an elasticity

(Van Dis 631) of memory that allows him to create not only his own identity but also a completely new country, a fictive Indonesia.

Drawing on Marianne Hirsch's writings on postmemory and on Frantz Fanon's psychoanalytical approach to colonialism and decolonization, I will show how the past is remembered under the sign of unreliability and fragmentation. The persistence of the painful and violent past leads to a tumultuous present and I argue that this happens because of what Hirsch refers to as postmemories – "experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right" (Hirsch 106-107). These postmemories are the foundation of Van Dis' deceptive recollection of Indonesia and of his own identity.

Bio:

Delia Grosu is a PhD Student at the University of Bucharest. Her research focuses on the relationship between postmemory, trauma, and Dutch-language postcolonial literature. She is currently a Teaching Assistant at the Dutch Studies Department, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures.

Shannon Sandford: *Tumbling, Troubling, Settling, Uprooting: The Ongoing Work of Making Oneself 'at Home' in Australian Graphic Narratives*

Abstract:

Comics and graphic narratives in Australia are booming, and on the move. From Tommy McRae – the first and most-famous First Nations cartoonist – to Livingston Hopkins – the artist responsible for introducing White Australia sentiments to early comics – the bespoke art of Australian comics has always engaged with subjects of citizenship, displacement, colonialism, translation, statelessness, and territorialisation. As a new vanguard of artists explore transnationalism from their own perspectives as second and third generation migrants, questions arise around the potential of the graphic medium to tell migration stories in ways that transcend language and literary boundaries and reflect important shifts in the cultural understanding of migrant identities.

Focusing on how comics may represent the liminality, slippages, and fragmentation of displacement, this paper thinks through the ways in which diasporic artists portray their ancestral history and navigate the ongoing work of making oneself 'at home' in Australia. Drawing on Life Narrative studies, cultural studies and transnational literary studies, this paper considers a broad cross-section of contemporary Australian graphic life narratives which foreground the migrant experience from the perspective of second and third generation artists, including Josh Santospirito's *Shallow*, Matt Huynh's *MA*, Lee Lai's *Stone Fruit*, and Rachel Ang's *Swimsuit*. Grounded in these primary texts, this paper aims to explore how comics might operate as a mode of inquiry to resist and reframe the multicultural success story and notions of the 'ideal immigrant' through the everyday, ongoing textures of life. Ultimately, it asks how diasporic artists negotiate, translate, and reinscribe global mobility in the graphic form and considers the role of comics in the construction and interpretation of migration stories in modern Australia.

Bio:

Dr Shannon Sandford is a Lecturer in Literary Studies at Griffith University, Queensland. Her primary research interest is in marginal and invisible subjects of self-representation in comics, graphic narratives, and digital media and culture. Shannon is affiliated with The Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research and The Life Narrative Lab. Her research has been published in *New Writing*, *TEXT*, *Textual Practice*, *Image & Narrative*, and the *Journal of Australian*

Studies. Her upcoming academic book, *Digital and In/Visible Lives in Autobiographical Webcomics*, will be published in Bloomsbury's *New Directions in Life Narrative* series in 2025.

Hedy Law: *Lamenting Snapshots of a Life: Muk' yu ge and Fragments of Chinese Immigrant's Lives in Twentieth-Century North America*

Abstract:

This paper argues that muk' yu ge (Wooden Fish Song)—a genre of folk songs sung in Taishanese or Cantonese Chinese dialects in the first-person singular on the life of Chinese immigrants in North America—functions as auto/biographical life writing. Typically sung in Taishanese, a dialect of Cantonese in the Canton region, the lyrics of these rarely researched songs were published as muk'yu shu (Wooden Fish Books) in Guangdong and Hong Kong in the first half of the twentieth century. Hundreds were brought by Chinese migrants or shipped as merchandise to North America on steam vessels. I examine two muk' yu ge in this paper. The first one, "Ten Thoughts" (ca. 1910–1949) by an anonymous author, documents ten snapshots of a Chinese female's lament. The University of British Columbia Library preserves a booklet with the song lyrics. Its melody—like many genres of folk songs and Cantonese opera—is expected to come from the tone language of Cantonese. Written by an anonymous author, probably a poor male writer who wrote these texts for a living in Guangdong, these booklets were sold for domestic consumption, probably sung by a woman with sufficient literacy to read the lyrics for other women in the household. Fragments of Chinese women's lives were shared through domestic reading and singing practices among Cantonese-speaking females in Canada. The second one, "Uncle Ng Comes to Gold Mountain," was a lament by Ng Sheung Chi (1910–2002) presenting an autobiographical account of his journey from Guangdong to Hong Kong to New York City. An analysis of the lyrics alongside the recording shows how rhyme, rhythm, and melody make his fragmented life musically coherent. These two laments show the interlocked oral-and-print culture circulated life narrative fragments among twentieth-century North American Chinese communities, disclosing singing and listening as autobiographical acts (300 words)

Bio:

Hedy Law is an Associate Professor of Musicology at the University of British Columbia. She received her Ph.D. in Music Theory and History at the University of Chicago. She has published in the *Journal of Musicology*, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, the *Opera Quarterly*, *Musique et Geste en France: De Lully à la Révolution*, the *Oxford Handbook of Music and Disability Studies*, the *Oxford Handbook of Music and Censorship*, the *Oxford Handbook on Music and the Body*, and the collection of essays *Noises, Audition, Aurality: History of the Sonic Worlds in Europe, 1500–1918*. Her book, *Music, Pantomime, and Enlightenment France*, was published by Boydell in 2020. Her secondary research interest is Cantonese music, understood as genres of songs with Cantonese lyrics. Since 2020, she has taught the course "Cantonese Music" at the University of British Columbia, emphasizing lexical tones, the sociolinguistic properties of the Cantonese language, and Cantonese music in Canada.

P45: Palestinian Fragments

V008

Chair: Gunnþórunn Guðmundsdóttir

Alex Winder: *Capturing Palestine's 'Robin Hood': Coherence and Fragmentation in Life Narratives of Abu Jildeh*

Abstract:

In 1933, Abu Jildeh, a small-time local outlaw from Palestine's Jordan Valley, emerged as a nationally- (and internationally-) known bandit figure. His actions—killing a policeman and evading the ensuing manhunt for nearly a year—contributed to his fame, but so did media coverage of his exploits, real and imagined. Newspapers gave near daily coverage to Abu Jildeh, ranging from dutiful reproductions of police statements to wild speculation, while Abu Jildeh himself sent personalized photographs to the press. He also received fictionalized treatments in an illustrated pamphlet by Palestinian journalist Hilmi Abu Sha'ban and an issue of the Beirut-based magazine *al-Lata'if al-'Asriyya* (Modern Wit). To some, Abu Jildeh symbolized Palestinian defiance of Britain's post-World War I rule over Palestine; authorities and other detractors saw him as a ruffian with no political significance.

After his capture and execution, Abu Jildeh was memorialized in Arabic-language Palestinian folk poetry. In a kind of *antonomasia*, his name became shorthand for Arab criminality in Hebrew-language Israeli fiction and political discourse in the second half of the twentieth century. In 2007 his exploits were novelized by the Gazan poet Harun Hashim Rashid and in 2017 a historical marker was erected in Abu Jildeh's hometown; around the same time, the website *abujildeh.com* was launched, amassing a range of sources on the outlaw.

My paper considers the possibilities and impossibilities of uniting these fragments to produce a coherent life narrative of Abu Jildeh. It examines the different truth regimes (criminological, journalistic, nationalistic, and poetic) that shaped the production of various sources, and ponders the historian/biographer's work of reconciling them into a single whole. Further, it argues that the fragmentary and conflicting sources on Abu Jildeh reflect Palestine's modern history, in which looting, displacement, and destruction have fractured the land, the body politic, and the archive.

Bio:

Alex Winder is visiting assistant professor of Middle East Studies at Brown University and editor of the *Jerusalem Quarterly*. He edited, annotated, and introduced *Between Jaffa and Mount Hebron: The Diary of Muhammad 'Abd al-Hadi al-Shrouf, 1943–1962*, the diaries of a Palestinian villager and policeman, published in Arabic by the Institute for Palestine Studies in 2016. He is a historian of twentieth-century Palestine, with interests in diaries and life-writing, policing and lawbreaking, and communal justice. His work has appeared in *a|b: Auto/Biography Studies*, *AlMuntaqa*, *Biography*, the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, and *Radical History Review*, in addition to a number of edited volumes.

Amir Nassar: *Palestinian Return Memoirs: Homeland in Fragments*

Abstract:

This paper explores the temporal dimensions of physical return to Palestine through an analysis of memoirs by three prominent Palestinian writers: Edward Said's *Out of Place* (1999), Mourid Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah* (2000), and Fawaz Turki's *Exile's Return* (1994). The concept of "return" in this context encapsulates the concrete efforts of exiles and refugees to reclaim their homeland following the 1948 expulsion. However, rather than focusing solely on the act of return, this study delves into the intricate ways these memoirists grapple with various forms of fragmentation—be it in reality or identity—as they navigate and resolve the complexities associated with returning home. Inspired by insights on the autobiographical fragment as a lens to address discontinuities and ruptures, the research emphasizes how these writers employ fragmented narrative structures to articulate their

experiences. The memoirs become a medium through which the authors navigate the fragmented aspects of their personal and collective lives, particularly within the context of the Nakba of 1948. The paper underscores the role of memory, both incomplete and fragmented, in shaping the narratives of return. It examines how the memoirists use narrative techniques to either reflect this fragmentation or create cohesive stories out of fractured pasts. In doing so, the study positions the memoirs of Said, Barghouti, and Turki as unique contributions to the broader discourse on life writing within the theme of fragmented lives. By focusing on fragmented narrative, identity, and pasts within Palestinian memoirs, this research aims to provide new insights into how life writing engages with the complexities of fragmented existence. It contributes to the conference theme by exploring how these authors negotiate and articulate the challenges posed by fragmented lives, demonstrating the unique capacity of life writing to navigate and make sense of diverse forms of fragmentation.

Bio:

Amir Nassar earned his BA in English Literature and Political Science and later completed an MA in English Literature from Tel Aviv University. His dissertation focuses on the narratives of Palestinian return memoirs, analyzing the written accounts of figures like Edward Said, Mourid Barghouti, and Fawaz Turki as they returned to their homeland after enduring decades-long exile. Amir possesses a diverse range of intellectual interests, spanning literature, anthropology, philosophy, post-modernism, and a specific focus on personal essays, memoirs, and life writing. Alongside Amir Marshi, he co-authored the article "The Fences of the Israeli University and the Palestinian Intellectual" featured in *Inside the Leviathan: Palestinian Experiences in Israeli Universities* (Van Leer, 2022). This collaborative work sheds light on the challenges faced by Palestinian intellectuals in Israeli academic settings. Amir's most recent contribution is the essay "Out of Place: The Search for the Multifaceted Identities of Edward Said" published in the online magazine *Fus7a*.

P46: The Fragment in Contemporary Poetry

V107

Chair: Fabio Ramasso

Helen Bain: *'I shall never get out of this!' Vorticism, Unheard Voices, and the Reconstitution of Sylvia Plath*

Abstract:

My research question asks whether it is possible to re-present a subject (Sylvia Plath) whose mythology has calcified in popular culture. The cultural icon is typically whole and consistent. It is identified by specific tropes or images that do not alter; it is depersonalised and two-dimensional. Its purpose is to reflect whatever that culture requires from it: the icon is put to work. How can we break up this un-real representation of coherence and instead splinter the subject back into authenticity? Conventional biography commits to a narrative that operates as a cohesive whole, but it struggles to integrate one single identity within that form. Its (traditional) medium is arguably unrepresentative of life. Could life writing offer an alternative medium of deliberate fragmentation? In the early twentieth century, Wyndham Lewis declared: 'In order to live you must remain broken up.' Where Woolfian modernism prioritised interiority - a seemingly fragmented consciousness nonetheless neatly contained within a subjective self - Lewis's abstract Vorticism prioritised the external 'self': a papier-maché carapace constructed from multiple (and contradictory) viewpoints of others. My paper contends that identity is necessarily fragmented, multifarious, and built into a semblance of a whole - not by our selves but by the perspective of others. Could a subject

rendered inauthentic by the status of cultural icon be reconstituted by the testimony of previously unheard or marginalised voices?

To illustrate this argument I will explore conflicting perspectives on Plath by three of her less-explored contemporaries: her cleaning woman, the town midwife, and a local bell-ringer. Through giving these (and other) subjective, autobiographical voices a platform, a new subject emerges: a disjointed abstract of many varied impressions which, Cubist-like, collide to create one - clashing but dazzling - kaleidoscopic self.

Bio:

Helen Bain is a fourth-year PhD research candidate in Creative Writing at King's College, London, researching Sylvia Plath's life and work in Devon from 1961 to 1962. She has MAs in Modern & Contemporary Literature and Creative Writing from Birkbeck, University of London. She won the 2021 Malcolm Bradbury Award from the British Association of American Studies and has been on emerging writers' programmes for the London Library (2020-21) and the Genesis Foundation (2022-23). In 2023 her ongoing creative/critical study of Plath was shortlisted for the Lucy Cavendish Fiction Prize.

Ana Barroso: *The Fragmented Self and Creativity: Confluences of Sylvia Plath's Poetry and Jane Eyre's Portraits*

Abstract:

Our presentation considers Sylvia Plath's poem "Lady Lazarus" and Janieta Eyre's photographic self-portrait series with the same title, whose artistic work is intrinsically linked to the ideas of identity, loss, fragmentation and revelation. Plath's poem explores these ideas through the staged experience of death, never as a final stage of life, but as a revelation of an emotional, creative and liberating inner energy. Thus, death is not a mere physical constraint but becomes a state to celebrate the possibility of fragmentation and alterity, and reborn with an ecstatic otherness, multiple and excessive. Her intimate life narrative(s) become a set of complex relations with herself, her work and the reader.

Eyre's artistic process becomes a work of multiple exposures of the Self and the "Lady Lazarus" series contains many of the elements that are recurrent in Plath's poetry. The Self becomes the subject of the portraits and the creation of radical alterity imagery that is presented as doubles or triplets, manipulating the conventions of self-portrait and creating compositions that are both experimental and bizarre. Eyre's imagery blends real and fiction, allowing the subject to express herself through alternative selves. The costumes, accessories, make-up and setting become a composition that enables Eyre to express an artistic freedom free of social and moral constraints and playfully engage the viewer in her own imaginary identities.

The final purpose of our presentation is to correlate the textual to the visual through transformation and death as the trope of multiple fictional identities that illuminate the condition of being multilayered both artists embrace in their creative works.

Bio:

Ana Barroso is a researcher at CEAUL/ULICES (University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies) working in the fields of arts, cinema and literature. She regularly participates in international conferences and publishes her articles in national and international journals, magazines and books. She is also a video artist and her works have been screened in art galleries, museums, film festivals and building facades. She is the recipient of 4 international awards (2010, USA; 2013, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Slovenia; 2018, Italy).

Shira Stav: *Poetic Memoirs: Fragmented Narratives in Contemporary Poetry*

Abstract:

Poetry of the last three decades shows a clear turn towards personal narratives and auto/biographical writing. Prominent poetic works are in fact a form of Life-Writing, which can be defined as a sub-genre: The Poetic Memoir. Scholarly inquiry into the “era of the memoir” (such as Couser 2012; de Bres 2021; Rak 2013; Yagoda 2010; Zwerdling 2017) has dealt almost solely with prose works. I aim to widen the field of discussion to poetry, and to identify and define the poetic memoir’s own characteristics, which call for description, conceptualization, and interpretation.

Poetic memoirs have a different poetics than prose memoirs. Although they share some similarities – in their personal narrative, based on private experience and memories, in their positioning on the seam between the personal and the public and in their reflection on the act of writing - but unlike them, these are texts that demonstrate a deep awareness of form, syntax, ambiguity, sound and rhythm. The breaking of the lines, the division into stanzas or fragments and the overall structural design often work against linear and narrative principles, and there is a constant negotiation between the said and the unsaid. Poetic memoirs are a charged arena of tension between the aesthetics and the documentation of the experience. This tension complicates the narrative and the cohesion of the 'I' that represents the poetic speaker.

My research focuses on contemporary Hebrew poetry. I will discuss the fragmentary nature of the poetic memoir and the way it complicates the narrative. Poetic memoirs do not employ a mimetic representation of reality and does not pretend to present a narrative claiming truth. Instead, they reveal the processes of choice between what can be known and what remains unknown, drawing attention to the seams and the gaps, and to the act of excluding or suppressing some of the details from the text, which leads to constantly questioning the framing of 'facts' and narratives. Poetic memoirs deviate both from autobiographical conventions and from norms of lyric poetry.

Bio:

Dr. Shira Stav is a scholar of Hebrew and comparative literature, a poet, a translator, and a literary critic. She is a senior lecturer in the department of Hebrew literature at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. Her research areas are contemporary poetry and fiction, life writing, and feminist studies. She is the author of *Reconstructing Daddy: Fathers and Daughters in Modern Hebrew Poetry* (Dvir 2014); *The Return of the Absent Father: A New Reading of a chain of Stories from the Babylonian Talmud* (Penn press 2022, together with Haim Weiss); and many journal articles.

P47: Female Worlds

V108

Chair: Kimberly Hall

Nicole Stamant: *The Hospitality of Culinary Memoir* **Withdrawn**

Abstract:

~~What can a feminist approach to hospitality, when applied to life writing, do? Described by the OED as “The act or practice of being hospitable; the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers, with liberality and goodwill,” hospitality seems benign. And, as Maurice Hamington suggests, “hospitality has been rendered a vacuous instrument of industry that offers the appearance of welcoming and goodwill to customers from paid employees with- out challenging underlying economic structures” (23). In this paper, I argue~~

that twentieth-century women's memoirs pose a particular and pointed challenge to such an innocuous and anodyne understanding of hospitality, instead presenting the relationship between host(ess) and guest in nuanced and complicated ways through the use of the culinary memoir. If, as Eva Karpinski has argued and the theme of this conference posits, "the autobiographical fragment is uniquely suited to address the discontinuities and ruptures of history, experience, and memory," I suggest that recipes and culinary memory materialize those fragments in crucial ways, bringing together host and guest. Reading culinary life writing through the lens of hospitality exposes how food-based and frequently fragmented memory exposes the subtle power of hospitality. In so doing, memoirists from across the twentieth century demand that readers think more critically about the role of foodways and hospitality, especially as they braid together race, gender, inheritance, and history. Building upon theorizations of hospitality from Jaques Derrida and of the hostess from Tracy McNulty, I argue that a) hospitality is performative, and b) the performativity of hospitality is exemplified within culinary memoir. The stakes of such a consideration underscore that culinary memoir should be neither minimized nor seen as frivolous, as such an approach remarginalizes women and gender minorities as well as people for whom foodways works to maintain national, cultural, racial, ethnic, and familial identity.

Bio:

Nicole Stamant, Associate Professor of English at Agnes Scott College, in Decatur, Georgia, specializes in Life Writing Studies and American Literature. She is the author of *Memoirs of Race, Color, and Belonging* (Routledge, 2022) and *Serial Memoir: Archiving American Lives* (Palgrave, 2014), along with numerous journal articles. She has recently contributed to the edited collections *Consumption and the Literary Cookbook* (2020), *American Literature in Transition: 1970-1980* (2018) and *The Postcolonial Subject in Transit: Migration, Borders, and Subjectivity in African Diaspora Literature* (2018). Her next project considers hospitality in culinary memoir.

Aneta Ostaszewska: *Fragmentary Life in Academia? The Auto/Bio/Ethnography about Doing Research in and about Academia*

Abstract:

My presentation is an example of what Sara Ahmed following Audre Lorde called "sweaty concepts"—a metaphor for intellectual work, the effort to make thoughts and the process of transforming them into words visible, so that they can be communicated to others. So, my aim is to reflect on my ongoing doubts and questions that have emerged due to the research project about women in academia, and which concerns the idea of the research situation as auto/biographical experience.

I want to elaborate the topic of research impact on the researcher's biography. In doing so I refer to Liz Stanley's term "the auto/biographical I". Stanley asks the question of the impact of personal experiences on research, I want to pose the opposite question: what is the impact of research on the researcher's biography? My argument is that research work becomes/is a part of researcher's biographical experience. In my situation, research work became a transformative experience that led to the reflection on being a feminist in the academia.

Referring to auto/biography and autoethnography I want to reflect on how being a feminist researcher marked my research and biographical experience. My questions are: How does my research affect the trajectory of my biography? What has happened to me during and after research? What is the story of my research experiences that I tell myself? Am I living

a fragmented life, as being both an Insider and an Outsider in the academia? For me, as a woman researcher in the patriarchally dominated institution, conducting research in and about academia reveals or even deepens my alienation but also frees my story as an Insider and at the same time Outsider in the academia. Negotiating my position within academia becomes an inevitable part of my biography whilst writing about it is a tool for structuring my (fragmented) experience.

Bio:

Aneta Ostaszewska —a sociologist and pedagogue, working as an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences and Resocialization of the University of Warsaw; she is the head of the Centre for Women’s and Gender Research at the University of Warsaw. Her research interests are focused mainly on auto/biography, women’s studies and gender inequality. Later in 2023 her book “Becoming bell hooks. A story about the self-empowerment of a Black girl who became a feminist” will be published by the Publishing House of the University of Warsaw (WUW).

Taryn Tavener-Smith: *Writing a Life from Fragments: Interweaving Fragmented Memories to Establish Identity in Life Writing*

Abstract:

Scholar Janet Malcolm (2010) acknowledges the unreliable nature of memory, which invariably falters, offering merely a glimmer or a hint about a subject, while showing “nothing sharply or clearly” to the recaller, attempting to recollect experiences. To this end, she argues for the necessity of inventing oneself and own identity when writing a life. It is through this undertaking that we utilise memory to shape our identities by reflecting on the past, and, perhaps more poignantly, by accumulating these fragmentary memories to relate stories about our lives. As part of my PhD project, I am writing a biographical memoir about a South African subject who contributed to the film industry between 1964 until his death in 2019. The project experiments with the boundaries of form by applying a fragmented narrative structure comprising ‘biography vignettes’ and ‘memoir vignettes’ to mimic the faltering of memory while addressing issues pertaining to fragmented identities reconstructed from fallible memories. In this paper, I argue for the use of fragmented narratives to mimic the infallibility of the way in which memory functions through a temporally fragmented narrative structure.

Bio:

Taryn Tavener-Smith is reading towards a part time PhD in English Studies in the Department of Literature and Languages at the University of Stirling. She is also a Visiting Doctoral Student in the Oxford Centre for Life Writing at the University of Oxford’s Wolfson College (<https://oclw.web.ox.ac.uk/people/taryn-tavener-smith>). Taryn holds a BA (Honours) and Master’s degree in English Literature from the University of Johannesburg. Her doctoral research considers the liminality of subjects in non-fiction life writing while exploring the boundaries of liminal identities within the context of South African film. She holds an affinity for the multidisciplinary application of Victor Turner’s Theory of Liminality, which she utilised as the theoretical underpinning of her dissertation exploring the Gothic elements present in contemporary British fiction. Taryn is an avid contributor to the University of Stellenbosch’s Encyclopaedia of South African Theatre, Film, Media, and Performance (ESAT). Her research profile can be viewed here: <https://bucksnew.academia.edu/TarynTavenerSmith>

P48: Fragments in US Writing

V103

Chair: Sergio Barcellos

Jeremy D. Popkin: *The Well-Digger's Tale: A Fragmented Life on the American Frontier*

Abstract:

By the time John Robert Shaw (1761-1813) wrote what was probably the first autobiographical narrative published in the American West in 1807, he could honestly say that he was a man of fragments. In pursuing his profession of well-digger, he boasted, "I have lost no less than one eye, four fingers, one thumb and seven toes," and his Narrative of the Life and Travels of John Robert Shaw, the Well-Digger, featured a woodcut of him lying senseless on the ground after one of the innumerable accidents he had survived. The story of the physical fragmentation of his body was just one of the many tangled threads in Shaw's tale of the "series of errors and follies" that made up his experiences. Born in England in 1761, he had been a soldier in the British army during the American War of Independence and a witness of war crimes, and then a prisoner of war who managed to escape and then enlist in the American forces. Deciding to stay in the United States after the peace, he gravitated to the country's frontier territories, in an odyssey punctuated by drinking bouts that makes his book one of the earliest American addiction memoirs.

After doing a variety of odd jobs, Shaw taught himself to blast wells using black powder and eventually settled in central Kentucky, the first state created west of the Appalachian Mountains. He did business with the most distinguished residents of Lexington, Kentucky, the first major city in the West, and engaged in fisticuffs with its other working-class toughs. An illustration in his memoir indicates that he became a slaveowner. His life continued to be a story of contradictions: between episodes in which he "blew himself up," he went on drinking bouts, usually followed by periods of intense religious repentance, one of which inspired him to write his memoir, even though he suspected that its publication might be "one of the greatest errors in the whole catalogue" of his adventures.

Richard Wade, a leading historian of the American West, has called Shaw's story "the only good firsthand account of wage-earning life in frontier towns... a historical document of considerable importance." Although Shaw himself called his story "the production of a man almost totally illiterate," he was in fact a man who took pride in his way with words; his narrative included a number of verses of his own composition. Long before American poet Walt Whitman proclaimed that "I contain multitudes," Shaw's fragmented tale of the life of a soldier, a brawler, an alcoholic, a working man, and a repentant sinner provided a classic demonstration of the ways in which life narrative enabled that most American of accomplishments: self-invention.

Bio:

Jeremy Popkin is the William T. Bryan Professor of history at the University of Kentucky (USA). His publications on life-writing include *History, Historians and Autobiography* (2005), *Zelda Popkin: The Life and Times of an American Jewish Woman Writer* (2023) and numerous articles. He has also written on the history of the French and Haitian Revolutions.

Sandra S. Hughes: *'These Fragments I have Shored Against My Ruins': The Final Writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne*

Abstract:

In "Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man," Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote: "I am possessed . . . with the thought that I have never yet discovered the real secret of my powers

. . . and for want of perhaps one fortunate idea, I am to die 'Unwept, unhonored, and unsung...'" (XI: 315). During the final decade of his life (1854-64), Hawthorne served as U.S. Consul in Liverpool, lived for a time in Italy where he wrote *The Marble Faun* (1860), and resettled in Concord hoping to write one last great romance. His family had been left almost in fragments with his wife's illness and his daughter's near death from malaria in Rome. He had left pieces of himself in Italy and England, and returned home to find his own country on the verge of a fragmentation so disturbing that it disrupted his writing because "this terrible war will not let us think of anything but itself" (XVIII: 468). Nonetheless, he tried four times to produce a work that would extend his claim to literary immortality. "The Ancestral Footstep," "Dr. Grimshawe's Secret," Septimius Felton, and *The Dolliver Romance* were all left as fragments at the time of his death. The first manuscript was filled with "hundreds and hundreds of pages . . . with corrections, interpolations, exclamations of frustration, and unanswerable questions as to plot, characterization, and motivation" (Miller 488). The last of the uncompleted manuscripts was placed on the author's coffin (XVIII: 620). Though he had sought with *Dolliver* to end "a life of much smolder and scanty fire in a blaze of glory" (641), of his last works he could only say "These fragments I have shored against my ruins." (Eliot)

Bio:

Sandra S. Hughes is a Professor of American Literature at Western Kentucky University who specializes in Poe and Hawthorne. A past president and current executive board member of the Nathaniel Hawthorne Society and a ten-year member of the editorial board of *The Edgar Allan Poe Review*, she has published eight articles on Poe's and/or Hawthorne's life and writing in journals and collections, and has delivered papers on them in seven countries. She also organized a conference in Japan that brought together the International Hawthorne Society, the International Poe Studies Association, the Nathaniel Hawthorne Society of Japan, and the Poe Society of Japan. In addition to her work on Poe and Hawthorne, she has published articles on the lives and writings of Henry James and Louisa May Alcott. Her current work focuses on Hawthorne's readings on Zoroastrianism and their influence on his autobiographical fiction.

Biljana Oklopcic: *Memory and the Fragmented (Auto)Biographical Self in Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire*

Abstract:

This paper attempts to show the correlation between memory, fragmented self, and life writing in Tennessee Williams's play *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) by looking at (1) the individual process of remembering and recollecting as well as (2) the collective memorialization of the American South myth as experienced by the play's characters and Williams himself. Beginning with the assumption that the individual and collective process of memorialization is in the play brought into being by the protagonists' (Blanche DuBois, Stella Kowalski, Stanley Kowalski, and Harold, Mitch, Mitchell) snapshots of episodic memory, the paper further argues that those snapshots are essentially (auto)biographical. Being a "multimodal and complex form of encoding, remembering and reliving the context and experiences of one's own biography" (Lengen et al. 21),¹ autobiographical memory "encompasses both specific episodic and conceptual self-related information" and "has been intimately linked with the self and identity" (El Haj et al. 37).² Those specific episodic and self-related fragmented experiences are, as the paper asserts, visible not only in the characters' fictional biographies but, what is more important, in the biographies of the playwright, his mother Edwina, and his sister Rose whose memories are to an extent identified as Blanche's.

The paper ends by suggesting that the fragmented authorial and fictional selves in *A Streetcar Named Desire* can be ascribed not only to autobiographical memories but also to the collective and cultural memory of the American South myth whose unsustainability in the modern South has been confirmed by both Tennessee Williams and his fictional double Blanche DuBois. Key words: autobiographical memory, episodic memory, collective memory, fragmentation, Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Bio:

Biljana Oklopčić is Professor (of American literature) at the Department of English of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Osijek, Croatia. She specializes in literature of the American South, American Modernism, popular culture, popular fiction, and stereotypes in literature and culture. She is the author of *Faulkner and the Native Keystone: Reading (Beyond) the American South* (Springer, 2014), *Myth and Stereotype in William Faulkner's Works* (FFOS Publishing, 2021), and the co-author of *Memory and Identity in Modern and Postmodern American Literature* (Springer, 2022). As a 2008-2009 postdoctoral Fulbright scholar at the UNC at Chapel Hill, she was doing research on Southern men stereotypes in William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha fiction. After the return to her home institution, she has continued to pursue her scholarly interests as a Georg Eckert Institute, John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, and Erasmus grantee. She has taken part in the projects *The Rise of City Cultures in Central Europe* and *The European Context of Croatian Popular Literature*.

14.30-15 Coffee
Veröld Ground Floor

15-16.30 Parallel Sessions:
P49: Fragmentation and Autotheory
V023

Chair: Astrid Joutseno/Swan

Eva C. Karpinski: *The Biographical Fragmentarium: Gleaning Lives from Footnotes*

Abstract:

The focus of my presentation is biography as an object that I want to approach from an unusual angle, by examining biographical footnotes (or endnotes, increasingly preferred as a referencing convention). In flipping this figure-ground arrangement, that is, obscuring what we normally see as a primary object and highlighting what we tend to ignore as its secondary background, I can glean the fragmentary "life" that happens in the footnotes—the biographer's own life and many marginal lives of people who have made an appearance in the biographee's story or have been instrumental in the making of the biography. As Anthony Grafton's witty history of this paratextual device shows, reading footnotes can be both revealing and rewarding. In fact, they contain traces of textualities comprised of information, situations, events, intertexts, relationships, and spatial and temporal footprints. In addition to their traditional function of referencing and providing evidence of scholarship, they reveal an array of sources that point to the biographer's chosen research techniques ranging from interviews (in-person or available on media) to archives (public and personal) and letters (found in the fonds or shared with the biographer). Footnotes acknowledge a constellation of people around the biographee, with whom the biographer has come in touch, and allow us to reconstruct actions involved in crafting a biography. By telling the story of the biographer's methodology and research process, footnotes document a life invested in the project. To

illustrate the hermeneutics of biographical footnotes, I will draw on two texts: Rosemary Sullivan's feminist biography of Elizabeth Smart, *By Heart* (which extensively relies on discursive endnotes), and Dubravka Ugresic's bio-metafiction *Fox* (which fleshes out the lives of "minor" characters who exist as footnotes in the biographies of famous others).

Bio:

Eva C. Karpinski is an Associate Professor in the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at York University in Toronto, where she teaches feminist theory, life writing, and translation studies. She has published over 40 articles and book chapters. She is the author of *Borrowed Tongues: Life Writing, Migration, and Translation* and co-author of *Life Writing Outside the Lines: Gender and Genre in the Americas* (2020) and *Translation, Semiotics, and Feminism: Selected Writings of Barbara Godard* (2022). Her most recent co-edited collection is *Adaptation and Beyond: Hybrid Transtextualities* (Routledge 2023). She is Associate Editor of *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*.

Sidonie Smith and **Julia Watson**: *Shoring Up Fragments? Autotheory, Autofiction, and New Formations*

Abstract:

The field of life writing studies has, in this century, become increasingly robust and wide-ranging, but also fragmented into many theoretical approaches focused on its widely diverse modes. But, in our view, a unified theory of the projects and goals of life writing studies is neither viable nor desirable. Rather, life narrative is both energized and fractured by the multiplicity of standpoints scholars and students bring in responding to the locations and positions of readers and the history of the field. This is a healthy disagreement about both what defines a life narrative genre and how genres overlap and stir up clashing expectations within a single work or constellation of works.

The forthcoming third edition of our book, entitled *Reading Autobiography Now: An Updated Guide for Interpreting Life Narrative* (University of Minnesota Press 2024), engages with both this fragmentation of the field and aspects of hybridity in many genres of life narrative that may seem "fragmentary." Our talk will focus on a few emergent narrative genres that are invoked as new formations: autotheory, autofiction, autoethnography, and (in Europe) autosociobiography. While these generic terms are characterized by their proponents as metatheoretical, interdisciplinary, and transnational, on closer examination it is clear that they incorporate pieces of argumentation from varied theoretical sources while raising important questions about the aesthetic, sociocultural, and geopolitical uses and stakes of autobiographical acts and practices. We will briefly discuss these formations, then turn to an example, likely from the autobiographically-informed narratives of Annie Ernaux, which fracture narrative arcs, voices, temporalities, and autobiographical "I"s in their provocative presentations of segments of a life troubled by and troubling received notions of memory.

Bios:

Sidonie Smith is the Lorna G. Goodison Distinguished University Professor Emerita of English and Women's Studies at the University of Michigan, and past-president of the Modern Language Association of America in 2010. She has published fourteen books, including: *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography* (1987); *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body* (1993); and *Moving Lives: Women's Twentieth Century Travel Narratives* (2001). With Kay Schaffer, she co-authored *Human Rights and Narrated Lives* (2004). In 2015, she published *Manifesto for the Humanities: Transforming Doctoral Education in Good Enough Times* (open access).

Julia Watson is Academy Professor Emerita of Comparative Studies, a former Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences, and a Core Faculty member of Project Narrative at The Ohio State University. She has published over thirty essays, recently on particular graphic memoirists, autoethnography, and a pandemic visual diary. Together, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have co-authored two books: *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (2nd ed., 2010) and *Life Writing in the Long Run: A Smith & Watson Autobiography Studies Reader*, with collaborative and solo essays over a quarter-century (2017, available in open access). They have co-edited five collections: *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography* (1992); *Getting a Life: Everyday Uses of Autobiography* (1996); *Women, Autobiography, Theory* (1998); *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance* (2001); and *Before They Could Vote: American Women's Autobiographical Writing, 1819-1919* (2006). Smith and Watson have also co-authored several essays, most recently on American life narratives of "reckoning," as well as ones on testimony, online life narrative, and archives. Both have lectured and taught abroad in numerous countries, have published creative work, and are at work on more.

P50: Listening to the Unravelling Mind: Mental Illness in Radio Life Writing
V007

Chair: Terri Tomsy

Inge Arteel: *Voicing Hallucinatory Minds: The (Re)Presentation of Madness in Ursula Krechel's Radio Play Im Ohrensaal*

Abstract:

Several works of German author Ursula Krechel originate in her historical interest in the biographies of women authors. In her radio plays in particular, she investigates the challenges and constraints women authors had to deal with in specific historical situations. Krechel uses the medium of the radio to reflect on the (im)possibility to give voice to those authors, making use of texts by these others themselves and reworking the genre of radio drama into a voice and sound-based piece of radio art. *Im Ohrensaal* (1995), the radio play at the centre of my paper, takes the life of surrealist author, visual artist and psychiatric patient Unica Zürn (1916-1970) as its starting point. Krechel conceives this radio play as a montage of the declamation of written texts, vocal sound performance and a collage of dissonant mechanical sounds. For the textual basis she uses excerpts from Zürn's autobiographical texts that address both her own experience in the psychiatric ward and the experiences of her fellow women inmates, as well as quotes from psychiatric reports. The vocal sound performance aims at a more visceral presentation of mental distress, whereas the mechanical soundscape amplifies the hallucinatory imagination and renders it as an acoustic imagination rather than in its visual dimension usually associated with hallucinatory processes. My analysis will focus on how the tensions and interactions between sane and insane minds, single and shared experience, and creative authorship and objectifying discourse are acoustically staged. This analysis is informed by two questions: how does this radio play rework the biographical portrait of a single women author into an example of life writing that opens the single voice into a plurality of voices; and how does this specific reworking relate to potential pitfalls of the stereotypical representation of (female) madness?

Bio:

Inge Arteel is Professor of Literature in German at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Her research focuses on post-1945 and contemporary Austrian literature and drama – with a particular interest in neo-avant-garde authors and playwrights –, on the radio play and performance

studies. Recent co-edited volumes include, with Silke Felber and Cornelis van der Haven, Susanne Kennedy. *Reanimating the Theatre* (Narr Francke Attempto 2023) and, with Eleonore De Felip, *Fragen zum Lyrischen in Friederike Mayröckers Poesie* (Metzler 2020).

Lisa van Acker: *A Dying Mind: Embodied Cognition in David Rudkin's Radio Play The Haunting of Mahler*

Abstract:

In radio studies, there is the widespread idea of the radio play as 'theatre in the mind' and of its fictional mind as 'disembodied'. These views stem from early twentieth-century notions of cognition as interiorization, epitomised by the 'madness' trope in radio drama. Recent cognitive studies, however, challenge the confinement of cognition to the head, emphasizing its distribution across brain, body, and world. This paper aims to extend these insights to radio life writing, proposing a critical reevaluation of the 'disembodied mind' in David Rudkin's 1994 biographical radio play *The Haunting of Mahler*, which revolves around the dying composer Gustav Mahler.

Rudkin takes Mahler's last days as a starting point for the radio play, which is set in 1911 and follows the composer during his final harrowing voyage home, physically and psychically struggling to finish his Tenth Symphony. The radio play offers an imagined insight into Mahler's mind; being bed-ridden with a bacterial disease, and with a paralyzing fixation on death, the composer is haunted by the mocking spectre of Death itself. Refusing to die before his final triumph, his mind slips in a hallucinatory state, teeming with voices, fractured memories, and obsessively repeating fragmented harmonies.

Informed by cognitive theory, this paper explores how the fictional mind in Rudkin's radio play is fundamentally anchored in the character's body, despite the absence of a visual stage. More particularly, it examines the presentation of cognition via textual (e.g. direct discourse and inner monologue) and auditory (e.g. sound and voice) strategies that support the character's 'mind evocation'. In addition, it probes the employed cognitive modes (e.g. mood and proprioception) in the radio play to illuminate the intricate ways in which cognitive processes shape bodily experiences and vice versa. By exploring the embodied mind, the paper seeks to advance our knowledge of cognition in the realm of radio plays and to shed light on the complex interplay between body and mind, reality and insanity, fact and fiction in the auditory rendering of Mahler's last days.

Bio:

Lise Van Acker is a doctoral researcher at the Centre for Literary and Intermedial Crossings at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium) and is working on the project "Theatre of the Extended Mind: Cognition in Twentieth-Century and Contemporary Audio Drama". She holds a master's degree in Dutch and English Literature and Linguistics (2021) and an advanced master's degree in Literary Studies (2022). Her theses deal with the presentation of consciousness in modernist and contemporary texts. Additionally, she holds a postgraduate degree in Curatorial Studies (2023) and was assistant curator in the research group Ghent, playing field of the visual arts, 1957-1987.

Iana Nikitenko: *The Vast Land of Psychiatry: Auditory Life-Writing and Representation of Madness in Klaus Lindemann's Radio Feature Ein weites dunkles Land*

Abstract:

While much scholarly attention has focused on the visual representation of serious mental illnesses, a parallel line of research has emerged to investigate the interplay between auditory

media and depictions of madness (e.g., Peters 2010, Birdsall & Siewert 2013, Selway 2019). This paper aims to extend this trajectory of inquiry by analyzing Klaus Lindemann's 1982 radio feature, *Ein weites dunkles Land* (SFB), that serves as a complex auditory tapestry that delves into the often-obscured realm of psychiatric institutions in Germany. Set in the 1970s, a period marked by skepticism toward psychiatry and a burgeoning anti-psychiatry movement (Kersting, 2005), Lindemann's work stands as an evocative exploration of this contested landscape. Venturing into the labyrinthine hallways of psychiatric facilities, Lindemann adopts the role of an immersed observer, guiding listeners through his journey. The radio feature captures the disparate voices—ranging from lucid articulations to fragmented utterances—of the residents, rendering it a compelling auditory experience. In doing so, it serves as a collective, albeit disjointed, testimony of the lives he encounters. Additionally, Lindemann's piece shines a light on the inherent fragmentation within psychiatric institutions themselves. These spaces function as isolated microcosms within the broader societal framework, each adhering to its own set of rules and regulations. In essence, they comprise "an archipelago of madness" embedded within the contours of mainstream society. Consequently, Lindemann's radio feature can be read as a form of life-writing that transcends individual narratives to encapsulate the very institutions that exert influence over these lives. Through an audio-narratological analysis of *Ein weites dunkles Land*, this study explores how Lindemann employs life-writing techniques via auditory media to articulate the sensorial and emotional intricacies of life within psychiatric institutions. It seeks to illuminate how sound serves as a dialogic space that both humanizes and dehumanizes its subjects, unraveling the complexities involved in representing mental illness.

Bio:

Iana Nikitenko is a PhD fellow at the Centre for Literary and Intermedial Crossings at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium) and is working on the FWO-funded research project "Radiobiographies. Innovations in Genre and Medium (1945–2020)," with a focus on English and German radio productions. She obtained an International Master's degree (EMJMD) in Children's Literature, Media and Culture at the University of Glasgow (UK), where she wrote her dissertation on the representation of the traumatic Soviet past in biographical graphic narratives. Her research interests centre around literary and media studies, radio studies, life writing, aural and visual narratives and transmedia storytelling.

P51: Life Writing After the Event

V008

Chair: Yurika Tamura

Sjoerd-Jeroen Moenandar: *'Now that's what I call disillusionment': Narratives of Disappointment in Bill Drummond's Rock Memoirs*

Abstract:

Bill Drummond (1953) is most famous for being one half of the KLF, a British pop sensation from the early 1990s, and his spectacular exit from the music industry in 1992, that saw him shooting blanks from an automatic rifle at the audience of that year's BRIT Awards and burning £1 million at the island of Jura. He published two pieces of life writing, both combinations of diaries and memoirs: *45* (2000), and *17* (2008). Although seemingly presenting his life as fragmented by going from the dizzying highs of being one half of an international chart-topping pop phenomenon, to a man who has run out of creative ideas, haunted by a notorious past he cannot escape, the underlying, unifying plot in both books seems to be a narrative of disappointment. An important element in story of the rock 'n roll

refugee who has escaped the clutches of the music industry, is his disappointed admirers, either in the form of people he meets in his memoirs, of a reader he seems to be addressing at times, or, at other times, of something he seems to expect the reader to be aware of. Drummond presents himself as relishing in these admirers' disillusionment with him, for instance by staging comebacks that are deliberately designed to fail and disappoint the fans and music press that used to adore him. Through their supposed disillusionment, Drummond, the picaresque outsider, can show how the real disappointment is the aging rockstar who, unlike him, does keep trying to remain relevant once their original creativity has run its course.

Bio:

Sjoerd-Jeroen Moenandar is assistant professor with the Minorities and Multilingualism programme at the University of Groningen and Journal Manager for the European Journal of Life Writing. He works on boundary narratives: narratives in which the way people conceive of themselves as opposed to something or someone else is manifested and negotiated. In his research he analyzes a broad range of such boundary narratives, from literary work and life writing to everyday interactions in classrooms.

Alexander Williams: *'So here I sat, a long way from Treblinka, out in life': Exploring the Narrative Afterlife of an Extermination Camp Experience through Richard Glazar's Testimony Trap with the Green Fence*

Abstract:

On 2 August, 1943 a few hundred prisoners of the Nazi Extermination camp Treblinka stage a revolt whereby a small number succeed in escaping to the forests without being captured. Amongst them is the Czech-Jewish Richard Glazar. Having been 'selected' to work in Treblinka ten months prior, Glazar witnessed the systemic murder of more than 900.000 – predominantly Jewish – victims. Yet what did escape, and hence liberation, entail for survivors like Glazar who witnessed countless atrocities on a daily basis? What does the representation of release back 'into life' suggest for how extermination camp survivors apprehended their experience through narrative? Richard Glazar's testimonial writing, *Trap with the Green Fence*, addresses this precise question.

Having fled Treblinka's murderous confines, the narrative's final section concerns Glazar's perilous journey through central Europe. Remarkably, despite having prevailed in "escaping from the other side," the narrative suggests there appears no experiential reprieve from Treblinka. Whilst having returned to life, Treblinka remains the narrative benchmark against which everything in said life is measured. Whether it be the shape of objects, the elapsing of time or the sudden – metonymic – intrusions of memory pertaining to Treblinka, the camp perpetually casts its shadow over this section of the testimony. Moreover, such contingent intrusions endow the narrative with a fragmentary character – implicitly invalidating not only the presupposition of any sense of narrative normality 'after the event,' but, additionally, negating any expectancy of normality during the 'afterlife' of an extermination camp experience.

Trap with the Green Fence thereby demonstrates that physical escape by no means implied experiential evasion of Treblinka. Instead of emancipation, the narrative suggests continuation. Why so? Juxtaposing the various, recurring narrative elements of Treblinka's 'return,' this paper explores what this portrayal suggests for the apprehension of an extermination camp experience after the fact – its lingering, ghost-like 'afterlife.'

Bio:

Alexander Williams is a self-funded PhD candidate at the Institute for the Study of Culture (ICOG), University of Groningen. By focusing on survivor testimonies concerning the former Aktion Reinhardt extermination camps—Belzec, Sobibór and Treblinka—his research explores why extermination camp inmates viewed themselves as spectral entities; as human ghosts who thought themselves as belonging neither to the living nor the dead. By analysing the spatiotemporal narrative elements within these testimonies through methodologies inspired by literature, philosophy and astrophysics he attempts to answer why this was so. Prior to receiving his Research Master's degree in Literary Studies from the University of Amsterdam in 2020, Alexander worked as a teacher and guidance counselor at a vocational college. He is also affiliated with the Dutch Sobibor Foundation and co-manages the European Journal of Life Writing.

P52: Fragments, Ethics, Memories: Writing Past Lives

V107

Chair: Maarit Leskelä-Kärki

Kirsi Tuohela: *Broken Lives: Archives of Mental Illness in Families*

Abstract:

My presentation addresses the question of madness in families, and how to study it from the cultural history perspective. I focus on the early twentieth century Finland and the source material I use in my current research project to ask how family members have been participating in the meaning making of mental disturbance and in the care when someone in the family has fallen ill. Lives written in family archives, collection of letters, diaries and personal papers, are not easy to reconstruct. Collections are fragmented, diverse and rare in the cases of ordinary families. With the material that exists we can, however, read about the sense of duty, concern and sorrow, feelings of compassion, like attitudes towards the system of professional care and diagnostic practices. The lives that are broken, are not only individual, but also the lives of the families often have a broken story.

Bio:

Dr Kirsi Tuohela holds a PhD and a Title of Docent in Cultural History at the University of Turku. Her research interests include cultural history of women's writing, mental illness and melancholy, history of autobiographies, life writing and lately history of mental illness in families. Her focus of research has been in the modern times, nineteenth and twentieth century Nordic cultures.

Karoliina Sjö: *Fragments of Past Lives in Life Writing of Two Finnish Writers, Kirsti Teräsvuori (1899-1988) and Adèle Weman (1844-1936)*

Abstract:

My paper focuses on questions of how past lives slowly, piece by piece, become visible through fragmented documents. I will examine autobiographical sources and life writing of two Finnish writers, previously unknown diary writer Kirsti Teräsvuori and at her time well-known and famous but after her death quite forgotten writer, playwright and poet Adèle Weman. Together, they create fascinating examples of very different but still somehow similar destinies of forgetting. Both of these writers created massive amount of written materials during their life time, which were archived after their deaths. For decades, the materials and the lives of these writers have been hidden and forgotten, but current research makes them visible again.

In my paper, I will ponder my role as a cultural historian and narrator of these lives. How to reconstruct fragmented lives in to display? What kind of questions and ethical concerns are there when using their personal documents: diaries, letters, notes, manuscripts, auto/biographies, photographs and material things?

Bio:

Dr Karoliina Sjö holds a PhD in Cultural History at the University of Turku. In her research, she focuses on autobiographical sources (such as diaries), biographical research, cultural history of life writing, connections between life and narration and gender history. She has published a monograph dissertation about the early diaries of Kirsti Teräsvuori, as well as articles about the history of life writing and diaries. Currently, she works as a postdoctoral researcher in a research project called “A Grove of Stories – Sagalund. Museum of the Home, Environment and Life Narrational Time”.

Maarit Leskelä-Kärki: *Who Owns a Life? The Contested Cultural Memory of Tove Jansson*

Abstract:

In this paper, I will ask what it is to write biographical research on a world famous person, whose life story is curated and monitored by her offspring. The life of a writer and visual artist Tove Jansson (1914-2001) cannot be framed as fragmentary. First of all, she has left a huge archive with letters, diaries, manuscripts, pictures, photographs, art, books. Secondly, there are numerous studies and biographical works related to her life and her work, and she is one of the globally best known Finnish people and artists. However, her archive and legacy is carefully curated by the Moomin Characters family company, that owns all the rights to her production, to Moomins and also owns most of her personal archive. Thus, when one wishes to write about Jansson, or do art based on her life and art, one has to be in contact with the company and negotiate on the rights and the substance of one’s work.

When planning and writing my recent book on the sea and Tove Jansson (Meri ja Tove. Elämää saaristossa, John Nurminen Foundation 2022) together with my colleague Otto Latva, we had to deal with this curation. In this paper, I will explore our research journey and ask how the curating effects the cultural memory of Tove Jansson, and how it, in the end, can leave us with a fragmented, curated life where many aspects of past lives can be silenced.

Bio:

Dr Maarit Leskelä-Kärki holds a Title of Docent in Cultural history and life-writing (University of Turku, University of Lapland), and is a university lecturer at the Department of Cultural History at the University of Turku. Her research has focused on the cultural history of women’s writing, autobiographical sources, methodological questions of life writing and biographies, and gender history. She recently led a multidisciplinary research project Seekers of the New (2018–2021) that dealt with the cultural history of Finnish esotericism from 1880 to 1930’s. Currently, she works in the field of environmental humanities both in her recent book on Sea and Tove Jansson (2022), and in leads a new research project A grove of stories – Sagalund. Home museum and environmental biography.

P53: Migration, Fragments, and Politics

V108

Chair: Barbara Clough

Margrét Ann Thors: *9/11, Fragmentation, and Historical (Dis)continuities in Ayad Akhtar’s Homeland Elegies*

Abstract:

Ayad Akhtar's hybrid memoir-novel *Homeland Elegies* (2020) offers a sweeping, intersectional portrayal of the author's—and America's—place within the world that 9/11 made. In this paper, I analyze the book's form, fragmented narrative, questions of hyphenated identity and contingent belonging, and portrayals of our hyperconnected yet utterly disconnected post-9/11 landscape. I argue that by engaging with fragmentation in both form and content, the book underscores the staccato, ruptured nature of marginalized identities after 9/11 and of the 21st century as a whole.

Narratively and structurally the book is fragmented, "part family drama, part social essay, part picaresque novel" (per the back cover description), and at times a little unwieldy. Akhtar has spoken about wanting the effect of the novel to be like scrolling through social media: "It's essay. It's memoir. It's fiction. It just had to be seamless, in the way that a platform like Instagram is seamless. And one of the pivotal dimensions of that content is the staging and curation of the self" (Schwartz). Indeed, as a celebrated playwright, Akhtar knows something about "staging" and "curating" the "self," and he makes that process explicit on the page.

The book blends fact and fiction, moving readers from scenes of Donald Trump in a medical exam room receiving cardiac treatment, to casinos and jail cells, to "a season of sexual fecklessness" (175) that ends in syphilis infection, to an SEC investigation and medical malpractice courtroom drama, and much more. Through the trials and triumphs of his Pakistani-American family, Akhtar reckons with America's many promises, shortcomings, and contradictions and uses his life story to craft a sharp socio-cultural narrative about the past twenty years.

Bio:

Margrét Ann Thors is a doctoral candidate at the University of Iceland. Her dissertation is titled, "'Success in Circuit Lies': A 'Slant' Approach to Analyzing Literature after 9/11." She holds a BA, MA, and MFA from Columbia University and publishes fiction and creative nonfiction in addition to academic work. Her research interests include contemporary literature, global literature, academic and creative writing, and literature of trauma and/or crisis.

Odile Heynders: *Writing in the Era of Postfiction: Hassan Blasim's GOD 99*

Abstract:

In *Free Indirect, The Novel in a Postfictional Age* (2022) Timothy Bewes argues that currently writers of fiction address the problem of thought (the problem of the point of view) by giving up any claim to representation or the democratizing of perspectives (p. 37). Literature has reached the point of bringing into being a thought that cannot be inhabited subjectively with the consequence of the deauthorization and decentering of literary discourse. Forms and concepts on which critical commentary was based are no longer affiliated: voice and subject, character and type, story and world, fiction and reality have become fluid. Bewes mentions the work of Ali Smith, Rachel Cusk, Valeria Luiselli, Ben Lerner and others, and in particular pays attention to W.G. Sebald as "against exemplarity". The significance of Sebald's texts lies in the lack of historical, epistemological and ethical consequences of the connections made. In a hermeneutic dialogue with Bewes, and based on a close reading of another contemporary work, Hassan Blasim's *GOD 99* (2018), I will elaborate the argument that contemporary literature reveals fragmented genres of writing, converging fiction, reportage, blogs. Blasim creates an alter ego, the refugee Hassan, in whose world there is agony, constant polyphony

and a lack of focus. A coherent story grounded in the representation of reality does not exist. Hassan writes: "In my case, literature hasn't only provided 'hiding places for pleasure', but I would also argue that literature has saved my life, since I was born in a country where every decade the barbaric level of violence has risen to higher and more grotesque levels" (5). Blasim demonstrates that postfiction does not just undermine subjectivity or connection, but scatters these notions in an ongoing re/presenting dynamic. Literature is life for the displaced writer.

Bio:

Odile Heynders is Professor of Comparative Literature at the Department of Culture Studies in the School of Humanities & Digital Sciences of Tilburg University in the Netherlands. She published several books and many articles on European literature, authorship and strategies of reading, as well as on how literary fiction intervenes in democratic public spheres. Her book *Writers as Public Intellectuals, Literature, Celebrity, Democracy* (2016) appeared at Palgrave Macmillan. Her current book project is on *Fictions of Migration* - focussing on how literary texts can offer new knowledge within the interdisciplinary context of migration studies. Heynders is member of the NWO [Dutch Research Council] Board: Social Sciences and Humanities.

Hannes Koberg: *Feelings of Fragmentation: Dramatizing the Lived Body in Transnational American Life Writing*

Abstract:

My dissertation project examines life writing at the intersection of Transnational American Studies and Queer Theory. José Esteban Muñoz defined queerness as "that thing that lets us feel that the world is not enough" (1). For Muñoz, queerness is always just on the horizon, giving us glimpses of an alternative world. I claim that the transnational life narratives I study explore a fragmentary lived experience in-between a here and there. The life writers' feelings of non-fulfilment, of a lack of belonging in the here mark a desire for a potential there, a queer elsewhere. Following Nadia Ellis, these are autobiographical, artistic texts that give rise to a potential "that suspends rather than resolves at the arrival at some new and satisfying space of exile" (4).

From their first-person lived experiences, the life writers take into account the "lived body" through which they embrace their fragmentary existence as a source of empowerment. The notion of the lived body was developed by phenomenologists Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir who argued that the body is not just a passive material object but also functions as our existential access to the world. The lived body testifies to the inextricable intersections of body, mind, and world. In this sense, the self is not bounded and whole but always already fragmented.

In my talk, I will present one example of how, instead of smoothing over the cracks, these life writers embrace their feelings of fragmentation as a creative force in-between a here and there. They center on the body as their access to the world. In *Autobiography of My Hungers* (2013), gay, Chicano writer Rigoberto González explores his unfulfilled desires as a diasporic self in the U.S. The body takes on an active role in transforming his feelings of fragmentation and of being the outsider in a heteronormative world into a culturally hybrid position of strength.

Bio:

Hannes Koberg (he/they) is research assistant at the chair of American Studies, Ruhr-University Bochum, where they also teach courses. Hannes is currently working on a Ph.D.

thesis tentatively titled “Queer Transformations in Transnational Life Writing”. Besides their research, Hannes has translated pieces of the autobiographical works by Jewish American, gay, and disabled writer Kenny Fries into German. Further research interests include: Contemporary U.S. Literature, 19th Century U.S. Fiction, Narratives of Same-Sex Love before Homosexuality, Critical Phenomenology, Diversity Studies. In addition to their work as a researcher, Hannes is interested in community building measures in their hometown, where they are an expert citizen on the city council and support the local cultural activities and cultural education.

Julia Lajta-Novak: *Remembering in Poems: Anthony Joseph’s Fragmented Auto/Biography in Sonnets for Albert*

Abstract:

British-Trinidadian poet and novelist Anthony Joseph immigrated to the UK in 1989, leaving home and family behind to make a name for himself as a writer and spoken-word vocalist not long after. While autobiographical fragments already appeared in his early work, it is his collection *Bird Head Son* (2009) that is his first overtly autobiographical book, assembling evocative poems about his childhood and youth in Trinidad. His most recent collection *Sonnets for Albert* (2022) follows on from *Bird Head Son* by focusing on Joseph’s difficult relationship with his father. Joseph described his father as an “intermittent presence”, a man with a “gone momentum”, arriving and departing constantly, so that Joseph came to know him “only in fragments”.

This paper will examine *Sonnets for Albert* as a poetic auto/biography. While Joseph’s sonnets encapsulate individual memories and thoughts about Albert, his collection also opens up a meta-level of poetic self-reflection. *Sonnets for Albert* thus demonstrates how a series of poems can become an apt representation not only of the workings of memory as fragmented and generative – as an act of auto/biographical remembrance – but also of a father-son relationship whose discontinuities resonate in, and in between, individual poems.

Bio:

Julia Lajta-Novak lectures in Anglophone literature and mediality at the Department of English, University of Vienna. She is an editor of the *European Journal of Life Writing* and has published extensively on biographical fictions in journals such as *Biography*; *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*; *Life Writing*; *Contemporary Women’s Writing*; *Journal of Neo-Victorian Studies*; and the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. Her (co-)edited books and journal issues include *Imagining Gender in Biographical Fiction* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), a special issue of *Life Writing* on the theme of “Life Writing and Celebrity” (Taylor & Francis, 2019) that was republished as a book by Routledge, and *Experiments in Life-Writing* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). Since 2021, Julia Novak has been directing a research project titled “Poetry Off the Page: Literary History and the Spoken Word, 1965-2020” (supported by the European Research Council and the Austrian Science Fund), in which she focuses on autobiographical spoken word poetry. www.julianovak.at

19 Conference Dinner
Gamla bío

15 JUNE

9.30-11 Parallel Sessions:

P54: War Memories and Fragmented Identities I

V023

Chair: Daisy Neijmann

Carol Acton: *'I seem to have exchanged my life for someone else's': Fragmented Identity in the First World War Correspondence between Couples*

Abstract:

Discussion of identity fragmentation in wartime life-writing has tended to focus on front-line diaries or one-sided letters from the Front, privileging the male combatant experience. However, when we move beyond this to consider published and unpublished letter exchanges between young couples, we find a much broader expression of how war fragments lives, as each side of the correspondence wrestles with the unprecedented shock of a massive emotional upheaval. McLoughlin et al assert that wartime life-writing reflects the extreme pressure exerted on it, such that it is 'stretched' and 'broken'. The letters discussed here reflect that brokenness: the letters themselves are material evidence of a state enforced disruption of the relationship they attempt to sustain; their content reveals the fragmented identities of their writers; and, as Liz Stanley reminds us, they themselves are fragmented in that they 'are characterized by temporal and spatial interruptions, are always 'unfinished' in the sense of containing gaps, ellipses and mistakes'. Moreover, in wartime, because letters go missing or are returned to sender when the recipient is wounded, 'missing', taken prisoner or killed, the narrative they attempt to sustain is disrupted or brutally ended.

These letter exchanges are especially revealing because of their writers' open engagement with each other, which allows us to see the identity fragmentation caused by the war from multiple angles, not just combat, as writers recognise and express anxiety about the fragmentation of self in the context of each other and of their romantic relationship. While the correspondence tries to maintain some vestige of control through narratives of romance, at the same time, the sending and receiving of letters and the context in which they are written, as they struggle to connect disconnected dialogue, undermines their writers' attempts to use them to construct a stable narrative.

Bio:

Carol Acton teaches English at St Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo, Ontario Canada. Her research focuses on life-writing in war. She has published on war and grief and on representations of trauma in medical personnel memoirs and diaries and on other war related writings. She is currently working on letter exchanges during the two wars.

Colin Davis: *Marguerite Duras: Changing Perspectives on the Memory of War*

Abstract:

In 1985 the French author Marguerite Duras published *La Douleur* (translated into English as *War: A Memoir*), which describes some of her experiences during the Second World War. The longest of the six texts which make up the volume portrays a woman waiting for her husband to return from a German concentration camp after his deportation as a member of the Communist resistance. The husband is eventually brought back in a state closer to death than life, and the text goes on to describe his slow recovery with the support of his wife and their comrades. Duras died in 1996, and a decade later in 2006 the notebooks on which *La Douleur* was based were published as *Cahiers de la guerre et autres textes* (*War Notebooks and Other*

Texts). These notebooks were written in the 1940s, so they were chronologically closer to the events they describe than *La Douleur*. Although the two versions are in many respects very close to one another, there are a number of important changes. The notebooks stress the political significance of the camps, emphasising the suffering of Communist opponents of Nazism. Forty years after the war, *La Douleur* refers more explicitly and specifically to Jewish victimhood. These changes can be related both to the unsettled nature of individual memory and subjectivity, as Duras re-frames her own experience of war, and to the shifting landscape of collective memory in post-war France.

Bio:

Colin Davis is Emeritus Professor of French and Comparative Literature at Royal Holloway, University of London, UK, having previously held posts in Cambridge, Oxford and Warwick. He has also been Visiting Professor at the Ecole Normale Supérieure – Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Lyon, France, the University of Indiana, Bloomington, USA, and the University of Turku, Finland. His research focuses mainly on connections between literature, film and philosophy, with particular interests in the modern French novel, ethics, ethical criticism, philosophical approaches to literature and film, hermeneutics, literary theory, cultural memory, trauma studies and Holocaust literature. His most recent books are *Traces of War: Interpreting Ethics and Trauma in Twentieth-Century French Writing* (2018), *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma*, co-edited with Hanna Meretoja (2020), *Silent Renoir: Philosophy and the Interpretation of Early Film* (2021), and *Forays: Literature, Interpretation, Ethics* (forthcoming).

Richard Wittmann: *The Shallows of Historiography: Life Narratives and Their Testimony to the Blanked out Internment Experience of Germans and Austrians in Turkey from 1944-1946*

Abstract:

With the rise to power of the National Socialists in Germany and neighboring Austria, Turkey has become an important country of refuge for people fleeing Nazi persecution. Among them were many prominent academics, who having fled the Third Reich to escape discrimination on racial or political grounds, helped to build the new, western-oriented university system of the young Turkish Republic. As a neutral country during the war, Turkey provided a safe haven for the several hundred German-speaking families who arrived in the country. This changed suddenly in August of 1944 when Turkey officially abandoned its neutrality and holders of German passports had to choose between leaving the country or accepting internment in one of three inner-Anatolian towns designated as internment centers. Around 800 ethnic Germans and Austrians spent the months from September 1944 until February 1946 – nine months after World War II had officially come to an end (!) – in the remote, underdeveloped towns of Yozgat, Kırşehir, and Çorum. Curiously, this historic episode has been virtually ignored in the historiography of both Turkey and the countries of origin of the detainees, Austria and Germany. During their internment the detainees were by and large left to themselves, some of whom suffering terribly as a consequence of neglect by the authorities and became victims of hunger and disease. The extant autobiographical testimonies of the detainees, however, allow for an attempt to fill in the details of the evolving cultural and social self-organization that secured survival for most of the detainees. By drawing on the personal first-hand experiences of the witnesses some of the gaps in the historiography can be filled. While for Turkey this historic phase seems to have been discarded as one of overall embarrassment in light of the grand narrative of the ‘praiseworthy longstanding friendship’ among the peoples of the former military allies in World War I; for historians of Germany and Austria, this experience of banishment in Turkey seemed to pale into insignificance in light of

the contemporaneous utmost calamities of the Holocaust and the suffering and casualties caused by the war. Letters, diaries and memoirs preserved by the German-speaking detainees, as shall be demonstrated, allow for a tentative reconstruction of the unusual conviviality developing among central-European captives of various political and religious persuasions who organized their social realities for an 18-months period amidst and in interaction with their local Turkish Muslim host community.

Bio:

Richard Wittmann (Ph.D. in History and Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University 2008) is the Associate Director of the Orient-Institut Istanbul, a German humanities research institute abroad. His research interests focus on Islamic legal history and the social history of the Ottoman Empire. Special attention is given in his work to the consideration of life narratives as historic sources for the study of the Near East. Richard Wittmann coordinates an international collaborative research project aiming at the study and publication of Ottoman autobiographical texts (www.istanbulmemories.org). He is the editor of the publication series *Memoria. Fontes Minores ad Historiam Imperii Ottomanici Pertinentes* (www.perspectivia.net/publikationen/memoria) and coeditor of the monograph series *Life Narratives of the Ottoman Realm: Individual and Empire in the Near East* (<https://www.routledge.com/Life-Narratives-of-the-Ottoman-Realm-Individual-and-Empire-in-the-Near-East/book-series/LNOR>). His latest coedited volume *Mapping Gender. What's New and What's Ahead in Ottoman and Turkish Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies* was released in print form and online in January 2022 (https://perspectivia.net/receive/pnet_mods_00005164).

Ernestine Hoegen: *A Mosaic of Memories: Understanding Individual, Local and Collective Narratives of Kamioka POW Camp*

Abstract:

In early September 1945, approximately 600 American, Dutch and British POWs were liberated from Kamioka POW camp, Honshu Island, Japan. In the tattered remains of their belongings, a few of the men carried secret war diaries, smuggled letters, forbidden sketches and drawings, and lists of fallen comrades. As the men repatriated to different parts of the world, these 'shards of memory' (Lindeman 2007) were spread around the globe, many ending up in the bottom drawer of a desk, there to be forgotten for decades. With the present 'memory boom' (Schwenkel 2010), and the renewed interest in remembrance and the second world war, many of these documents containing individual testimonies have resurfaced, and now reside in public and private archives in (among others) Australia, the Netherlands, the UK and the US.

In Kamioka itself, a cenotaph erected by local Japanese villagers (Nishisato 2023), and a handwritten book containing all the names of the Kamiokan war dead – both Japanese and Western – also bear witness to the events that took place in and around the POW camp during WWII. These local monuments, combined with the Japanese ritual of calling out the names of the dead – including those of the POWs - during the annual 'Obon' festival, add entirely different fragments to the mosaic of memories of Kamioka. Can all these shards of memory be brought together in a meaningful way? Where do the individual, local and collective memory narratives of Kamioka meet, and what affect do they have on present-day visitors? And how should we understand these memory narratives in the light of national meta-narratives of remembrance? This paper seeks to address these questions by analysing the

past and present memory practices of Kamioka POW camp, and will reflect on the theoretical and practical ways forward.

Bio:

Ernestine Hoegen is an author, editor and translator from the Netherlands. Her most recent book, (*Tegenspraak*. Amsterdam: Spectrum 2023) is a novel written together with Pamela Guldie about the Dutch judiciary. Previously, she published a biography of Dutchwoman Mieke Bouman and her involvement in criminal trials in 1950s Indonesia (*Een strijdbaar bestaan*. Amsterdam: Spectrum 2020). She has a Ph.D. in criminal law, is an editor of *The Yearbook of Women's History*, and a boardmember of the *European Journal of Life Writing*. Her research interests include Indonesia in the 1940s and 1950s, diary studies (in particular from Japanese WWII internment camps), and Japan's wartime sexual slavery system.

P55: Memoirs in Fragments

V007

Chair: Aneta Ostaszewska

Pawel Rodak: *The Experience of Fragmented Life in the Memoirs of the Unemployed in Poland in the 1930s*

Abstract:

In Poland during the interwar period, around twenty largescale memoir competitions were organised (for memoirs of workers, peasants and emigrants, among others). One such competition was the Competition for memoirs of the unemployed, organised in 1931 by the Institute of Social Economy. This competition resulted in as many as 774 diaries, memoirs and diaries, 57 of which were published two years later in a special book publication (1933). In my presentation, I want to look at the memoirs of the unemployed primarily through the categories of identity and time. Losing one's job usually causes a radical change in one's life condition, a change in one's perception of time, one's own past and future (thoughts of suicide are very common). The unemployed person experiences the time of successive seasons differently (dividing them into when it is easier or more difficult to get casual work). The unemployed person experiences relationships with other people and with their loved ones differently. The unemployed person experiences his or her own body differently (among other things, the very big problem of hunger comes up). In the diaries of the unemployed, the very motivations for writing a diary are very interesting (the desire to win a prize in a competition, but above all the desire to communicate their misery and their problems). Writing a memoir in the situation of job loss and the accompanying growing sense of disintegration of life and hopelessness are a very important self-therapeutic and communicative practice (the description of one's own condition allows one to share one's problems with others and to some extent to control it).

Bio:

Paweł Rodak – historian of Polish culture, professor at the Institute of Polish Culture, University of Warsaw; professeur associé and director of the Center of Polish Civilisation at the Sorbonne University in Paris (2016-2019), head of the Institute of Polish Culture, University of Warsaw (2012-2016). He is a member of International Auto/Biography Association (IABA Europe). His main publications: *Wizje kultury pokolenia wojennego* [Visions of Culture in the War Generation] (2000); edition of Andrzej Trzebiński's *Pamiętnik* [Diary], which was kept during the Second World War (2001); *Pismo, książka, lektura. Rozmowy* [Writing, Book, Lecture. Conversations with Jacques Le Goff, Roger Chartier, Jean Hébrard, Daniel Fabre, Philippe Lejeune] (2009); *Między zapisem a literaturą. Dziennik polskiego*

pisarza w XX wieku (Żeromski, Nałkowska, Dąbrowska, Gombrowicz, Herling-Grudziński) [Between the Written Practice of Everyday Life and Literature. Polish Writer's Diary in the 20th Century] (2011); edition of the book with articles of Philippe Lejeune on diaries translated into Polish „Drogi zeszyt...”, „drogi ekranie...” O dziennikach osobistych [« Dear notebook... », « Dear screen...». About diaries] (2010); edition of the book with articles of Roger Chartier on history of the book and history of reading translated into Polish Czy książki wywołują rewolucje? Szkice z historii książki, lektury i kultury piśmiennej [Do books make revolutions? On the history of books, reading and writing culture] (2019); Rethinking modern Polish identities: transnational encounters, edited by Agnieszka Pasieka and Pawel Rodak (2022). Member of IABA Europe 2023 Organizing Team.

Honorata Sroka: *Fragmentary Identities and Geographical Imaginary in Memoir-Writing Practices in Poland 1932-1939*

Abstract:

The presentation aims to discuss the Polish tradition of diary competitions and the usage of autobiographical documents in the primarily social sciences, as well as subsequently in history, culture and literary studies. Between the 1920s and the late 1930s – among others – Florian Znaniecki, William Thomas, Ludwik Krzywicki and Max Weinreich conducted countless competitions for life-writing documents. Each of these were devoted to different recipients.

I will specifically display the three competitions from 1932, 1934 and 1939, which were held by Yiddish Scientific Institute (later known as Institute for Jewish Research). Those sources bring an outstanding outlook of adolescent Jewish Poles (or Poland-based only), who were the target group of the YIVO's competition. I argue that collected diaries are fragmented at many levels: by multilingual status, fluent national autoidentity or due to their material lacknesses. Nevertheless, all of them are instructive to note the gravity of the emigration idea for the writers. The idea of relocating is the key feature of selected sources and the crucial social and political issue as well. Testimonies of young Jewish girls and boys allow us to analyze causes, subjective factors and a deeper background of specificity of pre-war Jewish emigration from life-writing perspectives.

Bio:

Honorata Sroka: PhD candidate of the literary discipline at the University of Warsaw, cooperator of the Center for Avant-Garde Studies (Jagiellonian University). Her research interests include the art of Franciszka and Stefan Themerson, the experimental life-writing practices and archives of the avant-gardes. She participates in the grant “Life writing competitions. Memoir-writing practices in Poland 1918-1939 (analysis - reception - meaning)” under the supervision of professor Paweł Rodak, the project is sponsored by the National Science Centre.

Yvonne Kristin Jende: *Contemporary Anglophone Memoir and the Ecology of Fragmentation*

Abstract:

Memoir is an ambiguous term both in literary theory and in practice – that is, how writers, publishers, and bookstores use it. The arbitrariness and multitude of decisive criteria have left academic approaches fragmentary. And not only that. Characterized by thematic organization, selective emphasis, and the frequent adoption of non-linear approaches to storytelling, memoir itself constitutes the fragmented representation of a memoirist's life. Although contemporary anglophone memoirs vary starkly in form, composition, and thematic focus, I contend that readers predominantly read them as memories. Consequently, when

reading memoirs, we must consider five elements related to acts of remembrance and the telling thereof: memory's relation to reality, fragmentation, fallibility, subjectivity, and selectivity/constructiveness. Additionally, I argue that memoir's connection to the faculty of memory creates five essential needs memoirists must satisfy: memoir's need for plausibility, authenticity, authority, significance, and ethicality. This paper will focus on how our intuitive understanding of the memory's fragmented nature mitigates these needs and shapes the genre as a liberating force for both memoirists and readers. While fragmentation is often connotated primarily negatively as a disruptive element to a preferred cohesive narrative and an unwelcome complication to fix, this paper will theorize how fragmentations instead mitigate a memoir's need for plausibility, fulfill its need for authority, and simultaneously encourage readers to accept the account as authentic. Overall, this paper outlines how fragmentation enables the variety and malleability of memoir storytelling appreciated by writers and readers from all walks of life. Approaching genre theory as a clarificatory rather than a classificatory system, this paper introduces a systematic yet flexible approach to examining memoirs and their functionality. Giving examples from different contemporary anglophone memoirs, I will demonstrate how my approach to the ecology of fragmentation in memoir can benefit its analysis and inform individual close readings.

Bio:

Yvonne K. Jende is a research associate, lecturer, and PhD candidate at the University of Paderborn, Germany. She holds a Master of Arts degree in both philosophy and English and American literary and cultural studies. At the University of Paderborn, she teaches undergraduate courses in anglophone literary and cultural studies with specific emphasis on Canadian Studies. Her doctoral research focuses on the (socio-literary) ecology of contemporary anglophone memoir between genre theory and publishing studies. Her further research interests include the formation and negotiation of identities in contemporary Canadian contexts, philosophy of truth, literary theory, and rhetoric.

P56: Forms, Genres, Poetics

V008

Chair: Lynley Edmeades

Libby King: *Genre Disruption: Fragmented Form as a Mirror of Fragmented Experience*

Abstract:

In non-fiction books and narrative essays, in scholarly essays and fictional stories, authors are blending genres. Scholars, such as Billy-Ray Belcourt and Maggie Nelson, are making their life stories a central part of their scholarship, while creative writers, like Shelia Heti and Rachel Cusk, have published books of life writing and called them fiction. When this habit was an outlier it was curious, but with its recent rise in popularity, we should take a moment to consider whether blended forms and genres—whether intentional or not—may be considered a strategy or a cultural intervention. This presentation will explore how fragmented forms mirror the fragmented experiences of the early 21st century. It will unpack how blended forms intrinsically redefine the boundaries of some of the most important conversations of the new century, such as: - representation/appropriation; - lived experience/institutional expertise; - facts/fictions; - authenticity/deception; - cancel culture/accountability; and, - public/private spaces. When viewed through this lens, it becomes possible to view anxiety and disruption in form and genre as a strategy that is often the point of the works being created rather than an unexpected side-effect. Intrinsic to this idea is that the form itself, separate from content, changes the boundaries of cultural

conversations and how they can be discussed. Grounded in the study of autobiography and life writing, the presentations will draw examples from Roland Barthes, Shelia Heti, Billy-Ray Belcourt, Maggie Nelson, Karl Ove Knausgård, Amitiv Ghosh, and Christos Tsiolkas. These examples will be used to understand how blended narrative strategies are making cultural interventions into the public town square—or perhaps even contributing to what conversations happen and the new rules about how those discussions are held.

Bio:

Libby King is a PhD student at Flinders University in South Australia researching blended narrative forms as 21st century cultural interventions. Her work has appeared in PRISM International, Meanjin, Grain, Project Passage, and Prairie Fire.

Laurie McNeill: *The Fragmentary Poetics of Life Narrative*

Abstract:

This paper will consider the role of fragments and the fragmentary as both structure and epistemology in contemporary poetic memoirs - that is, memoirs by poets writing in prose but that, as Stephanie Burt (2017) observes, “use the devices of poetry—interruption, compression, extended metaphor—to pay book-length attention to individual real lives.” As in texts such as Maggie Nelson’s *The Argonauts* (2015) and Anne Boyer’s *The Undying* (2020), these life writers craft narratives that address aspects of experience in short chapters that focus on the small moments of life, memory, reflection, or reinvention - documenting elements of experience at the level of the anecdote, the exchange, even a singular word. In this structure, such moments - fragments of life - accumulate in narratives that disrupt chronology and reject teleology, and are instead recursive and iterative: phrases and stories are told and retold, foregrounding the experience of changing temporality and identity. Such fragments emerge as touchstones that guide the dynamic work of auto/biographical memory and meaning-making.

I will focus on two recent North American poetic memoirs, Sadiqa de Meijer’s *Alfabet/Alphabet* (2022) and Maggie Smith’s *You Could Make This Place Beautiful* (2022) to examine how such life narratives use poetics to reproduce the experience of recreating memory and identity after loss - in de Meijer’s case, after immigration from Holland to Canada and the shift from Dutch to English; in Smith’s, after the discovery of her husband’s infidelity and their consequent divorce. I argue that these narratives, like Nelson’s, Boyer’s, and other poetic memoirs, illustrate the intentional uptake of the fragment to represent and make meaning of rupture, dislocation, alienation, and ultimately transformation. The fragment as poetic form becomes a creative constraint through which de Meijer and Smith embody and immerse readers in the work of recalibrating, reassessing, reconstituting, and reorienting.

Bio:

Dr. Laurie McNeill is a Professor of Teaching in the Department of English Language and Literatures and Associate Dean, Students in the Faculty of Arts at UBC. Her research in auto/biography studies focuses on the production and reception of life narratives and testimony in digital and archival spaces. She is co-author, with Sonja Boon, Julie Rak and Candida Rifkind, of *The Routledge Guide to Auto/Biography in Canada*; co-editor, with Kate Douglas, of *Teaching Lives: Contemporary Pedagogies of Life Narratives*, and with John David Zuern, *Online Lives 2.0*, a special issue of the journal *Biography and Comic Lives*, a special issue of *A/b: Autobiography Studies*. Her most recent articles and chapters have been

published in the journals a/b: Autobiography Studies and English Studies in Canada and in the collection *Inscribed Identities* (Routledge, 2019).

Teresa Brus: *Tectonics of Fragments in Personal Essays*

Abstract:

Thinking of “broken” forms – for such is the etymology of fragment – we think of “small pieces or parts,” of a “remainder of otherwise lost or destroyed whole,” of an “unfinished portion of writing or work of art.” Fragmentum is “a part broken off” (OED “Fragment”). Such forms as blog posts, text messages, and sketches, modernist fragments, footnotes, aphorisms, free-floating gestures, episodes, dribbles, drabbles, nano tales, brief appearances which in life-writing glossaries are sometimes identified as compressed fragments (cameos, profiles, portraits in miniatures or historiettes, and most recently microbiofiction) are composite constructs reflecting often contradictory meanings. Their prominence speaks to the immediacy of the age in which they were created but also to relationships of “minimal scale to maximal intensity” (Botha). The essayist Brian Dillon reflecting on tensions and disparities activated by accelerated pieces writes: “‘Fragment’ gives us ‘fragmental’ and ‘fragmentals’: geological terms for rocks and shales that are heterogenous, composed of more than one substance.” Fragments, notes Dillon, engage in traffic “between identity and dispersal, between formal, almost physical integrity and a fracturing or even pulverizing action” (Essayism 68).

In my presentation I am going to pair Dillon’s explorations of the fragments in the essay as a life-writing form with Virginia Woolf’s orchestrations of tectonics of fragments. I will argue for the conglomerate power of the fragment in her essayistic oeuvre, her pulverizing gestures turning away from the sum. I will focus on Woolf’s “Walter Sickert: A Conversation” (1934) essay, her extravagant biographical experiment, to illuminate ideas negating synthesizing impulses in order to repurpose portraiture.

Bio:

Teresa Bruś is associate professor at Wrocław University, Poland. Her major fields of research include visual culture, interactions of photography and literature, life-writing, poetics of the essay, and modernism. Her graduate seminars in the past few years include “The Poetry of W.H. Auden,” “Autobiographical Spaces in the 20th c.,” “Comparative Biography.” She has published extensively on various aspects of life-writing and photography. Her most recent papers are on interiorography, text/image hybridity in life-writing, experiments with images and writing, and the concept of dust in life-writing by Patti Smith. She is the author of *Life Writing as Self-Collecting in the 1930s: Cecil Day Lewis and Louis MacNeice* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego 2012) and *Face Forms in Life- Writing of the Interwar Years* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023). She is the co-organizer of IABA 2023 conference in Warsaw. She is editing a special issue of *Anglica Wratislaviensia* (62.2/ 2024) dedicated to experience of change in practices of life writing.

11-11.30 Coffee

Veröld Ground Floor

11.30-13 Parallel Sessions

P57: War Memories and Fragmented Identities II

V023

Chair: Yvonne Jende

Philip Charrier: *Urukawa Shizuka's Missing Eye as Absent Fragment*

Abstract:

Urukawa Shizuka is a second-generation atomic bomb survivor (hibakusha nisei) who, at the age of three, developed a malignant tumour in her left eye that necessitated its removal. Between 1961 and 1999 she was a regular subject of the photographer Tōmatsu Shōmei, who associated her story of survival and recovery with that of Nagasaki. Tōmatsu's pictures show that despite the stigma of a radiation sickness-linked deformity, Urukawa was able to marry and raise healthy children. The punctum in all the portraits of Urukawa is her missing eye, sometimes hidden by an eye patch, sometimes replaced by a glass eye, occasionally depicted simply as a scar. I argue that through its non-existence, the eye functions as an absent fragment that connects Urukawa's identity as hibakusha nisei to multiple traumatic ruptures and erasures: to the obliteration of Nagasaki on August 9, 1945; to the US occupying forces' suppression of information about radiation sickness; to the stigmatization of atomic bomb survivors and their families in the postwar years; and to Urukawa's mother's suffering and early death. These stories are mostly not Urukawa's own. Born as she was in the mid-1950s, her relation to the bombing is through the memories of others. However, her missing eye connects her indexically to that event: there is a causal relationship between her deformity and the destruction and irradiation of Nagasaki. Urukawa's unseen eye does not make present what is absent; rather, it creates the basis for those encountering her story to fill in the gap imaginatively, to inscribe their biography onto hers and others like her who suffered atomic bomb-related historical trauma.

Bio:

Philip Charrier is Associate Professor of History at the University of Regina, Canada. His research addresses the tensions between artistic and documentary modes of photographic expression, intention and reception, and 'Eastern' and 'Western' cultural constructs, especially with reference to cultural borrowing. In 2022 he published "The Trans Body in Christer Strömholm's *Vännerna Från Place Blanche* (1983)" in the journal *Photographies*. His current project explores conceptualizations of the everyday as resistance in 1960s Japanese photography and film.

Jeanne Devautour Choi: *Bridging Scattered Fragmented Memories in Kim Thúy's Ru*

Abstract:

Part of the 1.5 generation of Southeast Asian refugees who left their ancestral home following the end of the war in Vietnam and the reunification of the country in 1975, Vietnamese-Canadian author Kim Thúy (born in 1968) fled her native country by boat with her family when she was ten years old. Her debut autobiographical novel, *Ru* (2009), delves into a fictionalized recounting of her fragmented past memories of war and exile in a text itself fragmented. Split in more than a hundred brief vignettes, the non-linear narrative interweaves personal memories from the author's childhood in Vietnam, experience of a refugee camp in Malaysia and subsequent life in Canada. This paper analyzes the narrative strategies and stylistic choices through which the text gestures towards a reconciliation of the disconnected yet co-existing temporalities and spaces at the core of the narrator's interstitial position — not only between two countries, languages and cultures, but also between two generations split on one part and the other of a collective traumatic displacement. In the text, the "ru" of the narration connects hitherto disjointed memories of places, people, and objects through seemingly smooth associations of ideas, images, words, sounds, and scents. I argue that this writing, paradoxically, does not seek, nor attempt, to provide a smooth cohesive

whole of the narrator's life but rather intentionally highlights its very fragmentary nature — acknowledging, and ultimately embracing, its constitutive fractures.

Bio:

Jeanne Devautour Choi, normalienne from the ENS de Lyon (France), is pursuing a PhD at Columbia University in the French department and the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society. She is particularly interested in the questions of memory and postmemory, and the representations of collective trauma in 21st century post-war and post-dictatorial societies.

Barbara Kosta: *Saša Stanišić's Where You Come From: A Fragmented Narrative of War, Displacement and Arrival*

Abstract:

Saša Stanišić is a Bosnian-German writer, who in 1992 at the age of 14, fled Bosnia to Germany with his family to escape the Bosnian War. In 2019, he won the German Book Prize for his novel *Herkunft* (translated as *Where You Come From*), in which his childhood in Bosnia and arrival in Germany as a refugee is remembered. My paper analyzes the fragmented memories of war and the montage-like interjections that appear as symptoms of trauma. The narrative fluctuates between past and present in its exploration of the place of Stanišić's birth and heritage, the trauma of war and displacement, as well as the "mundanity in the aftermath of a cataclysmic event," namely the destruction of the former Yugoslavia after Tito's death. Stanišić's account brings the memory of the personal into relationship with the collective memory of the atrocities that ripped apart the former Yugoslavia. In his recollections, no memory is untouched by the war, which the author must negotiate with his present day in Germany. As he notes, "hardly any memory is just personal; almost everyone comes with a postscript, a footnote, of perpetrators and victims and atrocities that took place there." At the same time, I consider the representation of memory and its precarity as the foundation of autobiographical writing, especially when documenting trauma. As his grandmother, who still resides in the town of Stanisic's birth, slowly slips into dementia, the author recognizes that he must start collecting memories before they vanish. Her memories become a part of his legacy. In the context of Germany, Stanišić belongs to the generation of postmigrant writers who seek to work through the experiences of their traumatic pasts and migration while redefining themselves.

Bio:

Barbara Kosta is Professor and Head of the Department of German Studies at the University of Arizona. Her teaching and research interests are focused on autobiographical writing in postwar and contemporary German and Austrian literature, contemporary German cinema and visual culture of the Weimar Republic. Her publications include *Recasting Autobiography: Women's Counterfictions in Contemporary German Literature and Film* (Cornell) and *Willing Seduction: The Blue Angel, Marlene Dietrich, Mass Culture* (Berghahn). She is the co-editor of *Writing Against Boundaries: Gender, Ethnicity and Nationality in the German-speaking Context* (Rodopi) and *Women Writing War: From German Colonialism to WWI* (De Gruyter). Kosta received her Ph.D. in German from the University of California, Berkeley.

Lynn Domina: *Disloyal by Definition: Japanese-American Incarceration in Two Graphic Memoirs*

Abstract:

Among the more shameful events in modern United States history was the incarceration of well over 100,000 Japanese immigrants and their native-born children during World War II.

The immigrants themselves faced an impossible dilemma: they were prohibited from becoming U.S. citizens, yet they were suspect precisely because they weren't citizens. Their children, on the other hand, were citizens if they had been born in the United States, yet citizenship did not relieve them from suspicion. Beginning in 1942, U.S. residents of Japanese descent were hastily arrested and relocated to internment camps located throughout the country. Families suffered economically of course, losing homes, businesses, and other property, but individuals also suffered psychically, as their core identities were redefined by external authority. They were told that their own definitions of themselves as loyal Americans were not only inaccurate but impossible. From the perspective of the U.S. government, there was no such thing as a loyal Japanese. For decades previously, Japanese immigrants had been forced to negotiate their split national identities, residing in the United States but excluded from full membership in the nation and deprived of many American privileges and rights, perhaps perceiving themselves as American but not being received by others as American. Now, any perception of American identity was shattered.

It is this politicized fragmentation of identity that I will explore in this paper. I will analyze the stories narrated in two graphic memoirs, *We Hereby Refuse* by Frank Abe and Tamiko Nimura and *They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei. The physical relocation of the families whose experiences are narrated in these memoirs is mirrored by psychological dislocation—to the extent that identity is confirmed through recognition by others, these individuals realized that just as the world wasn't what they had assumed it to be, neither were they themselves the persons they'd understood themselves to be. I will integrate my discussion of these individual stories with a discussion of genre, arguing that the graphic memoir is particularly suitable for revealing stories when the language of identity has failed.

Bio:

Lynn Domina is a Professor of English at Northern Michigan University in the United States. She has published several books, including *The Harlem Renaissance: A Historical Exploration of Literature* and an annotated edition of Nella Larsen's novel *Passing*. She recently edited *Approaches to Teaching Jacobs's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, scheduled to be published by the MLA in 2024.

P58: Movements and Identities

V007

Chair: Astrid Joutseno/Swan

Meghan O'Donoghue: *Autobiography as School Thesis: The Case of Togoun Servais Acogny in 1958 Paris*

Abstract:

Togoun Servais Acogny was a thirty-five-year-old father of four when he left French West Africa, a federation of eight territories under French colonial rule, to pursue professional training in Paris in 1958. Far from his adopted home of Dakar, Senegal, and farther still from his rural homeland of Dahomey, now known as Togo, Acogny, like his African peers, had come to the Ecole Nationale de la France d'Outre-Mer (ENFOM) to become a highly ranked official in the French colonial administration. Yet as Acogny was completing his studies at ENFOM, the French colonial empire collapsed. The territories comprising French West Africa would soon become independent nations. Despite these seismic global changes, ENFOM still required its students to complete a thesis on a subject of their choosing pertaining to the efficient rule of colonized territories. While other students wrote of economics, agricultural

management, and politics, Acogny chose an altogether different subject for his own thesis: himself.

Acogny's unpublished 315-page ENFOM thesis is a genre-bending work that challenges the boundaries between self-disclosure and academic research among African writers in the turbulent years prior to decolonization. Interweaving structured prose, unedited letters to lovers and enemies, political missives, and intimate musings on his religious awakening, Acogny offers a fragmented portrait of himself to his ENFOM professors. His writing illustrates a West African man's growing disillusionment with France and the ideals of its empire, with the full knowledge that his teachers, former rulers of that empire, would be his readers. My paper explores the fragmented form and portrait of self that emerges from Acogny's autobiographical thesis, a work that has, like all of the ENFOM theses, largely eluded historians and literary scholars. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate how a student thesis from 1958 provides a provocative new lens through which to examine both life writing and colonial history.

Bio:

Meghan O'Donoghue is a doctoral candidate and Jefferson Fellow in French at the University of Virginia. Her dissertation is titled "Cultivating Knowledge: Land, Narrative, and Power in Colonial French West Africa, 1913-1959". She has conducted archival research in Senegal and France with support from a Fulbright Open Research Grant and the University of Virginia Jefferson Foundation.

Vesna Ukić Košta: *Fragmented Identities/Fragmented Forms in Bernardine Evaristo's Manifesto and Hanif Kureishi's My Ear at his Heart*

Abstract:

In the introduction to her 2021 memoir *Manifesto*, Bernardine Evaristo says that when she won a Booker Prize for the novel *Girl, Woman, Other* she became an "overnight success" – after some forty years working as a professional writer (1). While both the title and especially the subtitle of her memoir (*On Never Giving Up*) might sound almost like an averagely superficial self-help book, they do point to the unbreakable spirit of a woman who has always been a fighter. Coming from a mixed-race background, an English-Nigerian family, Evaristo says that she "was destined to be regarded as a sub-person: submissive, inferior, marginal, negligible – a bona-fie subaltern" (7). Partly a memoir which records and intertwines various instances of Britain's recent history with her own memories, partly a self-help book indeed (a 'manifesto for being unstoppable'), Evaristo's book can be seen as a fragmented form which will perhaps appeal most to those identifying with her struggles.

On the other hand, Hanif Kureishi, another mixed-race writer who shares a similar background, is the author of an 'untypical', or we might even say fragmented, memoir interestingly titled *My Ear at His Heart* (2004). Throughout the book he touches on a variety of issues, from pop-culture to Pakistani politics, juxtaposing notes from his father's unpublished novel, the memories of his father's Pakistani family and, not unlike Evaristo, his own beginnings as a non-white writer in the context of changing Britain. No stranger to using autobiographical details in his works (e.g. the semi-autobiographical novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*, or the fictionalized account of the separation from his partner in the novella *Intimacy*), in this book Kureishi seems more than willing to expose fragments of his intimate history once again.

This presentation sets out to explore ways in which both Evaristo's *Manifesto* and Kureishi's *My Ear at His Heart* adapt the genre of (auto)biography in order to articulate issues

pertinent to identity politics, British literature, and contemporary British society. Their mixed-race identity can be seen as a sort of a fragmented identity, a lens through which we can read both their memoirs and their fictions.

Bio:

Vesna Ukić Košta is assistant professor in the English department at the University of Zadar. She obtained her MA from the University of Zagreb and her Ph.D. from the University of Zadar. She is a co-editor of *Timeless Shakespeare* (University of Zadar, 2019), *Migrations: Literary and Linguistic Aspects* (Peter Lang, 2019) and *Rewriting Urban Space in Anglophone Literature and Culture* (University of Zadar, 2023). She has published numerous essays on Irish women's writing and contemporary British literature. Her research interests center on twentieth-century and contemporary British fiction, postcolonial literature, urban studies and literary representations of urban space, and popular culture. She is currently working on a book about identity in Hanif Kureishi's novels.

Rachel Fehily: *The Erasure and Reconstruction of Identity Through Memoir*

Abstract:

This paper is about the process of creating a cultural production that is a contemporary memoir that explores the unique experience and complicated mystery of the identity of a multiracial adoptee, who became a lawyer and subsequently a writer, growing up in an ethnically Irish family with other multi-racial adoptees, ethnically Irish adoptees and the biological child of their adoptive parents. The writer has experienced the effect of the erasure of her ethnic, racial and genetic identity. Previous adoption memoirs have focused on the psychological aspect of adoption and the complications of transracial adoption. The innovation of this memoir is its combination of an interdisciplinary and gender based lens, combined with personal experience using the creative non-fiction genre of memoir informed by the writer's creative skills, and research skills from her profession as a lawyer.

'I write as a multi-racial feminist woman who was raised in the repressed, patriarchal, monocultural, theocracy that was Ireland when I was born in 1968, and as it continued to be for some time after that. When my memoir ends, I hope I will have wrested control of some of the lost and fragmented narrative of past wrongs perpetrated against 'unmarried mothers' and 'illegitimate children' by Irish society, institutions, successive governments and religious orders, and established my hidden identity and the identity of my children with the level of certainty that is important to us as individuals and as a family, through engagement with the people, technology and institutions that are apposite to the parameters of my investigation. My quest involves a deep dive into the past up until the present. I place the beginning of this memoir in January 1945, near the end of World War II, and will bring the reader up to date by presenting a family history gained by talking to members of my family, written from my critical perspective of a lawyer who understands the issues around adoption and identity in Ireland from a personal and professional perspective, and through my experience of growing up in Ireland and becoming a mother of two young men, one of whom can 'pass' as white Irish and the other who appears multi-racial. As a conference contribution I would share my research methodology for writing a creative-based memoir to date which involves creative and research based skills, an interdisciplinary approach and technical knowledge of podcasting creation and production.'

Bio:

Rachel Fehily completed a BA in Economic and Social Studies at Trinity College Dublin before going to The Kings Inns. She was called to the Bar of Ireland and practiced as a barrister for 20 years. She went to do an MA in Drama and Performance Studies at University College

Dublin, focusing on playwriting. Her creative based research will take the form of a personal memoir and exegesis from her perspective as a barrister and multi-racial adoptee. A widely published writer, she has written a number of books, radio performances and professionally performed plays. She curated Professor Frank McGuinness' archive for UCD's James Joyce Library. As a lawyer she represented many clients in criminal trials, family law cases and at the Residential Institution Redress Board during over 20 years of professional practice and continues to provide legal advice on a pro bono basis. She is an experienced teacher at UCD's School of English Drama Film and Music.

P59: Art, Literature, Aesthetics and Histories

V008

Chair: Brynjarr Þór Eyjólfsson Mendoza

Charles Reeve: *At the Limit: Art History, Augustus John and the Autobiographical Fragment*
Abstract:

The disastrous romance of artists Augustus John and Ida Nettleship was deeply fragmentary: Nettleship lived only part of a life, dying in 1907 at 30 years old, after their fifth child's birth; the constant presence of Dorelia McNeill, mother to four more of John's children, strained their relationship to breaking; and their life writing invites opposing interpretations of the discourse of the fragment. In his autobiography *Chiaroscuro* (1952), John sought to control his life's narrative, yet its subtitle "fragments of autobiography" invokes that discourse to construct its author as a (stereo)typically Romantic artist. Contradistinctly, Nettleship's lifewriting truly was fragmentary, her correspondence recording a soul-crushing obeisance to John's breathtaking (even by Edwardian standards) sense of entitlement. For sure, the fragmentation of discourse is useful: as the European masculinist hegemony crumbled, we recovered voices like those of Nettleship and her sister-in-law Gwen John, opening the door for the current prominence of autobiographies by artists Judy Chicago, Ai Weiwei and Winfred Rembert. Yet these conditions also entrenched the discourse of the fragment: the insistence that lifewriting cannot adequately represent a life—not even Andy Warhol's two autobiographies and extensive diaries, Marie Bashkirtseff's obsessive journals or Mary Delany's voluminous correspondence. This insistence seems self-evident. But is it true? Writing of art history's fetishisation of the fragment, John's contemporary Edgar Wind notes, "We cherish these fragments as the traces of a lost original"—Wind arguing that this sentiment derives from the need to believe in the lost original, as a shield against a deep-seated suspicion that no such original exists. So is the fragment a symptom of the inevitably synecdochical status of any attempt to represent a life? Or the last gasp of an exhausted view of the individual that, as Michel Foucault (another contemporary of John and Wind) suggests, should be laid to rest?

Bio:

Charles Reeve is Professor of Visual and Critical Studies at OCAD University, where he also is Associate Dean of Arts & Science. He is author of *Artists and their Autobiographies from Today to the Renaissance and Back* (Routledge, 2022), co-editor, with Rachel Epp Buller, of *Inappropriate Bodies: art, design, and maternity* (Demeter, 2019) and co-producer, with Epp Buller and Elena Marchevska, of the podcast "Renewing the World." He has written widely on modern and contemporary art and culture for such publications as *frieze*, *Art History*, *RACAR*, *Biography*, *a/b*, the *London Review of Books* and the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and curated exhibitions featuring such prominent artists and designers as Jess Dobkin, Karim

Rashid, Rirkrit Tirivaniya and Adel Abdessemed. He is a past president of the OCAD University faculty union and of l'Association d'art des universités du Canada/the Universities Art Association of Canada.

Patricia Reid: *Literary Biofiction: A Collection of Fragments: Intertextual Borrowings in 'The Master of Bartholomew's Hospital 1914-1916' by Joyce Carol Oates*

Abstract:

My paper addresses how the structure of literary biofictions are made up of fragments, quotes, and borrowings of the subject's writings. Literary biofictions are stories (most commonly novels) about writers, and my research focuses on the rhetorical strategies involved in writing a fictional narrative about a fictional writer, in this case a short story. My talk is in two parts, in the first part I discuss the form of the short story, drawing attention to how its brevity means that the material is fragmentary, particular and limited, offering a glimpse. In the second part I analyse a short story biofiction about Henry James - 'The Master at St Bartholomew's Hospital 1914-1916' by Joyce Carol Oates, (2008). I focus on the intertextual dialogue between Oates's biofiction and James's writing, specifically two of his short stories, 'The Middle Years' and 'The Turn of the Screw' revealing how textual traces of James's writings emerge in Oates's story. I analyse how Oates appropriates, transforms, adapts, and modifies incidents and rhetorical features from James's stories into her own story. My focus on the rhetorical devices reveals how these apparently fragmentary traces form a distinctive, narrative whole. This identification of the inherent intertextuality of literary biofictions also highlights the appropriation -conscious or unconscious - of James's rhetorical devices by Oates, a practice I call double fictionality. I suggest that the practice of double fictionality is a productive lens through which to consider the potentially fragmentary nature of contemporary literary biofiction, providing a fresh approach to the poetics of the sub-genre.

Bio:

Patricia Reid is in her final year as a PhD student at the University of Lincoln UK. Her thesis investigates the poetics of 21st century literary biofiction. She has recently contributed a chapter on *The Great Lover* a biofiction of Rupert Brooke to a collection of essays published by Cambridge Scholars titled *Biofictions and Writers' Afterlives*.

13-14 Lunch

Veröld Ground floor

14-15

Concluding Remarks and Future Plans

V023