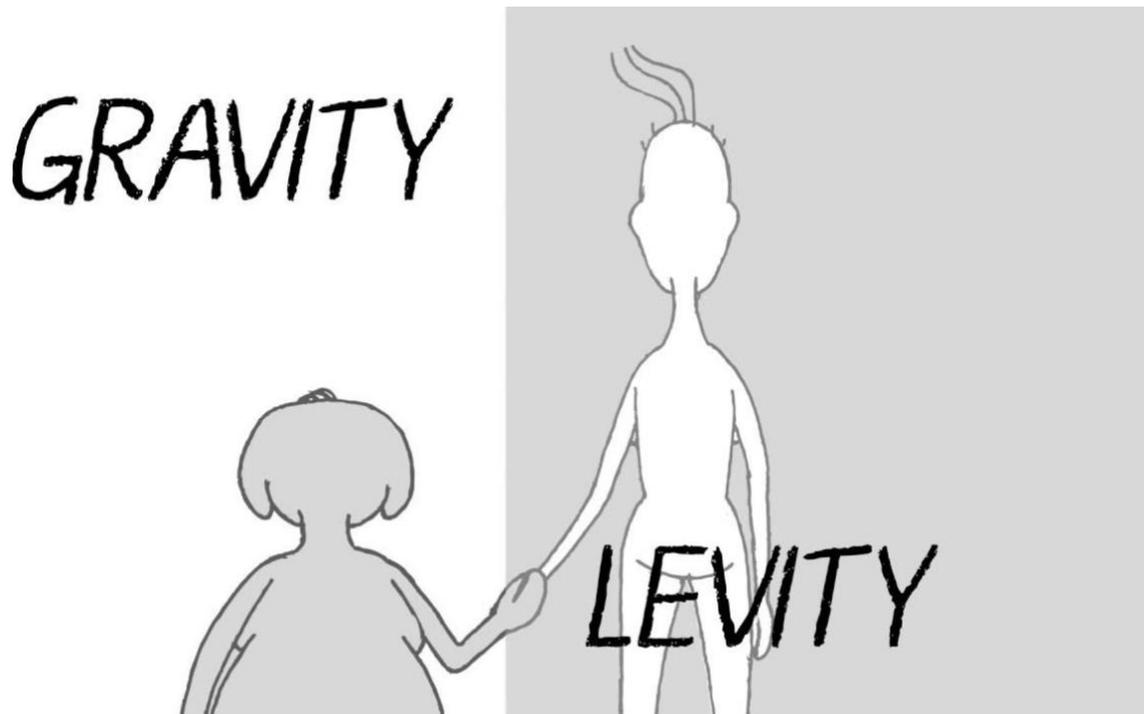


Critical Autoethnography 2019

Gravity and Levity: The Place of Humour in Critical Autoethnography



July 10, 11 & 12
State Library of Victoria
328 Swanston Street
Melbourne, Australia
(corner Swanston & LaTrobe Streets)

Welcome to Critical Autoethnography 2019

Gravity and Levity: The Place of Humour in Critical Autoethnography

Welcome to our fifth annual international critical autoethnography conference!

Critical autoethnography has, with a few notable exceptions, not given equal consideration to the importance of humour, lightness in feeling, and freedom from care as it has to the ability to focus our attention on the gravity of theorizing and living through difficult experiences and the cathartic emotions too often excluded from scholarship. This year, we have turned our attention to the interplay between levity and gravity, laughter and tears, humour and sorrow. Interpersonally and culturally, levity can be an opening to belonging, acceptance, and emotional release. Laughter, too, can be contagious, liberatory, and activist.

As co-conveners, we were inspired by the diversity of responses to the call for papers and performances; each contribution in our programme addresses the conference themes in interesting, complex and creative ways. We've structured the conference using the generative thinking-doing model of our inaugural gathering, combining individual contributions, collaborative workshops, and keynotes into two days of generative discussion and activity. We have also continued with the programme format of scheduling panels so that all participants can hear each other's work and to generate some immediately actionable ideas and work during our time together. Our conference offers a unique opportunity to meet, share work generative conversation, and establish and/or deepen international and local research connections and friendships. What an important and exciting time to be working in this field, and to be building upon our communities of practice!

We are thrilled to announce that next year's conference will be hosted by our Brisbane co-conveners on **8, 9, & 10 July, 2020**. Please check our Facebook page 'Critical Autoethnography' for a save the date announcement later this year. And stay in touch via email at: criticalautoethnography@gmail.com

With warmest wishes, the 2019 conveners: Anne Harris, Stacy Holman Jones, and David Purnell

And the 2019 Conference Committee: Peta Murray, Stayci Taylor, and Kim Munro

Keynote Address

A Story Walks into a Bar: Connecting Stand-up Comedy and Autoethnography Professor Jonathan Wyatt, University of Edinburgh

In this keynote I will propose 8 claims, ask 7 questions and offer 6 writing provocations that arise in considering the connections between stand-up comedy and autoethnography. These claims, questions and provocations have emerged for me during the four years of working on a book, now published (*Therapy, Stand-up and the Gesture of Writing: Towards Creative-Relational Inquiry*, Routledge), in which I tell stories of therapy, stand-up, and the personal and explore these together with theory (Deleuze and Guattari, the new materialisms and affect theory). Another way of framing the keynote is that it will consider what critical autoethnography might have to learn from stand-up, and how we might bring aspects of stand-up to bear upon our work. I am thinking here about the stand-up 'milieu' in the round, and beyond how autoethnography might or should be 'funny'. It's more about how we can understand both stand-up and autoethnography as complex, affective, processes. As happenings.



Jonathan Wyatt is professor of qualitative inquiry at The University of Edinburgh, where he is director of the Centre for Creative-Relational Inquiry. His latest book is *Therapy, Stand-up and the Gesture of Writing: Towards Creative-Relational Inquiry*, published by Routledge. His article with Beatrice Allegranti, *Witnessing Loss: A Feminist Material-Discursive Account*, won the 2015 Norman K. Denzin Qualitative Research Award. He completed his doctorate at Bristol (supervised by the wonderful Jane Speedy) in 2009, with a thesis (co-authored with the also-wonderful Ken Gale) about Deleuze and collaborative writing. This became a book, *Between the two: A nomadic inquiry into collaborative writing and subjectivity*, published by Cambridge Scholars. Originally an English teacher and youth worker, he worked for ten years as a counsellor in a doctors' surgery alongside being Head of Professional Development at the University of Oxford, before heading north to Scotland in 2013.

Keynote Performance

The Gravitas of I/Eye Sonny, Fetau, Joshua and Muamai Iosefo

The call of this conference interplays between levity and gravity, the politics of laughter and sorrow. This keynote performance is based on the va (relational spaces in between) gravity and levity. For a Samoan/Niuean family born in Aotearoa/New Zealand, family and humour are integral to critique and strengthen the va' tapuia (sacred spaces) and faasinomaga (identity) which from a Samoan indigenous reference are one in the same (Mo'a 2018, Tui Atua 2007). The relationality of the va (Wendt 1999) is similar to Spry (2016) where she articulates that autoethnography is about the 'we', it is about the relationality. Within academia, family and humour is often an afterthought. After the data; after theorising; after analysing-conceptualising; after the trauma; after the therapy; and after the healing. The gravitas of the I and eye performance seeks the pull of gravity from the moon to discuss the place and space for the aiga (family) and humour.



Sonny Iosefo (third from left) is the son of Fonoti and Sauimalae Iosefo. He is part Niuean and Samoan and born in Aotearoa. He is the second fastest swimmer and second eldest in his family. Sonny is married to (his first wife) Fetau Iosefo. He is the proud dad of two boys (that he knows of). He has been a Police Officer for 23 years and has specialised in Frontline; Recruiting; youth services; Community Policing and dancing. He is a Sergeant and currently the Counties Manukau family harm coordinator. **Fetau Iosefo** (second from left) is the youngest daughter of Su'a Muamai and Fuimaono Luse Vui Siope. She is also born in Aotearoa but her

ancestors' bones are in Samoa. Her lifetime partner is Sonny Iosefo and she has often thought of trading him in. She has had the painful privilege of giving birth to Joshua and Muamai and is thankful for her tubal ligation. She is a professional teaching fellow and doctoral candidate at the University of Auckland Faculty of Education and Social work. **Joshua Iosefo** (left) is the first accidental son of Sonny and Fetau Iosefo. He can't speak Samoan or Niuean but speaks Japanese fluently. He has an undergraduate degree of communications specialising television and screen production. Joshua is passionate about education, creative arts and mental health. He is currently working for Ako Matatupu (Teach first NZ) and has an internship with Creative New Zealand at Toi Ora. Joshua is also a masters of philosophy student who is writing a critical autoethnography of queer lineage. **Muamai Iosefo** (right) is the planned son of Sonny and Fetau Iosefo. Muamai loves soccer (football); playing roblox and maths. He thinks his older brother is amazing and his dad is his best friend and his mum gives the best hugs.

References:

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- Spry, T. (2016). *Autoethnography and the Other: Unsettling power through utopian performatives*. Routledge, New York.
- Wendt, A. (1999). Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body. In *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, edited by Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, 399-412. 1999. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Tui Atua, T,T,E. (2007). Bioethics and the Samoan Indigenous Reference. Keynote address at the UNESCO Bio-Ethics conference 2007. Tofasmamao, Leauvaa Samoa.

PRE-CONFERENCE DAY: Theory and Writing Workshop

Ecriture Feminine and Critical Autoethnography

Elizabeth Mackinlay & Briony Lipton, University of Queensland

Wednesday, 10 July, 12 -3:30 pm

RMIT Garden Building (see: <https://www.rmit.edu.au/maps>)

Critical autoethnography shares a reciprocal, and inter-animating relationship with Hélène Cixous' *écriture féminine* ("feminine writing") and in this writing workshop we invite you to join us in a poetic, personal and political exploration of the "strange science of writing" (Cixous, 1993). Her work *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* is a poetic, insightful, and ultimately moving reflection on the writing process and explores three distinct areas essential for writing: *The School of the Dead*—the notion that something or someone must die in order for good writing to be born; *The School of Dreams*—the crucial role dreams play in literary inspiration and output; and *The School of Roots*—the importance of depth in the 'nether realms' in all aspects of writing. In this work, Cixous writes of the letter H, a stylized outline of a ladder.



Its calligraphy begins with the letter I: 'One language, I another language, and between the two, the line that makes them vibrate; writing forms a passageway between two shores' (Cixous 1993, p. 4). The letter H is a stylized outline of a ladder. 'This is the ladder writing climbs' (Cixous 1993, p. 4). We might think of critical autoethnography as Cixous' letter H. The personal-I, meeting with the political-I. Critical autoethnography is an embodied reflexive movement; a spiral 'circling, pulling, and beginning again' (Adams & Holman-Jones 2011). Similarly, Cixous employs a circular form and sensual, metaphorically illustrated narrative to create cohesion between her ideas about the need for writers, particularly women, to refuse the reproduction of androcentric knowledge and write 'write

herself' (Cixous 1976), to write themselves. In this workshop, 'Let us go to the school of [critical autoethnographic] writing' (Cixous 1993, p. 3) with the work of Helene Cixous to speak in a different way and through a different medium of academic language, in an approach that reveals the tensions, the paradoxes, the pains and the pleasures of writing with critical autoethnography in the contemporary neoliberal university.

WELCOME TO DAY ONE: THURSDAY 11 JULY

8:30 – 9:00	Registration				
9:00 – 10:00	Keynote Address: Jonathan Wyatt				
10:00 – 11:15	Panel Session 1: Gravity and Levity in Everyday Life				
	Elizabeth Mackinlay	Donna Henson	Ingrid Wang	Esther Fitzpatrick	
11:15 – 11:30	Morning Tea				
11:30 – 12:45	Panel Session 2: Gravity and Levity in Self-Care				
	Nicole Brown	Jade Huell and Jennifer Erdely	Dawne Fahey	Michelle Walter	
12:45 – 1:30	Making Session				
1:30 – 2:30	Lunch				
2:30 – 3:45	Panel Session 3: Tragedy? Comedy?				
	Elizabeth Walley	Mihaela Enache	Dewi Andriani	Briony Lipton	
3:45 – 4:00	Afternoon Tea				
4:00 – 5:15	Panel Session 4: Clowning Around				
	Julie Brien	Michael Crowhurst	Pauline Sherlock	Emily McConochie	

WELCOME TO DAY TWO: FRIDAY 12 JULY					
9:00 – 10:15	Panel Session 1: Funny That Way				
	Christine Hatton	Patrick Kelly	Julie Peters	David Purnell	
10:15 – 10:30	Morning Tea				
10:30 – 11:15	Panel Session 2: Gravity and Levity with the Symphony of Awkward				
	Kim Munro	Peta Murray	Stayci Taylor		
11:15 – 12:00	Making Session				
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch				
1:00 – 2:15	Panel Session 3: Gravity and Levity in Academia				
	Denise Chapman	Karen Madden	Katarina Tuinamuana Joanna Yoo	Craig Wood	Jacqui Young
2:15 – 2:30	Afternoon Tea				
2:30 – 3:45	Panel Session 4: Gravity and Levity: Sustaining Resistance and Rupture				
	Tom Paul Haynes	Fleur Kilpatrick Sarah Walker	Pennie Togatama-Otto	Rebecca Ream	Stephen Vizard
3:45 – 4:15	Reception and Book Launch				
4:15 – 5:00	Keynote Performance: Sonny, Fetau, Joshua and Muamai Iosefo				
5:30-?	Social Event: Naked for Satan Rooftop Bar, 285 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy VIC 3065				

DAY 2: Panel Paper Abstracts

Day 2, Session 1: Gravity and Levity in Every Day Life

Cracking up Coloniality: A Yanyuwa and Cixousian Song We Sing—Elizabeth Mackinlay

In the late 1940s senior Yanyuwa Aboriginal Law woman Nora Jalirduma immortalised the historical arrival of missionaries in Burrulula in a song affectionately called the “Bra song”. An object of colonial and patriarchal control over women’s bodies, the bra is un/dressed in this a-nguyuynguyul (clever or tricky) song to become an affective embodiment of feminine resistance and subversion which seeks, as Cixous (1976, p. 888) reminds us, “to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the ‘truth’ with laughter” (p. 888). In this paper, I draw upon my shared experiences of bras, singing and performance with Yanyuwa women to consider the ways in which the rhythm of women’s language and bodies sound as levity to “crack up” the gravity of coloniality in moments where “because of words” (Cixous, 1986, p. 5) we laugh to cry to forget to remember to cry to laugh.

Domestic Godlessness: An Autoethnography of Life and Story, Cake and Trauma—Donna F. Henson

You know, I think we “forgot to bring the funny.” We have, we write, the serious, the critical and political. Big things. Important things. Complex, unsafe and unsorted things. Compulsive renderings of the unjust and adverse, we bear witness and script the subjective in artful heartfelt constructions of power and privilege. And well we should. But I fear the extent to which our natural attraction to tension, to the dramatic and harrowing, rather paradoxically denies the lightness in our dark. Or, not uncommonly, locates the light in our lives as the aesthetically attractive, narratively luminous, end of our long, dark literary tunnel. The present paper explores the regular and routine, the flighty and the flippant, and seeks to embrace Goodall’s notion of “narrative inheritance” in the small moments of mundane meaning-making that are evidenced in the inevitable wit and accidental comedy of life and story, cake and trauma.

21 Days of Laughter—Ingrid Wang

A New Zealand Chinese arts therapist, researcher and autoethnographer decided to try to use a popular Chinese social media platform, WeChat, for a ‘group therapy’ project without knowing its therapeutic purpose. The researcher set up a ‘21 days simple life challenge’ WeChat group with 12 friends where all members could help each other to confront a serious global issue humanity is facing. For each of the 21 days, each group member chose one item bought for desire rather than need which would be donated to charity. Through humour and laughter, through sharing the stories behind the items, through discussing feelings and personal reflections, the researcher’s own realization about the relationship between identity and materialism was awakened. Through engaging in bricolage using the discussion threads from the online WeChat group, the researcher applied critical autoethnographic thinking to reflect on her experience with materiality in everyday life, and to understand how her identity

formation has been affected by materiality experiences. This research hopefully would inspire people to realise how much of their consumption is driven by desire rather than necessity and how it impacts the environmental crisis which the world is facing.

An Invitation to Laugh—Esther Fitzpatrick

Last night I laughed. I didn't cover my mouth hiding the laughter, ashamed of myself or guilty. I bellowed out loud, my whole body shaking. I had been invited to laugh. I laughed also on Sunday. Sitting under a starry sky with burnt BBQ sausages and close friends. The laughter was more delicious than chocolate. Today I dreamingly contemplate a year, like on a reality TV show chasing authentic recipes, instead travelling the world chasing an invitation to laugh. A year of feeding my soul on deep belly laughter. As a child I would make people laugh, I understood the power, reducing my mother and sisters into a mushy mess. I wonder if an invitation to laugh, through dropping words like stones into a silent lake, into boardroom conversations, watching the ripples disrupt the 'proper' way of being, could become a decolonizing strategy.

Day 2, Session 2: Gravity and Levity in Self-Care

A Lorde's Work: A Year-Long Computational Exploration of Laughter Using a Theoretical Frame for Rage—Nicole M. Brown

This piece applies Audre Lorde's "Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism" as a theoretical blueprint to consider how examinations of Black humor, laughter, and joy can move us toward liberation. A curated and digitized collection of journal entries spanning one year was used to create a corpus for analysis. Using computational digital autoethnography as methodology, the paper considers how mundane occurrences of Black humor, laughter and joy are translated into 'freedom energy' (energy in service to progress and change). The paper uses computation to juxtapose responses of laughter and rage to understand the relationship between humor and pain. Specifically, how might we understand black women's offerings of humor and laughter as responses to pain caused by systemic oppressions. The piece also considers the intoxication of humor ('the feel good') and how such disarmament unifies and distinguishes our values and priorities while also potentially stifling our ability to deeply interrogate oppressive systems.

A Slap on the Back: Performing the Push and Pull of Chronic Pain—Jade Huell & Jennifer Erdely

Few things are more solemn and more personal, than pain. Pain tends to pull us into ourselves and our singular experiences, and there is often nothing funny about it. On the other hand, the theory and practice of autoethnography invite us to offer the hyper-personal up as radical social engagement. This autoethnographic performance about back pain, surgeries, and self-care practices, explores the empathic convergence between the performer and director (who each live with back pain) as they apply Vsevolod Meyerhold's "slap" etude as a template for the push and pull of the body with each instinctual rejection of attempts at repair. Much like doctors use a smiley-face array to identify variance in pain, the performer and director use a

scale of levity and gravity to build their performative relationship, challenging the interiority of conceptualizing pain and demonstrating the relations between empathy and performance.

“OMG, I Have Lost my Sense of Humour”—Dawne Fahey

Zelda cries: “OMG, I have lost my sense of humour! Where has it gone? I can’t find it. Please can you help me?” “OMG ...” is an autoethnography made up of actual events co-mingled (Bochner & Ellis:2016:222) with fictional characters. It uses the gesture of writing to explore Zelda’s experience (personally, politically and culturally) (Wyatt:2018:28) of losing her sense of humour while working in an acute mental health facility, in a private psychiatric hospital. It is an oral tale performed by Zelda who speaks about a balance between levity and gravity; and the necessity of retaining a sense of humour while working with humanity, and surviving madness. In sharing her story, Zelda makes use of digital images, memories and snippets of conversations to explore her experience of burnout, the impact this had on her, and the cost to her, professionally and personally. Fortunately for Zelda, her story ends well.

How Can I Make this Easier for You? Telling Jokes from the Cutting Edge of Research—Michelle Walter

How can I make this easier for you? Telling jokes from the cutting edge of research “The problem of injurious speech raises the question of which words wound, which representations offend...” (Butler, 1997). As an autoethnographer working to explore experiences of long-term mental illness, I am in the position of telling difficult and painful stories. Often, I find myself drawing on humour in order to make the hearing easier, diffusing tension and breaking open moments in order to allow people to laugh with me. Humour eases the telling of these stories, and allows space for moments of levity and lightness that enable painful truths to be spoken and heard. And yet, in turning myself into the joke, in allowing the laughter in order to ease the listener, am I not, as Butler (1997) argued, marshalling the very forces to my defense that injured me in the initial instance? This paper will explore this question, troubling the line between levity and denigration in autoethnographic storytelling.

Day 2, Session 3: Tragedy? Comedy?

‘Make ‘em Laugh’: Confronting Trauma with Humour—Elizabeth Walley

*Oh, you could study Shakespeare and be quite elite,
And you could charm the critics and have nothing to eat,
Just slip on a banana peel, the world's at your feet
Make 'em laugh, make 'em laugh, make 'em laugh!*

Nacio Herb Brown and Arthur Freed Performed by: Donald O’Connor, ‘Singing in the Rain’ (1952)

Is it appropriate to joke about sexual assault, and if so, who can perform these narratives? I propose a comic performance in which I engage dialogically with myself to illuminate a personal experience of trauma and sexual assault in a performative ‘I’ (Spry, 2006), embracing humour as a mode of communication and activism. Stepping irreverently into the field of trauma as a

critical autoethnographer at the intersection of trauma and comedy, I employ levity to rage softly at issues of patriarchal power and privilege. Offering my comic performance in an academic setting I hope to disarm, disturb and amuse, as I explore the possibilities of feminist humour to 'disrupt stasis' (Gurba, 2018), reclaim the rape narrative, and critically reflect upon a culture that enables gendered violation. And if all else fails, there's always the banana peel!

Laughing-Crying: Communist Stories of Tragicomedy—Mihaela Enache

This autoethnographic presentation will investigate laughing-crying, a social phenomenon in communist Romania, a country where people chose to laugh in the face of adversity. During communism and dictatorship, humour was used by Romanian people as a coping mechanism, as a survival strategy. Social oppression, censorship, and a life full of restrictions, were counterbalanced by underground jokes, parody, and ridicule of an absurd Orwellian society. Humour was a way of alleviating the rigidity of the system and of breaking free, a liberatory and activist act of resistance. Romanians were subtly laughing at power, at the dictator and his family, at a grey and monotonous life, at hardship and lack of freedom. Humour was one of the few strategies available to citizens, albeit a dangerous one, to put up a fight against the political order.

The waving Cassava Leaves: A Narrative of an Indonesian Woman in a Space She Feels She Does Not Belong In—Dewi Andriani

The story that I will be sharing is about cassava leaves - a vegetable root growing in tropical countries such as Indonesia. Cassava is a symbol of low status, the staple food of common people during colonialism in Indonesia, where I am from. Once cassava and I entered a space where we do not seem to belong, we were seen as 'other'. Instead of lamenting on what had happened, I choose to laugh from this experience about my powerlessness. Being inspired by Stengel (2014), who made a point about laughter in an educational setting, I am trying to tell my story as an outsider who faced a different cultural encounter. Stengel further states that we laugh at both comical and difficult situations, while evoking range of emotional states; fear, nervousness, shame and confusion. In this paper, I will explore how laughter becomes a way to reclaim power and unsettle binaries.

The Australian National University Laughing at Leadership: Affect, Autoethnography, and Resistance in the Neoliberal University—Briony Lipton

Laughter is a complex and reflexive expression of affects and emotions, sometimes unexplainable and un-representable in origin. Rather than simply relegate these moments to the square brackets of an interview transcript, this paper explores the affective dimensions of my encounters with laughter in research on academic women and university leadership. Influenced by the way Helene Cixous' writing invites the reader to engage with the body and the senses. An engagement with sound invites more experimentation with an affective critical autoethnographic writing practice, and reveals the theoretical, methodological, and practical possibilities of sound in autoethnography. Sound plays an important part in the formation of identity, belonging, and place, and raises important questions about power and privilege. Laughter captures the affective aspects of academic work and subjectivities. It also muddies

binaristic debates about women and voice, and agency. This paper also couples as a feminist sounded-work that accompanies and complements the textual.

The Tala (Tales) of Aunty Tala— A Clown is Born: Daisy: An Autoethnographic Exploration of Becoming a Clown and the Transformative Effects Upon Life and Art—Pauline Sherlock

“The clown is an archetypal figure, which has always existed: it makes people laugh because of its accidents and failures and faults.” Fusetti (2006) Humour and laughter provide an opportunity for us to reflect upon deep issues important to our human existence. Pauline Sherlock is currently a PhD candidate exploring the world of stand-up comedy and the pursuit of expertise in comedy performance. As part of this pursuit Pauline has been participating in clown workshops with the Italian clown maestro, Giovanni Fusetti. This paper will discuss the immersive experience of becoming a clown and the transformative effects upon the artist’s work and life. This presentation will involve a clown performance and discussion of the processes, techniques and impact of the experience.

Day 2, Session 4: Clowning Around

Levity and Gravity: The Place of Humour in Critical Autoethnography—Julie Brien

Hey...watch me now! Looking at ourselves, and our actions through the eyes of others often presents moments of clarity that can instigate and create change. Change of behaviours, patterns, responses, actions. For this submission I propose to use willing members of the audience to participate in an impromptu skit. Each participant will be given specific character traits, qualities and props without anyone else being aware of them. The audience will watch a teaching staff meeting take place, complete with agenda. Personalities represented include those that create or stifle change, those hyper engaged, those participating yet remaining on their phones, those with secret agendas, those who love/hate every idea, the questioners, the ones with the answers.... The skit will provide humour as well as a window into the soul of ourselves and others as we watch the characters act and react based on the character they are playing. This is meant to be a light hearted, funny skit where we can laugh at ourselves, others and the way educators seem to dissect and tussle over the smallest of decisions, when we are tasked with one of the biggest jobs globally. Simmering under the surface is the love of being in education, while simultaneously being sucked dry and bare of creativity, spontaneity and time with students.

Squiggling Towards the Generation of Queerly Supportive Environments—Michael Crowhurst and Michael Emslie

One element of an assemblage of lighter playful activities designed for practitioners. Abstract: The authors are in the process of bringing together an assemblage of activities that aim to trouble normativities by provoking multiplicities. The activities are designed to be used with various practitioners. The activities also connect with critical/collective/auto/ethnographic writing/research projects we are in the process of completing. In this presentation we will outline a sequence of activities designed to encourage exploration of various ambiguous spaces in the interests of leaning towards the construction of ethical educative spaces. We will ask

participants to read a short transcript extract aloud. We will ask participants to consider what they have read. Then drawing on Lyotard's (Postmodern Fables Ch 14) notion of 'the gestural [before]' we will engage in some squiggling in the present as a gestural leaning towards an 'as yet to come into presence' future. Squiggling, we argue, is an arts-based strategy, a gestural diffractive before, that sits somewhere between systematic reflection and strategic actions. Squiggling is a simple practice that involves noodling in the 'new that is the as yet present or realized new' – it is about the sometimes imprecise aspects of the work of leaning towards betterment. It is also quite fun to do.

A Clown is Born: Daisy: An Autoethnographic Exploration of Becoming a Clown and the Transformative Effects Upon Life and Art—Pauline Sherlock

"The clown is an archetypal figure, which has always existed: it makes people laugh because of its accidents and failures and faults." Fusetti (2006) Humour and laughter provide an opportunity for us to reflect upon deep issues important to our human existence. Pauline Sherlock is currently a PhD candidate exploring the world of stand-up comedy and the pursuit of expertise in comedy performance. As part of this pursuit Pauline has been participating in clown workshops with the Italian clown maestro, Giovanni Fusetti. This paper will discuss the immersive experience of becoming a clown and the transformative effects upon the artist's work and life. This presentation will involve a clown performance and discussion of the processes, techniques and impact of the experience.

A Comedian Ate my Homework... and Other Tall-Tales—Emily McConochie

A comedian ate my homework. Typical. You just can't trust comedians in 2019. It was a delightful typology: lots of *typing* and lots of *ologies* reflecting on ways I trick myself into writing better jokes. Attitude, act-outs, exaggeration... It was seriously the BEST abstract I'd ever written. I reflected on ways to write material using '*the school of boredom*' as training ground for humour in both stand-up and community development praxis. My homework was a masterpiece of well-cited, erudite wafflings on critical reflexivity, comedic timing, and the double-consciousness required to present both premise and multiple punchlines to grand effect. It delighted in the dynamics of tension and reveal. I even included the story of how the art of the trickster was imparted to me. Then the comedian vomited some crap onto a page and called it an abstract. Typical. Bad comedian.

DAY 3: Panel Paper Abstracts

Day 3, Session 1: Funny That Way

Clowning Around with Doctor Jess Terr and the Academic Showgirls—Christine Hatton

Roll up, roll up! ...Doctor Jess Terr and the academic showgirls will amaze and astound you with their playful acts, external income and many scholarly achievements, despite all the while being simultaneously both cheerful and invisible. Witness their clown antics and positive efficiencies in "The Girl with the Dreamy Eyes" and 'Odiva, the Living

Mermaid’, two new pieces based on hard data, pointy instruments and ‘real’ science. If you loved them in their hilarious masquerade show “Quality assurance and me”, you won’t be disappointed!

If laughter is a catalyst for audience engagement, it offers a simple contract...to laugh, or not (Wright, 2006). The clown invites us to play. To sense the very game that we are complicit in. Drawing on the ‘blue vaudeville’ period of the late 19th century, this comic critical autoethnographic performance piece will playfully consider female academic acrobatics and the ‘spectacularisation’ of the female body (of work) fashioned in the contemporary neoliberal marketplace of higher education.

Painted Fingernails, Drag, and Making Movies: Evocative Autoethnography and Humour in Queer Screen Production—Patrick Kelly

What are the possibilities of using humour and autoethnography in queer Australian screen production to better understand the notion of ambivalence in queer life and creative work? It has been established that autoethnography can be used to better understand notions of kinship and ambivalence in queer practices, but how can we begin to understand how humour can be utilised as part of an evocative autoethnographic process to realise documentary stories within an Australian context? This presentation is conceptually situated within a queer Australian context, with recent debates and experiences around marriage equality, Safe Schools, conversion therapy, and comedy helping to contextualise examples from the field of queer Australian documentary film, including two of my own films – a personal video essay *What’s With Your Nails?* (2018), and an in-production feature documentary *Honcho Disko: The Movie* (forthcoming). Through an examination of work-in-progress, initial outcomes, and autoethnographic reflections of life and work, this presentation will further our understandings of queerness and documentary screen production in Australia.

If Gender is Gunny, Then Transgender Must be Hilarious—Julie Peters

Freud (1905) suggests we laugh at things we are stressed about. I guess that’s why I find gender funny. And I’m sure my transgender status stresses people. During high school, I stumbled upon the realisation that if I was funny people were far less critical. I became known as the mad professor. In a fairly kind way, this eccentricity-label (Weeks and James 1995) acknowledged my shyness, social inadequacies, dishevelled unfashionable dress, low socio-economic status, low sports status and my high-level abilities in the sciences and humanities. Over the next decades, I grew my sense of humour, primarily through acute observation, to deflect a number of potential sources of stigma. I also realised a humorous light touch gave me the ability to influence people by speaking positively to get things done rather anger which inhibits action. The proposed paper uses personal critical autoethnography to examine the strategic advantages of using levity and gravity to avoid the day-to-day stigma around gender non-conformity.

Funny That Way: Tired of Challenging Traditional Norms Through “Wit” Humor—David Purnell

Humor has long been used to introduce alternative views of the two opposing dichotomies between which we have been struggling to choose. Incongruity and its resolution are at the heart of “wit” humor and television can use “wit” humor to challenge traditional norms. For example, *Sex and the City* often incorporated humor to challenge the notion that to be happy, women had to be married. These issues have gained momentum through media portrayals of motherhood and single moms. *Will and Grace* began to challenge the perceived deviant nature of being gay through the relationship of a gay man and a straight woman, which offered an entry into the conversation of sexuality. Homosexuality is contrasted against heteronormative ideology, which produces the incongruity needed for others to find the subject humorous. In gay humor the role of the homosexual character, joke, or narrative is to influence and challenge the traditional norms regarding sexuality.

Day 3, Session 2: Gravity and Levity with the Symphony of Awkward

Lears & Taughter: Listening in on the Lasagna of our Lives—Kim Munro, Peta Murray and Stayci Taylor

Philosopher Lynne Segal (2017) argues for the restoration of what she terms “radical happiness” through transformative experiences of collective joy that keep “a politics of hope” alive. This presentation extends upon our work as the *Symphony of Awkward*, a trio of researchers exploring the live performance of girlhood diaries, through collectively joyful experiences such as DBK (DiaryBingoKaraoke). Drawing also on the “radical possibilities of listening publics” (Lacey 2013), we present a live-cum-audio experiment that we are calling LHR (LiveHypotheticalRadio), in which we share snippets of a sound-based work-in-progress interspersed with live re-voicings and contextual commentary. How will acts of listening lasagnify layers of the life course while celebrating embarrassingly unformed voices? LHR aims to uncover the potential for radical joy to be found in public rites of expurgation, while also exemplifying the interplay of gravity and levity, through creative practice-based research, in quest of shared meaning, renewal, and resistance.

Day 3, Session 3: Gravity and Levity in Academia

Hot Flashes and Waving Chin Hair: Learning to Embrace and Find Levity in the Trickster called The Change—Denise Chapman

Balancing urgency and stress in academic life has been compared to the juggling of flaming chainsaws (Marshall, 2012). While this juggle is challenging for many, the dominant discourses of Whiteness and Patriarchy in academia result in steeper slopes towards success for black female academics through exclusion and more often invisibility (Gabriel & Tate, 2017). Despite this, there are black female academics showing a collective resistance to being devalued, and some are using a range of creative media to counter oppressive discourses, self-actualise, and love themselves (hooks, 2015). For some black female academics, learning to love oneself within academic spaces can be a lonely experience, especially if you are the only black female in the faculty. This performative autoethnography will explore in the form of spoken word poetry

and interactive digital images how one academic used her experience of menopause as levity to yield self-love and strategies for survival and resistance.

Creating a Killjoy Survival Kit Using the KonMari Method—Karen Madden

Ahmed's (2017), *Living a Feminist Life*, culminates in an itemised killjoy survival kit (p. 235- 249). "It is about finding ways to exist in a world that makes it difficult to exist," she explains, declaring "self-care is warfare" (p.239). What better way can there be to create one's own killjoy survival kit than with Marie Kondo's revolutionary KonMari Method (2019)? "It's about choosing joy," Kondo pronounces. Ahmed's killjoy choosing Kondo's joy - you know it makes sense! In this paper, I take a light-hearted approach to the heavy task of ensuring survival in the world of institutional education that is hostile to the feminist. The levity in Kondo's joy-sparking methodology helps us get closer to the grave subject of surviving worlds that threaten our existence. Does it spark joy? Does it spark feminism? Does it spark joyous feminism? You bet it does.

Down the Rabbit Hole and Into the Blue-Light Carriage: The Paradox of Laughter in Academia—Katarina Tuinamuana and Joanne Yoo

What makes us laugh at 'work'? Do we, like Snow White's seven dwarfs, 'whistle while we work'? What power does laughter hold in everyday practice, and is there a paradox at play in how laughter is used? In this presentation, we extend our use of Indigenous methods of Talanoa, troubling the line between fiction and non-fiction. We parody two fictionalised-yet-lived accounts where laughter is a mask that can both diminish and empower. Laughter that camouflages shame, injustice and powerlessness can take us 'down a rabbit hole' to a disorienting alternate reality. In our presentation, we ask whether laughter can empower us in academia, within supposedly-safe spaces, such as the 'blue light carriage' on a train. Or do these artificially generated safe-houses actually work against us, diminishing us further? Asking these questions, our aim is to explore how shared laughter can be channeled as "an act of solidarity" (Robinson, 2009).

The Secret Art of Pedagogical Alchemy: Creating Joy in Neoliberal Times—Craig Wood

Pedagogical alchemy is a political response to the challenges faced by creative teachers in turbulent and neoliberal times. Pedagogical alchemy embraces emancipatory possibilities of joy and levity in creative teacher praxis that disrupts oppressive neoliberal policy enactments in schools. Like their medieval counterparts, pedagogical alchemists work in secret networks, developing political resistance and generating moments of joy in classrooms where individual students are liberated and humanity is celebrated. *The Secret Art of Pedagogical Alchemy* presents a contemporary pedagogical alchemist's work, that featured Renaissance alchemist Isabella Cortese. *The Secret art of Pedagogical Alchemy* uses a/r/tography as method to embrace teacher voice, in all of its joy and vulnerabilities, to critically reflect on education policy enshrined in publicly available documents. Honouring Cortese written records, the presentation is performed in iambic pentameter.

Sifting Properties Lost and Found in the Academy: Gravity, Levity and Humour in a PhD Journey—Jacqui Young

When my journal goes missing I find myself searching. How could I lose it, have I lost it, why that? My journal contains properties I cannot be recall, is filled with drawings and words scribbled spontaneously, is integral to my PhD. It encapsulates the light-heartedness and the gravitas of the task I set myself, as a researcher. A thinking process, a story mapped, a thread illuminated, autoethnographic scholarship poetically evidenced! Strange I am not distraught, I am calm, philosophical so to speak. “Funny about that, yes, funny strange” I muse as I turn stuff inside out. Sifting my house, my head, I re-search. I was distraught at other times, when it seemed I’d lost the plot in my research, and my sense of humour, rather than beautiful evidence of it. Haha, but now the plot thickens

Day 3, Session 4: Gravity and Levity in Sustaining Resistance and Rupture

Facilitating a Paradigm Shift toward Sustainability: An Autoethnography that Spans Gravity and Levity/Lightness—Tom Paul Haynes

My autoethnographic research is based in my facilitation of architectural stakeholders to conceptualise future communities (Glass-Coffin, 2010; Holman Jones, 2016). This future is framed by the gravity of the Anthropocene - planetary transformation on the scale of past geological epochs that is driven by human activity (Chakrabarty, 2015; Steffen, 2015). In this presentation I explore the need for a paradigm shift in architectural design (Kuhn, 1962; Foucault, 2005). This is inspired by introducing quantum-based principles that integrate the myriad parts of design into a greater wholeness (O'Brien, 2016; Wendt, 2015; Laszlo, 2008). This introduces an element of levity/lightness into a potentially impossible situation. To make this personal and tangible, I facilitate imaginal visioning processes that have been developed by foresight and futurist professionals (Markley, 2014). These processes emphasise listening to intuitive guidance within to support connection to shared insights and wisdom traditions (Fuller, 1982; Nader, 2000; Mercay, 2008; Moler, 2018).

Staging Subversion: Comedic Tactics in the Theatre of Climate Change—Fleur Kilpatrick and Sarah Walker

In a rising ocean of dire facts, there is an urgent need for performative fiction about our present that confronts climate crisis with irreverence and absurdity. To write about climate change in a way that empowers audiences and inspires action is to find a balance between hope and despair: too much or too little of either can paralyse. Many artists struggle to contain the complexities of the present in their representation of climate change: getting on with life whilst living in fear. Many choose instead to favour a dystopian lens; such narratives sit within conventional dramatic structure far better than the unresolved distress and mundanity of the present. In this paper, we will argue for entertainment as a disarming mechanism through an examination of our shared creative practice. Our works uses comedic tactics and absurdist structures to examine Australia’s relationship with nature and our global responsibility from new narrative viewpoints.

The tala (tales) of Aunty Tala—Pennie Togatama-Otto

Oi...Did you get a hiding?

Yeah... Who from?

My brother...

Whoa. Did he smash your head? You're bleeding.

Oh, yeah must be...

...Bahahahahaha

We sit close and accept the silent tears. Then out of nowhere, we erupt in laughter to cover the shame, the pain and the hurt. This is our empathy this is our catharsis. As Pasifika people, we are renowned for our resilience, our kind nature and our sense of humour (Iosefo, 2016). Pasifika culture sometimes views comedy as a medium to discuss sensitive topics. It is usually through parody and jest that one can address their concerns of communal incest, family harm or self-harm including transgender and gay issues or sensitivities. Former comedy duo The Laughing Samoans united audiences across generations and cultures with their humorous take on Pasifika values in politics including, family violence, cultural pressures, the church and other facets of Pasifika culture. The Samoan practice of faleaitu “privileges family as central to the identity construction, emphasizes domestic relations, enacts narratives and engages in critical political satire” (Pearson, 2014). This form of comedy is highly valued in Samoa with very few faleaitu coming forward. Dr Tyler Perry’s, *Madea* is another example of bringing sensitive issues to the table for dissemination. *Madea*’s stance on domestic violence empowers women to stand up and reclaim their lives. Dr Tyler Perry and *Madea* literally saved my life. My critical autoethnographic performance will be in the character of Aunty Tala where I will share her journey of the bruising laughs. For when we laugh together, we cry together and when we cry together we learn together.

Poetic Pan-Play: Unsettling Pākehā Binaries—Rebecca Ream

Pan, the satyr, has been the God of Arcadia since antiquity. He is playful – a player, a hedonist, a joker. I have recently started playing with Pan to ease the anxiety and fervour entrenched in the strident Pākehā binary between agricultural production and environmental preservation in New Zealand. As the basis for my doctoral research, I chose to explore these land tensions through the framework of Arcadia. For two-thousand years Arcadia has been refashioned poetically into an ideal society, duplicitously used by the British Empire to naturalise White occupancy within New Zealand. As a descendant of colonial settlers, I felt compelled to examine my own part in this colonising process as a part of my research. Interestingly, whilst excavating my own Pākehā arcadianism, with the help of Haraway’s *natureculturesii*, I found playing with Pan fruitful for unsettling Pākehā binaries within myself that provided political possibilities, presented in poetical form.

The Last Vigil: The Trickster in Death's Waiting Room—Stephen Vizard

Life’s most traumatic encounter is almost always life’s final encounter - death. In my two recent theatrical works - *Banquet of Secrets*, an opera produced by Arts Centre Melbourne and Queensland Performing Arts Centre; and *Vigil*, a musical, produced by Adelaide Festival Centre – I have recorded and responded to my own recent personal encounters with a family

member's death, and a close friend's death, through, in large part, the prism of humour. In mode, form, character and style I have used humour to rupture, subvert, recalibrate and explore the ambiguities and possibilities of belonging and ceasing to belong, of being and ceasing to be. In this presentation I will reflect on my use of humour as expressed in these two works. In particular I will explore and interpret my experience and those of my theatrical protagonists as those of a Trickster arising from the ambiguous liminality in that transformative, disruptive place and moment, 'trembling in the balance', between life and death, order and chaos, structure and non-structure.