



a/b
Auto/Biography Study
Group

**BSA Auto/Biography Study Group
Summer Conference**

Disappointments and Dissonances

10th- 12th July 2024

Venue Reading, Reading



BRITISH
SOCIOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

BSA Registered Charity Number: 1080235

Disappointments and Dissonances

Welcome

Dear Friends

Welcome to the 32nd BSA Auto/Biography Study Group Summer Conference, taking place at Venue Reading, University of Reading. In this document you will find a programme overview, a full programme plus abstracts, a delegate list and some useful information about Reading Venues.

We are so much looking forward to seeing you all. Here's to a stimulating and enriching conference.

Very best wishes

Gayle Letherby and Aidan Seery BSA Auto/Biography study group summer conference organisers
Anne Chappell and Carly Stewart, BSA Auto/Biography study group convenors

Venue Reading



This year, we are holding our conference at Venue Reading at the University of Reading. The Venue holds a number of large conferences every year, including academic conferences and large corporate events. The conference team has worked closely with us to identify how best to accommodate our requirements and wishes for accommodation, seminar rooms, dining and bar facilities. We are grateful, in particular, to Laura Robb for her work with us and hope that the Venue proves to be a success for our group at this year's conference.

The Programme at a Glance

WEDNESDAY 10th July

14.15-15.10	Registration. Coffee, tea, sandwiches and cake Palmer 1.08
15.10-16.00	Academic Presentations (Palmer 1.06 and 1.07)
16.05-16.55	Academic Presentations (Palmer 1.06 and 1.07)
19.00-late(r) (Bar open until 21.00)	Pre-Dinner Drinks (not included in conference fee) PARK HOUSE Dinner – PARK EAT After dinner drinks (not included in conference fee) PARK HOUSE (private room)

THURSDAY 11th July

7.30-9.00	Breakfast Park Eat
9.00-9.50	Academic Presentations (Palmer 1.06)
9.55-10.45	Academic Presentations (Palmer 1.06 and 1.07)
10.45-11.10	Coffee, tea and biscuits Palmer 1.08
11.10-12.00	Academic Presentations (Palmer 1.06 and 1.07)
12.05-13.05	Karin Bacon Keynote (Palmer 1.06)
13.05-14.00	Lunch Palmer 1.08
14.00-14.50	Academic Presentations
14.55-15.45	Installations Palmer 1.08
15.45-16.20	Coffee, tea and cake Palmer 1.08
16.20-17.10	Academic Presentations (Palmer 1.06 and 1.07)
19.00-late(r) (Bar open until 23.00)	Pre-Dinner Conference Drinks (included in conference fee), followed by Conference Dinner BLANDFORDS and after bar.

FRIDAY 12th July

7.30-9.00	Breakfast Park Eat
9.00-9.50	Academic Presentations (Palmer 1.06 and 1.07)
9.55-10.45	Academic Presentations (Palmer 1.06 and 1.07)
10.45-11.15	Coffee, tea and biscuits Palmer 1.08
11.15-12.05	Academic Presentations (Palmer 1.06 and 1.07)
12.10-13.00	Academic Presentations (Palmer 1.06 and 1.07)
13.00 – 14:00	Lunch Palmer 1.08
	CONFERENCE ENDS

Programme

WEDNESDAY 10th July 2022

14.15-14.50 Registration. Coffee/tea and cake Palmer 1.08

15.00-15.50 Academic Presentations

Palmer 1.06

Dissonances, disappointments, and the development of testimony in the Tibetan diaspora

Julie Fletcher

Chair: Jan Bradford

Palmer 1.07

'You're out of touch, I'm out of time': interdisciplinary work, mess and praxis

Tracey Collett

Chair: Jackie Goode

15.55-16.45 Academic Presentations

Palmer 1.06

Baby Bird – remembering loss, pregnancy and motherhood through the visual (NB: This presentation includes illustrations of miscarriage)

Carly Guest

Chair: Esther Miriam van der Walt

Palmer 1.07

Spirited Away

Beth Moran

Chair: Mark Price

Pre-Dinner Drinks **PARK HOUSE**

Dinner **PARK EAT**

After dinner drinks **PARK HOUSE** (private room)

THURSDAY 13th July 2022

7.30-9.00 Breakfast – Park Eat

9.00-9.50 Academic Presentations

Palmer 1.06

Chair Tokitae: turning a life of disappointments and dissonances into joy

Christine Lewis

Chair: Aidan Seery

9.55-10.45 Academic Presentations

Palmer 1.06

Looking back: academic lives in Irish higher education in the last forty years

Aidan Seery

Chair: Carly Stewart

Palmer 1.07

Tales of a Hysterical Woman: The Untold Stories of Involuntarily Childless Women with Endometriosis

Madelaine French

Chair: Gayle Letherby

10.45-11.10 Coffee, tea and biscuits Palmer 1.08

11.10-12.00 Academic Presentations

Palmer 1.06

Disappointments and Dissonances: On Fathers, Sons and Suicide

Peter John Massyn

Chair: Jenifer Nicholson

Palmer 1.07

Disappointments and Dissonances as a Catalyst for Creativity

Juliet Hall

Chair: Julie Fletcher

12.05-13.05 **Palmer 1.06**

A family divided by conflict politics - disappointments and dissonances
Karin Bacon

Chair: Gayle Letherby

13.05-14.00 LUNCH Palmer 1.08

14.00-14.50 Academic Presentations

Palmer 1.06

Dreaming of the dreaming spires: early career academics' dissonance and loss

Laura Minogue

Chair: Judith Chapman

Palmer 1.07

Telling Stories: using auto/biographical fiction (and memoir) at times of personal (and collective) disappointments and dissonances

Gayle Letherby

Chair: Beth Moran

14.55-15.45 Installations **Palmer 1.06**

Karin Bacon **A family divided by conflict politics - disappointments and dissonances: artefacts to a Keynote**

Jan Bradford: **Every photograph (and significant object) tells a story**

Tracey Collett and Gayle Letherby **Mon-otony (?): a board (bored) game**

15.45-16.20 Coffee, tea and cake Palmer 1.08

16.20-17.20 Academic Presentations**Palmer 1.06**

The Turmoil of The Gilded Age: Edith Wharton's The Custom of the Country

Jenny Byrne**Chair: Karin Bacon**Pre-Dinner Conference Drinks, followed by Conference Dinner **BLANDFORDS****FRIDAY 16th July 2022**

7.30- 9.00 Breakfast - Park Eat

9.00.-9.50 Academic Presentations**Palmer 1.06**

Annie Ernaux: 'Speaking the unspeakable', the voice of the subaltern

Jenifer Nicholson**Chair: Richard Vytiniorgo****Palmer 1.07**

Writing Through, and Out of, Disappointments and Dissonances: a creative writing WORKSHOP

Gayle Letherby**(DOUBLE SESSION See 9.55-10.45)****9.55-10.45 Academic Presentations****Palmer 1.06**

Structural Exclusion or Self-Exclusion? A Filipino Academic Navigating Catholicism

Mary Janet Arnado**Chair: Jenny Byrne****Palmer 1.07**

Writing Through, and Out of, Disappointments and Dissonances: a creative writing WORKSHOP

Gayle Letherby (DOUBLE SESSION See 9.00-9.50)**10.45-11.15 Coffee, tea and biscuits Palmer 1.08****11.15-12.05 Academic Presentations****Palmer 1.06**

Braided stories of ghostly disappointments and dissonances encountered in formations of gender, class and age

Jackie Goode Mark Price Jan Bradford (DOUBLE SESSION See 12.10-13.00)**Chair: Christine Lewis****Palmer 1.07**

Disappointments and Dissonances: Pregnant Mothers' Dreams Meet Life

Esther Miriam van der Walt**Chair: Juliet Hall**

12.10-13.00 Academic Presentations	
Palmer 1.06	Palmer 1.07
<p>Braided stories of ghostly disappointments and dissonances encountered in formations of gender, class and age</p> <p>Jackie Goode Mark Price Jan Bradford DOUBLE SESSION See 11.15-12.05</p> <p>Chair: Christine Lewis</p>	<p>Truth-telling in the post-truth society. Autobiographical dissonances</p> <p>Ewa Sidorenko</p> <p>Chair: Tracey Collett</p>

13.00-14.00 LUNCH Palmer 1.08 and DEPART

ABSTRACTS

Keynote

Karin Bacon

A family divided by conflict politics - disappointments and dissonances

Modern Ireland has been shaped by events of a century ago: Partition, Truce, Treaty and Civil War. An Irish Free State was created, for the twenty-six counties of southern Ireland. The terms of the treaty generated turmoil within the republican movement and the country and in June 1922 Ireland collapsed into a bitter civil war, ripping the country, local communities, and families asunder. This Civil War had a harrowing impact and cast a long shadow, socially, economically and politically, which included both public rows and recriminations and deep, often private traumas. This period of Irish history was certainly filled with disappointments, dissonances and divisions.

This paper gives an overview of the events of this Civil War and examines the divide that emerged within my maternal grandparents' family. My grandfather, Richard Mulcahy, was chief of staff of the IRA, successor to Michael Collins as Commander in Chief of the National Army and later leader of Fine Gael and actively supported the Treaty. At the same time many of my grandmother's family, who also took a prominent role in revolutionary politics ended up on the anti-treaty side.

This paper draws on archival material, and materials held within my family, witness statements and testimony from Irish people who lived and fought through extraordinary times.

Ferriter, D., [2021], *Between Two Hells*, London: Profile books

Ferriter, D., [2015], *A nation and not a rabble*, London: Profile books,

Kenny, C., [2022], *A bitter winter*, Dublin: Eastwood books

Presentations

Mary Janet Arnado

Structural Exclusion or Self-Exclusion? A Filipino Academic Navigating Catholicism

This paper examines the role of Catholicism and sociology in developing or constraining religious consciousness. It employs autobiographical sociology as a methodological framework. Drawing upon my personal narrative as a Filipino academic, I explore the interplay of the sociological imagination and Catholicism, with life events that shifted my position from being a devout Catholic to a Catholic at the margin. It revolves around the challenges I faced as a Filipino academic in navigating my Catholic identity within the context of structural and self-imposed boundaries. Raised by pious parents and educated in Catholic institutions, my upbringing immersed me in religious practices and missionary endeavors. However, divergence ensued as sociology shaped my perspectives on social issues and religion, further influenced by my marriage to a non-Filipino, non-

Catholic partner. The narrative extends to my experiences residing in societies with varying degrees of religiosity, such as the USA, Singapore, and Germany, contrasting with the deeply Catholic milieu of the Philippines. It further extends to structural exclusions in the Catholic church. Through these transitions, I reflect on the evolution of my religiosity (decline and resurgence), tracing the impact of knowledge systems, diverse socio-cultural contexts, and experiences on my religious identity. By weaving together personal anecdotes with sociological insights, this paper illuminates Filipino academics' complex negotiation of identities, offering a nuanced understanding of the interplay between sociology and Catholicism in shaping individual beliefs and behaviors.

Jenny Byrne

The Turmoil of The Gilded Age: Edith Wharton's *The Custom of the Country*

The first change came in the 'eighties, with the earliest detachment of big money-makers from the West, soon to be followed by the lords of Pittsburgh. (Wharton, *A Backward Glance*, 1934:6) Edith Wharton is unequalled as a novelist of the haute bourgeoisie of 'Gilded Age' New York. She examined its habits, customs, and rituals in scrupulous sociological detail. During her life time Wharton witnessed the decline of Old New York as its two-centuries of conformity and regulation were threatened and eventually replaced by the arrival of new powerful people, such as the Carnegies and the Vanderbilts, who promoted an unregulated aggressive capitalism. Published in 1913, *The Custom of the Country* is a novel of high satire that captures the conflicts and rivalry between these two social groups. Within this framework aspirational nouveau riche Undine Spragg marries, divorces, breaks hearts, betrays and social climbs with the unburdened ruthlessness of a Borgia. This paper will examine the collapse of Undine's marriage to Ralph Marvell, a representative of Old New York to explore in detail the disharmony and disillusionment consequent upon interpersonal relations caught in conflicting social systems.

Tracey Collett

'You're out of touch, I'm out of time': interdisciplinary work, mess and praxis

This term at the medical school has felt particularly tense. There have been further changes to management, disappointing NSS scores and in September we will be delivering a new medical doctor degree apprenticeship scheme that is yet to be approved. Maybe it's because people are tired and hardworking, perhaps we are going through a 'blip' but there is a sense of unease. In a department that relies on interdisciplinary working it feels that groups are pulling apart. This paper forms part of my ongoing reflexive A/B project that considers the role of sociology in medical education. My aim is to explore the inter subjective nature of interdisciplinary working within the context of my workplace focusing on how mundane processes give rise to shared meanings which can, in turn, (at times and over time), work for or against us. Using music as a metaphor, my presentation will borrow from mine and my husband's cd collection of 17 years. I will use 7 songs or tunes (some popular some less so) to illustrate the personal experiences that I describe. In the interdisciplinary context of my workplace, it seems that we are out of tune. It is as if (in sociological terms) there is a difference between unproductive and productive messiness. I wonder whether, in addition to drawing on mid-range, text book understandings of educational work and ideas about group work that draw on the discipline of psychology, a more finely honed knowledge of social process would be helpful: a Theory driven approach to individual and group interdisciplinary practice that takes into account for example, ideas such as 'networking and knot working', 'care-ful working', 'emotional work', 'slow scholarship', 'narrative' and 'reflexivity'. Such an approach, a praxis of interdisciplinary working as such, may, I propose, offer a meaningful way of, in real time, working with personal and group trouble.

Julie Fletcher

Dissonances, disappointments, and the development of testimony in the Tibetan diaspora

Since 1959, across the decades of the Tibetan diaspora, a developing testimonial culture has produced auto/biographical texts and practices increasingly able to cross geographic, cultural, and linguistic borders, and translate silenced and often hidden Tibetan experiences into transnational public domains. In order to cross these borders, Tibetan experiences have required mediation and re-framing in forms that are intelligible within human rights frameworks. In this, the activists, NGO workers, and individuals involved in the co-production of these texts become important in “translating” transnational rights concepts “down” to local communities, and local experiences and grievances “up” into the languages of transnational public realms. The Tibetan community in exile, sometimes in collaboration with non-Tibetans, has become increasingly skilled at “telling Tibetan stories” in these ways. This paper considers examples from the earliest iteration of rights-based testimony in the Tibetan diaspora. As Tibetan refugees were arriving into refugee camps forming along the Indo-Tibetan border, members of the community in exile gathered their witness accounts for translation and forwarding to the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), to form the basis of the ICJ 1959 and 1960 reports on Tibet. I trace how human rights practices of fact-finding, framing, and mediation emerge and are utilised to overcome the dissonances between the ‘raw’ narration of Tibetan experiences and the evidentiary expectations of international rights contexts. Further, the profound disappointments of the ICJ reports arguably set in motion a developing testimonial culture that has become a key form of Tibetan cultural production and political action in the diaspora.

Madelaine French

Tales of a Hysterical Woman: The Untold Stories of Involuntarily Childless Women with Endometriosis

Existing research centres on the ‘potential’ infertility of women diagnosed with endometriosis, placing the focus on the psychological impact created by the uncertainty of their reproductive futures. Further along the reproductive timeline, actualised infertility and treatment experiences are dominated by an adversity narrative, where the negative experience of childlessness is ‘resolved’, with a helping hand from science, resulting in a ‘miracle baby’. Whilst research is seeking to address the lived experiences of endometriosis, infertility and new reproductive technologies, the body at the centre of these experiences is often a fertile one. Very little public and academic attention has been given to the messy, complex, and unresolvable outcomes. Women who have experienced endometriosis, and infertility only to find themselves involuntarily childless remain noticeably absent from the conversation. This only serves to perpetuate the stigma associated with childlessness and reproduces the ‘never give up’ narrative. In this paper I explore the silencing of narratives at the intersection of infertility, endometriosis and childlessness, exposing a dissonance between the realities of the lived experiences and dominant public discourses. Drawing on qualitative creative methods I consider how auto/biographical narrative writing, photography and artwork can begin to disrupt these dominant narratives. I explore how engaging with these methods exposed/s the silencing of my voice, as an involuntarily childless woman with endometriosis, and the impact that not being listened to had on my reproductive journey.

Jackie Goode Mark Price Jan Bradford

Braided stories of ghostly disappointments and dissonances encountered in formations of gender, class and age (DOUBLE SLOT)

What does 'a life' consist of? And how might we evaluate it? In examining the narrative fabric of autobiographical identity construction, Jens Brockmeier (2000: 52-4) quotes Kierkegaard when he observes that a human life is lived forwards but must be understood backwards - by evaluating the present self in the light of past events. Here, we seek to confront the disappointments inherent in that powerful and pervasive notion of the grand narrative – that onward trajectory of successive achievements, along planned lines, culminating in a pinnacle from which the (typically male) protagonist views the lower slopes they have traversed. The central character in this story may feel indulgence for youthful innocence and unwitting diversions or gratification at their ability to overcome a spiral of obstacles; but either way, they are the hero of their own story. For many – perhaps most - life's not actually like that. In this joint presentation, we interweave stories of reflected moments, experiences and interactions as forms of mediation between institution and individual, social structure and subject, history and biography - in which what Avery Gordon refers to as 'vague memories' and 'bare traces' hint at what is missing - lost lives, paths not taken. In our exploration, particularly in relation to expectations of gender, class and age, we reach towards reparation – of old disappointments, embarrassments and moments of dissonance – as we identify and confront the lost and missing versions of ourselves.

Carly Guest

Baby Bird – remembering loss, pregnancy and motherhood through the visual (NB: This presentation includes illustrations of miscarriage)

In this presentation I will share parts of an auto/biographical work-in-progress zine/graphic novel 'Baby Bird' and reflect on the experience of documenting difficult experiences through the graphic novel form. Baby Bird explores the disappointments of fertility, pregnancy/loss, motherhood and mental health, and the dissonance of not feeling like you (think you) should in motherhood. Through the LDComics 'Safe Space for Hard Stories' group, run by Wallis Eates, I have been reflecting on and remembering these experiences through visual storytelling. The process of exploring the self through the graphic form has raised questions about memory, narrative and 'truth' telling and the fear of fixing in place unknowable, not quite spoken, or understood experiences. This personal project has started to find its way into my 'work work', and vice versa, as I return to sociological ideas to help me navigate creative storytelling.

Juliet Hall

Disappointments and Dissonances as a Catalyst for Creativity

My PhD research shares the experience of women mothering autistic children, as described in their stories. It is borne out of my personal experiences and represents a significantly misunderstood experience. 30 women participated in research conversations with me which I transcribed. I sought to interpret using my own embodied and experiential knowledge as a guide in conjunction with reflective thematic analysis. When it came to reading the interview transcripts for analysis, I found it extremely difficult as the process of turning spoken words into written words "sanitised" the data. I could no longer hear their voices nor live their experiences with them. I was disappointed. This process had hidden the nuances of the stories I collected. I needed to start listening again. This helped, but I then found myself fixated on generating themes and trying to "shoehorn" experiences into them. The application of overarching themes across people and contexts, depersonalised women's experiences (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). I was trying to apply an overly prescriptive analysis process. This caused an unsettling dissonance, a 'sense' (Deleuze, 2004) that I was doing things wrong, inhibiting my ability to discover new things. I started "playing" with my data, to get

to know it in different ways. This became a catalyst for creativity. I created a research playlist, poetry, biographical collages, and artefacts as an alternative way of thinking, doing, and saying, without relying on language alone. An accessible way of shining a light on the experience of women mothering autistic children.

Gayle Letherby

Telling Stories: using auto/biographical fiction (and memoir) at times of personal (and collective) disappointments and dissonances

Sociological fiction and memoir aids the telling of sociological stories. My own work of this type began after two significant bereavements 14 and 12 years ago and has been, and still is, a significant part of the griefwork (Letherby and Davidson 2015) I do alone and with others. Some of the fiction I write is explicit sociological fiction (written specifically to generate sociological knowledge), all of it is informed by my sociological self. For me (and for others) this way of working, of writing, of academic storytelling, blurs the boundaries of 'fact' and 'fiction' and moves between the academic and the personal. As with 'self-conscious' auto/biographical writing it also 'acknowledges the social location of the writer thus making clear the author's role in constructing rather than discovering the story/the knowledge' (Letherby 2000: 90). As creative and arts-based, rather than traditionally academic, sociological fiction and memoir has implications for the ways in which we define, and attempt to enact, engagement and impact, within, besides and beyond the academy. In this paper I focus specifically on fiction writing and reflect on the, I think, personal, and intellectual benefits of such work. I share some recent stories – including on P/politics, on loss, and on working, learning and being in higher education - and reflect on my own and others' experience of this type of work in times of personal (and collective) disappointments and dissonances.

Gayle Letherby

Writing Through, and Out of, Disappointments and Dissonances: a creative writing WORKSHOP (DOUBLE SLOT)

NB: This is a companion session to 'Telling Stories: using auto/biographical fiction (and memoir) at times of personal (and collective) disappointment and dissonance'. A DOUBLE paper session if accepted please. The focus of this workshop is to explore – in creative ways – writing through, and out of, disappointments and dissonances. This will include reflection on various materials and prompts including auto/biographical accounts (written, visual and film-based etc.) and research diaries and data; pedagogic reflections; emotional, practical, theoretical and P/political concerns. In addition to challenging traditional understandings of 'good', 'valid' and 'tidy' research and scholarship this way of working has implications for the ways in which we define and progress knowledge and impact both within and outside of the academy. In the workshop there will be time for a discussion of the value of creative writing and in addition to writing some short pieces of fiction and memoir / poetry / song lyrics (and such like) we will also engage in some creative editing. Prior to the workshop please reflect on some of the substantive and methodological auto/biographical issues that are currently concerning you. On the day bring along something to write on (computer, phone, paper OR all of these) and of course your imagination. . .

Christine Lewis

Tokitae: turning a life of disappointments and dissonances into joy

Tokitae, a female orca, was violently captured in 1970, at the age of 4, from her Southern Resident community in the Pacific Northwest (USA) and forced into slavery in the marine park industry. Miraculously, in 2023, 53 years later, she was still living in the same tiny, impoverished tank in Miami, when plans were being made to take her home, to a sea pen. There she would be able to

swim in a straight line for the first time in 53 years and maybe hear her mother's voice; Ocean Sun, who still swims in the Salish Sea. However, on the afternoon of the 18th of August 2023 Tokitae tragically died. The disappointment of the "Empty the Tank" activists, many of whom had been fighting for Tokitae's release for 30 years, was visibly raw and shattering. Orcas have been shown to possess self-awareness, and can think of themselves, as an "autobiographical "me,"" (Marino et al, 2020, p. 71). Tokitae as a highly social being, would therefore feel the dissonances of kinship. In this piece I draw on Mason's (2008) human centred framework, to narrate Toki's extraordinary kinship characteristics. This is not to anthropomorphise Toki, but to support the argument that her kinship should not be oppressed and silenced as a species less than human but should be celebrated as a non-human person. Inevitably narrating Toki's story involves responding reflexively, and so I recognise I am 'a self-in-relation' to her (Plumwood 1999, 1993).

Peter John Massyn

Disappointments and Dissonances: On Fathers, Sons and Suicide

A man sits at his desk in the high summer of a Christmas Eve afternoon. He is unaware of the sounds of his Johannesburg household and the garden beyond. A hint of a dream lingers near the base of his skull, scratching away until it finally breaks through in a tumble of memory. It is of his father's gravestone, the flickering emptiness of its surface, and of the word: the crude, exhilarating little word, rising from the core of the rock, spreading across its surface to settle like a fibrous scar slashed across the cheek of a man. It is this moment that propels the auto/biographical story I shall read. An adult son – father himself – imagining the last moments of his old man, embittered in the contemporary world because he was formed by an older, now dissonant order, the violence of his life and its ending. Then, the interruption of the narrator's imaginings by his own young sons, nagging for his attention, his hesitation, the taste of shame, before the sudden moment of redemption when he inexplicably finds himself flinging open the door, surging after his boys, sweeping them up in an act that brings the story to its celebratory culmination.

Laura Minogue

Dreaming of the dreaming spires: early career academics' dissonance and loss

This paper will present the initial findings of my doctoral research with early career academics. I am interested in their stories, in particular, why did they choose to become academics? What has their career transition been like? What have they left behind? Early career academics, particularly those making the transition from a previous career, face a range of challenges in academia. These include imposter syndrome, student behaviour, high workloads and the language and conventions of higher education. The academics I've interviewed for my research without exception felt a strong pull to academia. However, their arrival as academics has involved unexpected dissonance and loss, both in terms of the lived reality of being a lecturer and a mourning for their old identities. In the first set of interviews for this research, I was struck by one participant who confessed that he had "probably watched too many films" and that this had informed his ideas about what life as an academic would be like. This comment revealed a powerful theme echoed by other participants touching on the sense of loss of an imagined future self in an imagined future domain which turned out not to exist.

Beth Moran

Spirited Away

'Needless to say, neighbourhood action is not a panacea. Certainly it should not be used as an excuse for avoiding the large structural reforms needed in society. But the two are intertwined..... The preventative neighbourhood is as much a vision as a concept' (Holman, 1988). This paper offers a creative critical reflection of the disappointments and dissonances challenging both my

personal and professional identities, at moments when the two seemingly collide. I explore the recent loss of a missing neighbour and friend through their experience of ill health and subsequent dissonance between professional decision-making and my social role. This loss leads me in pursuit of the whereabouts of this old friend, as well as the vagaries of my social work profession. Constructed as a disappointing loss to me, this could represent a catastrophic and perhaps final change for my neighbour. A range of 'caring' professions pursue the promotion of wellbeing, but what could possibly be construed as 'well' about this sad and disappointing outcome? Further, I explore how professional dissonance bleeds into my personal experience, impacting on my social role and way of being. Professional values and personal experiences sometimes align but often cause dissonance and disappointment in my sense-making. Loss brings these challenges into stark relief and reinforces the temporal nature of identity construction. This exploration is crafted through poetry and prose as a performative method of reaching diverse audiences through the sharing of creative critical reflection.

Reference

Holman, B, (1988) *Putting Families First*, London: Palgrave Macmillan

Jenifer Nicholson

Annie Ernaux: 'Speaking the unspeakable', the voice of the subaltern

Annie Ernaux: "speaking the unspeakable". Annie Ernaux, the 2022 Nobel Prize winner for literature, describes herself as an 'internal immigrant' and as a 'social defector'. Both terms imply dislocation and disjunction with a social group. Ernaux's books whether novels or memoirs, chronicle the dissonance in her life, the disjunction she felt as a girl having to live by one set of rules whilst thinking and feeling by another set of ideas. Now she experiences, even nurtures the dissonance between her mature, now nominally bourgeois self, and the behaviours and style expected of a literary figure. Thus, although she sees herself as "transfuge" a defector from her working class roots, I argue that it also applies to her position as the single writer in the literary establishment writing from and for the working class. She writes about the "unspeakable", supermarkets, periods, class, contraception, abortion, domestic inequality, violence against women. To do this effectively, she rejected the norms of literary style for her own anti-elite 'flat' writing which expresses her anger and the harshness and brutality of her memories. At twenty she declared, "I will write to avenge my people". In particular, she writes of the callousness and oppression suffered by women, particularly poor women, in French society so that avenging her people means avenging her sex. She continues to write and to militate on behalf of the oppressed whose number and wrongs increase daily. As she said in her Nobel acceptance speech, "when the unspeakable is brought to light it becomes political".

Aidan Seery

Looking back: academic lives in Irish higher education in the last forty years

This paper is based on an on-going research project carried out by the 'Cultures, Academic Values and Education' [CAVE] Research Centre at Trinity College, the University of Dublin. Retired academic and senior administrative colleagues from all universities in the Republic of Ireland were invited to tell the stories of their academic lives, some of them stretching over more than forty years. Forty participants, from a range of disciplines, agreed to take part and extended personal narrative-based interviews were conducted to generate data. I will report on the initial findings based on the analysis of twenty-five of the narratives which reveal memories of fulfilment, achievement, and success but also of disappointments and dissonances in academic lives in Ireland in the last decades. While a number of personal memoirs of academic life have appeared in the literature, no

work has been completed to date that examines the commonalities and differences of how academic lives in Irish higher education have been experienced against the background of unprecedented changes in policy, institutional identity and practices in research, teaching and learning.

Ewa Sidorenko

Truth-telling in the post-truth society. Autobiographical dissonances

In his 1785 Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, Immanuel Kant set out his categorical imperative to never treat another person as a means to an end and claimed that lying is always wrong. And yet, as Hannah Arendt wrote in 1971, in her precursory acknowledgement of the emergence of post-truth society, 'lies have always been regarded as justifiable tools in political dealings. Whoever reflects on these matters can only be surprised by how little attention has been paid, in our tradition of philosophical and political thought, to their significance [...] for the nature of our ability to deny in thought and words whatever happens to be the case (Arendt 1971). In this presentation, I will draw on my auto/biographical dissonances around truth and truth telling to explore how speaking one's truth and the very idea of credibility have been affected by the post-truth realities. I will ask about the conditions of possibility for a restoration of meaningful communication in the world dominated by the legacy of postmodern expectations (of tribal) relativism on the one hand, and an emergent of aspects of powerful modern grand-narratives, propaganda and increasing attempts to control free speech. I will argue for the return of Habermasian sense of rational and open communication within both public spheres and our lifeworlds in order for voices to be truly heard and for auto/biographical approach to have a greater validity.

Esther Miriam van der Walt

Disappointments and Dissonances: Pregnant Mothers' Dreams Meet Life

I am sitting at my honey-coloured yellowwood desk, trying to listen to the hollow, synthesized computer renditions of Bach, Mozart, Gluck, and Schubert's lullabies called Majors for Minors: A Symphony of Sleep. I am struggling to recall the stars in my eyes, the dreams, fantasies, and future plans I had during the times when I was heavy with child. It is difficult to recall them now that my eldest is on the verge of adolescence and does not confide in me as often and freely as this psychologist's ego would have loved. My youngest is eight and has long been preferring Imagine Dragons over Majors for Minors, also making it difficult to remember back. As much as I marvel at their development and their lives at large, I know life got in the way of those in-utero dreams. I am currently undertaking a doctoral study on maternal identity as a social construct. I listen to, and I read and write about mothers and their experiences, including my own. In using auto/biography I see my own stories in theirs as well as the vast differences in each of our own experiences. I see some contentment, gratitude, joy - but just a little. I mostly see the mental load; typically gendered parental roles, societal expectations, do's and don'ts, judgement, punishment. I sometimes see a glimmer of hope and a fantasy of personal freedom. In my paper, you will hear - through auto/biographical extracts, I-poetry, and fiction - all about this.

Installations

Karin Bacon

A family divided by conflict politics - disappointments and dissonances: artefacts to a Keynote

This installation is comprised of a number of family photographs, memorial cards and personal possessions [passports, awards, etc.] associated with both my maternal grandfather and grandmother. Both were involved in the Easter Rising of 1916 in Dublin and beyond.

My grandfather. General Richard Mulcahy, was in also involved in the subsequent Irish Civil War [1922-1923], as General Chief of Army Staff, and later in the foundation of the Irish Free State, as a founding member of one of the major political parties and as government minister. The collection therefore also includes partial witness statements from some of these events and characters who were central to Irish history at this time.

Jan Bradford

Every photograph (and significant object) tells a story

This installation consists of a series of photographs alongside a selection of physical objects that found their way onto my desk and into the broken heart of my thesis during my doctoral research. There is an patchwork Elmer the Elephant snowglobe; the white faux leather keepsake bible my Mum and I carried on our wedding days; a souvenir Matryoshka doll; a gold charm bracelet I coveted as a child; well-worn shabby brown sheepskin mitts; the cubic-zirconia-emerald cluster earrings hospital staff removed from my Nana's ears when she died; a yellow-gold locket with the photos mysteriously removed; and a cheap Newton's cradle executive-toy. These significant objects and accompanying photographs will tell an auto/biographical story of how my research - exploring family secrets - drew me to spending time in a cemetery, a playpark and a bleak foreshore road in the town where I was born. Acknowledging that writing from these locations led me to piecing together 'writing stories' of faith, hope, loss, longing and love, this installation will highlight how 'writing as a method of inquiry' left me despairing and declaring in my writing that Maw – my maternal great-grandmother who died before I was born - was a 'disappointment' in my research as I searched – in my writing - to meet her eyes...to do her proud - understand her pain - and - most importantly - seek justice for her suffering.

Tracey Collett and Gayle Letherby

Mon-otony (?): a board (bored) game

This installation follows on from our paper '**If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution(s): on working together in and outside of the academy**' which we delivered at the Summer 2023 Auto/Biography Conference 'New Beginnings'. In the paper, in addition to challenging traditional definitions and myths of working and learning in higher education we discussed, with particular reference to our individual and joint working practices, alternative ways of working. Building on our discussion of the value in collaborative, care-ful working practices that acknowledge the political, the emotional and the embodied aspects of academic life and the relationships with in, here we invite you to join us in a game of: *Mon-otony (?)*.

Focusing on the everyday challenges (and opportunities) in the higher education workplace this game can be played by two or more players either in competition (!!!) or collaboration. We'll supply the board, the die and the figures so all you will need to bring is your experience and imagination.

Our working relationship and our friendship has led to new, professional, personal and political, beginnings for both of us and greatly enriches our work and home life-balance, supporting each of us in our intellectual, emotional, political and physical daily '*dances*'. Our hope is through this game others will join us in challenging those practices that are less rewarding.

DELEGATE LIST

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