

Being Human: How Hidden Narratives Challenge Authority

University of Gloucestershire mini-conference

Tuesday 11th July 2017

ABSTRACTS

The Curious Case of Social Media

Dr David Webster

See blog and video interview on the [Being Human website](#).

National Poets and the Strange Case of Master William Shakespeare

Dr Paul Innes

See video interview on the [Being Human website](#).

Purpose, constraints and consequences of creativity in post-WWII Yugoslavia and other contemporary totalitarian societies

Senja Andrejevic-Bullock

In this paper I shall argue that, while totalitarian societies do suppress overall levels of creativity and creative production if unrelated to social utility, it is nonetheless possible to find outstanding examples of Big-C creative products owing to the natural variability of individuals within every society, and also owing to a wider social context.

The particular example I will use is that of post-WWII Yugoslavia, where all cultural policies were established by a government body called the Department for Agitation and Propaganda and where the party defined the task of the writer in this way: 'The art-work's dominant idea had to be communist.' Drawing on the models of Csikszentmihalyi, Amabile and others, I shall demonstrate how even such a regime couldn't successfully repress artistic spirit and, instead, gave rise to some of the most revolutionary examples of creativity in literature, art and cinematography.

Also see blog posting on the [Being Human website](#).

How Hidden Narratives Create Unequal Authority

Lucy Cadbury

On the one hand, it is vital to challenge toxic societal authority via hidden narratives; but first, we must start to unravel the existing structures already in place.

To become explicitly aware and critical of the current dominant ideologies, carried within the language of our society, will affect the way in which we think, talk and act, leading to new stories, and a more-equal society.

By examining current popular, dominant discourse, and the linguistic features that build our reality, we can begin to reveal these ideologies, challenge them, and create a new world.

The Hill

Dr Angela France

The book (The Hill) is a psychogeography of a hill I have walked for fifty years, blending my own experience with the rich and layered human history of the place. I present the poems as part of a multi-media show which includes pictorial references as well as recordings giving voice to the local people who have worked and played on the hill. Thirty years before Kinder Scout, a quarry owner closed the hill to local people and this led to riots; the ringleaders were working men, clay-diggers and labourers, and the court case papers in the county archives have provided source material which is recorded by a voice actor as part of the show.

Speaking Flames

Jonathan Code

'Speaking flames' is an 'action inquiry' into the why's and wherefore's of education which Jonathan has been pursuing for many years. This action research is contributing to his ongoing Ed. D research (with the University of Bath in the Education department).

Resisting Resilience

Dr Nikki Rivers and Dr David Webster

Everywhere you look in Higher Education, we are told that an attribute we ought to cultivate in our students (or act so as to encourage the cultivation of), is that of **resilience**. You can find toolkits for it, and articles asserting its decline. In the latter we encounter the claim that: “students’ emotional fragility has become a serious problem” (Psychology Today, Sept 2015), but no data, only anecdotes about students who can’t cope with criticism, or mice, or life in general. Some are more engaged with the complexity of student mental health, and the cultural setting such as the project: Stanford, I Screwed Up! A Celebration of Failure and Resilience, but the general cultural drift they represent makes us uncomfortable, and we hope to show why it should make you uncomfortable too.

See also blog posting on the [Being Human website](#).

Creative Transgressions

Dr Kayleigh Moore

'Creative Transgression' will give a whistle-stop tour into how the auto-ethnographic process informs and influences the process behind transgressive writing. In essence: how taking a long (3 year) hard (PhD) look at yourself (writer-researcher of morally objectionable content) in the act of writing a novel rooted in violence and sexual exploitation can identify the real-life inspirations behind transgressive prose, and in turn influence the development of the story. The presentation will also touch upon the personal creator/artefact relationship in Art Spiegelman's 'Maus' and, in a spur of temporal ambition, peep at the use of graphics to convey meaning.

Also see our video interview on the [Being Human website](#).

Subversive Re/Viewing

Dr Robin Griffiths, University of Gloucestershire

The interdisciplinary challenge of contemporary queer screen studies has carved out an undeniably subversive niche in contemporary film and media research and pedagogy over the past twenty years. Because the indeterminate and fluid interface that takes place between filmic construction and spectatorial consumption, has long proven to be an especially fertile space for subverting the 'meta-narrative' drive to inculcate heteronormative values into the very fabric of a film's textual structure; thereby revealing, as Ellis Hanson proclaimed, that Cinema is in fact "one of the queerest institutions ever invented" (1999: 7).

But has the neoliberal drive to re-appropriate and 'assimilate' queer screen studies within the academy (and the class room) merely resulted in the dilution of its political efficacy as a tool of epistemological subversion? (thus compromising its much vaunted role as a "scandalous affront to dominant sensibilities" [Brett Farmer, 2000: 2]). And what do more recent critical debates concerning subversive spectatorship reveal about the student-spectator's experience of contemporary film and media pedagogy from within the increasingly (albeit problematic) queer-normative institutional context of contemporary academia?

Anarchy

Dr Martin Randall

Anarchism is nearly *always* a 'hidden narrative.' And by definition, Anarchism *always* challenges authority. By definition it's 'hidden', too. But Anarchism, for me at least, is always *there*. A possibility, or rather, a *series* of possibilities for the ways things might be, could be, should be. As a famous May 68 slogan puts it,

Beneath the Pavement, the Beach

Politics, mainstream, party politics – Mr Corbyn and Mrs May, Brexit, The Donald, post-truth, TINA – is *all* about the pavement; concrete, unyielding and covered in chewing gum and dogshit. But, in embryo, all the fun (and equality, and fairness, and shared dignity) of the beach *can* be created.

So, let's talk about UBI. Let's talk about robots and VR and 'bullshit jobs'. Let's talk about uber.com. and deliveroo and facebook. Let's talk about taxing the 1% and radical redistribution and the revolutionary aimlessness of the *derive*.

Remember,

Demand the Impossible!