Welcome to the 8th annual
CRITICAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY CONFERENCE

Love is an Action
27-29 September 2023
Oxford Scholar, Level 1
427 Swanston St, Melbourne VIC 3000
RMIT University
Love is an Action

Autoethnography is a method that makes space for and takes seriously emotions, feelings and affects in research and in scholarship. In focusing on love as an action that is bound up, as bell hooks writes, in a “practice of freedom”, autoethnography asks us to work and live relationally, in service of others and the world around us (Outlaw Culture, 1994, p. 250). hooks writes “The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others. That action is the testimony of love as the practice of freedom” (1994, p 250), and when we “choose to love we choose to move against fear” (All About Love, 1999, p 125).

Drawing on hooks’ large body of work on love, hope and activism, the 2023 critical autoethnography conference focuses on the role of love as both an action and a practice of freedom in critical autoethnographic scholarship and research.

We are interested in how critical autoethnographic work can focus attention on the felt-sense of loving and being loved as an ethical relation, how our engagement with theory and writing is a practice motivated by and an enactment of love, and how love can animate and fuel our work in the academy and beyond. We are interested too in how the critical autoethnography conference can nurture and sustain what hooks described as ‘beloved community’ of activist researchers and artists, one formed through the affirmation of difference, where each of us claims and takes responsibility for the “identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world” (Killing Rage, 1995, p. 265).
Writing and Researching in Relation to Our Felt-Sense
Professor Eve Tuck

In this keynote lecture, Eve Tuck will reflect on nearly two decades of thinking with conceptualizations of the felt-sense, especially as theorized in the work of Sondra Perl. Tuck will layer this discussion with Indigenous feminist understandings of felt-theory, as described by Tanana Athabaskan scholar Dian Million. In writing and researching with our felt sense, we can attend to our many relations of care and responsibility, to communities, to lands and waters, and to one another.

Eve Tuck is Professor of Critical Race and Indigenous Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. She is also Canada Research of Indigenous Methodologies with Youth and Communities. Writing across fields of Indigenous studies, education, research practice and ethics, Tuck’s work attends to the possibilities of Collaborative Indigenous Research for the kinds of futures that Indigenous communities are trying to bring about for future generations. Tuck is Unanga Xavier and is an enrolled member of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island, Alaska.

Learn more about her work at http://www.evetuck.com/ and https://www.tkarontocirclelab.com/

Photo Credit: Red Works
Navel-Gazing Breaks the Heart Open: Autoethnography as Love-in-Action
Dr Fiona Murray

In this paper, I gaze at my tummy, the part of my body with which I have the most complex relationship. During a period of burnout following my divorce, I tell my therapist about the practice of writing autoethnography. I tell her about my writing to get well, being unpoetic and sensationless writing that navel-gazes. She asks me what needs to happen for me to be able to write again in service of others. There was an emergence of silence to these questions that sensed the impossibility of an answer. In the silence, I focus on the rainbow string of circles falling against the dark background my therapist sits against. She follows my gaze.

She touches the colourful cascade and tells me that each circle is a chakra, chakra, the Sanskrit word for wheel. She says we all have chakras located in certain parts of our bodies. I listen and start to understand these wheels as cogs in the machine, with each wheel an intersection of affect and intensity, working on the register of the body without organs (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004). My therapist decides that the encounter between the chakras and my hungry gaze is a sign that she should abandon the usual counselling concepts and go with the chakras.

We start with the lower chakras, all located in the abdomen. Through the chakras, I learn that it is through navel-gazing that I can write again in service of others. Therefore, this paper responds to the age-old critique that autoethnography is navel-gazing and narcissistic. It posits that it cannot be both. It holds that autoethnography without navel-gazing is narcissistic writing, as it never truly reaches the heart.


Dr Fiona Murray is a co-director of the Centre for Creative-Relational Inquiry and a lecturer in Counselling, Psychotherapy and Applied Social Sciences at the University of Edinburgh. Her current research interest is in the development of creating Performative Writing as an approach to writing-together-in-process. A recent publication is “From Post-qualitative Inquiry towards Creative-Relational Inquiry in (and beyond) the Education/Training of Therapists” in Qualitative Research Approaches for Psychotherapy: Reflexivity, Methodology, and Criticality, edited by Keith Tudor and Jonathan Wyatt.
Theory Workshop
Loving, Thinking, Action: Writing Authoethnography with bell hooks
Liz Mackinlay and Denise Chapman

bell hooks was a dedicated writer who drew inspiration from her identity as a black, female, southern, and working-class individual. She fully embraced these aspects of her identity, understanding them as integral markers that defined her (1999a, p. 58). Her writing is a journey fueled by her pursuit of love, intertwined with feminist and anti-racist endeavors (1992, n. p.). Quantity was not her goal; instead, she wrote with a profound desire to express her thoughts and share them with the world (1999a, p. 16). Writing was a daily commitment for her (1999a, p. 15), a craft she diligently honed (1999a, p. 65), weaving together small pieces of her work through constant revision. She was deeply committed to an intellectual life, using ideas as tools to craft alternative ways of understanding the world (1999b, p. 32). Her aim was not to simplify complex ideas but to make the complexity clear (1999a, p. 40). She wrote fearlessly and passionately, inviting rigorous critique of her storytelling methods and narratives (1999a, p. 68). Her writing is infused with a powerful political agenda, firmly rooted in her dedication to ending all forms of domination (1999a, p. 141).

In this workshop we explore bell hooks life, work and words as a way to put love into autoethnographic action. We will take you on a relational journey in conversation with bell hooks to engage with her love-thinking, her love of thinking, and her love of thinking-in-action.

References

Elizabeth (Liz) Mackinlay is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at the Southern Cross University. She is in love with words and her most recent books, Critical writing for embodied approaches: Autoethnography, feminism and decoloniality published by Palgrave in 2019, Writing feminist autoethnography: In love with theory, words, and the language of women writers with Routledge 2022, Departing radically in academic writing: Alternative approaches to writing and methods in qualitative research with Karen Madden to be published by Routledge and Critical authoethnography and ecriture feminine: Writing with Hélène Cixous with Renee Mickelburgh with Palgrave 2023, are expressions of this passion.

Denise Chapman is a Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Monash University. She uses oral stories, children’s literature, poetry, and digital images as counternarrative windows for liberation. Her counter-hegemonic creative work continues the traditions of her Gullah heritage, exploring themes of immigration, Afro Diasporic-motherhood, and belonging. Denise was shortlisted for the Queensland Poetry’s 2022 XYZ Prize for Excellence in Spoken Word; she is the 2023 Mem Fox Fellow, and her poetry-film work is currently being exhibited at the Counihan Gallery until October 22, 2023.
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<td>8:30 – 8:45</td>
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| 9:00 – 12:00 | **Theory Workshop:** Loving, Thinking, Action: Writing Authoethnography with bell hooks  
                        Liz Mackinlay and Denise Chapman (including Morning Tea) |
| 12:00 – 12:45 | Lunch On Your Own                                                      |
| 12:45 – 2:00 | Panel Session 1: Love is an Action in Teaching, Mentoring and Collaboration  
                        Catherine Sundbye, Linda Henderson, Damien Lyons  
                        Esther Fitzpatrick, Soyon Park, Naomi Pears-Scown  
                        Eloise Doherty  
                        Jack Tan  
                        Elizabeth Allotta |
| 2:00 – 2:15  | Afternoon Tea                                                          |
| 2:15 – 3:45  | Panel Session 2: Love is an Action of Resilience and Reciprocity  
                        Karissa Taylor  
                        Suzanne Crowley  
                        Michelle Walter  
                        Julie Peters  
                        David Purnell |
| 3:45 – ?     | Impromptu Drinks/Dinner with New Friends, Locations TBD                |
## WELCOME TO DAY TWO: THURSDAY 28 SEPTEMBER

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<td>9:15 – 10:15</td>
<td>Keynote: Professor Eve Tuck</td>
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<td>10:30 – 12:00</td>
<td><strong>Panel Session 3: Love is an Action of/as Embodied Practice</strong></td>
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<td>Elizabeth Walley</td>
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<td>Jonathan Graffam-O’Meara, Em Kegan, Ryan Hamilton, Georgie Wolf</td>
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<td>Vanessa Chapple</td>
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<td>12:00 – 12:45</td>
<td><strong>Lunch On Your Own</strong></td>
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<td>12:45 – 2:00</td>
<td><strong>Panel Session 4: Love is an Action in the Practice of Freedom</strong></td>
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<td>Julie Tabrum</td>
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<td>2:00 – 3:00</td>
<td><strong>Making Session: Erasure Poetry as a Collaborative Performance of Becoming, Visualising Erasure and Repair</strong>, Dawne Fahey &amp; Christine Hatton <em>(including afternoon tea)</em></td>
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<td>3:00 – 4:30</td>
<td><strong>Panel Session 5: Love is an Action of Connection, Changemaking and Healing</strong></td>
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<td>Mia Livingston</td>
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<td>4:30 – 5:00</td>
<td><strong>Drinks Downstairs @Oxford Scholar</strong></td>
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<td>5:00 – 6:00</td>
<td><strong>Feature Performance: Full Cream</strong></td>
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<td>Em Kegan, Ryan Hamilton, Georgie Wolfe &amp; Jonathan Graffam-O’Meara</td>
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<td>6:00 – 8:00</td>
<td><strong>Conference Dinner, Mabu Mabu, Fed Square, 25/2 Swanston Street Melbourne VIC, 3000 (optional)</strong></td>
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<td>Morning Tea</td>
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<td>10:15 – 11:45</td>
<td>Panel Session 6: Love is an Action in the Anthropocene</td>
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<td>Julie Vulcan             Lilian Roberts             Deborah Green             Meghan Shelton             Jacqui Young</td>
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<td>11:45 – 12:30</td>
<td>Lunch On Your Own</td>
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<td>12:30 – 2:00</td>
<td>Panel Session 7: Love is an Action of Mutual Love and Caring</td>
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<td>Georgie Harriss               Gabriella Angelini           Michelle Hood             Donna Henson             Nic Menser Hearn</td>
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<td>2:00 – 3:00</td>
<td>Making Session: Embodied Mapmaking as a Critical Autoethnographic Practice for (Re)conciliation and De/colonization, Danielle Hradsky, Jane Carter &amp; Andrew Byrne (including afternoon tea)</td>
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<td>3:00 – 4:30</td>
<td>Panel Session 8: Poetry as Love in Action</td>
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<td>Liuning Yang               Rebecca Ream               Nicola Apps           Mig Dann              Melanie Baak and Denise Chapman</td>
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<td>4:30 – 5:00</td>
<td>Celebrating CAE Family &amp; Closing Plenary</td>
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<td>5:30-?</td>
<td>Social Event: Naked for Satan Rooftop Bar, 285 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy VIC 3065 (Optional)</td>
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Abstracts

Wednesday, 27 September

12:45-2:00 Panel Session 1: Love is an Action in Teaching, Mentoring and Collaboration

Entanglements of Love in the PhD Supervision Relationship
Catherine Sundbye, Linda Henderson, Damien Lyons, Monash University

In this paper, we want to explore the entanglements of love in a PhD relationship. We acknowledge that to speak of love in this relationship is unusual with the current climate of institutional requirements for timely PhD completions. Research would argue that to achieve timely completions then good supervision is defined by a shared culture of exploration of the topic as well as expert guidance, continuous support, and timely feedback. However, when examining the research on PhD pedagogy there is a distinct lack of how this ‘shared culture’ is developed and maintained throughout the PhD journey and its relational aspects. In this paper, we untangle the entanglements of love that have developed over time in a PhD supervision relationship. We describe and theorise the characteristics of these entanglements drawing on bell hooks (2001) definition of love as a quality that fosters the flourishing of life thus supporting the growth of self and other – student and supervisor. In effect, what we seek to do in this paper is provide a way of understanding supervision as an entanglement of love that can support deep learning within the entanglement of the student and supervisor relationship.

Becoming Researchers Plugging into Love and Staying with the Trouble
Soyon Park, Naomi Pears-Scown and Esther Fitzpatrick, with a collaboration of voices from Aotearoa, University of Auckland

A research assemblage plugged into love flows
With uninvited moments of falling into love.
Embraces the inevitable messiness of love.
Plugging, un-plugging and re-plugging into love
Always already becoming.
Sometimes we don’t choose love, love chooses us.
We fell for Deleuze, the falling,
Was and was not by choice.
We think and write by plugging into
Other thinking-writing-machines.
Through academic intra-actions we encounter theory,
Learning and thinking, folded, unfolded, refolded,
Our be(com)ings form a rhizomatic connection with
Human and non-human machines;
This new assemblage now set in motion,
Ready to get plugged into love.

Rosi Braidotti said,
‘We must do something that really grabs us,
Otherwise, it won’t sustain us.’
I have been charting the light
Move across the sky.
Watching how it greets me through different windows.
The choice to love a place.
Unclenching my fists and letting go.
Staying with the trouble we
Choose to plug into love.

How Might this Change the Outcome? An Autoethnographic Exploration of Love in Audiology Education
Eloise Doherty, Flinders University

She isn’t sure how to do this... She understands autoethnography on a theoretical level, but how does one do autoethnography? In her discipline, where discipline into mind-numbing conformity is “normal”, how can she break from that? Autoethnography is just not done, yet love as an action resonates strongly...

Lately I’ve been questioning what kind of academic I want to be. Everywhere I look I see hollow promises and shallow self-centeredness; a lack of care in professions that should. Departments that reward staff for sacrificing student education and wellbeing as they claw to the top. Games played; collateral damage swept aside. It’s time to confront the biases that shape teaching and practice in my discipline; to recognise that if I seek change, “the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility” (hooks, 1994, p. 12). Love in the classroom prepares us “to open our minds and hearts” (hooks, 2010, p. 163), and so, I will begin with love...

Why Am I Here, Doing What I Do?
Elizabeth Allotta. University of Queensland

I often find myself questioning why I teach, why I continue, and why others continue when so many leave? What do teachers experience? What drives them to continue? Listening to teachers’ stories I am drawn into their world and experiences filled with passion, emotion, belief, and love – love in action, love embodied, love that enables them to continue. Their stories challenge perceptions, challenge the status quo, challenge what is and what is accepted. bell hooks’ love ethic theory urges us to see love as more than “an act of will with intent and action towards care, commitment, trust, respect, responsibility, and knowledge of oneself and the other, but also as an act of resistance” (Biana, 2021, p.127). Teachers continue. They resist and act with love – love of teaching, love of human potential, love of possibility. hooks urges us “to return to love and reclaim is transformative power” (2002, p.15).

2:15-3:45 Panel Session 2: Love is an Action of Resilience and Reciprocity

Joy, By Any Means Necessary: A (Very Short) Survival Manifesto for a Bad Year
Karissa Taylor, Monash University

bell hooks offers us a love ethic. A way of living to survive climates of emergency and climates of just having a really fucking bad year. A commitment to living in relation to others, to ourselves and to our worlds.

1. Peer Review: start small. make a commitment to self-criticality with emphasis on safety and consistency. this builds resilience and a personal sense of relationality. by this, I mean, go to therapy.
2. Complain: make an account of your reaction, then make a decision about your response.
3. Practice Integrity: a colossal leap in size of suggestion. nevertheless. now is not the time to compromise yourself. through a process of considering whether it is you, whether it is them, and how the twain intertwine the importance of the matter will rise, like congealed soy milk skin on a poorly poured latte, to the surface.

4. Go out and love: joy begets the capacity to love, despite repeated knocks to our perceived capacity to give a shit. love, not without boundary — do not abandon your integrity (harder than it sounds) — but give it a clumsy go.

5. Repeat, obviously: maybe not in this order.

A love ethic is an embodied act of deep resilience: living your values in action as a concise expression of self through love.

**Love is an Action**  
Suzanne Crowley, University of Tasmania

In April 1981, I attended the *Women, Patriarchy and the Future* forum in Melbourne. I attended as part of my larger journey of seeking *It* out. I did not know that then. My 1981 journal kept at the time has, upon re-reading, transformed into an autoethnographic account; of the forum; the broader social context in which it was situated, and of an unanticipated event that arose from it. It also records attempts to discuss racism and male violence toward women. It embodies a nascent yearning for feminism (hooks, 2014) today distorted by elite capture (Táíwò, 2022). Critical reflection on past events reminds us that today’s concerns are not new. We have been here before. A critical revisiting of my diaries, which have come to structure my life narrative, makes reconsideration of what I recorded possible. Challenging elite capture is love in action and involves valuing our past. (hooks, 2014, p. 147)

**Caring for and Caring with as an Act of Love: Audience, Reciprocity and Ethics in Telling Our Trauma Stories**  
Michelle Walter. Melbourne University

Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis (2020) write that to do autoethnographic work is to pay attention to ethics, access and aesthetics. In doing so we ‘...position...[our audiences] as active participants...’ (p. 7), expecting them to engage with our stories in acts of mutual responsibility and care. But what are our responsibilities when telling *trauma* stories? How do we walk the line between honouring our telling and our truths, while taking care of those who listen, watch and read in what is a relational act of collective witness bearing? What is our responsibility to audiences when, as Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis (2020) note, many who take up Autoethnography may themselves be emerging from difficult places of trauma? In this presentation, I discuss the ethics of writing and telling trauma stories, exploring the balance between maintaining the integrity of the telling while caring for, and with, our autoethnographic community.

**All is Us ... All You Need is Love**  
Julie Peters

Love drives connection. We are connected ... all is us ... all humans ... all creatures ... all ecosystems ... connected. Love is central to promoting social justice and equity and love of the environment. Humans have enabled the ongoing cephalisation of the planet. This means humanity is now responsible for the direction of our social and psychological evolution as well as all life on earth. The author examines how love can lead positive change while noting some humans behave incredibly badly, some do not stand for justice, some do not stand for freedom, or feminism or sexual freedom. They have no intention of giving up unearned privilege. How do we love them, the badly behaved? The tools of cultural
reproduction and change include carrot and stick – normative coercion (Bourdieu 1973), stigma (Douglas 1966), doing things differently (onto-formativity) (Kosik 1976) and changing the world through function status declarations (Searle 2010).

**The Power of Love in a Pre-Dystopian Political Culture**  
David Purnell, Western Washington University

The pre-dystopian political conditions found in the US and elsewhere are characterized by political polarization, the erosion of democratic institutions, and income inequality. These conditions can contribute to the erosion of democracy and the rise of authoritarianism, which can lead to a dystopian future. It is essential for policymakers and citizens alike to work towards addressing these issues in order to maintain a healthy and vibrant democracy. Looking to hooks who proposes the concept of "love as political resistance," a commitment to justice and equality, and a rejection of dominant culture that perpetuates violence and oppression, we need to be attuned to power dynamics, and to actively work to dismantle them. Love, for hooks, is a transformative force that has the power to heal and to create new possibilities not only for individuals, but also for the communities in which we live.

**Thursday, 28 September**

**10:30-12:00 Panel Session 3: Love is an Action of/as Embodied Practice**

**Love, Care and Reciprocity in the Act of Writing Ethnodrama**  
Zoe Hogan, University of Sydney

This paper is a reflection on writing an ethnodrama as a loving gift for research participants, rather than a research output about participants. Originally envisaged as a methodology to synthesise and present research findings, writing an ethnodrama became an act of love for the research participants who I had come to know, and be known by, in the preceding months. The well-trodden path of writing an ethnodrama for an external audience would, in this context, have necessitated a broad sweep of dramaturgical decisions to combine and conflate characters, and simplify and flatten multivocal and multilingual expression. Instead, writing reshaped itself around an aesthetics of care, where my reciprocal relations with research participants came to be at the forefront of every aesthetic decision (Thompson 2015). The ethnodrama presentation became a one-off, private experience shared with participants, ‘performed and performing in a cocoon of meaning’ (Harris and Jones, 2020, p.326).

**Choosing Love: Performing Trauma as a Radical Act of Self Love**  
Elizabeth Walley, RMIT University

I stand in the wings  
and breathe deeply.  
Fully present in this moment  
I wait to become my self  
to perform myself  
to feel the words  
to engage the body  
purposefully  
in an act of mutual trust  
an act of rebellion  
a radical act of love.
To perform a curated, critically examined story of self is both an act of love and a practice of freedom. Norman Denzin (Performance Ethnography, 2003, p 258), argues that performance autoethnography is a ‘tool of liberation,’ while bell hooks states that ‘Living, as we do, in a culture of domination, to truly choose to love is heroic’ (Speaking Freely, 2016). Making autoethnography is an embrace and a refusal, an act of hope and an act of protest, a furious rage of self-acceptance. In my activist practice, as Martin Luther King declared, ‘I have decided to love.’ In this performance before beloved community, I share my artistic process and my method of creative composition. Embracing my story of lived trauma and my personal feminist narrative, I offer this dramatic re-presentation as a radical act of self love.

_I’m Single ... Still... and Here’s Why_  
Peter J. Cook, University of Southern Queensland

My response to my singledom is to turn to my community. Within my chosen academic family, I find the tenets of “care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment, and trust, as well as honest and open communication” (hooks, 1999). But I have fought dysfunction to find it. My freedom is complicated and confusing, but in considering the complexities I find enlightenment, and connectivity within the community, not instead of, but as well as loving self.

This presentation offers a video dance work that explores an embodied representation of the confusion that relationships cause and suggests a justification for sidestepping them to seek a better fit within a chosen community. The work engages a poignant musical theatre accompaniment as stimulus for understanding singledom and the impetus for the pursuit of community. By availing some private thoughts, I aim to encourage comments, critiques, and reflections that enhance the connection between self-love/loathing, relationship frustrations and finding inner freedom.

_Staging Fat Kinship: Full Cream’s Dramaturgy of Fat-Queer Love_  
Jonathan Graffam-O’Meara, Ryan Hamilton, Emily Keagan and Georgina Wolfe, Monash University

Our part-performance/part-paper presentation examines the processes of making the theatre show _Full Cream_ (2023). We begin by showcasing select material (scenes) from the production and move to examine our experiences in devising and shaping the work. _Full Cream_ puts centre stage the fat kinship and love shared by real-life housemates Emily and Ryan. It’s a story of chubby chasers, of mourning Adele’s fat, of jiggling bellies and hook-ups gone right. We ask: what happens when fat people are happy and not just the elephant in the room? _Full Cream_ blends verbatim text, physical theatre and mukbang to imagine (and realise) a stage where fat people belong, where they can show love and be loved fiercely and unapologetically. It’s a slice of utopia served with a side of clotted cream. Our show is for those who keep checks on who is the fattest in the room and for those who are indeed the fattest in the room. In examining scenes shared for the presentation, we autoethnographically trace the felt experiences of, and knowledge gained from, generating and crafting this material for performance. In composing our analysis, we draw on queer theory, performance studies (dramaturgy), fat studies and public health discourse to weave together a robust theoretical framework. Through our joint performance-paper presentation we articulate a dramaturgy of fat-queer love and argue its potential for crafting affective — joyous and celebratory — moments of performance.
**Heart Condition**  
Vanessa Chapple, RMIT University

The heart is a figure for love. *Heart condition* is a participatory performance which invites connection with heart stories. This spoken-word performance, written through a feminist new-materialist lens, tells the story of the heart condition the artist-researcher was born with, including fragments which articulate the bodied hypervigilance she developed as a child, the not/necessary interventions which occurred within the patriarchal culture of Western medicine, and the lure of somatic practices in her search for embodied connection to self.

**12:45-2:00 Panel Session 4: Love is an Action in the Practice of Freedom**

**The Critical Act of Mending**  
Julie Tabrum, University of Auckland

Translated as ‘golden joinery’ or ‘golden repair’ kintsugi demonstrates a passion for something artful and beautiful, something renewed where a whole is attainable even with the scars of our past. Kintsugi embraces “a reconciliation with flaws and accidents” and imperfections of ourselves and life around us as we come to understand and accept the imperfections of who we are (School of Life, 2021). Where love is an action towards this reconciliation, I accept that I am not perfect. In this critical autoethnographic presentation I share how the theories of kintsugi enabled a reconciliation with the exposure and vulnerability settler educators can experience when interrogating their practice. This work revealed a love-hate dichotomy with the self where Love as an Action saw kintsugi fill in the gaps in my knowledge of self, teacher practice and pedagogy and the golden joinery highlighted not only the scars of my past that my vulnerability exposed and revealed, but the act of living with this exposure and these scars.

**Unschoolable**  
Amy Gill, University of Newcastle

“Consciously or unconsciously, the act of rebellion by the oppressed (an act which is always, or nearly always, as violent as the initial act of violence by the oppressors) can initiate love” (Freire, 1993, p.30). A child - fourteen, smart, tenacious, unloved, and terribly broken - has through an act of rebellion sparked my desire to reclaim the seemingly ‘unschoolable’. This performed paper will share my experience as a teacher-researcher working with the most marginalised and disadvantaged young people in Australia. By sharing this story, I seek to examine the fundamental growth need of belonging and challenge educators to pursue love-fueled pedagogy that nurtures ‘full humanness’ in our schools and communities.

**Love as an Educational and Pedagogical Practice of Freedom**  
Aaron Teo and Yu Ming, University of Queensland

In *Writing Beyond Race*, bell hooks (2012) writes, “There can be no love where there is domination. And anytime we do the work of love we are doing the work of ending domination.” This duoethnography pursues love as an educational and pedagogical practice of freedom. We apply methods of critical reflective practice to interrogate stories of teacher praxis that reveal racism in the field of education. Our stories show opportunities to perform the work of love in our personal, professional, and political lives in ways that disrupt the racialised ‘culture of nice’ (Castagno, 2014) that masks the “violent hegemony of whiteness” (Mondon & Winter, 2020, p.63) in Australian schools.
Eraser Poetry
Nami Araki

I am a Japanese university teacher of literature. In an efficiency-oriented society, I feel lost and limited in my work. To trace the source of my living difficulty, I started writing autoethnography every day. I keep a journal, in the form of poetry, and use “eraser poetry” to examine the roots of my social worries and ramblings. Every day, I weave and turn my feelings of the moment into a work of art. What came into view was a battered version of myself, torn between two opposing ideals of what society “should be” and what I “really want to be”. I would like to share this realization with students, colleagues, and members of society who are similarly torn between the two ideals. I would like to talk about the small reality in which Japan is placed in society.

Feminist Leader’s Manifesto: An Act of Love
Karen Madden, University of Queensland

What if feminist leaders in schools swiped all the books on leadership in a swift stroke straight into the bin? What if when those feminist leaders had a question about how to respond to a request/decision/crisis, they remembered the feminist leaders’ manifesto they had written collectively within their “feminist dwelling” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 2)? What if the world forgot every word that has been written on leadership and instead discovered every word that has been written on feminist love? For as bell hooks proclaims, “culturally, all spheres of (sic) life—politics, religion, the workplace, domestic households, intimate relations—should and could have as their foundation a love ethic” (hooks, 1999, p. 87). This performative presentation seeks to explore possibilities for leadership practice that is centred on a feminist ethic of love. It tells the fictional story of a collective of feminist leaders who write/live their feminist manifesto in community.

2:00-3:00 Making Session: Erasure Poetry as a Collaborative Performance of Becoming, Visualisation and Repair
Dawne Fahey (Western Sydney University) & Christine Hatton (Newcastle University)
(including Afternoon Tea)

Erasure poetry is form of becoming, expressing an embodied, performative, freeing, methodological, transformative form of activism. It’s a form of arts-based inquiry allows us to critique of overlapping themes (cultural, political & social) that speak to patriarchal and colonial storylines of abuse, power and privilege that erase the human-animal-country-spiritual-inner-self – as we consider our relationship with self, community, and country. In this making session, we will craft erasure poetry that embodies and theorises the provocation “love is an action.” Using the words of feminist writers (Ahmed, Berlant, Bhattacharya, Faulkner, Holman Jones, hooks, Mackinlay & Spry), we will situate and perform a collaborative poetic visual response to being in relation. Adding our words to the words of others. We will juxtapose words and images - bringing our embodied-relational-poetry to life.

3:00-4:30 Panel Session 5: Love is an Action of Connection, Changemaking and Healing

Love is an Action - But How? A Buddhist Experience
Mia Livingston

While Lauren Berlant suggests that “people can’t have fidelity to a 'situation' because they don’t know what it is or how to be in it” (Cruel Optimism, 2011, p 5), I argue that it is only through fidelity to the situation as an unknown present that love-as-an-action is possible. Through deliberate somatic-psychotherapeutic unravelling (Blackstone, Trauma and the Unbound Body, 2018) and training at a Zen
monastery (Livingston, *What is Love? TEDx, 2014*), an internal, embodied felt-"sense of the present affectively as immanence" (Berlant, p 6) facilitated love both as-an-action and as an opening/connection. However, commitment to one thing necessitates cutting off all other things, so imagining love and freedom ahead of our embodiment of it arguably imprisons / limits them to our imaginations, which cannot grasp (the reality of) love.

**Big Love: Buddhism, bell hooks and Becoming an Autoethnographer**

Elizabeth Mackinlay, Southern Cross University

With bell hooks’ *Teaching to transgress* open on her lap, she gently closes her eyes and focuses on her breath. In and out. Until now, she had never seen the words of Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh (1992) cited in a book on education, or a phrase like the “transformative power of love” offered as a path to resist “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (hooks, 1994, p. 26). In and out. Gently moving her finger from one mala bead to the next, the Green Tara mantra falls softly from her lips. “Om tara tuttare ture soha”, over and over 108 times. In and out. In this piece, she remembers moments of unbearable suffering where in the teachings of Buddhism and hooks writing in relation with Buddhism, she found and felt affirmed that an ethic of “big love” (Tomlin, 2023) in action was a-way to endure, a-way to courage, a-way to freedom—and a-way to autoethnography.

**Discovering love as a Verb: A Dyadic Autoethnography on Solidarity and Changemaking by Two Individuals, Each a Sibling of Child Sexual Abuse Survivors**

Anais Cadieux Van Vliet, McGill University and Elisabeth Hanscombe, Melbourne-based Psychotherapist

Anais Cadieux Vanvliet is a PhD candidate in social work, and Elisabeth Hanscombe, a psychotherapist. Also, we are both are the sibling of a survivor of familial child sexual abuse. By the same token, we are both our fathers sexually abused at least one of our siblings. As two siblings with lived experience and professional therapeutic expertise, a generation and oceans apart, we come together for mutual support and understanding, to grapple with a shared positioning vis-à-vis child sexual abuse. We write and analyze our experiences to shed light on the challenges that non-abused, non-abuser siblings face, including jealousy, isolation and obfuscation, all with the aim of bringing about change. For this presentation, we hope to share our process of monthly discussions, reflexive journaling, writing, and some of the themes that have emerged through this dyadic autoethnographic labor of love: of self-love, love for one another and of solidarity with all siblings impacted by child sexual abuse.

**Love (in Fifty-Minute Increments)**

Laura Hartell, Monash University

What does love do in therapy? How does therapy co-create “a world that can hold an image of [us] more complete than the image [we] can hold of [our]selves?” (Berlant, ‘The Book of Love,’ 2014).

There are plenty of clinical terms I could use to describe the love-in-action of my long-term relationship with my therapist: projection, (counter-)transference, mother complex, anxious attachment. But they all dismiss what Lauren Berlant might call the “queer practices [that] bring the intimate into circulation... in registers including, but not identical to, the register of freedom” (‘Intimacy as World Making’).

Freedom lies at the heart of my therapist’s practice of liberation psychology. She brings me into community with all the parts of myself, so that I can be of better service to my community out in the world. And now, as I train to become a psychotherapist, I am asking: what happens when we address
therapy as a worlding made possible by love? And how might an ethics of love be a queer, guiding force of healing therapeutic relationships?

*Trauma, The Truth, and Writing for No One*
Stephen Andrew

Autoethnographic research demands an ethic that seeks to protect those who write and those written about. Researchers that wish to reflect and explore their world autoethnographically can find inspiration and flow inhibited by these ethical constraints at the beginning, middle and end points in the manuscript creation. In this presentation I will explore the creation of free prose, created without any attention to ethical, social or legal concerns, via what I call ‘unvarnished’ writing. Central to this process was the warm and loving presence of a witness, in the form of my psychotherapist. His active presence was central to the emergence and realisation of these creations. I will discuss and demonstrate how this raw material was translated, refashioned, and edited into quality, ethical, autoethnographic material. The focus of this presentation will be around a worked example from my time as a client where unvarnished prose was encouraged, then reworked into sounds, lyrics and recorded songs. I will discuss the therapeutic benefits of engaging in such a process. Some examples of these recordings will be played during the presentation.

**Friday 29 September**

**10:15-11:45 Panel Session 6: Love is an Action in the Anthropocene**

*Disturbing the Night*
Julie Vulcan, Western Sydney University

_We step out into the rhythm and beat of the night. The modulations of owls separate and become two. They are close to our left and to our right. I am here and she is there, a sonance across the millennia._

As humans fold into their bed-places their diurnal activities give way to non-human critters whose world is the nocturnal. We might imagine these night activities but my hunch is we don’t give them much thought let alone agency. As Harris and Holman Jones propose, a posthuman perspective must motivate our curiosities to explore “creative ecologies and worlds-in-relation” in ways that are reparative, co-constitutive and propositional. How then do I cultivate a love-action for the night? This presentation explores an imagined conversation between myself, situated in the Australian bush, and a figure on an ancient Babylonian high-relief plaque recently renamed the Queen of the Night. As a hybrid figure they are a creative entity that disturbs. Together we disturb the night.

*Me and the Machine: Textile/Textual Acts of Love and Quilting as Research Method*
Lilian Roberts, University of South Australia

For Christmas of 2022, my partner gave me a sewing machine so I could begin a new hobby: quilting. In time for us to marry in March of this year, I had used it to make several quilts. These patchwork pieces were spread out on our sun-soaked wedding day for guests to sit on; our community of friends and family forming a dynamic assemblage of love with our other-than-human surroundings (ducks, fire, water, mosquitoes, canna lilies, cushions). This process of quilting – selecting, cutting, and piecing together (often discarded, re-purposed, or left-behind) scraps – is a feminist method for information collation, social storytelling, and autobiography; a physical act of becoming that links the political with the personal; a method for ‘bridging analysis and action’ (Holman Jones p. 234). As a ‘constructing of
constellations among differences’ (Schwartz 2009, p. 413), it also represents a deep act of love. Through critical autoethnography, we vitally unite stories of the self-reflexive self with critical approaches and frameworks. My presentation asks, via a critically auto-ethnographic film-poem, how we might extend love beyond the couple and towards the other-than-human participants in our research, using the metaphor of the quilt as a guide.

Aro-Ha: Love, Attentiveness, Breath within Creative Arts Therapy Research
Dr Deborah Green, Whitecliffe

Art Therapy has historically resided within suburbs built upon Rogerian/humanistic/person-to-person ‘unconditional positive regard’. Creative Arts Therapy (CAT) embraces posthuman/new materialist orientations, decentering this human-centrism and inviting walkabout into wilder territories. CAT practitioners/researchers are dancing within grittily relational love-as-action cracks opening at the fertile intra-section/action of: human and more-than-human imaginaries; traditional psychology/psychotherapy; indigenous/shamanistic healing practices; and the matter/making of creative arts. CAT-research braids together the entangled expanded options of this diffractive-reflexivity through performative arts-based and critical autoethnographic approaches. In this image-saturated poetic presentation, I harvest and share doings/beings/becomings shaping CAT-practice/pedagogy/research at Whitecliffe. Here, we’re traversing less-tamed/barely-mapped places of aro-ha(love) by paying intentional attention(aro-) to the dynamic breath and taste of life(-ha) in all. This liberatory love invites us to treat inquiry-projects as cherished clients, tenderly attending to coherent and contradictory stories swirling in/through/around us-and-them-and..., communing with unfolding matters of mattering through materials that invite expression of the more-than-visible.

The Organic Self: Drawing Threads of Ancestral Knowledge Across Time; Krafting Landscapes of Feminine Interiority
Meaghan Shelton, Queensland University of Technology

My visual arts practice draws on the evocation of memory within domestic spaces to untangle aspects of female experience enmeshed within historical marginalisation and its hierarchical valuing of art made by women. My studio practice merges the aesthetic languages of painting and sculpture to express the tactile, utilitarian aspects of craft practices as conduits for the organic process of creative practice. I engage autoethnography as a reparative, decolonising lens conjoined with intersectional feminism to untie the diasporic threads of my Anglo Celtic heritage. I engage creative practice to unravel Art historical narratives of the ways in which nature has been represented in the domestic sphere. Drawing the threads of women’s experiences across time to access consciousness beyond the realms of personal identity toward an immersive transpersonal, deep connection to the organic self. In re-crafting connections between women and nature, my practice challenges the historical conflation of both woman and nature as culture’s Others.

Love is an Action....
Jacqui Young

I pause long in an open doorway this morning, standing so still, mesmerised. Vibrancy and glittering morning light are partly the reason, and yet more so another presence. Yesterday I listened to bell hooks; in every way I could I listened and watched. The affects are palpable. Stepping into my garden I sit with the presence of her, forming response to how I might commit to conferencing “Love is an Action” for CAE 23. I have not read bell hooks, but before I can dwell on that being a shortcoming, her voice seizes that way I do not love, dismantles and replaces it with an opening.
I offer a presentation shaped by what happens in this opening. Reading bell hooks will coincide with an unprecedented opportunity to locate myself more freely as an artist. Until yesterday the potential of these affordances seemed overwhelming.

12:30-2:00 Panel Session 7: Love is an Action of Mutual Love and Caring

Reading/Writing Life in Erotic Unsettlement
Georgie Harriss, Monash University

Critical autoethnography allows the sharing of lived experiences between writer-testifier and reader-witness to become an active and participatory encounter in which both parties remain responsive to each other’s needs and desires. Both making and responding to critical autoethnography – or at least doing so well – can thus become a mutual act of love. As bell hooks (1999) suggests, love exists through action and therefore to be a truly loving reader or writer, one must be pulled into an active state of relationality with the other. Inspired by Namwali Serpell’s provocation in ‘The Banality of Empathy’ (2019) and synthesising Audre Lorde’s ‘Uses of the Erotic’ (1978) with Dominick LaCapra’s ‘empathetic unsettlement’ (2001), this presentation formulates a new register for writing about lived experiences that is both ethically rigorous and affectively charged: erotic unsettlement. Erotic unsettlement will be explored as a means of facilitating an active and loving literary encounter which embraces, rather than erases, difference.

Intimacy, Racism, Stereotypes: From Judgment to Mutual Transformation through Ethnographic Love and Autoethnography
Gabriella Angelini, Chinese University of Hong Kong

Conducting research on race, gender, and culture in intimate relationships constitutes a challenging undertaking, due to the sensitivity of the subject, and the facility with which judgments may arise. This is especially the case when controversial behaviors and viewpoints come from loved ones, such as family, friends, or even oneself. The use of self-reflexive autoethnography combined with what Catherine Besteman (2015, 260) has termed “ethnographic love”—“a form of love defined by the experience of mutuality, solidarity, collaboration, and self-transformation”—can open up spaces for a deeper conversation and understanding of our shared humanity, that goes beyond initial judgments and distrust. Based on nine months of ethnographic fieldwork and autoethnography on ‘interracial’ relationships in Hong Kong, this paper reflects on the potential for shared experiences and self-reflection to provide deeper insights into sensitive issues and create opportunities for mutually transformative research.

Caring Around Death and Dying as Love in Action
Michelle Hood, LaTrobe University

When we see our loved ones in the vulnerable state of the final stage of life, of death and dying, we ourselves are vulnerable, we feel helpless, but feel the need to be strong, stoic and in charge of them and ourselves. We desperately try to care, to advocate and ease the pain and suffering through love and compassion. Caring around death is love in action, love becomes the voice in the dark attempting to shed light in the void and make sense of the here and now and the beyond. Caring is community and it is isolation. Our diverse experiences of death and dying tell stories based in critical love, compassionate care, and existential uncertainty, this is a critical autoethnographic account of caring for my brother while navigating a neo-liberal, pre-humanist health system, it is his story, it is my story, and it is research into human caring as liberation.
Love is a Necessary Fiction
Donna F. Henson, Bond University

“All the stories are too big and too small” she says (Haraway, 2015, p. 159), as I look to this and all these cells and constellations of the words-I don’t-have to say what-I-don’t-know. Aesthetic and anaesthetic tellings of wantings and worldings. Scripted maybes of hope and desire. Distal visions of once-was and will-be, where past and possibility avoid the now and the knowing... For love—my darling—love is a necessary fiction.

It’s dirty, this kind of love (Abrahamson & Berton, 2014). The difficult kind. Love in the face of a thousand imperfections. Love in the face of failings and frailties. Love in “the dithering” (Robinson, 2015). For love is the journey. Staying. Love in the layers: a hot passion, warm intimacy, and a cold decision, made and remade.

This much she knows.

Queer Yiddish Love in the Field
Nic Menser Hearn, Monash University

I love    Ikh hob lib    אַל חֵב לייב

This paper is an exploration of recent experiences in the field. Thinking through critical autoethnography and my practice-based methods, I explore love for my participant-collaborators, love for my community, and love for myself. My research is about contemporary iterations of Queer Yiddishkeit, or queer Ashkenazi Jewish/Yiddish culture. I am an insider in the community I am researching – part of a global community of queer and trans Jews who explore or enact Jewish and queer identity through Queer Yiddishkeit. My project asks how critical autoethnography and practice-based methods might help us better understand contemporary Yiddish culture and practice. In Research is Ceremony, Shawn Wilson writes: “If research doesn’t change you as a person, then you haven’t done it right.” Reading this alongside queer theories of time and space (Jack Halberstam, José Esteban Muñoz), I use autoethnographic film and performance to consider how my embeddedness, relationality, and love for my field shapes my approach to critical autoethnographic research.

2:00-3:00 Making Session: Embodied Mapmaking as a Critical Autoethnographic Practice for (Re)conciliation and De/colonization
Danielle Hradsky (Monash University and Drama Victoria), Jane Carter (Drama Victoria and Department of Education and Training) & Andrew Byrne (Melbourne University, Drama Victoria and Department of Education and Training

(including afternoon tea)

Educators are increasingly required to embed First Nations perspectives and content into curriculum. Some regard this as a moral imperative, going beyond box-ticking to critically engage with personal and institutional racism and Whiteness. Seeking (re)conciliation and de/colonisation (Dénommé-Welch & Montero, 2014) necessitates ongoing scrutiny and disruption: discomforting processes that can trigger resistance rather than transformation (Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017). Beyond discomfort, our collaborative auto-ethnodrama (Hradsky et al., 2021) explores the love and joy arising from holistic relationships and meaningful work. Through embodied mapmaking, this workshop aims to guide you to reflect critically on your own journeys of love and activism and inspire you to continue these paths as part of a beloved community.
3:00-4:00 Panel Session 8: Poetry as Love in Action

Playing the field? playing in the field? Love, Sunsets and Bourdieu
Liuning Yang, University of Auckland

The one I had crush on loves sunsets.
From Melbourne to Auckland,
I was chasing, photographing,
and writing sunsets,
I became a “student of sunset”.
Learning to make photos satisfying,
Learning to know the person,
And learning the way to love.
I ask Pierre Bourdieu,
Am I playing the field,
or playing in the field,
that is dominated by her?

By applying the lens of Bourdieu’s theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990), this poetic/digital autoethnography discusses a potential field as a micro-level social structure: “someone’s romantic relationship field”. Data (sunset photos, digital notes, social media posts) were interpreted using Bourdieu’s inter-related conceptual thinking tools (field, doxa, illusio, capital and habitus) (Pretorius & Macaulay, 2021). In particular, how myself, as a player, understands the doxa (rules of practice), adjust their illusio (navigating the practice) and acquire and exchange capitals in someone’s romantic relationship field.

Our love is an Intra-Action
Rebecca L Ream, The barren valleys and hills of Canterbury, Aotearoa New Zealand

Our love is an intra-action:
a theory-practice diffraction
an entangled im/possibility
a complex dis/continuity.

Our love is an intra-action
an ethico-onto-epistemology
of already mutuality
of never separateness.
But an ethics of
Togetherness.

Our love is an intra-action
a practice of hot asymmetricality
an awkward theory of soft corporeality.

Our love is an intra-action.
It is theory
from our flesh
and blood
which pumps from our hearts
and spills as skin is cut
together-apart.

Our love is an intra-action
that causes us
to breathe fast and hard.

Our love is an intra-action
a failed sobriety
a dangerous
plan of easing anxiety
that keeps making the cuts deeper
but the joy-scented weaves of love
sweeter.

**Dreaming Outloud: Poems of Loss and Longing**
Migg Dann, RMIT University

Drawing on bell hooks’ promise of freedom and Sandra Faulkner’s assertion that ‘poetry is a feminist act’, I propose to present an artwork that addresses how love is a collective, ethical response-ability in critical autoethnography.

This artwork is a 26-page text(ile) ‘book’, measuring 50 x 39 cm, consisting of twelve poems that I wrote responding to the sudden death of my long-term partner in late 2020. Each page contains an embroidered poem, embedded in a collage of textiles that are all taken from her clothes, so closely connected with the body of the absent wearer. By eliciting the felt experience of touch grief emerges and is acknowledged through this tactile encounter. It is a gesture of repair that leads to the promise of freedom. As a generative process to explore loss and longing, the effects of trauma are felt and distributed collectively and the material manifestation of this trauma prompts discussion about these broader intersections.

**We are our families’ librarians**
Melanie Baak, University of South Australia & Denise Chapman, Monash University

As mothers of Black children, when we sit and read books beside our children We make connections that localise the context. Like a spider’s web there’s not a singular thread of African diasporic identity It’s a complex web of global connections.

We read words
at a particular point
for a particular family
for a particular child
through a particular lens. It’s the light shining on that web, in that way, in that moment for that child.
It's why as mothers of Black children
we curate our family's library
And weave words.
stories for our children
stories beyond the text
what teachers don't have.
They don't have the stories beyond the text.
They've only got the text and what it tells them.

This critical duo-ethnographic poetic letter sings as it seeks,
seeks like parched plant roots
reaching for water, seeks
to broker literacies
literacies of resistance, seeks
radical futures
with love

4:40-5:00 Celebrating CAE Family & Closing Plenary