

(In)visible Publics: Performing (Non)Belonging

Online Conference

UCD School of Music

Friday 13 September 2024

9:30-11:30 - Session 1 - To live to tell the tale: curating (non-) belonging(s) through autoethnography, drawing and film

Ahmed M. Al-Awthan (Maynooth University) - In the shadow of two worlds: a refugee's tale of oppression and transformation from the lenses of auto-ethnographic approach

This auto-ethnographic research addresses and connects a specific lived experience to wider cultural and political contexts. The researcher introduces another character of himself named 'Phoenix', who was dying and then he was reborn with a different identity. His journey commenced in his indigenous community in Yemen when he grappled with oppression, earnestly seeking enlightenment from the community members. Residing there, he discerned the injustice of oppression, yet hesitated to articulate his experience until embarking on a journey to a different country, an experience that profoundly transformed him. Upon his arrival in Ireland, he assumed his misery ended, however, another journey of struggle erupted when he applied for International Protection and went through this system. Being exposed to inequality, discrimination, racism, labelling and hate speech, Phoenix shares his experience through the lenses of auto-ethnography. This study examines how socio-cultural dimensions revealed through personal experiences influence and impact the educational experience of Phoenix. It also addresses the aspects of racism, inequality, and oppression in the Irish asylum-seeking system and how these aspects intersect with education.

Natalija Cera (University College Dublin) - (In)visible hermeneutic labour underpinning migrant belonging performances

Moreover, it addresses how a new identity is shaped through education bridging the gap between the past and present in two different communities. Through adopting this approach, new themes emerge and exhibit themselves in the form of dialogue between the researcher and the introduced character.

In a recent paper on gendered care labour in heterosexual intimate relationships, Ellie Anderson introduced a concept of 'hermeneutic labour', distinguishing it from emotional labour and defining it as "the burdensome activity of: understanding and coherently expressing one's own feelings, desires, intentions, and motivations; discerning those of others; and inventing solutions for relational issues arising from interpersonal tensions" (2023, p.177). In this paper, I aim to begin exploring the possibility of expanding the 'hermeneutic labour' concept to apply it to migrant belonging experiences – specifically, its usefulness for an improved understanding of how migrants perform belonging in their daily lives. For example, migrant accounts reveal burdensome activities of understanding and formulating their identities in the countries they moved to (George & Selimos 2019) or their parents moved to (Anthias 2002), efforts to discern social expectations to be accepted as equal participants and struggles to invent strategies of reconciling one's identity with society's conditions of belonging (Axyonova 2023). I hypothesise that while society benefits from the effects of migrants' hermeneutic labour (for instance, in the form of new, already qualified, and, building on successful hermeneutic efforts, increasingly efficient workforce), mostly it stays publicly invisible, known only to the migrant actors and a few others who

participate in some capacity in migrants' preparatory labour to perform belonging in specific contexts. Nevertheless, even if publicly invisible, hermeneutic labour remains implicitly expected of migrants if they are to become recognised by their new 'home' society as 'integrated' in that society, where integration tends to be presented and perceived as a condition of belonging. Therefore, migrant belonging performances can be experienced as a demanding performance of integration that requires significant and publicly unacknowledged hermeneutic labour, part of which is the effort to figure out what this or that specific society means by integration.

Hamutal Sadan (Tel Aviv University) -
'Because I have no spirit in my mind, I have no strength [to draw]': How has the incarceration of asylum seekers in a detention centre shaped the conditions in which they create art?

Between 2013 and 2018, the State of Israel detained asylum-seeking men from Eritrea and Sudan in Holot Detention Center, located in the Negev Desert in the south of Israel. The facility's name, Holot, means "sands" in Hebrew, and indeed, it was surrounded by sand and was a one-hour drive from the closest city. According to the Interior Minister at the time, Eli Yishai, the purpose of incarcerating asylum seekers in Holot was "to make their lives unbearable" in order to coerce them to leave Israel "voluntarily" for third countries, as Israel has signed the Refugee Convention and thus cannot deport them. Yishai's goal was partially achieved, and many asylum seekers signed "voluntary departure" agreements and left for Uganda. Nevertheless, there were a handful of individuals who decided to use the long hours to paint. Over the five years that Holot was active, asylum seekers created dozens of mural paintings on the interior and exterior walls of the facility. In my paper, I will discuss Holot as a heterotopia and liminal space and time, that located far away from Israeli society's eye and heart in order to exclude asylum

seekers from Israel—geographically and socially—until their final “exclusion,” i.e., their departure to another country. I will show how these harsh conditions shaped the circumstances in which some of them created art: On the one hand, these conditions provided time and space for the artists to create art, “like a studio,” as one of the artists said. On the other hand, these conditions increased levels of depression and took away hope, as another artist said after his release: “Because I have no spirit in my mind, I have no strength [to draw].” These conditions formed the asylum seekers as a community and pushed them to recreate their identity. For some, it motivated them to resist through art. I will discuss the case of two painters—Afwerki Teame and Tsegay Berhe—who painted dozens of mural artworks, and will show the ways they took agency and initiative to create art and make a change.

Ningfei Xiao (Shannon) (Victoria University of Wellington) -Performing dialogue(s) before sunset: A feminist posthuman autoethnography along Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington Harbour

This creative presentation is about a comprehensive feminist posthuman autoethnographic documentary, documenting the site-specific performance, Dialogue Before Sunset. Interweaving feminist architectural and art practices with posthuman inquiries, the study employs autoethnography to explore decentered research subjectivities and site-specific performances along Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington Harbour. Inspired by encounters with shamanic traditions in both China and Aotearoa New Zealand, I embarked on a walking journey through the sites and public spaces within Wellington Harbour, guided by embodied perceptions of the Taniwha (water spirits in Māori stories). The modernised waterfront, reclaimed from former swamps and streams, bears a diverse colonial history and was utilised by Māori.

As a Han Chinese non-Māori/Ewengki creative practitioner and researcher, and a feminist, I collaborated with female Rongoā Māori healers and Ewengki/Evenki shamanic traditional practitioners to conduct performances. Our work delves into the essence of Taniwha: the local wetland ecosystem, the harbour's colonial history and its interactions with contemporary urban life, which present a significant presence in the collective imagination of Te Whanganui-a-Tara. Through documentation of conversations, reflections, and audiovisual recordings along this journey, the autoethnographic documentary focuses on a series of becoming moments and events involving both human and non-human entities: the sites and spaces, Taniwha, women, diverse ethnic communities, and technological existence of the multi-species traditions. The aim is to represent our embodied collective experiences of the space and place, and to foster discussions on the more-than-human in urban public spaces under colonial influences, drawing from tangible and intangible connections inherent in shamanic traditions. We believe that the 气Qi or mauri, life force, can be remembered through this ongoing dialogue with our surrounding environments, enabling us to see, hear, and feel our relations with the land and water. Note: The project is made possible through Wellington City Council's Public Art Fund. Collaborators: Lu Pang (film), Paula Mac Ewan (performance), Tanya Te Miringa Te Rorarangi Ruka (video art).

11:45-13:45 - Session 2- Manifesting against exclusions, performing the desire to belong: from visual art and songs to punk and carnival

Sergey Katsuba (University College Dublin) -Hate crime and visual art

The art project is based on the research on hate crimes against LGBTQ in Russia. 10 years ago, in June 2013 the Russian government introduced legislation that was commonly referred to as the “gay propaganda law”. This legislation restricted LGBTQ in their rights and had adverse societal effects – the increase in hate crimes. Hate crime is a criminal offense motivated by prejudice towards a social group. In Russia, this prejudice is encouraged by the authorities. This provoked a chain reaction when hundreds of random people around the country (sometimes with the help of authorities) decided to kill gay people. The Russian government does not record hate crimes against LGBTQ. Moreover, the authorities make statements like “We don't have those kinds of people here. We don't have any gays. You cannot kill those who do not exist”. The purpose of the research was to prove it wrong. In order to do that the researchers generated a database of such crimes which included 1056 cases. Those are the real people and real crimes that do exist. The research project worked with texts of thousands of court judgments on hate crimes against LGBTQ. Those crimes are invisible for the public, neglected by the authorities and not mentioned by the media. The artwork represents an attempt to bring these crimes to light.

The artwork: The main artwork is a big PVC banner (5x1 meters). The banner is a compilation of short texts, divided by gridlines. The unusually big size of the artwork allows to include as many hate crime stories as possible. While some texts are presented in full, others do not fit on the banner, leaving the reader with an impression that there are indeed thousands of them somewhere out there. Choosing a banner as a medium can be considered unconventional and "inappropriate". This highlights the marginalised nature of the hate crime

Stephen Millar (Queen's University Belfast)- 'We are not sectarian': Performing irony in Northern Ireland's loyalist music scene.

Marc Rontsch (Odeion School of Music, University of the Free State)- (Un)silenced and (Dis)belonging: Sounding South African whiteness in Hog Hoggidy Hog's Oink!.

stories, which cannot be told through conventional mediums. Every story presented is real and derived from court judgments discovered by the researchers.

For almost thirty years, Irish republicans, Ulster loyalists, and British state forces fought for control over the six counties of Northern Ireland during a period euphemistically referred to as 'the Troubles' (1969-98). Today, in the absence of physical conflict, loyalists and republicans are engaged in a culture war wherein sport, parades, music, murals (and more) and are used to mark territory and claim symbolic space. Drawing on ongoing ethnographic work in loyalist pubs and social clubs across Northern Ireland, this paper focuses on the explicitly sectarian nature of the loyalist song scene and considers loyalist claims that such songs (with their use of anti-Catholic and anti-Irish references) are in fact ironic. Taking the seemingly paradoxical loyalist chant 'we are not sectarian' as its focus, the paper questions the limits of irony when it takes place on a large scale and whether irony functions differently within post-conflict societies, particularly among those dissatisfied with the negotiated settlement.

Hog Hoggidy Hog were a band from Cape Town, who integrated punk, ska, metal, rock, jazz and goema into music which they aimed to be "visceral and transcend genre", a music which they named "Pork Rock". During the band's career spanning two decades, they performed across South Africa and internationally, and released four full-length studio albums and three EP's. The band's tenure as a leading force in South African underground music ended with the death

of their singer George Bacon in 2015. Their penultimate studio album, Oink! released in 2004 saw Hog Hoggidy Hog expressing themes such as drug addiction, their move from underground to mainstream, self-loathing and South African post-Apartheid racial tension. Musically Oink! features more integration of musical styles and genres as well as a slicker production, factors which culminate on the band's cover of Johnny Clegg's Great Heart. This paper takes the arguments made by Samantha Vice in her 2010 paper "How Do I Live In This Strange Place?" as a theoretical framework to discuss Hog Hoggidy Hog's expression of racial discomfort. Through discussions of punk's political history, lyrical content and the musical hybridity of Oink!, I argue that this album represents the positioning of white South Africans as a that of simultaneous belonging and not belonging.

Andrew Snyder (NOVA University Lisbon) -Structural xenophobia: the struggle for the viability of Lisbon's Brazilian carnival

The Brazilian carnival that has grown exponentially since the mid-2010s in the streets of Brazil's ex-metropole Lisbon has been an important site for the articulation of immigrant belonging, visibility, and audibility in Portugal, both in terms of creating diasporic experiences of their country of origin and of forging links with the host society of Portugal. As the events of the blocos (carnival ensembles) began relatively small, they initially made use of the status of parading as a "political protest" with minimal fees. By 2020, when their events had grown into as much as the tens of thousands, the city government has come to categorise instead as "commercial events," requiring the blocos to pay expensive fees, despite their celebrations in public space having no profit motive and impeding the realisation of the events. Since 2023, the blocos have launched a public campaign

calling for a way forward to make the carnival viable, but in 2024 they again reached an impasse, leading the blocos to parade again as protests under a questionable legal status. Notably, though Brazilian immigrants have understood the treatment as a result of the xenophobia they often experience in Portugal, the city has been careful not to stigmatise Brazilian communities or cultural practices as the reason for the impasse, arguing that the Brazilians are being “treated no differently from others.” I argue that Brazilian immigrants in Portugal encounter structural xenophobia, a systemic form of immigrant exclusion based not on explicitly xenophobic rationales. When bureaucratic systems do not explicitly adapt their models towards the goals of equity and inclusion with attention to the specific needs of immigrant events, they can exclude these communities, which are inherently more precarious and cannot take advantage of these systems as easily as local actors.

14:00-16:00 - Session 3- Navigating (non-)belonging in the aftermath of war(s)

Camille Maalawy (University of Hull, Yorkshire) - Mezzaterra-Meeting Point

Mezzaterra or ‘meeting point’ – is a song cycle rooted in an exploration of language, culture, and identity, and how these are perceived and translated across cultures and between nations.

British/Egyptian (Coptic) mezzo soprano Camille Maalawy specialises in singing new music, and that of other cultures, predominantly classical Arabic and Sephardic repertoire of the Spanish and Judeo-Arabic diaspora. As part of a PRSF Resonance residency with Opera North, Camille worked with composer Mark Slater to create a song cycle based on

themes of culture and identity based on her heritage.

Responding to sources from pharaonic hieroglyphs through to contemporary poetry via European art music and music for religious rituals, the result is a new 40-minute piece fusing Arabic and European musical styles, both notated and improvisatory. The piece examines concepts of travel, wandering, being an outsider, a foreigner – issues that are as powerful and relevant today as they were in pharaonic times.

In pharaonic hieroglyphics, the Rekhyt Rebus (or lapwing) was always depicted with its wings pinned back to represent the foreigner as someone of a lower class, but whom the ancient Egyptians acknowledged had a rightful place in their society to balance maat (order) and isfet (chaos).

Our piece explores the connections between languages, identities and musical idioms in a celebration of the common ground – or mezzaterra – that unites us.

Further information including an introduction video from Camille, and an excerpts video from the initial performance at Opera North, as well as the Tete-a-Tete performance can be found at:

<https://camillemaalawy.com/mezzaterra/>

Ailbhe Kenny (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick)- Making music while seeking asylum: negotiating the politics of belonging

Accommodation centres for those seeking asylum are unique spaces in which to make and share music. The geographical and physical boundaries drawn up are obvious through the temporary and segregated accommodation provided. The policies, discourses and practices that follow such boundaries also present a distinct separation of ‘us’ from ‘them’ which Yuval-Davis would argue is the very essence of

any politics of belonging (2006, 204). This paper explores how both belonging and non-belonging is performed, enacted and projected through individual and collective musical practices while living within asylum seeking systems. Creating and sharing music within asylum seeking centres allows for alternative ways of being as well as spaces for belonging, despite the physical, geographical, social and economic constraints of living in such designated housing. This paper draws on several projects across centres in both Ireland and Germany, to reveal different types of musical participation, identities and forms of belonging as well as non-belonging. As Bowman has warned, “music is always inclusive and exclusive” (2007, 110). Findings from qualitative case studies provide particular insights into a “plurality of forms of belonging” (Antonsich, 2010, 653), thereby resisting narrow categorisations, nationalisms, monocultures and fixed boundaries in its examination. Throughout the discussion, I draw on various research methods of interviewing, observation, informal conversations, videos, music recordings and reflective logs. Both the children and adults featured invent, transform and negotiate forms of belonging despite the temporary and transient nature of their living arrangements.

References
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Bowman, W. (2007). Who is the “we”? Rethinking professionalism in music education. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 6:4, 109–31.
Yuval-Davis N (2006) Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice* 40:3, 197–214.

Natalie Kirschstein -Repertoires of (non)belonging: music impacts of Russia's invasion of Ukraine

Music and displacement are often discussed in terms of how musical traditions are kept alive and/or how they grow, change, and take on new meanings as their bearers carry them into new contexts. Yet what happens when the bearer's relationship to the musical tradition becomes contested neither because of a new context nor because of a lack of access and community to perpetuate it, but because of the very circumstances under which they became displaced? What happens to their sense of musical belonging when the music they had considered theirs suddenly becomes inextricably linked with their oppressor? Among the thousands of people displaced by Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 and the ensuing and ongoing war are many classical musicians whose musical identity was firmly rooted in the romantic period. This paper discusses the nuances of this musical relationship, based on conversations with young Ukrainian pianists who, after fleeing the war in Ukraine, have continued their studies at the conservatory in Lucerne Switzerland. From struggles with shame over musical decisions, to a reframing of the repertoire, to an outright rejection of works by Russian composers, their musical responses and choices are highly individual, but all deeply political in nature. I explore how they navigate and perform (non)belonging in their personal and professional lives and consider what it means for a musical repertoire to suddenly and drastically take on a new meaning that places musicians' musical and social identities at odds with each other.

Ioanna Manoussaki-Adamopoulou - Becoming visible in a protest: performing belonging by exerting the right to the public space.

Documenting various voices, languages and demands of migrants and refugees in protests in Athens, this pastiche audio-visual piece aims to explore public

political participation as a performance of active citizenship. Regularly finding themselves in the liminal space of legal, housing and employment limbo, made invisible through containment techniques such as the camp, violent and passive racisms and exclusions from official discourse, the public space often becomes the last resource for collective existence and expression. Defying their systemic non-belonging by exerting their right to the city through a political performance of their desires and demands for equal rights, they simultaneously create and become publics. Merging with other – often shared - political genealogies, these politicised visibilities end up transforming the public performance of politics and the experience of the urban space itself, defying its current commodification and the socially restrictive effects of gentrification by embodying an inclusive notion of the experience of public(s).

16:15-17:00 – After-conference BYO gathering