



Engaging Empathy Through Creativity Conference

Friday, 30th November 2018

Pound Arts Centre, Corsham (SenseAbility)

Sponsored by Bath Spa University's Empathy and Writing Research Group

Programme

9.45-10.10	Arrival and registration
10.10-10.20	Professor Maggie Gee, Welcome
10.20-11.20	<u>Session 1: Exploring the 'Self'</u>
Chair:	Maggie Gee
10.20	Kylie Fitzpatrick (20 mins)
10.40	Moira Johnson (20 mins)
11.00	Cheryl Morgan (20 mins)
	Q&A (continued over coffee)
11.20-11.30	Coffee

11.30-1.15 **Session Two: Journeys**

Chair: Alice Herve

11.30 Nathan Filer (20 mins)

11.50 Beverley Ferguson (20 mins)

12.10 Lucy English & Sarah Tremlett (30 mins)

12.40 Q &A (can continue over lunch!)

1.00–2.00 Lunch

2.00 -3.00 **Session Three: Vocalisation and Embodiment**

Chair: Lucy English

2.00 Alice Herve (20 mins)

2.20 Victoria Christodoulides (20 mins)

2.40 Q&A

3.00-3.15 Coffee

2.15 – 4.30 **Session Four: Whose Life is it Anyway?**

Chair: Tanvir Bush

3.15 Sabrin Hasbun (20 mins)

3.35-3.55 Penney Ellis (20 mins)

3.55-4.25 Stephen Bush (25 mins)

Q&A

4.30 **Close**

Abstracts

Empathy Starts with 'I'

Dr Kylie Fitzpatrick

This presentation explores the relationship between neuropsychology - how brain function and human behaviour are interdependent - and depth psychology, which assumes the existence of the unconscious mind. The vehicle is first-person narration; 'I': the word by which the brain recognises self, the means by which memoirists, diarists and journal-writers navigate and excavate their conscious and unconscious minds, and the device used by writers of fiction to initiate intimacy and confidentiality with the reader. Can first-person narration also help those with trauma conditions and mental health-related disabilities to re-route errant brain circuitry.

Empathy and Trauma

Moira Johnson

When Moira Johnston's father died she turned to writing as a means of working through the trauma. In this presentation she will explore whether writing is better suited to resolving grief, or just processing it, and how does this affect the reader?

The Power of the Personal; Crafting Stories for Civil Rights Activism

Cheryl Morgan

Civil rights activists aim to connect their audiences to the struggles of the people on whose behalf they are advocating. By far the most effective way to do this is by the power of story, and the best stories to tell are personal. This is the essence of the "role model" technique used by organisations such as Stonewall and Diversity Role Models. This paper will illustrate the process in the form of my own story: a journey from a shy and frightened person thrust into the spotlight by circumstances to, well, someone who doesn't die of embarrassment on stage or on camera.

The Heartland

Nathan Filer

In this presentation, qualified mental-health nurse and award-winning author Nathan Filer will talk about his (not yet finished) new book, *The Heartland*, and about navigating the intersection between empathy, creativity and scientific rigour.

Following the Breadcrumbs

Beverley Ferguson

This paper explores the impact of creative writing in the recovery from mental illness. Finding a trail through the darkness of mental illness can be frightening, confusing and challenging. In this presentation, Beverley Ferguson explores her own journey through illness, admission and sedation, to self-expression, resilience, recovery and hope.

Uprooted

Lucy English & Sarah Tremlett

Uprooted is a talk and screening and focuses on different artistic interpretations through poetry and film of civil unrest and refugee status (some are speaking of first-hand experience in war zones, others are, like ourselves second-hand). We will give a talk on the subject, the different poets and filmmakers involved, and discuss the making of our own films on this subject (with Lucy's from *The Book of Hours*). This will be followed by a screening of selected films from the *Uprooted* collection which is going to be screened at different festivals over the next 6–9 months – from book and poetry festivals to poetry film festivals. We will begin with The North Cornwall Book Festival in the UK in October.

Literature and Madness: The Confusion of Self and Not-Self

Dr Alice Herve

This presentation will explore the challenges to fictional depictions of psychosis, especially in texts with a homodiegetic or autodiegetic narrator that necessitate long passages of the vocalised or interiorised 'mad' voice. It will examine effective and empathetic methods of representation, in particular the displacement of the narrative voice from first-person singular to plural, or to second or to third, in a manner that is inappropriate or bizarre.

The Many Voices of Trauma's Stigma

Victoria Christodoulides

In this presentation, Victoria will discuss her PhD project, a collaboration with trauma recovery centres who are using art therapy to explore how individuals negotiate the complex socio-cultural factors involved in recovery from trauma. The project focuses on the importance of using biomedical measures and embodied approaches *together* in support services. Using an interdisciplinary approach, the project seeks to bridge the gap between our understanding of communication of embodied experiences.

Listen, How Quickly Your Heart is Beating in Me

Sabrin Hasbun

When her mother died, Sabrin faced her personal pain to write a family memoir. She discovered that the personal was just the beginning. How do we write about other people's inner lives without misappropriation and disrespect? How can we use creative writing to explore feelings and memories? Can we write about a loved one without being influenced by our relationship with them, and does this relationship need to be highlighted in the writing? There are, culturally, many different ways to deal with emotions and, specifically, grief.

Plot 202

Penny Ellis

Plot 202 is a triangular piece of land 80km west of Johannesburg. When Penny Ellis's parents bought the smallholding 30 years ago it was surrounded by agricultural land. They invested everything into their dream of the good life, including both their pensions. People have since, increasingly, moved to the area in search of employment. Two settlements are now established within 1km of the plot. Hundreds of people live in makeshift shacks. Crime has increased in the area. Plot 202 documents, with text and photographs, how Penny Ellis's parents coped with a constant sense of threat and with their own financial vulnerability.

Whose Life is it Anyway?

Stephen Bush

Political Commentator and award-winning journalist Stephen Bush will be speaking about who tells our stories, who gets to report, and what this means for journalism, and for political journalism in particular.

Presenter Biographies

Kylie Fitzpatrick

Kylie Fitzpatrick, PhD, is a novelist and associate lecturer in Creative Writing at Bath Spa University. Her four historical novels have been published in eleven languages, and she mentors novelists and memoirists through the Writers & Artist's literary consultancy at Bloomsbury Publishing. Her most recent critical writing *In Search of Meaning; Depth Psychology & Writing*, was published in the *Writing In Education Journal*, Spring, 2017. Her present research into how empathy might be enabled by first-person narration is central to the development of a creative journaling program for rehabilitation and recovery from trauma.

Moira Johnson

Moira Johnston was born and raised in Los Angeles. She reluctantly moved away from her home state to get her undergraduate degree in English and Creative Writing from Wellesley College. She will prattle on about her love for Bath, and how- despite the fact her father dropped dead two years ago - she's just spent the past year in the Creative Writing MA at Bath Spa University completing a memoir about her life with her dad. Moira continues towards her goal of becoming a fully-fledged author, based between Bath and New York.

Cheryl Morgan

Cheryl Morgan is the co-chair of OutStories Bristol, an organisation that researches, preserves and re-tells the stories of LGBT+ people from Bristol and the surrounding area. She is also a professional transgender awareness trainer for The Diversity Trust, and a Stonewall Schools Role Model. In her spare time she likes to read and write science fiction.

Nathan Filer

Nathan Filer is a qualified mental health nurse. *The Shock of the Fall*, his novel about the life of a young man grieving the loss of his brother was a Sunday Times bestseller and translated into thirty languages. It won The Costa Book of the Year, The Betty Trask Prize, The National Book Award for Popular Fiction and The Writers' Guild Award for Best First Novel. He has written for The Guardian and The New York Times. His BBC radio 4 documentary, *The Mind in the Media*, which explored portrayals of mental illness in fiction and journalism was shortlisted for a Mind Media Award.

Beverley Ferguson

Beverley Ferguson is a poet, writer, textile and mixed media artist. She works from a studio at Bath Artists Studios. Her career as a psychotherapist and Tai Chi teacher was interrupted by her experiences of mental illness. As a consequence she has had two long admissions to psychiatric hospital. During her long illness she discovered the power of creative processes. These enabled her to reconnect with her passion for the arts. Beverley threads together a variety of mediums to express and

communicate her experiences. She makes them visible as a way to counteract the judgments and stigma of mental illness.

Lucy English & Sarah Tremlett

Poet Lucy English (Reader in Creative Writing at Bath Spa University) and poetry filmmaker Sarah Tremlett (FRSA, MPhil, SWIP) are co-directors of Liberated Words Poetry Film events www.liberatedwords.com (which first began as part of MIX and was screened at The Pound Centre in 2012!). We have curated and screened our own festivals, and judged and lectured around the world on the subject of poetry films. Lucy is about to publish *The Book of Hours*, poems written for 48 poetry films, and Sarah is finalising a book on *The Poetics of Poetry Film*. Poetry films are short films with poetry, the moving image and music, and are ideal for expressing individual or marginalized voices.

Alice Herve

Alice Herve has a BA in Literature and Philosophy and an MA in Literatures in English from the Open University, and a PhD in Creative Writing from Bath Spa University. Her work centres around the themes of mental and physical dislocation, deracination, transformation, and the plasticity and vulnerability of identity.

Victoria Christodoulides

Victoria Christodoulides 1st year PhD student, University of Bath Health Department, Lead supervisor Simone Fullagar Professor of Physical culture, Sport and Health, Co supervisors Sarah Halligan Professor of Psychology and Leslie Bunt Professor of Music Therapy exploring The value of creative experiences for recovery from childhood trauma in the context of socio-economic inequality.

Sabrin Hasbrun

Sabrin is an Italian-Palestinian transnational writer. She has always had to mediate between two cultures and every day for her is a journey across borders. Italy and Palestine are her two countries and form the focus of her writing. She is currently doing her PhD in Creative Writing with AHRC funding support and writing her first book about her mixed family.

Penney Ellis

Penny Ellis is a South African living in England with some experience of violent trauma. She recently completed an MA in Documentary Photography at the University of South Wales. Her project focused on her family, living on the rural outskirts of Johannesburg, as they cope with the external pressure of living in a society with high levels of violence and their own financial insecurity.

Stephen Bush

Stephen Bush is the New Statesman's special correspondent, covering politics, policy and culture. He writes the NS political column and their daily morning email, as well as writing for the Sunday Times, the FT and the Guardian. He is the PSA's Journalist of the Year and the Editorial Intelligence Political Commentator of the Year.

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