

BEYOND BOUNDARIES

AUTHORSHIP AND READERSHIP IN LIFE WRITING

ABSTRACTS AND BIOS

KEY NOTE SPEAKERS

Bart Moeyaert

Author
Belgium

Bart Moeyaert made his debut as an author in 1983 with *Duet met valse noten* (Off-Key Duet), a book that has achieved the status of a classic in Dutch-speaking countries. Since then, he published many other novels and poems for children, young adults and adults, as well as scripts for theatre and television. His body of work consists of about fifty titles. His best-known books are *Blote handen* (Bare Hands, 1995), *Het is de liefde die we niet begrijpen* (It's Love We Don't Understand) and *Broere* (Brothers). He won many important children's book awards in the Netherlands, Belgium and other countries. In 2019 he was the winner of the prestigious Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award.

Julia Lajta Novak

University of Vienna
Vienna, Austria

Speaking to Young Adults:

Kat François's Spoken-Word Show Raiding Lazarus as Inspirational Auto/Biography

Julia Lajta-Novak is a lecturer in English literature and cultural studies, literature manager, and poet. She studied English and Music in Vienna and Edinburgh, and Arts Management in London. She has been a research fellow at the University of Salzburg and a visiting fellow at the Institute of English Studies, University of London, King's College University of London, and the English Faculty, University of Oxford, as well as visiting professor of English and Anglophone Literatures at the University of Vienna. Apart from having published numerous articles and several books, she is a member of the editorial board of the *European Journal of Life Writing*, and one of the editors of *Experiments in Life-Writing: Intersections of Auto/Biography and Fiction* (2017). For her scholarly and literary work she has received a number of prizes and awards, among them the Theodor Körner Prize, the Dr Maria Schaumayer Prize, the DOC Award of the City of Vienna, and a DOC scholarship by the Austrian Academy of Sciences. In 2015 she was awarded the University of Salzburg's Prize for Excellence in Teaching.

Anna Poletti

Utrecht University
Utrecht, the Netherlands

**Mediated Testimony:
Social Media and Young People's Knowledge Production**

Anna Poletti is Associate Professor of English Language and Culture at the University of Utrecht. Her research focus is contemporary forms of life narrative, with a particular interest in youth cultures, ephemera (both digital and analogue) and the role of mediation and materiality in autobiography. Drawing on feminist and queer theory traditions, Anna's published work examines how the materiality of media forms – from handmade postcards, to the selfie – inform the presentation of stories from lived experience. Anna's first book, *Intimate Ephemera: Reading Young Lives in Australian Zine Culture* (2008), opened up a new area in the study of life writing through an analysis of the importance of autobiography in a dynamic culture of self-publishing in Australia. Anna is co-author of the first study of life narrative in youth cultures, *Life Narratives and Youth Culture: Representation, Agency and Participation* (with Kate Douglas, 2016), and co-editor of the essay collection *Identity Technologies: Constructing the Self Online* (with Julie Rak, 2014). Their next book, on the intersection of autobiography and media, is forthcoming from New York University Press in 2020.

Edward van de Vendel

Author
The Netherlands

Edward van de Vendel was trained as an elementary school teacher and taught at different schools before he became a fulltime writer in 2001. He writes novels for children and young adults, poetry, picturebooks, non-fiction and song lyrics. His books were awarded with the Golden Kiss (Gouden Zoen/Gouden Lijst, best book for teenagers, 4x), Silver Slate (Zilveren Griffel, best books for children, 9x), Woutertje Pieterse Prijs (critic's choice, 2x), Children's Prize (Flanders, Belgium), the Prix Sorcières (France, best picturebook) and the Deutsche Jugendliteraturpreis (Germany, best picturebook). He was nominated for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in 2011, 2012, 2019, and 2020, and in 2018 for the Hans Christian Andersen Award. His books are translated into more than twenty-five languages.

PANELISTS

Sander Bax

Tilburg University
Tilburg, the Netherlands

The Enemy of the Silent Congregation Connie Palmen's Literary Construction of the Life Writer as a Traitor

Abstract

In my presentation, I will elaborate on the notion, brought forward by Dutch literary writer Connie Palmen in her autobiographical *Logboek van een onbarmhartig jaar* (2011) of the life writer as a *Judas* – the life writer as a person who betrays beloved ones. Palmen considers this to be *essential* to literature: 'The writer is essentially indiscrete. He is the traitor, the revealer, the discoverer. He is the enemy of the silent congregation, the dark family secret, the mysterious conspiracy, the group, the club, the institute. Shameful, cautious, discrete, introvert and charming when he is among people, whenever the writer takes up the pen he becomes Judas.' (Palmen 2011: 20). What are the consequences for our literary theoretical perspectives on life writing if we accept this notion of the life writer as 'traitor' and 'revealer'? What are the implication for our analyses of life writing? And what are the consequences for our own work as life writers – as is the case in biographical writing? In my presentation, I will elaborate on these questions by reading a second book by Connie Palmen, the novel *Jij zegt het* (2015) [You say so]. In that book, Palmen does not take up the pen as an autobiographical writer but as a biographical novelist giving voice to poet Ted Hughes, husband of poet Sylvia Plath, who promises us to tell *his* story to correct the image of Plath being the 'fragile saint' and him being 'the harsh traitor'. I will analyze and interpret this novel as a theoretical reflection on the ethical consequences of (auto)biographical writing. In contemporary media culture, literary writers arouse the fascination of media fans by awakening in them the desire for the *authentic* by publishing autobiographical novels or other forms of life narrative. In doing so, they run the risk of becoming part of media's large gossip mechanism that plays such a central role nowadays. The public conversation about their books becomes focused on the elements of truth and authenticity and ignores the literary or fictional construction of the work. In my presentation, I will try to shed some light on the question of what the connection between gossip and literature teaches us about the paradoxical position of the literary writer as a media celebrity. How do contemporary star authors such as Connie Palmen distinguish themselves from media gossipers?

Bio

Sander Bax (1977) is associate professor in Literary Studies, Cultural History and Dutch Language and Literature Education at the Department of Culture Studies of Tilburg University. He published the monographs *De taak van de schrijver* (2007), *De Mulisch Mythe* (2015) and *De literatuur draait door* (2019) and he co-edited the volume *Interrupting the city. Artistic constitutions of the public sphere* (2015). He is currently working on a monograph about authorship in 20th century Dutch literature and on a biography of Dutch literary writer Bernlef.

Marjolein Breems

Technical University Delft
Delft, the Netherlands

**Nostalgia Hurts:
Children's Literary Tattoos as autobiography**

Abstract

At first sight, children's literary tattoos combine two worlds that seem far apart, that of tattoos and that of children's books. Whereas people value children's books as an important medium to make children familiar with reading and with the world they live in, tattoos were far less accepted. However, nowadays tattoos become more appreciated, also because of their so-called artification. A growing number of tattoo artists received their education at traditional art schools and therefore consider themselves to be artists who use skin as a medium. Another way in which tattoos and art cross paths is in the form of literary tattoos, inspired by or based on quotes from books, illustrations, poems or portraits of authors. A lot of these tattoos are based on children's literature such as the *Harry Potter*-series and *Alice and Wonderland*. The tattooees often read these books long before they reached the legal age to get a tattoo. Getting a tattoo based on these texts signifies the impact they had on their personal life.

In this presentation I give insight in how these tattoos based on children's books tell autobiographical narratives about the tattooees' childhood. Firstly, I explore theories about both literature and tattoos and their relation to someone's identity and theories that deal with different ways of remembering. Secondly, I report the results of my empirical research, in which I combine three data sets: blogs about personal stories related to literary tattoos, an online questionnaire about the meaning of children's literary tattoos for tattooees, and semi-structured interviews.

Bio

During her bachelor studies in Cultural Studies Marjolein Breems got interested in the phenomenon of literary tattoos and started studying the relation between bodies and literature. As a librarian she became aware of the lasting impact literature can have on children and during her master in Children's and Young Adult Literature she wrote a thesis on the autobiographical elements of children's literary tattoos and the different ways in which these tattoos tell life stories. After her study, she followed a post-master to become a teacher of Dutch. Currently, she is involved with the general guidance of PhD candidates at Technical University Delft.

Jacques Dane

National Museum of Education (Onderwijsmuseum)
Dordrecht, the Netherlands.

**An Autobiography as a Justification for a Career as a Children's Book Writer?
W.G. van de Hulst (1879-1963): *Memories of a Schoolmaster* (1943)**

Abstract

The teacher and children's book author Willem Gerrit van de Hulst (1879-1963) was well known in Protestant Christian circles in the Netherlands and far beyond. His work was translated into English, German, South African, Indonesian, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and other languages. After his retirement as a teacher, Van de Hulst wrote an autobiography, *Memories of a schoolmaster* (1943), in which he not only gave a biography of himself but also a justification of his activities as a teacher and a children's book writer: "Did I make the best possible use of my talents donated from God? How did Van de Hulst look back on his working life? What role did he think his social origin (he was born in a humble craftsman's family) and Protestant Christian background played in his children's books? How did he look back on his successful career as a children's book author? And to what extent is this autobiography a reliable source for Van de Hulst's biography?"

Bio

Jacques Dane (1964), historian, head of the Collection and Research department of the National Museum of Education (Onderwijsmuseum) in Dordrecht, the Netherlands. He worked at the University of Groningen as a researcher in the field of family and educational history and as coordinator of the archive and documentation centre for Dutch behavioural sciences. For several research committees of the Ministry of Justice and Security and the Ministry of Health, he conducted archive research into violence and sexual abuse in the Dutch youth care system after 1945. Dane is the biographer of W.G. van de Hulst.

Nicoleta Enciu

Goethe University
Frankfurt, Germany

Life-Writing in Mircea Eliade's Work: One Life, Two Perspectives
Transnational life-writing

Abstract

In my paper I will contrast the modalities of self-representation of the teenager and the adult by juxtaposing two autobiographical works of the same author. The article deals centrally with the "Diary of a Short-Sighted Adolescent" (written in 1924 and published posthumously in 1989) by the Romanian writer Mircea Eliade, known in the West primarily as a religious scholar. In this autobiographical work, the adolescence of a precocious and literary ambitious teenager is presented in diary form. A parallel reading of the novel and the "Memories" of the author can be extremely interesting, because the two books address the same events, but from different angles: in the "Diary of a Short-Sighted Adolescent" Eliade depicts the adolescent's life narrative, while in his 1966 published "Memories" the adult reflects and presents his early adolescence and youth in retrospective view.

Based on the example of Mircea Eliade, I intend to answer the following question: What is the meaning of the timing and of the point of view of the writing for the depicted object - the youth of the narrator? Another issue that is to be discussed in my contribution is: What function does the confrontation with the youth have for the seventeen-year-old boy on the one hand and for the adult on the other hand?

Bio

Originally from Moldova, I grew up in a Romanian-speaking family. After completing my bachelor's degree in Moldova in 2013, I studied from 2013 - 2015 at the Free University of Berlin (master's program 'German as a foreign language: cultural mediation').

Since 2017 I am a doctoral student in German Literature at Goethe University Frankfurt. In my dissertation I deal with youth images in German and Romanian literature from the beginning of the 20th century. The work is settled - more specifically - in the field of Comparative Literature, because the aspect of cultural comparison plays a major role. Since April 2018 I am a scholarship holder of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom.

Laurie M.C. Faro

Tilburg University
Tilburg, the Netherlands

Sad is anyone, it comes along and finds you
Grief, Life Writing and Picture Books for Children

Abstract

British poet and writer Michael Rosen chronicles in *Sad Book* (2004) his devastating grief after the sudden death at the age of 19 of his son Eddy. His almost desperate emotions are impressively expressed by the images of Quentin Blake. Most of the pictures of sad Michael are in grey cheerless tints, while his remembrances of Eddy are all colourful, showing a happy, bouncing boy. This picture book illustrates the mourning process of an adult, realized in a picture book for children.

Mourning may be described in terms of a process of adaptation to loss by death. In order to adapt, tasks of mourning such as acceptance of the reality and finality, experiencing pain and emotions, and adjusting to an environment without the deceased must be executed. An important step concerns the process of emotionally relocating the deceased within one's life, find ways to memorialize and consequently to move on. Mourning tasks also apply when children mourn, but they should be comprehended in terms of the cognitive, emotional and social development of the child.

This contribution explores how illustrations and text in picture books might help children in understanding the mourning process.

Findings show that *Sad Book* singles out the task of facing and experiencing emotions, it does not show whether the author has been able to cope, and 'move on' with his life. In this respect the book could be problematic for children because it seems to show that sadness remains forever and that life will never get better after an immense loss.

Bio

Laurie Faro (1957) has been educated in the field of law and culture studies. Already as a young attorney she developed a strong interest in empowering the victim in the legal process. This focus remained when she switched to scientific research in the field of health law. She has published extensively on the subject of quality of care and patients' rights. In 1990 she completed a PhD project on this subject.

In 2015 she completed a second PhD research project as the result of her personal interest in the experiences of people who have been burdened with traumatic experiences in the past and the impact of their ritual commemoration practices, especially at the site of a public monument.

At present Laurie Faro is involved, as a Post Doc researcher at Tilburg University, in a project relating to children and death in the Netherlands: Children and death: reality versus popular culture.

Lena Hoffmann

University of Cologne
Cologne, Germany

**Picturebooks as Archives:
Life Writing by Celebrities for a Young Audience**

Abstract

Since the late 1990s a multitude of books for children and adolescents have been published by celebrities. The term celebrities is used here as a pragmatic collective name for people that are known by and of interest for a public audience through media. As Chris Rojek puts it in his book *Celebrity* (2001): 'Celebrity = impact on public consciousness.' The growing research field of Celebrity Studies deal with the discursive construction and meaning of celebrities through different times and nations because '[c]elebrity is key to the way the social world organises and commodifies its representations, discourses and ideologies, sensations, impressions and fanatsies.' Although the impact of celebrities is now analysed internationally, literary critics and scholars of literary studies haven't noticed so far the picturebooks and children's novels by people like Keith Richards, Barack Obama, Yoko Ono, Kylie Minogue, Marcel Marceau, Paul McCartney etc. Especially in their picturebooks, a lot of celebrities tell about themselves and their lives through text and pictures. The picturebook seems to carry three main functions in this context: a) it is a means to address a dual audience; b) it is therefore a way to prolong the collective memory of a public figure into the next generation and c) the combination of texts and pictures stages to offer a special and intimate perspective on a person's life that is not possible through text alone. The presentation therefore refers to the subthemes 'dual-audience life writing' and 'life writing in text and images' and aims to provide a new perspective on life writing that is contextualised in popular culture.

Bio

Lena Hoffmann is a postdoc researcher at the University of Cologne, Arbeitsstelle für Kinder- und Jugendmedienforschung. She holds a PhD from the University of Münster, Germany. In her thesis she analysed the phenomenon of crossover literature from the late 19th century until the present and identified structures of multiple addressing in texts, discourses and the literary market. Her research focusses on children's and adolescent's literature and media and popular culture.

Vanessa Joosen

University of Antwerp
Antwerp, Belgium

**Writing when Young:
Bart Moeyaert as a Young Adult Author**

Abstract

The most recent Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award winner Bart Moeyaert wrote his debut *Duet met valse noten* (*Duet with false notes*) in his teenage years and published it in 1983, when he was only nineteen years old. The novel, which was an immediate bestseller, tells the story of Liselot and Lander, who fall in love in secondary school and join a theatre group together. Their relationship takes a dramatic turn when Liselot loses the ability to walk in a car accident after a fight with Lander. Moeyaert started writing the story as a diary at the age of thirteen in 1977, but soon implemented elements of personal fantasy in the text, so that it grew into a novel that eventually took the form of two voices mingling. Some of the controversial passages from earlier drafts were adapted in the course of the books' genesis. In this paper, Vanessa Joosen first presents general trends and issues that critics have identified in publications by child authors: their reliance on personal experiences, their use of literary models and the question of authenticity when their works are published by adults. She then considers aspects of the genesis of *Duet met valse noten* to see how these apply to Moeyaert's famous debut.

Bio

Vanessa Joosen is associate professor of English literature and children's literature at the University of Antwerp, Belgium. There she leads the ERC-funded project "Constructing Age for Young Authors." Her recent publications include *Adulthood in Children's Literature* (Bloomsbury 2018) and *Connecting Childhood and Old Age in Popular Media* (University of Mississippi Press 2018).

Anne Klomberg

Tilburg University
Tilburg, the Netherlands

Embodied Voices

Abstract

The effect of dual authorship on the construction of outsiderhood in collaborative life writing Contemporary Dutch society exhibits a growing awareness of ethnic, cultural, and physical diversity as a consequence of e.g. refugee migration and shifting understandings of gender and sexual identity (Roetman, 2018; Wekker, 2016, pp. 108-138). Ensuing discussions have sparked discord, but simultaneously invite critical reflection on discrimination, tolerance, and integration. They foreground the salience of outsiderhood – being outside the centre of society’s norms – particularly, as it manifests in intersecting and embodied identity markers. Tying in with intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) and embodiment theory (Ahmed, 2000), I study outsiderhood to illuminate society’s normativity/alterity dynamics and subsequent processes of in-/exclusion.

Embodied outsiderhood is central to two recent life writing narratives with refugee protagonists: *The fortune finder*¹ (Van de Vendel & Elman, 2008) and *Dance for your life*² (Noori & Dieltiens, 2012). Key to these works is the collaboration between well-known authors and young adults, whose embodiment differs notably in terms of age, ethnicity, and gender. Being white adults, the authors are insiders in Dutch society and hold power in terms of voice, as they ultimately communicate the story to a larger audience.

In this presentation, I examine the effect of such collaborations on the representation of outsiderhood. Drawing on cognitive narratology (Trites, 2014), I demonstrate how embodied metaphors intersect to shape the protagonists’ outsiderhood. By relating these findings to the authors’ embodiment, I comment on the implications of dual authorship for the construction of outsiderhood.

Bio

In August 2017, Anne Klomberg graduated from the Master Children’s and Youth Literature at Tilburg University. Her master thesis focused on the representation of Surinamese culture in Dutch and Suriname picture books. Since graduating, she has been pursuing a career in the field of children’s literature research. In 2018, Anne took part in a research project on ethnic-cultural diversity in children’s books, a cooperation between Tilburg University and Stichting Lezen, the Dutch Reading Trust. The report presenting its results, which she co-authored, is currently in press. Since January 2019, she has been conducting PhD-research on the construction of embodied outsiderhood in children’s and young adults’ lives.

Helma van Lierop-Debrauwer

Tilburg University
Tilburg, the Netherlands

Voice and Silence in Jacqueline Woodson's *Brown Girl Dreaming*

Abstract

In 2014, the American writer Jacqueline Woodson published *Brown Girl Dreaming*, the story of her childhood in verse. The publisher, Penguin, put the book on the list of 'Children's Middle Grade Books'. On her website, the author herself categorizes the book as a Young Adult Novel. After its publication, the book was the winner several literary prizes awarded to books for young readers. Critics also had high praise for the novel. Like the juries of the literary awards, all reviewers discuss Woodson's novel as a book for young readers. In *The New York Times* writer and editor Veronica Chambers starts her very positive review with a complaint about the title. According to her, 'the title seems to confine the book in too narrow a box. I wondered if the author and publishers, by calling the book *Brown Girl Dreaming*, were limiting its audience or, at the very least, the audience of girls who would pick it up right away'. Chambers is worried that the specific title keeps young readers who do not have the same ethnicity as the girl in the title, from reading the book.

In this presentation, I argue that it is not the title of the book that narrows down its potential readership, nor its content and form, but the aforementioned context of its production and reception. Through a narrative analysis, I posit that *Brown Girl Dreaming* is a so-called ambivalent or crossover text. The book addresses a dual audience of young and adult readers, because it can be interpreted on different levels, depending on the reader's literary and cultural competence. In my argumentation of the crossover potential of *Brown Girl Dreaming* I focus on the presence of voice and silence in this autobiographical novel.

Bio

Helma van Lierop-Debrauwer has been professor of children's literature since 1998. Together with Neel Bastiaansen-Harks she published a book about adolescent novels in literature education in 2005. In 2014 she edited a history on Dutch children's literature, together with Rita Ghesquiere and Vanessa Joosen. She published, among other things, on girl's literature, adolescent literature, age studies, and life writing.

Jane McVeigh

University of Roehampton
London, United Kingdom

Beyond the Boundaries of Crossover Writing

Abstract

The British author Richmal Crompton (1890–1969) wrote *Just William* stories for adults. She was well-known for these stories about an eleven years old boy called William Brown. They were important in the lives of millions of readers across many countries in the early to mid-twentieth. In 1952, Crompton wrote: 'I don't think that there is any hard line of demarcation between writing for children and writing for adults (except, of course, in the case of tiny children). A child and an adult dwell side by side in most of us.' She was popular with both adults and children, especially boys. In her writing, Crompton challenges traditional views about what it means to be childlike in the early twentieth century. From the perspective of twenty-first century approaches, how can my life-writing discuss this aspect of her writing in such a way that it will resonate with a wide readership today? This paper will also explore how my biography might meet the expectations of contemporary older and younger readers and in doing so reassess notions of dual audience or crossover writing. Perhaps these boundaries constrain rather than unlock both our understanding of readers' experience and our life-writing.

Bio

Jane Mcveigh is writing the biography of Richmal Crompton and aims to offer a reappraisal of Richmal Crompton's influence as a twentieth century woman writer of both novels and short stories, as a disabled writer, as a celebrity author, and as a writer who was popular with readers of different ages in a transnational context.

Marie Luise Rau

Independent Scholar
Rüsselsheim, Germany

Life Writing in Picture Books for Young Children

Abstract

Otto. The Autobiography of a Teddy Bear (T.Ungerer/1999)

Der rote Wolf (F.K.Waechter/1998)

Adjö, herr Muffin (U.Nilsson/A.-C.Tidholm/2002)

Considering limits, picture books for young children and life writing seem incompatible. Number of pages and amount of text are limited, as are world knowledge and time concepts on the part of the child readers. Stories in which the protagonist looks back on his life introduce a new form of narrative at an age when concepts of passing of time and duration are still beyond young children's grasp. Nevertheless, outstanding picture book artists have coped with these difficulties.

Tomi Ungerer's popular picture book *Otto. The Autobiography of a Teddy Bear* is an extraordinary blend of several strands: The story ties in with Ungerer's life writing, the bear being a cherished object from his childhood. Ungerer adds pictures of the cruelties of the Nazi regime and war (and other, more subtle references), but awareness of these cruelties depends on the adult co-reader and the age of the child reader. Young children will readily take the limited perspective of the loveable teddy bear. Differences in focalisation are due to the two modalities, verbal and visual, in which picture book stories are presented. I will illustrate how autobiography and biography are intertwined in picture book.

In all three books the theme of reviewing life is linked with the theme of friendship, which attracts children from early on. Anthropomorphous animals and animal toys fit in well with children's imagination. Surprisingly, facets of life writing discussed in literary criticism of adult literature become apparent already here, such as motivation, memories and evaluation, differences in presentation, search for identity, 'autobiographical pact' (Lejeune) between narrator and child reader.

Bio

After a career as a language teacher and linguistic studies in pragmatic linguistics and in first-language acquisition, Marie Luise Rau concentrated her research on picture books with a special interest in the interrelation between picture book reception and cognitive development. She is a member of the GKJF and has participated in international and national conferences.

Marleen Rensen

Amsterdam University
Amsterdam, the Netherlands

New Role-Models for Young Readers in the 21st Century

Abstract

This paper will examine the contemporary use of life writing to provide young readers with new, positive role-models. It will focus on some of the hugely successful life stories collections, marketed for young readers, such as *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls* (2017) by Elena Favilli, Ben Brooks' *Stories for Boys who Dare to be Different* (2017) and *Stories for Kids who Dare to be Different* (2018), and *Heldinnen / Heroines* (2018) by Janny van der Molen. All these books have the same structure with identical formats and formulas. They compile short biographies of famous and not so famous men and women from the past and present, among whom are Michelle Obama, Malala, Conchita Wurst, Andy Warhol, Ai Weiwei, Björk, Andrea Bocelli. Each story is illustrated by a colorful portrait of the featured person, created by artists from various countries. By covering the life stories of different sort of 'heroes', including women's lives, black lives, lesbian and gay lives, as well as disabled lives, these books have become symbols of resistance to gender, ethnic, social and cultural stereotypes. Focusing on the international bestseller *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls*, this paper will analyze how it addresses young readers and how its narrative style and structure relate to issues of agency and empowerment. Finally, it will reflect on the book's immense appeal to a readership across national and cultural borders.

Bio

Marleen Rensen is a Senior Lecturer in Modern European Literature at the University of Amsterdam. Her research and teaching centres on literature and life writing in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Her most recent work focuses on artists' biographies and autobiographies, with particular attention on articulations of European and transnational identities. She has published numerous articles in edited volumes and journals, including the *European Journal of Life Writing*. She has co-edited the volume *Unhinging the National Framework: Case Studies in Transnational Life Writing* (Peer-reviewed, forthcoming, Sidestone Press, 2019) as well as a special issue of the *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity*, dedicated to Life Writing and European Identities (peer-reviewed, forthcoming 2019). As a lecturer, she has been teaching an MA course on European 'Lives' for several years now. Currently, she is co-teaching a seminar on 'Contemporary Debates in Life-Writing' for Research Masters and PhD students.

[Website](#)

Jessica Sanfilippo-Schulz

University of Leeds
Leeds, United Kingdom

**Growing Up on the Move:
Adapting in Childhood, Disrupting Life Writing in Adulthood**

Abstract

Nowadays, more and more children are growing up in multiple countries and in a variety of cultural settings and languages due to the forced or voluntary migration of their parents. Frequently, these children are required to follow behaviours and lifestyles that are typical and respectful of both their parents' heritage cultures and the new receiving societies. This paper explores life writing about internationally transient childhoods. It will be argued that after having recurrently re-adapted in childhood, the life writing by adults who were raised on the move displays multiple unrest. 'Life writing about moving childhoods' shows that these individuals often reject being cast in a single mould. Thus, their life writing typically disrupts boundaries, such as generic ones. In this paper, I will discuss the memoir *Olive Witch* and the 'ph/autography' book *A Long Way Home* by Abeer Hoque, who grew up in Nigeria, Bangladesh and the United States. Additionally, I will examine the one-woman play of Elizabeth Liang, which is performed for adults and school children. In this 'performative autobiographics' literary borders are crossed and traditional forms of life writing are unsettled. Here, the boundaries between life writing for adults and life writing for children are blurred too.

Bio

Jessica Sanfilippo-Schulz is a first-year PhD researcher at the University of Leeds, School of English. Her PhD explores the life writing of individuals who were raised in multiple countries. Jessica obtained her BA in English and Italian (thesis topic: Autobiography and motherhood) and her MA in National and Transnational Studies (thesis topic: Bio blurbs of third culture novelists) at the University of Muenster WWU, Germany. In between her MA and PhD studies, Jessica worked at the University of Muenster as a research assistant.

Monica Soeting

European Journal of Life Writing
Amsterdam, the Netherlands

It's lovely to make up all these silly stories
Cissy van Marxveldt and the Art of Disclaiming Authorship

Abstract

During her rather short life – she died when she was 58 – Dutch author Cissy van Marxveldt, pseudonym of Setske de Haan (1889-1848), produced 27 novels and collections of short stories for girls and young women, of which her *Joop ter Heul*-series about the coming of age of a rich girl from Amsterdam were, and are, the most popular of her books. Having provided Anne Frank with a template for her early diary notes, the *Joop ter Heul*-series were read by thousands of Dutch girls and young women, not only in the Netherlands, and are still being read today. The same holds true for several other of Van Marxveldt's novels, like *Een zomerzothed* (A midsummer folly, 1927) or the *Marijke*-series (1929-1934). To this day, her books are reprinted on a regular basis. For many years her family – her husband and two sons – relied on her income. However, when asked in interviews about her literary work, Van Marxveldt would not only disclaim her fame, but also her authorship. Writing books, she'd say, was a mere hobby, something she'd spend time on only when her children were at school and all household chores had been taken care of.

In my paper I will argue that Van Marxveldt's social ambitions and strategems, and gender questions let her to disclaim her status as a famous writer and diminish her work to a mere pasttime.

Bio

Monica Soeting studied philosophy in Amsterdam and Tübingen, and holds PhD's from Maastricht University and the University of Groningen. She was chief editor of the Dutch journal *Biografie Bulletin*, is co-founder of the European section of the International Auto/Biography Association (IABA) and co-founder and journal manager of the *European Journal of Life Writing*, an open access, scholarly e-journal. In 2017, she published a biography of Cissy van Marxveldt. She is presently researching a biography of Dutch queen Emma (1858-1934).

Danie Stander

Stellenbosch University
Stellenbosch, South Africa

**Autofiction as Children's Literature and the Adaptation thereof as Defamation:
The Case of Two South African Writers – Alba Bouwer and Reza de Wet**

Abstract

What are the implications of transmuting one's childhood memories into works of children's literature? What are the ethical stakes involved when life writing of this kind is treated as fiction by a younger writer who adapts it into a play targeted at adult audiences while the nonfictive referent of the source text's protagonist, its author, is still alive? These questions seem redundant in a post-truth era in which labelling a text as "literary" or "intertextual" shields its author from legal charges of plagiarism or defamation. Yet it attended the career launch in 1985, of Reza de Wet, one of South Africa's most prolific, awarded and translated playwrights. As a child De Wet identified strongly with Bouwer's avatar in her children's book *Stories van Rivierplaas* [Stories of River Farm]. But in 1985 De Wet writes a sequel to *Rivierplaas* in which the protagonist, now 30 years of age, commits patricide and incest and refuses to act as an adult. Bouwer saw this theatrical intervention as a personal attack and threatened to file a charge of defamation against De Wet unless she changes the names of the characters in her play. With a special focus on the significance of childhood in both Bouwer's and De Wet's oeuvres, my paper consider the two writers' reciprocal readings and misreading of each other's works and lives as it surfaced during this polemic

Bio

Danie Stander is a final year doctoral student and tutor at Stellenbosch University. Based in English Studies his research interests, bracketed mostly under the interdisciplinary rubric of life writing, include: auto/biography, literary biography, biofiction, autofiction, theatre and performance studies, historiography, canonicity, and South African literature and history. His PhD project aims to document and analyse the life of South African playwright, Reza de Wet (1952-2012), in view of a biocritical analysis of her work.

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**Seeing Through the 'I' of the Past Self:
Tracing the Boundary Between Narrating and Narrated in Autobiographical Narratives of
Childhood**

Abstract

Though the narrating and narrated *I* refer to the same historical person, the narrated *I* of past experience is always already removed from the narrating *I* through the very act of narration. As they remember and indeed reconstruct past events, the adult/narrating *I* – a textual construct who shares a name with but does not precisely correspond to the author – engages with and simultaneously constructs the narrated child. Yet this relationship is far from uncomplicated. As Jacqueline Rose suggests in *The Case of Peter Pan*, 'childhood persists as something which we endlessly rework in our attempt to build an image of our own history. When we think about childhood, it is above all our investment in doing so which counts'(12). Though Rose refers to children's fiction, her conclusions provide a starting point for discussions of autobiographical narratives of childhood, especially those written for children. In this presentation, I look to middle-grade graphic memoirs – including Cece Bell's *El Deafo*, Vera Brosgol's *Be Prepared*, Raina Telgemeier's *Smile*, and Jarrett Krosoczka's *Hey, Kiddo* – in order to trace the nature of the relationship between the narrating and narrated *I*, particularly with regard to ways in which that relationship inflects/is influenced by both the implied child reader and also (individual and collective) memory. As Astrid Erll explains in the introduction to *Cultural Memory Studies*, 'There is no such thing as pre-cultural individual memory; but neither is there a Collective or Cultural Memory...which is detached from individuals and embodied only in media and institutions' (5).

Bio

Danielle Sutton is a PhD candidate in English Studies at Illinois State University. She works at the intersections of life writing, children's literature, and memory studies and is especially interested in visual and verse memoirs of childhood.