

## Encountering through Storytelling: Whose Listening?

**Parinita:** When people and institutions make room for multiple stories to exist, who listens to these stories and what are ethical ways of listening?

You're listening to the final episode of our Encountering through Storytelling series. Our first two episodes focused on why we need a multiplicity of both stories and storytellers. In this episode, we're going to think about the different ways in which people listen to these stories and how we can learn to listen to difficult stories.

Sociolinguist Ana Deumert drew attention to the concept of witnessing which can help us listen to people's different stories and understand diverse experiences.

**Ana Deumert:** I've recently become interested in Maria Lugones's idea of witnessing. It is a useful concept. It is not just listening or seeing, an approach that privileges the ear and the eyes. But as we are in each other's presence, we are fully and bodily co-present, feeling with all our senses, witnessing the other, the fullness of their being, their joy and pain, their hopes and anger. Witnessing allows us to experience what Lugones calls "the manyness of worlds" and to lead a life that is plurisensical, not monosensical. A plurisensical life is, I would suggest, a life that is magical, artful, attuned to multiplicity and mutuality. It is art in particular that attunes us to the manyness of worlds, that permeates our boundaries and makes them porous, open to receive.

**Parinita:** Artist and poet Sophie Herxheimer described how everyday encounters with strangers can provide opportunities to share and listen to stories. By co-creating art with different people, Sophie's work invites a broad range of stories, tellers and witnesses.

**Sophie Herxheimer:** My provocation is going to be about my long-term project that I've been doing since about 2004 and it's got a rather unwieldy name. It's called Collecting Stories - Live In Ink. It's a way that I work which involves kind of temporary collaborations where often I've been asked by an organisation or a residency or a project to work with members of the public or a community group in collecting stories mainly because these people who ask me to do it have seen me do this before. And they realise that this is a nice way to involve people in art, in kind of thinking and sharing and listening and stories. And, I don't know, it's a kind of immediate thing because as an artist and a poet, I've often worked using instinct and spontaneity and interaction.

It's a genuine exchange because each person gets a copy of their story to take away. They are my collaborator, they are 50% of the art. What they tell me goes in the art, they're the material, the content. I'm the drawer and the servant of the story. So it's a very funny arrangement but somehow it suits me because I'm a poet and an artist, and using words and pictures together is my natural state of being. So I like the fact that I can use both and that I can dovetail the image with the text and the listening with the looking. It feels like what I should be doing and so luckily for me I get plenty of opportunities to do it.

**Parinita:** A shared context like this can open up conversations among people from diverse backgrounds so they can listen to each other's stories. For our participants, these contexts ranged from popular media, worship, music, food and art – all of which brought together people around a shared interest and helped them both encounter and negotiate difference.

For Sophie, the framework of food opened the door to different cultural histories and experiences. This allowed her to listen to stories in a way few public spaces make room for.

**Sophie:** And then when we developed this project further, which was partly provoked again by Claire Paty, because she invited me to make a tablecloth big enough for a thousand Londoners to dine at

together. And I made on hotel-salvaged linen a 300-meter tablecloth. I screen-printed it at London Print Works Trust and in each place setting, I put a food story that I'd collected from a Londoner. And at that stage, I wasn't collecting them always live, especially as I had a deadline. So I would collect them from people at bus stops, in the shop – anywhere. The school playground when I was picking up my kids: “tell me, what do you like to eat? Who did the cooking in your house when you were growing up? Mhmm that sounds nice!” So, you know, I always had my notebook and my pen. I still go round without fail with my notebook and pen - and I don't know how people without a notebook can manage. But anyway, they use their phones and that's good too.

So back to the story collecting. When we had Feast On The Bridge from 2007, I guess my tablecloth started its life and probably ended in 2012 because then the funding got cut for Feast On The Bridge and the Thames Festival in general. But every year I would have a stall on the bridge, and I would collect people's food stories live in ink. And I'd have a big wad of paper and a photocopier and a helper who's known as the Photocopier Whisperer because an outdoor photocopier always goes wrong - or even indoors they do, don't they - and a big bottle of ink, nice set of brushes. And I would just sit there and listen, and one by one people would tell me their stories. And I would draw them for them and I would also write, as close as I could possibly get it, their own words. And doing that I had to really tune into them and find out what was important in the story. Because if somebody talks to me for 5 minutes - you can imagine that's like a storm of thousands of words. So where do you start? What do you choose? What line do you begin with, what line do you end with?

The theme of food which is a great theme and is obviously a universal theme because hopefully everybody gets to eat quite often. And it connects to our families and our stories and where we come from and who we are and where we're going and what we like and what we don't like and our senses and all our relationships - they're all tied up with food. Our belief systems – did I say that? So food is a great universal theme to go in at.

**Parinita:** For interdisciplinary musician Thandanani Gumede, music provided a way to bridge language and cultural barriers. The Lullaby Project which he facilitated in collaboration with Opera North, Leeds, helped him encounter a diversity of stories and helped him build unexpected connections with the storytellers.

**Thandanani Gumede:** So with the people's lullabies, we had to work with different organisations who are Opera North's partner groups. It was organisations like Caring For Life that supported people with learning disabilities, there were groups that were for ex-offenders - women ex-offenders - and even old people's homes. So for instance in encountering these different people it was interesting to see the different contexts. So when we were working with different people, the first session was normally about me as a performer, Dave as a performer, showcasing what we can do. But ultimately the goal wasn't just about us performing, but getting them to replace us so that they took the stage and told their own stories.

Amongst the people that we encountered there was a lady from Nigeria. We were in this church that was empty - beautiful building. And she sang this beautiful song that I could not understand in the language, and which was an interesting thing to experience as well because normally when I sing in Zulu, people don't understand me. So it was nice to be the one who did not understand the lyric but could totally get the emotion and the tone behind her story.

Another example was when we walked into an entirely different context. We were coming from a church where we had a Nigerian song and then we went into a care home, and we were just thrown into this room of people who were interested in singing church songs. And it was more of a spiritual thing. There was this gentleman who was just quiet and still, but he was really animated when we

asked him about his favourite music he came to life and he started singing in this beautiful voice with such character, you know. And he was singing a jazz standard. And then there was also a lady who was singing in Punjabi. Although she couldn't understand English but when you said lullaby, the song, you sang growing up - somebody translated - and she started singing. And it was so beautiful to see the contrast between these micro tonal scales and the things that she was singing.

And eventually we found this I'll say grandma - beautiful soul - started singing another song. It took me back to the days when I used to go to church and everything there was like based on the minor pentatonic scale. We sang in that scale it was the blues scale, you know, we preached in this scale - everything was there. And the beautiful thing about her song was that it was repetitive but when you kept on singing that same line, it's like you could see her journey and the things she went through and what the song meant to her.

And that was the beautiful thing about gospel music in the townships, I guess. We did not have overhead projectors, we could not afford to have a lot of lyrics, so the lyrics were repetitive. But then it encouraged you or challenged you as a performer to make sure that your audience is engaged. So it forced you or rather created an environment that actually challenged you to start embellishing and enhancing the melody and improvising by infusing your own story into the song. So she never sang the same thing twice, you know, and her scales were amazing.

That project, the Lullaby Project, it seemed to be customised for each and every individual that was involved and they told their own stories. And it culminated actually in the screening of all these lullabies on the big screen at Everyman Cinema in Trinity in Leeds. And just to sit there and watch that on the big screen that was happening in these different remote places - the Irish lullaby, the Nigerian song, the gospel song - and it was nice to see people prioritising the story and the message and using music as a conduit to tell that story, even when they were like "we are not professionals, we are not this, we are not that." They were in a place or a position where they can tell the story from a position of their comfort while they were stepping into their comfort zone and saying, "hey you know I don't think I could sing it", like actually you can sing and they got every note right. But, more importantly, the aesthetic of the song felt so authentic, so real and so genuine and that was a beautiful thing about the project.

(extract of singer singing plays)

**Parinita:** As we see through these experiences, such shared contexts prompt interactions which can help people engage with a range of experiences they may otherwise not have encountered. The ETHER space itself provided a shared context for people from a wide range of backgrounds and disciplines. Bringing together multiple knowledges, histories and cultures means that there's potential to learn *about* and *from* each other's unfamiliar experiences. Sign language interpreter Amber Galloway-Gallego invited people to reconsider ideas about who is supposed to listen to music. Amber interprets music for deaf fans and hoped to disrupt mainstream narratives by highlighting diverse perspectives.

**Amber Galloway-Gallego:** In 2013, I was interpreting Kendrick Lamar's set and someone recorded me and posted it - and the video went viral. It was seen by millions of people. This changed quite a bit for me. I was able to use my platform to start educating and advocating for our community on the importance of access to entertainment and to tell the world very loud and clear that we deserve access, and we should have access. But sadly most of the comments in the comment section were always like "How can deaf people enjoy music? Why do deaf people go to concerts? They can't hear." So here's your answer.

**Warren “Wawa” Snipe:** So many deaf people love music. It's a big myth in the hearing world. They think that deaf people can't hear so therefore they don't like music, they don't like the sound. That is actually not true. Many deaf people love music. That's a fact. It's more about the feel and the way you vibe. We're just like anyone else.

**Kristen Hejl-Rietz:** You ask me if a deaf person loves music. I would have to tell you I am one of those people. I am an absolute fanatic when it comes to country music like the incredible George Strait, Koe Wetzel, Cory Morrow, I mean the list goes on and on. I actually have a lot of music on my phone.

**Sean Forbes:** Deaf people love music. For myself as a deaf person, I've always loved music. There have been several deaf people that have come up to me over the years and have told me “thank you for making music accessible.” I've also met other deaf people in my life that music was not as important for them. But it wasn't until I got to the Rochester Institute of Technology that I met so many deaf people that love the music. And I've met so many more along the way.

**Amber:** So I challenge you to flip the script when it comes to access. When places and events are set up, many of us are not even considered in the planning. Hearing people don't have to worry about whether or not you can hear your favourite artist because speakers are automatically provided but interpreters and captioning is often an afterthought or not even considered. Let's rewrite the story together. What if at events, in planning stages we made interpreters and closed captioning the same priority as speakers, microphones and lighting? Obtaining interpreter services and captions should not fall on the shoulders of our community, but it does. It sometimes takes days, weeks, months, even years.

Rewriting the narrative can be challenging but ensuring we are including all voices in the story will in fact promote a more equitable society. You are worthy of this, and I am too. We all are. We have the power to change the narrative, but this requires us to be open to the change which I know can be uncomfortable and that's okay.

**Parinita:** Relatedly, Professor and researcher Charles Forsdick advocated for disrupting the ways in which we listen to stories too. He proposed that by rereading historical travel narratives in distinct ways, we can include and understand those perspectives which these narratives largely erased.

**Charles Forsdick:** All of these works sketch out what the author calls an aesthetics of diversity. They were written during a period when colonial literature and the exoticist novel were at their height. They attempt though to produce a narrative perspective that either recreates non-Western voices or is at least inflected or attenuated by the multiple perspectives that constitute any form of inter-human and intercultural encounter. The aim of this provocation is to explore the ambiguities of Segalen's engagement with the ethics of travel and by extension to reflect on the ways in which travel narratives can present contact zones as spaces that highlight the initial discomforts that encounters with difference are likely to produce.

What was original in Segalen's work - produced in a context characterised by the still often unquestioned assumptions of colonial expansion - was its reflection on the relationship between Western self and non-Western other. In the field of travel, to borrow the terminology of Mary Louise Pratt in the context of her thinking on the contact zone, this translates into a reflection on the connection between traveller and travelee.

Segalen's own travelogues and most notably the text you see here “Équipée” - translated a couple of years ago into English as “Journey To The Land Of The Real” - pose in their representation of interpersonal encounters in the field between Western travellers and often Chinese travelees, they

pose clear questions about the ethics of travel and in particular about the asymmetries of power that such meetings often imply. He presents these encounters in terms of a mutually disorientating destabilisation of identity. This is dependent on an understanding of exoticism that is profoundly bilateral and depends ultimately on an imagination of mutual defamiliarisation. According to this, the traditional solipsism of the European traveller is undermined. And this goes on to challenge a critical orthodoxy in the Anglophone academy where the founding and enduring influence of critics such as Edward Said and Mary Louise Pratt has often meant that travel literature has been read as a form of colonial discourse

In conclusion, I'm going to suggest a rereading then of this travelogue by Segalen "Équipée" published for the first time in 1929. Unlike many other travel writers and colonial authors of the period, there's a tendency throughout Segalen's work to acknowledge the travelling or mobile nature of other cultures. So the Polynesian or Chinese protagonists of some of his most important works are themselves travellers. And this understanding of the travelling nature of other cultures and of the potential of their inhabitants to be travellers in their own right is radically different from that of the majority of his contemporaries

These ideas are translated via the travelogue "Équipée" into reflection on the traveller-narrator's relationship to and his representation of the travelees he meets. For instance, and I'll give you this example in a moment, a Chinese girl who stares at the French traveller produces a troubling moment of contact as the narrator is himself exoticised and in Pratt's terms - you can see them here - studied from the perspective of those who participate on the receiving end of travel.

This is travel writing that's emerging very much in a colonial context. And so those issues about the subject of travel - what Mary Louise Pratt calls I think really usefully "the travelee" - literally the person who is travelled over and who is often marginalised and domesticated in the account.

For me it's the key question about the form. It's a form which, as I implied, was exclusively for centuries a very white space. And so what we're seeing is an opening of this genre to a variety of authors who previously would not have had access to this heavily policed literary space. The other thing that really strikes me, Maya - and this goes back to the conversation between Jonathan and Awad - it's thinking about travel, and it's understanding that travel writing has for many years created a very elite understanding of the practice. And that we need to be open to multiple journeys, many journeys which are enforced, which are necessary and which relativise the types of journey that I talked about very briefly in my provocation - Victor Segalen in China who is there as an archaeologist, there as a French colonial official and military officer.

So I think in the 21st century, I go back to really what was at the heart of my provocation, this sense that I think travel writing remains a form, despite all the historical baggage it has, it remains a form in which we can grapple with a number of the issues that bring us together today from our multiple sectors and perspectives and the media.

**Parinita:** As different participants explored diverse contexts of telling and listening to stories, Erin Moriarty Harrelson, Assistant Professor For Deaf Studies at Gallaudet University, emphasised the need to pay attention to the ethics of telling and listening to stories – especially when it comes to representing other people's experiences. Here, Erin is being voiced by Andy Carmichael, a sign language interpreter.

**Erin Moriarty Harrelson:** So first of all I want to think about something that recurred as a theme today - how do we really listen to people who are strangers to us? And I feel like there's also a

converse theme of what's the ethics of listening? What's the morality of representing others and especially strangers? And what does it mean to interpret or translate for them?

What I mean to talk about is, you know if we talk about what does it mean to translate or be translated? What does it mean to interpret or to be interpreted? And looking at the duality of those, and really understanding that translation is more out of time; it's asynchronous. It's usually linked traditionally with literature or screen studies - those sorts of things. Interpretation being much more in the moment, in the now, the transformative encounter.

I wanted really to hold those thoughts and then to think about what it means to then have all the different encounters that we've discussed today. And in these encounters, where and when people have different trajectories, different biographies and understandings, what happens when those come together?

**Parinita:** Such productive discomfort can result in some valuable insights not only about other people's experiences but also your own assumptions. Artist Sophie Herxheimer shared how she made an effort to listen to difficult stories and navigate uncomfortable moments.

**Sophie Herxheimer:** I think that all any of us want is to be listened to. I think if I do my job properly, I give the person my attention. And I weave around them a sort of sense of safety and insight and they know that they're with me and that I'm not judging them. I don't have time to judge them, I don't have the inclination but I don't have the time because it's a very quick turnaround. And I think that helps in that people suddenly feel that they could open up, tell me something - and I hope they don't feel robbed, which is why I want to give them a copy of their story.

Sometimes I say to them, "Are you okay? Do you want me to share this or not share the story?" And if they say, "I can't believe I told you that, please never tell anyone else", then I don't, and I don't share the drawing. There are little bits, a few little rules at the beginning and end of story collecting. Obviously, I don't want it to be an exploitative act. And it is an act in which I am the drawer and I am the artist. But because I've never really enjoyed that idea of the separation of the roles and the punter situation and the expert, I don't really like that, and I find it uncomfortable. Although I don't mind discomfort and I think discomfort is great, because it usually involves something shifting, there's a transformation going on.

Another person, another poet who's been helpful, said to me, "For every ten stories you collect from other people, do you collect ten from yourself? Collect three from yourself." And I've started doing this. Because I agree that I have a lot of stories. It's a very fluid act and it affects people differently; it affects me differently. It's true that sometimes people haven't been listened to, ever; or they might not have been listened to for some time. And then they want to take a full hour, and I haven't sometimes got a full hour. But if they've got a very, very urgent story about death, for example, and they need to offload it on me, I'm not going to hurry them up really. I just tell everyone else to wait for a bit. And then it does take me - then I've been loaded up with their story, and I have to lie down. But I don't lie down until two days later, because I still got a lot to collect.

**Parinita:** However, as Adam Jaffer pointed out in a previous episode, even if one makes space to represent difficult stories – particularly those marginalised ones that have previously not been told – the act of listening is far from guaranteed. Helen Finch, Associate Professor of German at Leeds

University, believes that literature can offer an avenue to disrupt this silence and enable people to tell their stories that others aren't quite ready to hear<sup>1</sup>.

**Helen Finch:** The writers that I am looking at encountered violence at the hands of the Nazis because of being othered as Jewish. And yet they were people who shared a culture with their German persecutors, they shared a language with their persecutors. Often, they reflected on the fact that they knew their persecutors intimately as friends. So my questions that I'm bringing to this provocation are asking, well, how can somebody who has been othered by a majority culture, who has experienced extreme violence at the hands of that culture, still encounter members of that dominant culture within their own shared language? How can, to put it more specifically, how can a German survivor, somebody who was born in the German lands, write in German to a German-speaking audience about their history of pain and suffering? How can they make a German audience - who in the 1950s and 1960s often wanted nothing more than to say that the past was over and done with; to say that enough compensation had been given to people who had suffered persecution; who wanted their literature to reflect an optimistic sense of moving forward from the past - how could these writers find an audience? What role did their literature have in staging this encounter between Germans and Jews that would acknowledge on the one hand the shared culture, but on the other the radically different experience that German Jews had of the period of Nazi persecution.

There are lots and lots of questions that emerge from this - the practical questions of what German publisher is going to publish this material, material that often accuses the German public of crimes and attitudes that it would rather forget? Such works might find a publishing house in other parts of the world but when the people being accused of, for example, culturally persecuting Jews - other people who are publishing the literature - how does that encounter play itself out?

In fact in many of the literary texts that I'm looking at, this encounter is fictionalised and restaged. So for example I'm just going to give you one example of a survivor called Edgar Hilsenrath who was born in Germany in the 1920s and only died very recently - two years ago. He wrote novels throughout the latter half of the 20th century, brilliant novels, speaking about various aspects of the experience of German Jews both during the period of the Shoah but also before it - the period of Jewish culture and Stettel life, prior to the Second World War - that was different and that has been irrevocably lost. But also this crucial experience of the survivor who tries to return to German culture, who tries to speak in German to a member of the German majority culture, about a history that the persecutor wishes to forget. So I'm going to take his last novel "Berlin Last Station" which was published in 2006 which stages this encounter between the survivor and the persecutor in intimate fashion.

Hilsenrath is a satirical and a grotesque writer and his grotesque writing breaks through the veil of piety with which this German Jewish encounter is often cloaked. The theorist Max Czollek has spoken of this as a Theatre of Memory that German majority culture, mainstream culture, loves certain performances of contrition and restitution through, for example, constructing memorials such as the memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin. But that actually engaging with the needs and the histories of real living Jewish people is sometimes a step too much because they break with the idea of the Memory Theatre in which everyone knows their predestined role. And Hilsenrath is one of these people with no interest in the Memory Theatre in which Jews encounter

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<sup>1</sup> Helen Finch's provocation draws on AHRC-funded research into German-Jewish writers and the Holocaust, which will be published in the monograph *German-Jewish Life Writing in the Aftermath of the Holocaust: Beyond Testimony* (Camden House, 2023).

Germans only to absolve them of the past, only to talk about a shared future, only to talk about how much progress Germany has made since 1945. By contrast the encounters between German and Jew in Hilsenrath's work right through the 1950s, 60s, 70s and into this century show and relate encounters which are difficult, which are over-determined, which are emotional.

And my question then is what is the role of literature in staging these encounters? Can it serve as a troubling factor that disturbs the overwhelming normative force of the Memory Theatre that demands that all encounters be harmonious? And I hope that it can; it can disrupt; it can be problematic

**Parinita:** Charlotta Einarsson, Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Mid Sweden University, spoke about how valuable it can be to disrupt the way narratives are usually presented. She pointed at how Samuel Beckett's drama offers incomplete narratives with meanings that are rarely set in stone. By inviting uncertainty, frustration and multiple interpretations, she believed that these different ways of listening could provide valuable insights into ethical encounters with difference.

**Charlotta Einarsson:** These presentations do not have their meanings determined in advance. The poetic stage images in Beckett's drama therefore seem dependent on the techniques that produce them. For example, isolation, stasis, fragmentation, disappearance. And they also have the power to become significant in many different ways. Not what mis-movements mean then, but their potential for becoming meaning is what I have been trying to address. Structurally, Beckett's drama is characterised by incompleteness. It does not tell us what to understand or think. It's not didactic - at least not in any conventional sense of the word. Rather it invites spectators to pay attention to aesthetic aspects of performance - for instance, shapes and sounds - and to engage imaginatively and creatively in thinking from such experiences. In Beckett's own words, his drama is "a poetry of the theatre rather than a poetry in the theatre."

Meaning in this context depends less on whether or not we are able to decode stage images and more on our ability to tune to their appearing as open-ended and ambiguous poetic manifestations. Because clearly we cannot stop making meaning and the crisis of interpretation in Beckett's drama therefore does not do away with meaning; it merely underwrites our complicity and participation in creating it.

Yet Beckett's drama does not tell us what to understand or think nor does it explain our lives. Rather it presents an open-ended invitation to participate in the construction of meaning. In other words, Beckett's drama seems to offer up a range of embodied experiences to be imaginatively inhabited by spectators. In so doing, it does not only resist habitual or conventional meaning-making but it also invites us to look for meaning elsewhere; to attend to what Gendlin terms our felt sense. And to proceed to think from there - from not knowing, from frustration or curiosity, from effect.

I would therefore want to suggest that Beckett's drama unveils the pluralism intrinsic to experience. It invites us to re-evaluate the experience of what it means to know something but also what it means to be ignorant, to experience conflict, difference and stuckness. And this, finally, is also how it is ethical. It prompts us to think differently. Because just as dancers often come to realise that injuries are guides not adversaries - guides that help them move differently - we need to dare to let go of what we are most committed to, namely our beliefs and convictions, in order to find routes or ways of communicating with each other. Indeed, as Timothy Garton Ash reminds us, our survival as a species may hinge on our capacity to recalibrate a "we" in this respect. Thus, finally, may we also come to understand why encountering the other could be so fruitfully conceived in terms of an ethical drama.



**Parinita:** As we can see, there are different ways to disrupt people into listening to stories in new ways. However, this ability to listen can be complicated by the intersection of marginalisation and privilege. As a deaf woman in the US, Erin Moriarty Harrelson was removed from the experiences of her deaf research participants in Cambodia. Opera composer Jonathan Dove from England stumbled across unexpected hurdles while eliciting and representing the experiences of the refugees he encountered. What ethical responsibility do listeners have when it comes to engaging with other people's stories? Like before, Andy Carmichael, a sign language interpreter, is voicing Erin.

**Erin Harrelson:** So I should just say, look, I think, Adrian, that's I think the key of our discussion today. The ethics of the encounter, I think, is a very good frame - plus looking at the storytellers, as you've just rightly said, and the responsibility of the storytellers. And one thing that I do want to say, and I mentioned in my previous presentation is, how we inhabit roles that actually create a difference, yeah? So by these encounters, we are creating difference and we can't be in denial of that. [Interpreter: I think she wants to just ... ah there we go] - our complicity in creating difference [Interpreter: is the point Erin wants to make]. Thank you.

**Jonathan:** Yes, first of all, just to thank Erin, I mean for everything that you're saying there, but particularly the idea of becoming the other, I thought was a very helpful way of framing a lot of different activities. I thought that was certainly very helpful for me as a way of thinking about what I'm doing in trying to give voice to someone else's story and trying to embody someone else. I never thought of it in quite that way, but then I saw that that connects very directly with the act of signing, with the act of interpreting and with the act of translating. And there's a relationship between all of those. I found that very illuminating and thought provoking, so thank you.

**Parinita:** This discussion prompted Maggie Kubanyiova, Professor of Language Education, and Anna Douglas, curator, researcher and writer, to consider what it means to listen to other people's stories in ways that could represent them more ethically and more complexly in different contexts.

**Maggie Kubanyiova:** What I wanted to really kind of reflect on is that idea of representing the other. And I think that can become quite a paralysing debate or even a paralysing prospect for anyone doing research in the way that many of us do. So the ethnographic anthropological. And that's why I've always found Ingold's distinction between ethnography and anthropology - and kind of referring back to Gert's idea of our research being educational - really quite useful. In the sense that yes, of course, I do absolutely need to take responsibility for how I represent. But by paralysing I mean that you can get into a kind of space where you feel you have no right. And yet you do feel that the other is making a demand on you.

And I found that in my research, I really need to step aside from that question of how do I represent other? And really try and address the question, how do I represent my encounter with the other? So how I have been touched by the other. Of course, I may be wrong, and my view can be limited, but I just feel that this is what I somehow need to address in my research. I have no idea how and that's what I'm working with, but that is why I find our conversation with the arts and artists so important. Because I also feel that there are artistic traditions that - and of course, not all art does it, and not all art should do it - but there are artistic traditions that have been working with this. How do you actually create that encounter of you and the other so that it opens up that space for others to approach it with that same responsibility and take away what they must, because you never know what they need to get from it.

**Anna Douglas:** I'm actually really sort of picking up on what Maggie just talked about because this idea of the responsibility of how I represent others and that potential over-concern leading to paralysis is exactly what happened really in British photographic practice in the 1980s. Where the

theoretical frameworks around the interplay of power between the photographer and those who are the subjects of the photographer's photographs became so theorised to basically Foucaultian frameworks around power dynamics that it began to actually make a kind of situation - that brought about a situation of paralysis where it became impossible to make certain kinds of photographic work because of this concern.

And I think there is something that actually I find the gap in that paralysis that Maggie is talking about is around actually being both aware of that potential interplay of power and making that the subject, making in a sense "the encounter with the other" the subject, not the subject the subject of the photographic practice, if that makes sense. So it actually acknowledges one's relationality to the subject. It seems to me that that's a sort of interstitial space that become the subject of the representation, no matter what the form is, whether it's photography or written text or playwriting or whatever.

But it's about - certainly something that I tried to do in my own PhD thesis was in many of the conversations I had with people, I tried to turn that back on myself - again trying to avoid the potential narcissism of that as well - which is "Who am I in this encounter?" And to actually try to reflect on that in relation to what I'm also hearing and how what is it that I'm hearing is affecting me. And to actually make that the very content of our discussions. I was actually engaged in photo elicitation. And rather than actually seeing the photograph as a sort of transparent window on a past world, I actually was trying to engage in a conversation which I, myself, the photograph were in the present, all acting as agents affecting that moment of conversation, and that's for me a very different process actually.

**Parinita:** This productive discomfort emerges in different spaces including interdisciplinary seminars like ETHER and public protest spaces that attract diverse others. Erin Moriarty Harrelson drew attention to the different ways of listening that emerged in these spaces. She also explored how people can actively negotiate discomfort by accommodating diverse needs and listening to stories in surprising ways. As different participants have reiterated, listening to multiple stories and making room for different voices – particularly historically excluded ones - can open up new conversations and enable people to learn from diverse perspectives.

**Erin:** It doesn't matter that I'm a deaf person. I enjoy music. I don't know the words, I just like the feel of it. I do like it, the vibration of it. Obviously lyrics don't mean anything to me, so I experience music in a very different way. But it got me to thinking that - I think, you have to forgive me, I think somebody else was saying that – music is the translation of the soul. You're putting feelings into sonic vibrations. And I wanted to just kind of turn that on its head a little bit and show you some examples of visual music.

[Plays clip of waves]

That's silent, but for me in my body – so this video is from Bali where I did at my latest field work. And I was looking at this and I just thought there's something intrinsically beautiful to the rhythm of this. There's something that transcends just what's going on really, you know? The different sounds, the vibrations, what's happening in reality in terms of the natural world, there's something that's above it.

[plays clip of tree blowing in the wind]

Okay, and so that's just from out here in my backyard. So I'm sure you can hear when trees rustle in the wind like that and have a different experience. But obviously from my point of view as a visual centred person, to me, this is what I would say is visual music.

Now another example of visual music is this.

I don't know if you're gonna get this, but there are two interpreters there. One is a hearing interpreter, one's a deaf interpreter and this is a disability group for ... I think it was a protest. You see people in wheelchairs and deaf people, all that sort of stuff. But again, strangers coming together, all for a common purpose and all being angry about what happened with George Floyd and the killing of George Floyd. So have a look at this in terms of the music of encounter.

[Plays clip of protesters using sign language]

So they're signing GF, George Floyd, George Floyd. So it's a commemoration of his name in sign language, is what's going on. So there's a real rhythm to this visual protest.

Okay so look well just to take all that, it's just really my way of trying to bring everything together and I don't know how successful I've been. But really my key point is this productive discomfort. I think that's my main takeaway from all of this.