

Book of Abstracts

Sounds of a Lifetime: Exploring Life Writing in Audio Media

29–30 January 2026, HOEK 38, Leuvenseweg 38, 1000 Brussels

Pre-Conference Workshop

Marit MacArthur, University of California, Davis: *Slow Listening: How to Study Audio Recordings as Vocal Performance?*

- **Abstract:** This workshop will introduce Slow Listening methods and an extremely user friendly, state-of-the-art, open-source tool, called Drift, for the purpose of studying audio recordings of speech as performance. Such recordings can range from poetry readings to podcasts, stand-up comedy to audio books, radio drama to political speeches. Drift, available at <https://drift4.spokenweb.ca/>, was developed over the last decade, with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities in the U.S. and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. It allows artists and humanities scholars, with no background in linguistics or signal processing, to easily upload audio or video files and visualize and analyze aspects of speech as performance. Participants are encouraged to bring a laptop and share a short audio or video clip of interest by sending it to soundsofalifetime@vub.be. Questions? Reach out to Marit MacArthur at mjmacarthur@ucdavis.edu.
- **Marit MacArthur** teaches writing, and occasionally performance studies, at the University of California, Davis. Her collaborative, interdisciplinary research in digital voice studies and Slow Listening has been published in *PMLA*, *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, the *Journal of Cultural Analytics*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Sounding Out!*, Stanford's *ARCADE Colloquy*, *The Paris Review Online*, *Jacket2* and *Literature in the Digital Age* (edited by Adam Hammond). Her recent work on AI and writing has appeared in *Frontiers in Communication*, *Computers and Composition*, *AI & Society*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and *Digital Rhetoric Collaborative*, and is forthcoming in *Bad Ideas about AI and Writing*. She is series editor for the journal *Critical AI* on the topic of generative AI and writing in higher education.
- **Robert M. Ochshorn** is one of Drift's primary developers, is an artist, engineer, and cultural theorist based in Brussels and New York City. He is co-founder and CEO of Reduct.Video and a researcher at KASK School of the Arts. Working collectively, collaboratively, and in correspondence, he makes software and interface that offer new tactility and perspective to media and archives.

Keynote Speakers

Julia Lajta-Novak, University of Vienna: *Memoirs in Sound: "Reading" Anthony Joseph's Auto/Biographical Jazz Poetry*

- **Abstract:** In recent decades, oral poetry performance has become a popular medium of autobiographical narration, to the extent that critics have identified “authentic” self presentation as spoken word poetry’s dominant mode (Ailes). Frequently, spoken word’s aesthetic of authenticity is tied to the speaker’s marginalized social identity and conceived as literally “giving voice” to their experiences and concerns: it is predicated on a rhetoric of confession and sincerity, a clarity of expression, and direct address.

This lecture centers on two auto/biographical poetry collections by award-winning Trinidadian-British poet Anthony Joseph – *Bird Head Son* (2009) and *Sonnets for Albert* (2022) – both of which have been published in different audio formats and with the backing of jazz musicians. In 1989, as a young man, Anthony Joseph immigrated to the UK, leaving home and family behind to make a name for himself as a writer and spoken-word vocalist not long after. In 2023, he won the prestigious T. S. Eliot Prize for *Sonnets for Albert*. In contrast to the ‘slammy’ rhetoric of much contemporary spoken word, Joseph’s performances are delivered in a distinctly ‘jazzy’ mode that underscores the lyricism of his poetic memoirs. This performance style, together with the musical backing, results in an elusive quality that reflects the themes of his life narratives in interesting ways. The question at the centre of this lecture is how we can “read” poetic life narrative in its oral mode, especially when it is accompanied by music. The example of Joseph’s vocal performance of his memoirs will demonstrate how orality and music can add to, or detract, from textual semantics and how sonic collaborations can probe the boundaries of autobiographical subjectivity and authorship.

- **Julia Lajta-Novak** is Associate Professor for Anglophone Literature and Mediality at the University of Vienna, Austria. She is an editor of the *European Journal of Life Writing* and has published extensively on biographical fiction and on poetry performance. Her (co-)edited books and journal issues include *Imagining Gender in Biographical Fiction* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), a special issue of *Life Writing* on the theme of “Life Writing and Celebrity” (Taylor & Francis, 2019), and *Experiments in Life-Writing* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). She is the author of *Gemeinsam Lesen* (Lit 2007 – a book on reading groups) and *Live Poetry: An Integrated Approach to Poetry in Performance* (Brill | Rodopi 2011). Since 2021, she has been directing a 5-year research project titled “Poetry Off the Page: Literary History and the Spoken Word, 1965-2020” (supported by the European Research Council and the Austrian Science Fund), which focuses on spoken word poetry in UK and Ireland.

Matthew Rubery, Queen Mary University of London: *Fraudiobooks?: Audio Fraud from the Analog Era to AI*

- **Abstract:** This presentation traces the long history of deception in recorded voices, from the earliest days of the phonograph to the emerging challenges posed by AI voice synthesis. Beginning with the late-nineteenth-century scramble to capture the voices of celebrities such as Queen Victoria, William Gladstone, and Oscar Wilde, it shows how the allure of “authentic” voices has repeatedly been exploited by collectors, counterfeiters, and impersonators. Moving into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it then looks at how audiobooks have reshaped the “autobiographical pact” into the “audiobiographical pact”—a tacit promise that narrators are who they claim

to be and that their stories are true. The presentation finishes with a consideration of contemporary risks posed by AI-generated voices, arguing that the audiobook's promise of unmediated access to an author's voice has always been a potentially fraudulent experience.

- **Matthew Rubery** is Professor of Modern Literature at Queen Mary University of London. His books include *Reader's Block: A History of Reading Differences* (2022), *The Untold Story of the Talking Book* (2016), and *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies* (2011). He also co-edited *Further Reading* (2020), a collection of essays for the series Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature.

Jarmila Mildorf, University of Paderborn: *A Life in Music: Ror Wolf's Radio Ballad Leben und Tod des Kornettisten Bix Beiderbecke aus Nord-Amerika*

- **Abstract:** Ror Wolf's radio ballad *Leben und Tod des Kornettisten Bix Beiderbecke aus Nord-Amerika*, first broadcast in 1987 and awarded the prestigious *Hörspielpreis der Kriegsblinden* in 1988, tells the life story of jazz cornet player Bix Beiderbecke in unconventional ways, using a collage of voices and original music while constantly crossing narrative boundaries. Günter Rinke (2018: 75) uses Wolf's 'liberal' approach to facts in his radio piece as an example to reflect on the relationship between 'truth' and fiction in audio biographies and on the question whether one could posit a 'radio drama pact' between author and audiences analogous to the 'fictional' pact pertaining to prose fiction. While the notion of a 'radio drama pact' is perhaps difficult to uphold in an effectively multi-authorial art form such as radio drama, the author's own (radio-) poetological reflections are worthwhile taking into account to elucidate the expectational frames surrounding an audio biography such as the one analysed in this talk. Wolf's choice of the label "radio ballad" underlines his resistance to generic pigeonholing and deliberate deviation from radio genre traditions such as radio drama or the radio feature, as he also pointed to in his award acceptance speech.

Taking my cue from Rinke, I analyse the radio ballad from audionarratological perspectives (Mildorf and Kinzel 2016, Bernaerts and Mildorf 2021, Mildorf 2025) against the background of some of its paratextual contexts, exploring what one might call the "artistic truth" (Zuidervaat 2004) of this audio biography. The audiophonic design of Wolf's radio piece is shown to create a complex narrative situation achieved through multiple perspectives and different narratorial voices, the characterisation of Beiderbecke through voice, imaginary dialogue and music, as well as occasional metaleptic jokes that have a comic relief function while simultaneously bringing home even more forcefully the tragic dimension of the musician's short life and career. Especially the use of original music, I argue, not only serves the function of providing 'local colour' for Beiderbecke's life story or of making it more 'authentic', but demonstrates that music in fact was his life, thereby engaging in meaning-making that cuts across the documentary and the artistic. By telling a life in and through music, Wolf creates "resonance" (Schmitt 2017) with audiences in every sense of the word, which is prefigured by the significance of jazz and Beiderbecke in post-war Germany (Poiger 2002) and in Wolf's own life story as told in interviews.

- **Jarmila Mildorf** is Professor of English Philology at the University of Paderborn. Her research focuses on life storytelling in oral history and autobiography, second-person

narration, dialogue, audionarratology, radio drama, literature and medicine and the medical humanities. She is the author of *Storying Domestic Violence: Constructions and Stereotypes of Abuse in the Discourse of General Practitioners* (University of Nebraska Press, 2007) and *Life Storying in Oral History: Fictional Contamination and Literary Complexity* (De Gruyter, 2023), and co-editor of numerous collections and journal special issues, including *Audionarratology: Interfaces of Sound and Narrative* (De Gruyter, 2016), *Audionarratology: Lessons from Radio Drama* (Ohio State University Press, 2021), *Narratives and Mental Health: Reimagining Theory and Practice* (Oxford University Press, 2023), *Word, Sound and Music in Radio Drama* (Brill, 2024), and most recently, *Performing Selves in the 21st Century* (Partial Answers 23.2, 2025) and *Life Storytelling across Media and Contexts* (forthcoming in *Narrative Inquiry*). Mildorf serves on the editorial boards of the book series *Narratives and Mental Health*, *Jahrbuch Literatur und Medizin* and the journals *EON* and *Re:visit*.

Panelists

Iana Nikitenko, Vrije Universiteit Brussel: *Memories of Our Fathers: The Poetics of Family Life Writing in German Radio Drama (1970s–1980s)*

- **Abstract:** Following the silence surrounding moral complicity and guilt in Germany after World War II, the era shaped by the protest movements of 1968 helped foster a more openly critical culture. This climate encouraged fresh discussions on parental authority and the collective weight of the nation's past. In this context, the father figure—often either implicated in or marked by the Nazi regime—emerged as a central theme in contemporary creative works across various media.

This study explores how family life writing and collective memory intersect within the immersive medium of radio drama, focusing on Hans Noever's *Der Tod meines Vaters* (1972) and Walter Kempowski's *Moin Vadder läbt* (1980)—both awarded the *Hörspielpreis der Kriegsblinden*, one of the most prestigious awards for German-language radio plays. In these works, the father's story transcends the private sphere, reflecting broader national debates on complicity and generational conflict. Through sound-based narratives, these radio plays illuminate repressed memories, examine the distortion of recall, and reveal a society increasingly willing to probe its recent past.

These radio dramas employ experimental sound design to pursue more authentic forms of self-expression and remembrance. They create a distinct auditory space in which personal memory, guilt, and trauma intersect, forging a unique style of life writing on radio and suggesting new ways of communicating lived experience. Noever's piece, for instance, weaves together raw, original sound recordings and stereo montages to document the author's fixation on his father's death, treating memory "as a substitute for the present." Kempowski's work adopts an experimental linguistic approach—combining elements of Yiddish, Silesian German, and other dialects—to convey what he describes as the "Klage" (lament) for his deceased father.

By focusing on representations of the father and employing the auditory medium of radio, this paper contributes to broader debates in life writing studies regarding the

boundaries between public and private histories. It demonstrates how the critical ethos that followed the late 1960s inspired inventive forms of storytelling—modes capable of embracing the tensions among personal recollection, collective responsibility, and the search for genuine self-expression.

- **Iana Nikitenko** is a PhD fellow at the Centre for Literary and Intermedial Crossings at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium) who works on the Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (FWO)-funded research project *Broadcast Biographies. Innovations in Genre and Medium (1945–2020)*, with a focus on British and German radio productions. She obtained an International Master's degree (EMJMD) in Children's Literature, Media and Culture at the University of Glasgow (UK), where she wrote her dissertation on the representation of the traumatic Soviet past in biographical graphic narratives. Her research interests include literary and media studies, radio studies, life writing, and transmedia storytelling.

Matilda Jones, Freie Universität Berlin: *Sounding Sororal Subjectivities in Kaitlin Prest's 'SISTERS'*

- **Abstract:** This paper presents the sounding of sisterhood in Kaitlin Prest's six-part audio series 'SISTERS' (The Heart, 2023). Created by sisters Kaitlin and Natalie Prest for CBC Podcasts, Radiotopia and Mermaid Palace, the series spans a biographical timeline of roughly thirty years, narrativising the real life sororal relationship between the two women from childhood to the present-day. An intimate and intensely moving aural tapestry, the story is told through an intricately woven mix of historic family recordings, musical excerpts – including the sisters' piano recitals and harmonised singing – and contemporary studio narration alongside reenactments of past arguments, conversations and phone calls that occurred 'when [the] microphone wasn't around' ('SISTERS: Chapter One-isode', 02:10). Calling attention to the series' explicit and self-conscious narrativisation of two simultaneously lived realities, 'SISTERS' utilisation of the audio medium is thus heard in line with Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's discussion of 'automediality' (2010, 168), as notions of 'truth', 'authenticity' and 'selfhood' emerge in metamedial juxtaposition with recordings past and present. Emphasising the doubling effect of the eerily similar yet palpably distinct sound of these sisterly voices, my analysis hence raises questions surrounding truthful/authentic representations of selfhood/subjective experience in conjunction with Cairtíona Ní Dhúill's critique of the way in which traditional autobiographical practices have historically functioned to reinforce 'a bourgeois or otherwise normative model of individualist subjectivity' (2012, 280). Overall, I contend that the sounding of subjectivity in 'SISTERS' not only offers a feminist recasting of romance as a sororal phenomenon, reorienting the autobiographical focus away from hetero-patriarchal invocations of the normative love affair, but also – following Ní Dhúill – that the series ultimately functions to 'dislodge the concept of self from the central position it still occupies in theories and practices of life writing' (Ní Dhúill, 2012, p. 279). As a result, I conclude by asserting the significance of audio media in deconstructing the reaffirmation of Cartesian individualism associated with traditional forms of (auto)biography and life-writing.
- As a radio-maker, producer, vocalist, and lecturer at Berlin's Freie Universität, **Matilda Jones** combines various sound endeavours under the alias 'Teplíce' with work

towards a PhD that explores sonic innovations in digital culture. In addition to academic publication in the *Journal for the Study of British Cultures*, Jones' music has played on BBC Radio 6 Music, NTS Radio, Worldwide FM and Refuge Worldwide as well as featuring in *Mixmag*, *The Guardian*, *Dazed*, *Ransom Note*, and *Stamp the Wax*. Her co-hosted show *Trouble in Paradise* airs monthly on Cashmere Radio.

Lukas Kosch, University of Vienna: *The Individual Voice Against Collective Forgetting: On the Function and Form of Jean Améry's Radio Essays*

- **Abstract:** The Austrian writer and Holocaust survivor Jean Améry, who remained in exile in Brussels until his suicide, delivered a radio lecture titled *Die Tortur* (*The Torture*) on *Süddeutscher Rundfunk* in 1965. This lecture was subsequently incorporated into his widely discussed essay collection *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne* (*At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities*), published in 1966, which played a pivotal role in establishing his intellectual career. Throughout his literary work, Améry recorded all of his essays for radio broadcast, underscoring the extent to which the medium of radio shaped both the structure and length of his texts. Through both his distinctive speaking voice and his deeply personal essay collections, such as *On Aging* (1968) and *On Suicide* (1976), Améry emerged as one of the most significant and influential witnesses of his time. At the core of his autobiographical reflections lies a philosophical commitment to defending the individual human being and their lived experience while maintaining a steadfast adherence to Enlightenment principles in the aftermath of Auschwitz.

This paper examines the role of auditory realization in Améry's work, analyzing the voice as a medium for conveying a corporeally experienced reality. It demonstrates how the auditory format and the individuality of Améry's voice played a crucial role in his critique of the structuralist preference for purely formal aspects in the work of Michel Foucault, as well as in his opposition to the abstraction of subjectivity in Theodor W. Adorno's dialectics. Améry perceived these intellectual tendencies as a threat to the individual and their subjective experience, countering them with his distinctly personal audio life narratives. Furthermore, this study explores how Améry sought to inscribe the perceptual transformations induced by Auschwitz into postwar discourse and the broader framework of cultural memory.

- **Lukas Kosch** is a research associate and lecturer at the Department of German Studies at the University of Vienna, currently working on the project *Listening to Literature: Experiencing Literary Audiobooks*. After completing his studies in German literature and history, his research has focused on postwar philosophy, the implications of digitalization for literature, and the processes of literary reading from a reception-theoretical perspective. His most recent publications include the edited volume *Mythen des Lesens: Über eine Kulturtechnik in Zeiten gesellschaftlichen Wandels* (2024) and the book *Philosophie nach Auschwitz: Jean Amérys Verteidigung des Subjekts* (2018).

Desirée Henderson, University of Texas Arlington: *What Does a Diary Sound Like? The Sonification of the Diary in Nonfiction and Fiction Audiotexts*

- **Abstract:** If asked, many could describe what a diary looks like: a bound book closed with a small lock and key. While the visual iconography of the diary is relatively stable, even stereotypical, there is little settled agreement on what a diary sounds like. Even to pose the question appears to run counter to the idea of the diary as a (hand)written genre, whose material textuality is central to its meaning. It further challenges the perception of the diary as a private genre written for the diarist alone and without communicative purpose. With the exception of audio diaries (born-audio or voice-recorded diaries), the diary genre may appear to be antithetical to sound: a form of writing rooted in silence.

My talk questions this view by introducing the audience to a wide range of sounded diaries, with particular attention to two strategies: sound effects and vocal performance. I address these two audio affordances as they appear on websites hosting digitized diaries, in audiobooks, and in podcasts. Further, I identify key sound effects and vocal performance techniques as they are employed for the sonification of both nonfiction diaries and works of diary fiction, analyzing the role that sound can play in enhancing the perceived authenticity or truthfulness of a diary. In exploring the sonification of the diary across so many diverse audiotexts, I seek to discover what audio-enhanced or performed diaries can teach us about the genre as a whole, including uncovering its association with specific sounds and vocal registers, tones, or moods. I will show that the question of what a diary sounds like has already been answered by sound designers/engineers and voice performers/readers, and that the answer is instructive regarding the continued relevance of the diary within the contemporary multi-media soundscape.

- **Desirée Henderson** is Professor of English at the University of Texas at Arlington (USA), where she specializes in American literature, women's writing, and auto/biography studies. She is the author of *How to Read a Diary: Critical Contexts and Interpretive Strategies for 21st-Century Readers* (Routledge, 2019), as well as essays on diaries published in *a/b: Auto/biography Studies*, *American Periodicals*, and *The Diary: The Epic of Everyday Life*, among other venues. She is the co-editor of *Short Diary Fiction: A New Global Anthology*, published by Bloomsbury (2025). Since 2020, she has taught a course on audiobooks and fiction podcasts, which informs her research on the intersections between autobiography studies and sound studies.

Kim Fox, The American University in Cairo: *Sonic Testimonies: Student Audio Diaries as Intimate Life Narratives*

- **Abstract:** Audio diaries represent a unique form of sonic life writing, offering deeply personal, self-reflective narratives that document lived experiences through voice, sound, and atmosphere. Unlike traditional written autobiographies, these first-person sonic accounts blend immediacy, intimacy, and affect, allowing listeners to engage with the speaker's world in ways that written text often cannot. This paper explores audio diaries as a form of life writing that mediates and reconstitutes personal and collective identities. It examines their aesthetic strategies, the role of sonic elements such as background noise, pacing, and vocal tone, and their impact on listeners' engagement with the diarist's lived experiences.

Drawing on media and sound studies, this paper considers how audio diaries function as both documentary and performative acts. Through close listening and analysis of select examples of audio diaries from college students, it interrogates how these recordings construct authenticity, negotiate memory, and navigate the porous boundary between fact and fiction. Additionally, the paper situates audio diaries within broader historical and contemporary frameworks, including radio and podcasting traditions, to explore their evolving role in autobiographical storytelling.

The research plan would be to conduct a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based on a purposive set of audio diaries produced by students in my Audio Production course since 2019. The choice of CDA could be useful in unpacking the ways language, voice, and sonic elements contribute to meaning-making in autobiographical storytelling.

Potential research questions:

RQ1: What recurring themes and sounds appear in the student audio diaries?

RQ2: How do background noise, pauses, breath, and pitch shape the meaning of the narratives?

RQ3: How do code-switching or other performative elements appear in the student audio diaries?

RQ4: How is emotion conveyed through their voices in the student audio diaries?

By centering audio diaries as a form of sonic life writing, this paper contributes to discussions on the politics of voice, the embodied nature of sound, and the intimate yet public dimensions of autobiographical acts in audio media. It highlights how personal testimonies, recorded in real-time or retrospectively, document individual lives and reflect broader social and cultural narratives.

- **Kim Fox** is a professor of practice at The American University in Cairo (AUC) in Cairo, Egypt. Her primary area of interest is radio/audio/podcasting. In addition to teaching, she's a scholar-creative conducting academic research on Global Majority podcasts and podcasters. Additionally, she produces a multi-award-winning podcast, the Ehky Ya Masr Podcast. Fox is known as a leader in global media education having facilitated audio-related workshops in Lebanon, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, the UAE and more. She serves on the board of directors of numerous professional organizations. Previously, Fox spent decades working in various positions in the US radio industry.

Hannah McGregor, Simon Fraser University: *Scholarly Podcasting as Audible Autotheory*

- **Abstract:** Recent scholarship on podcasting as a form of non-traditional scholarly communication has emphasized how the introduction of the voice shifts the register of scholarship, bringing the embodied identity of the scholar into their work in a way that much written scholarship deliberately strips out. In *Podcast or Perish: Peer Review and Knowledge Creation for the 21st Century*, my co-authors Lori Beckstead and Ian M. Cook and I consider the pros and cons of such a shift, noting that voices bring new registers of meaning into scholarship; on the one hand they can convey affect,

engender trust, and express authenticity, but they are also subject to the political and cultural ideologies embedded in how we listen and how we perceive who has 'authority.' In this sense scholarly podcasting aligns with the work of autotheory, which Lauren Fournier defines as "the integration of theory and philosophy with autobiography, the body, and other so-called personal and explicitly subjective modes," linking it to feminist, queer, and BIPOC interventions into the objectivity of scholarship as well as the devaluation of lived experience as a valid form of knowledge.

In my presentation, I will speak from the perspective of a scholarly podcaster who has been doing my scholarship out loud and in public since 2015, when I launched my first podcast, *Witch, Please*, with my long-time collaborator Marcelle Kosman. Since then I have also created the four-season peer reviewed podcast *Secret Feminist Agenda*, which I positioned explicitly as an autotheoretical work in the monograph that followed its completion, *A Sentimental Education*. In keeping with my own ongoing practice of autotheory, this presentation will take an autotheoretical turn, beginning from the specificity of my own lived experience and podcasting practice to begin to unpack the question of how sound intersects with autotheory to create a new form of research-creation and of life-writing.

- **Hannah McGregor** (she/they) is an academic, podcaster, and author living on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. They're an Associate Professor of Publishing at Simon Fraser University, where their research and teaching focus on the intersection of publishing and social change. McGregor is the co-director of the Amplify Podcast Network and the creator of its pilot podcast, *Secret Feminist Agenda*. She also co-hosts *Material Girls*, a scholarly podcast about pop culture, and *The SpokenWeb* Podcast, part of a collaborative scholarly project exploring audio literary archives. They're the co-author of *Podcast or Perish: Peer Review and Knowledge Creation for the 20th Century* (Bloomsbury Academic 2024) and the author of *A Sentimental Education* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press 2022) and *Clever Girl: Jurassic Park* (ECW 2024).

Patricia Frazis, Australian National University: *Narratorial Authority and Identity in Autobiographical Fiction: Listening to Lost Children Archive*

- **Abstract:** In the past two decades, audiobooks have become increasingly engrained in contemporary literary culture. Audiobooks have seen more growth than any other sector of the publishing industry, with double digit growth reported by the American Audio Publishers Association for the eleventh year in a row in 2023 (Anderson, 2023, p. 4). However, they remain at the margins of literary criticism. While most audiobooks are narrated by professional narrators and voice actors, some authors narrate their own work. This self-narration is particularly prevalent amongst authors of autobiographies and memoirs. The recitation of ones' own work is not a phenomenon unique to the contemporary audiobook, however very little research has considered the impact of self-narration on authority and identity in audiobooks (for example, see van Maas, 2018; Severs, 2011; Harrison, 2011).

This paper examines the impact of self-narration on authority, identity, and characterisation in autobiographical fiction through a close reading (or close listening) of *Lost Children Archive* by Valeria Luiselli, narrated by Valeria Luiselli (Ma) and Kivlighan de Montebello (the Boy) with William DeMeritt (Pa) and Maia Enrigue Luiselli (the Girl). I apply Cathy Lane's conceptualisation of vocal compositional techniques in spoken word works (2006, pp. 5–6) alongside Cannon and Rubery's re-assertion of "the interdependence of speaking, hearing, and writing" in sound studies and literature (2020, p. 315) to consider how Luiselli's narration as Ma interacts with the text to establish the character's narratorial authority. I find that as Luiselli embodies her fictionalised self, Ma becomes Luiselli and implicitly adopts not only the authority of the Author, but also the audible characteristics of Luiselli's identity. Luiselli's accents in English, Spanish, and French each negotiate with the text to complicate Ma's characterisation as a transnational Mexican woman and, by extension, her narratorial authority regarding the institutionalised and social racism she encounters in the novel.

- **Patricia Frazis** is a PhD candidate at the Australian National University, Canberra. Her research examines the use of voice, music, and ekphrasis in audiobooks through close listening and creative practice. She has been published in *The Westerly* and *Publishing Research Quarterly* and her writing often explores family dynamics and diasporic experiences through music and sound.

Valeriya Lindström, Lund University: *Russian Anti-War Music and the Creation of Counter-History*

- **Abstract:** Following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, numerous Russian artists began using music as a powerful medium of protest, expressing dissent and resistance against the war. This study conducts a thematic analysis of lyrics from anti-war songs, focusing on compositions discussed in the podcast *Anti-War Music* by musicologist Anna Vilenskaya and journalist Maxim Zagovora. The podcast, produced by the human rights project First Department, explores contemporary and historical anti-war compositions, including works by Boris Grebenshchikov, DDT, Noize MC, IC3PEAK, etc.

This research involves a qualitative thematic analysis of lyrics from songs featured in the podcast. By examining recurring motifs and narratives, the study seeks to analyse how these artists articulate opposition, convey emotional resonance and mobilize listeners against the war.

In this paper the author uses the Foucauldian idea of counter-history as a way to challenge dominant historical narratives that serve power structures. Anti-war music compositions serve as subjugated knowledges (marginalized voices, alternative histories) that provides resistance to these dominant discourses. Thus, the main aim of the study is to explore what metaphors, symbolism, and storytelling techniques are used to create the counter narrative and highlight the transformative power of music in challenging oppressive narratives.

Ultimately, this study focuses on the intersection of art, activism, and public discourse and contributes to a deeper understanding of the power of sonic life writing in times of conflict.

- **Valeriya Lindström** currently is a MS student of Lund university, Sweden. Valeriya has a Russian background and finished their bachelor's degree at Moscow State University of International Relations (MGIMO). Currently they are finishing the Global Studies Programme with a major in Political Science. With a strong interest in Critical Security Studies, postcolonial theory, memory politics, and Russian imperialism, the author aspires to pursue a PhD, focusing on Russian indigenous groups and post-Soviet nations in their decolonial struggles.

Ingibjörg Ágústsdóttir, University of Iceland: *Rewriting Anne Bonny: Karlene's Musical Tribute to a Pirate Queen*

- **Abstract:** Anne Bonny was an Irish pirate active in the Caribbean during the early 18th century, and is one of history's most famous female pirates. Her story challenges traditional gender roles in piracy and history, emphasising the often overlooked role of women in maritime crime. Anne Bonny has been reinterpreted in literature and various contemporary media, including television, film, music and video games. She is often presented as a feminist icon, a woman carving out her own place in a violent, male-dominated sphere.

Karlene is a Scottish singer-songwriter renowned for her evocative music inspired by history, literature, films, and television series. She began her musical journey in 2010, sharing her work on YouTube, which led to a dedicated fanbase. Her music blends traditional Celtic elements with contemporary sounds, creating a timeless and ethereal quality. Lyrically, Karlene explores narratives from various sources, including fantasy novels, historical figures, and folklore. In a 2014 interview, she states, "I'm a big lover of history and find so much inspiration in the stories of our past."¹ Karlene has released three albums focusing on female historical figures: *The Ballad of Anne Boleyn* (2014), *Elizabeth* (2018), and *Anne Bonny* (2020). On her Spotify page, she marks *Anne Bonny* as her "proudest album". This paper will explore how Karlene's music not only reimagines Anne Bonny from a feminist angle but also brings her tumultuous life to vivid, emotional life, allowing listeners to experience her journey through the power of song.

- **Ingibjörg Ágústsdóttir** is Associate Professor in English Studies at the University of Iceland and holds a Ph.D. in Scottish Literature from the University of Glasgow. She is series co-editor of Brill's new book series *Global Historical Fictions* (<https://brill.com/page/hifi>) and has published on Scottish writing, historical novels and fictional representations of the Tudors and Stuarts in literature and film. Her current research is focused on contemporary women's historical fiction and rewritings of women's history, representations of the Arctic in Scottish literature from the nineteenth century to the present, and Scottish women travellers in Iceland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Manon Houtart, University of Namur: *Les Rizières Duras (2003): Sonic Forms of Biographemes in Franck Smith's Radio Essay*

- **Abstract:** As part of l'Atelier de création radiophonique on France Culture – an experimental laboratory that fostered the development of new auditory grammars between 1969 and 2011 (deliberately blurring the generic boundaries between documentary and fiction) –, French poet Frank Smith conceived a diptych dedicated to the life of Marguerite Duras, titled *Les Rizières Duras* and broadcast on February 9 and 16, 2003.

This radio essay operates through the juxtaposition of auditory, verbal, and non-verbal *biographemes* (Barthes): soundscapes recorded in the writer's childhood lands in Cambodia (where her literary "vocation" is said to have been born), archival recordings of her voice, interviews with her biographer Jean Vallier and with various relatives and witnesses, excerpts from novels, films, songs, and earlier radio creations, etc. Through this nomadic and rhizomatic composition, Smith seeks to cultivate an art of the microphone without fixed roots, much like the way rice paddies are planted.

In this paper, we will seek to identify the originality of the relationship that this audiobiography establishes between the author's life and her work, compared to the one that Duras herself claims. How does the writer's stance – expressed in both her books and media appearances – shape Frank Smith's aesthetic choices? How is the narrative identity she constructs either reinforced, expanded, reshaped, or challenged? How does the sonic language allow for a renewal of the biographical genre, in resonance with Duras's own conception of the relationship between writing and lived experience?

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Virginia Madsen, Macquarie University: *The audio portraiture of Kaye Mortley: 'the self, told, is at once a fiction'*

- **Abstract:** This essay offers an extended meditation on the audio 'life writing' oeuvre of the distinguished radio writer-producer-director and artist, Kaye Mortley. Mortley's productions and original texts and collaborations for radio now span five decades, and have been broadcast in multiple languages since the 1970s when she quickly made a name for her experimental work at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). She has lived in France since the 1980s, joining Radio France Culture's *atelier de création radiophonique*. In 2017 she earned the lifetime achievement award, Le Prix de l'oeuvre de la SCAM. The essay will connect and reflect on several of her key works that have challenged and extended the more traditional radio feature portraiture or literary portrait genre first established in the post war BBC Radio Features department. In particular, this essay considers her collaboration with Australian performer Gillian Jones, for *The Flight*, which received the 1981 Prix Futura. This radio 'play' began with a series of conceptually linked autobiographical fragments – texts offered by Jones that were then further composed for the radio medium by Mortley. The resulting work

combining drama-documentary elements, marks the beginning of many more 'essaies' engaging with what Mortley has called, 'reality-fiction' for the sound medium. These exquisite 'radio films' or '*documentaire de creation*'* have few other counterparts in the world of radio or podcasting today and yet these encounters, many built on intimate friendships and collaboration, are remarkable for their beauty and the sophistication of their interaction. This essay also approaches the radio feature, 'Shirley Goldfarb: an American in Paris'**, constructed and composed, like 'The Flight', from autobiographical texts. In this case, there are hundreds of fragments of texts that come into this 'play' (e.g., diary entries) with the addition of recorded memories (e.g., from her composer husband, Gregory Masurovsky, to the waiters in the cafes she frequented). We enter her world and the artists she knew in this voicing and voiced over montage: Francis Bacon, David Hockney, Andy Warhol, Yves Saint Laurent... We find this is more than memoir as death taunts and haunts this last canvas, this conjuring of a mythic figure of the Parisian artistic world.

*See eg, Virginia Madsen chapters in *This is Channel Earth: One Hundred Years of Global Radio Play* (Brill/Fink, 2024); and *Le désir de belle radio aujourd'hui (fiction, documentaire)* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2024).

** (Notes written by Mortley for 'The Flight', 1981, by Gillian Jones, directed and produced by Kaye Mortley, ABC, Author's archives).

***Written and produced in Paris for the ABC (1985), with another longer version produced for France Culture (French national radio network): 'Shirley Goldfarb: Qui ça? Shirley Goldfarb, peintre' (1985).

- **Virginia Madsen** is a senior lecturer in media, and former director of the Centre for Media History, Faculty of Arts, Macquarie University. Prior to her academic career she was a founding producer of the renowned ABC audio arts and performance program, The Listening Room, developing a large body of radio work, and continues to create for new audio media platforms. She has published widely on all areas of sound culture, public radio and its specialist forms, expression and audio media history, with pioneering work on audio documentary in major collections. Current writing and book projects focus on the international expression of a documentary imagination in sound from broadcast to podcast, and the cultural institutions, producers and outlets that continue to support and disseminate these rich forms. Latest publication contributions appear in *Listen Up! Radio Art in the USA* (Transcript, 2025); *Word, Sound & Music in Radio Drama* (Brill, 2024); *This is Channel Earth: One Hundred Years of Global Radio Play* (Brill/Fink, 2024); *Le désir de belle radio aujourd'hui (fiction, documentaire)* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2024); experience her sonic portrait/locative media soundtrack (2023): <http://soundtrails.com.au/portland-nsw/>
Profile: <https://researchers.mq.edu.au/en/persons/virginia-madsen>

Louisa Léo, Sorbonne Nouvelle: *The Radio Interview as Life Story or Self-narrative?*

- **Abstract:** In 1949, Jean Amrouche created a new radio genre: the 'entretiens-feuilletons' (Héron, 2000), in which he spoke to authors such as Gide and Claudel in the form of radio series that portrayed their lives and artistic works. In its content and structure, the radio interview adopts a literary form which can be compared to a writer's memoir or autobiography. This format of interviews with multidisciplinary

artists (and not just authors) has endured on radio and is still very much present at Radio France today. We could think of Jacques Chancel's programme called *Radioscopie* on France Inter, which ran from the 1960s to the 1990s. More recently, Augustin Trapenard's *Boomerang* and Eva Bester's *La 20ème heure*. France Culture also offers a range of programmes featuring interviews with artists. These include Alain Veinstein's night-time programme called *Du Jour au lendemain*, Laure Adler's *Hors-champs* and Marie Richeux's *Par les temps qui courent* and *Book Club*. What these programmes have in common is that they are both written and improvised dialogues based on a question-and-answer system, recorded between two people in a studio and addressed to listeners. 'Common research' (Morin, 1966) takes place between the interviewer and the interviewee, who together construct a thought process, recounting the influences that the guest has encountered in his or her life. This presentation aims to explore the *ethos* of the interviewee who constructs a self-image through his or her dialogic voice, mediated by radio. Moreover, this happens while the guest is recounting his or her life and art with an unspoken convention of sincerity and intimacy through the microphone. Does the form of the interview intrinsically transform the life story into a two voices construction of the self?

- **Louisa Léo** is a second-year PhD student in Theatre Studies at the Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, working on "The Theater of Radio Voices". She holds two master's degrees in General and Comparative Literature and Theatre Studies, also from the Sorbonne Nouvelle. She has worked at France Culture (Radio France) as an intern, program preparer and production assistant for Marie Richeux (daily program *Par les temps qui courent*). She is currently producer and interviewer of two podcasts: *Voix enchantées* on Radio Campus Paris and *Radio Monfort - entretiens d'artistes* for the Theater Silvia Monfort in Paris.

Tien Phat Nguyen, Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen: *The Audio Construction of Identities and Memories in A Man of Two Faces by Viet Thanh Nguyen*

- **Abstract:** In 2023, Viet Thanh Nguyen explored his hybrid heritage as a Vietnamese American refugee and the intrinsic nature of war made by the AMERICAN™ in an autobiography published simultaneously both in printed form and as an audiobook. The narrator of the Audible production is the author himself. As a result, this can be considered as an example of a new trend of producing audio life writing in contemporary multimodal literature. Through a lens based on the orientation towards oral storytelling in postclassical narratologies, this paper examines the role of audio narrative techniques in constructing and re-constructing; remembering, and disremembering; colonizing, and decolonizing the cultural selves of a refugee in the US. From an intermedial approach, the paper analyzes these storytelling techniques, performed by the writer to answer questions about the idea of "a man of two faces", a recurring character in his non-fiction and fiction, including the intertextual network of his debut novel *The Sympathizer*, and its recent adaptation. The acrobatic heterodiegetic narrator, along with a range of variations of homodiegetic narration, from "you" to "I" and then "we", are utilized in tune with other multimodal tools in his self-writing to investigate the multi-faceted cultural identities. The printed version of the memoir represents itself with shatter typography interfaces which might trouble readers more than usual texts. It has many different types of text, whether centered,

left or right-aligned, or censored words in black boxes, along with a diversity of text sizes, and images, which immediately addresses the fragmented mind of a refugee growing up in AMERICA™ without any specific descriptions. These multimodal techniques raise interesting questions about how narrative strategies fit for printed technology can be transformed into the realm of sounds, how the sonic version leads listeners through the disrupted journey of identities and memories, and how the author (re)constructs his identities and memories by using these engaging narrative tools with his sympathizing voice

- **Tien Phat Nguyen** (Nguyễn Tiến Phát) is a doctoral candidate at the International PhD Programme Literary and Cultural Studies at the GKK (Gießen Graduate Center of Cultural Studies), Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen. He graduated from the University of Tübingen with a thesis focused on adaptation and is now working on his dissertation: *“Narrative Techniques In The 21st Century: An Intermedial Approach to the Interplay between Theatre, Prose, and Film”*. His research interests include narrative theories; cultural narratologies; World literature, cinema, theatre; neocolonialism; and intermedial studies.

Bénédicte Ledent, University of Liège: *From Biography to Autobiography: Caryl Phillips’s Radiophonic Lifewriting*

- **Abstract:** Anglo-Kittitian Caryl Phillips is the author of three radio plays exploring moments in the life of famous artistic and intellectual figures of the African diaspora: James Baldwin in *A Kind of Home: James Baldwin in Paris*, Marvin Gaye in *A Long Way from Home* as well as Richard Wright and CLR James in *Dinner in the Village*. Respectively broadcast by the BBC in 2004, 2008 and 2011, these radio dramas convey Phillips’s fascination for these four men whose writing (or music in the case of Marvin Gaye) could be described, to borrow the words of Martinican writer Patrick Chamoiseau, as Phillips’s “sentimenthèque” -- that is works that have had a deep emotional impact on him and affected his development as a writer. To that extent, the three radio plays in question also have an autobiographical dimension: they indeed touch upon the difficulties facing all black artists in white societies, particularly in their attempts at defining themselves away from the racist clichés trying to circumscribe them and their art.

Rather conventional in terms of form, *A Kind of Home: James Baldwin in Paris*, *A Long Way from Home* and *Dinner in the Village* are economically written and rely on a succession of short scenes that evocatively capture the essence of the characters’ dilemmas, both as men and as artists. These three plays constitute intimate sonic companion pieces to the numerous essays that Phillips has devoted to his four protagonists over the years; it will therefore be interesting to explore what radio drama can do that non-fiction can’t when it comes to reconstituting lives.

- **Bénédicte Ledent** is honorary professor from the University of Liège, where she taught anglophone literatures until 2021. She is also a member of the postcolonial research group [CEREP](#), which she directed from 2009 to 2019. Her research interests include Caribbean and Black British literatures, biographical fiction, slavery novels as well as the representation of madness in literature. She has published extensively on the work of Caryl Phillips and other contemporary writers of the Caribbean diaspora.

She is co-editor, with Delphine Munos, of the book series *Cross/Cultures* (Brill). Her most recent publication is an edited collection of Caryl Phillips's radio plays (Methuen, 2023).

Jason Wiens, University of Calgary: *Exploring an Indigenous Literary Audio Archive as Individual and Collective Autobiography*

- **Abstract:** This paper will discuss the audio recordings in the Marvin Francis fonds held at the University of Manitoba, Canada. Francis (1955-2005) was an Indigenous (Cree) Canadian poet, playwright, and printmaker who was a key figure in the Manitoba Indigenous Writers Collective in Winnipeg, Canada in the 1990s and 2000s, before his sudden death in 2005. The Marvin Francis collection is one of the only archives of an Indigenous poet in Canada, and include recordings of readings, interviews, radio plays, and conversations between Francis and other Indigenous writers and artists. My paper will discuss this audio collection as an autobiography of Francis' creative life, but also a collective autobiography of an Indigenous writing collective. Contesting a critical perspective which sees Indigenous autobiography as a "bicultural" form which assumes autobiography is a "white" genre, Deanna Reder argues that "autobiographies by Indigenous authors—in many forms—exist as an Indigenous intellectual tradition" which "exists not just as a response to colonizers about injustice but also as an expression of specific culturally informed values and ideas to be shared with community members, descendants, and future generations" (Reder 30). If the "specific culturally informed values" Reder references include the privileging of the collective over the individual and the oral over the written, I content that this audio archive articulates a form of collective autobiography consistent with those Indigenous values.
- **Jason Wiens** is a Professor in the Department of English and Associate Dean in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Calgary. He has published widely on contemporary poetry, Canadian literature, archival studies, and literary audio. Recent publications have appeared in *Variants*, *Amodern*, *English Studies in Canada*, and *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory*. He is a co-investigator in the North American research partnership the SpokenWeb.

Preenika S., Anu Kuriakose, NIT Trichy: *Podcasting as Feminist Life Writing: Resisting Gendered Public Spaces in Kerala, India*

- **Abstract:** Podcasting has emerged as a powerful digital medium that extends the tradition of life writing into the auditory realm, allowing women to document their lived experiences and contest dominant socio-cultural narratives. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (2010) argue, life narratives are not merely personal but deeply political, shaping and resisting hegemonic discourses. Drawing from feminist media theory and the concept of counterpublics (Fraser, 1990), this paper explores how podcasts function as a feminist space for voice, resistance, and historical documentation. Through an analysis of *In Perspective*, specifically Episode 26, *Feminist Resistance in Kerala: The Sabarimala Temple Controversy and More* with Dr. Jayakumari Devika, this study examines how women's writing and digital storytelling

are reshaping gender relations in Kerala, a state in southern India. The discussion critically engages with how Malayali women navigate public spaces, challenge socio-religious structures, and use digital platforms to reclaim narratives historically dominated by patriarchal discourse. Situated within the framework of digital feminism and participatory media (Gill & Orgad, 2018), this paper argues that podcasts provide an accessible and dynamic medium for feminist discourse, enabling women to document histories, contest structural inequalities, and create alternative public spheres. By tracing these shifts from the 19th to the 21st century, the study highlights the transformative potential of podcasting as a feminist digital space and a tool for socio-political activism in contemporary Kerala.

- **Preenika S.** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at NITTiruchirappalli, India. Her research focuses on the intersections of Sound Media Studies and Gender Studies. She is a recipient of University Grants Commission, India's Junior Research Fellowship (UGC-JRF).
- **Anu Kuriakose** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at NIT Tiruchirappalli, India. Her research interests include intersectional feminism, transgender and genderqueer identities in popular sociocultural discourses, transgender perspectives in literature and environment, gender-inclusive language in professional communication and academic writing, film, media, cultural studies, and digital humanities.