

Experiments with Book Festival People (Real and Imaginary)

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Volume 11, numéro 2, printemps 2020

Commerce du livre, carnaval du livre
Book Commerce Book Carnival

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1070271ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1070271ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Groupe de recherches et d'études sur le livre au Québec

ISSN

1920-602X (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Driscoll, B. & Squires, C. (2020). Experiments with Book Festival People (Real and Imaginary). *Mémoires du livre / Studies in Book Culture*, 11(2).
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1070271ar>

Résumé de l'article

Bien qu'il existe de multiples approches en matière de recherche sur les activités culturelles, les cadres universitaires prédominants ont tendance à être sociologiques, ou encore inspirés de la manière dont on aborde les industries créatives. Ceux-ci ne permettent pas de prendre véritablement en compte l'expérience individuelle et intérieure vécue lors de festivals du livre. Des écrivains ont dépeint ces lieux d'interaction entre l'auteur et le lecteur; de son côté, la recherche actuelle tend à s'axer sur l'autoethnographie et la phénoménologie. Dans l'article, nous prolongeons et rendons plus tangibles ces approches en nous appuyant sur diverses interventions créatives, inspirées des arts : @AuthorsYurt, une personnification, sur Twitter, de la salle verte du Festival international du livre d'Édimbourg; Paper Dolls, des poupées de papier à habiller représentant des membres du public présent à divers festivals du livre en Europe, en Amérique du Nord et en Australie; et ClueButeDo, une reformulation satirique des commentaires de participants à un festival du roman noir tenu sur la petite île de Bute au Royaume-Uni. Chacun de ces exemples révèle des aspects de la personne telle qu'elle se situe dans un festival du livre, à partir des notions d'intériorité, d'individualité et d'expérientialité, ainsi que d'inclusion et d'exclusion. Nous sommes ici guidées par le slogan autoethnographique « No Insight Without Inside, No Inside Without Outside » (« Pas d'intériorité sans intérieur, pas d'intérieur sans extérieur ») (Nunu Otot).

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EXPERIMENTS WITH BOOK FESTIVAL PEOPLE (REAL AND IMAGINARY)

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ABSTRACT

While there are multiple approaches to researching cultural events, predominant academic frames tend to be either sociological or situated within a creative industries discourse. Neither of these approaches have supported sustained engagement with individual, interior experience at book festivals. Creative writers have imaginatively depicted these sites of author-reader interaction, and developing scholarship focuses on autoethnography and the phenomenological. In this article, we extend and materialise these approaches through a series of creative, arts-informed interventions: @AuthorsYurt, a personification on Twitter of the Edinburgh International Book Festival's green room; Paper Dolls, a series of cut-out-and-dress dolls depicting audience members at a variety of book festivals across Europe, North America and Australia; and ClueButeDo, a satirical reworking of the audience feedback form at a small island crime festival in the UK. Each of the three experiments reveals aspects of personhood at book festivals, engaging with ideas of interiority, individuality, and experientiality, as well as of inclusion and exclusion. In pursuing this aim, we are guided by the autoethnographic slogan, "No Insight Without Inside, No Inside Without Outside" (Nunu Otot).

RÉSUMÉ

Bien qu'il existe de multiples approches en matière de recherche sur les activités culturelles, les cadres universitaires prédominants ont tendance à être sociologiques, ou encore inspirés de la manière dont on aborde les industries créatives. Ceux-ci ne permettent pas de prendre véritablement en compte l'expérience individuelle et intérieure vécue lors de festivals du livre. Des écrivains ont dépeint ces lieux d'interaction entre l'auteur et le lecteur; de son côté, la recherche actuelle tend à s'axer sur l'autoethnographie et la phénoménologie. Dans l'article, nous prolongeons et rendons plus tangibles ces approches en nous appuyant sur diverses interventions créatives, inspirées des arts : @AuthorsYurt, une personnification, sur Twitter, de la salle verte du Festival international du livre

d'Édimbourg; Paper Dolls, des poupées de papier à habiller représentant des membres du public présent à divers festivals du livre en Europe, en Amérique du Nord et en Australie; et ClueButeDo, une reformulation satirique des commentaires de participants à un festival du roman noir tenu sur la petite île de Bute au Royaume-Uni. Chacun de ces exemples révèle des aspects de la personne telle qu'elle se situe dans un festival du livre, à partir des notions d'intériorité, d'individualité et d'expérientialité, ainsi que d'inclusion et d'exclusion. Nous sommes ici guidées par le slogan autoethnographique « No Insight Without Inside, No Inside Without Outside » (« Pas d'intériorité sans intérieur, pas d'intérieur sans extérieur ») (Nunu Otot).

Keywords

Book festivals, autoethnography, creative methods, experientiality, Ullapoolism

Mots-clés

Festivals du livre, autoethnographie, méthodes créatives, expérientialité, Ullapoolisme

No Insight Without Inside, No Inside Without Outside
Nunu and Otot

How does it feel to attend a book festival? What interior experiences unite and differentiate individuals who attend as readers, as art workers, as authors, as publishers? This article seeks to address this phenomenological question, enabled by the Ullapoolist epistemology that we have developed.¹ While there are multiple approaches to researching book festivals (many of them featured in the special issue of which this article is part), predominant academic frames still tend to be either sociological or situated within a creative industries discourse. Neither of these disciplines has supported sustained engagement with individual, interior experience at festivals; such aspects of literary events have largely been resistant to prevailing modes of scholarship.

Even in using game-inspired thinking to move beyond sociological and creative industries paradigms for our previous article “Serious Fun: Gaming the Book Festival,”² we still found it hard to convey the experience and interiority of individuals attending book festivals. Our “Bookfestivalopoly” board game and “Book Festival Top Trumps” card game productively elucidated some dynamics of festivals, but the Snakes and Ladders-style race

game we had created to express the experience of readers was an interesting failure. As we commented:

we saw that we were making the gains and pitfalls extreme. Games exaggerate, we discovered, for the sake of jeopardy and, indeed, satire. This was enjoyable, but not entirely true to life: a reader goes to a festival for a day out, to meet friends, to hear from authors, but ends up in a race for the finish line? Perhaps not.³

The questions that underpin the present article proceed from this challenge: how might we, as scholar-participants, seek to understand, represent, and engage with the experiential aspect of attendees at book festivals? What modes might we use in order to express the sensations of book festival attendance, including those of inclusion and exclusion? And how might our own involvement in such events enhance our understanding, and affect the events themselves? In considering these questions, we outline the potential of autoethnographic and phenomenological methodologies, including those which are creative and experimental in their approach. Such methodologies inform Ullapoolism, our post-data, activist, autoethnographic epistemology. The body of the article details three creative engagements with participant experience at book festivals: @AuthorsYurt, a personification on Twitter of the 2016 Edinburgh International Book Festival's green room; Paper Dolls, a series of cut-out-and-dress figures with accompanying mini-stories depicting audience members at a variety of book festivals across Europe, North America, and Australia; and ClueButeDo, a satirical reworking of the audience feedback form at a small island crime festival.

Through these creative, arts-informed interventions in both analogue and digital forms, our work explores how the feelings and behaviours of those attending book festivals can be accessed and articulated. The experiments thus produce knowledge of the forms of personhood and experience at such events, including who feels like an insider and an outsider at book festivals, and how people might move across and beyond the roles of arts worker, author, or reader.

Accounting for Experiences at Book Festivals: From Sociology to Ullapoolism

The scholarship of book festivals—and indeed cultural events more broadly, including book fairs and extending into other creative sectors—has coalesced around a small number of dominant conceptual approaches. Many studies derive from cultural sociology, primarily with a Bourdieusian underpinning.⁴ Others work from a cultural industries perspective, examining festivals' contribution to and critiquing their entanglement with the creative economy.⁵ Microhistorical research makes efforts to link closely studied empirical examples with an understanding of the larger cultural, social, political, and economic dynamics, as some of the more extended studies of festivals have done.⁶

These approaches have steered the methods used in book festivals research, which while multiple have relied heavily on the case study as a unit of empirical analysis. Mixed sociological methods such as questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and social media scraping are used to elicit individual accounts. In some cases, these methods reveal articulations of interior experiences, including emotional reactions.⁷ However, such accounts tend to operate with established categories of analysis—author, audience, staff member, publisher—that reinforce shared, rather than personal, experiences. Their conceptualisations draw on ideas of the audience, crowd, or other collective or societal consciousness, often configuring audiences as receptive rather than active.⁸ While some festivals research has challenged the notion that crowds and audiences are passive,⁹ group categorizations tend to remain intact, with little exploration of how audiences for author talks, for example, may be constituted of other writers, arts workers, publishers, and so on, with boundaries between roles therefore blurring. Other sociological attempts to break down the mass of the crowd do so by introducing demographic categories: upper, middle, and working class, for example, or division by race or gender. Even with an understanding that all collective identities include variation, the propelling disciplinary urge is to classify and analyze people in groups. While this can be useful—group features do inform individual experience—such classifications cannot explain every aspect of experience at festivals.

This sociological impulse is replicated in the creative industries, where market research carves up audiences into defined types. Fictional names or labels are sometimes used to define segments of the audience: “Eva”s who are 30-something and love late night networking events; “Jan”s who are in their sixties and looking for new cultural experiences (note: these are fictional examples of fictionalization).¹⁰ Such groupings may partially speak to the lived experiences of people attending book culture events, but inevitably smooth over the rough edges of non-conformity to type.

A divergent strand of investigation of book festival experiences has come from creative accounts by authors who participate in them. Creative writers have used their imaginations to depict these sites of author-reader interaction, often taking a satirical approach. In Nora Roberts’s *Second Nature* (1985), a US writers’ conference is the site at which her journalist-heroine Lee tracks down a reclusive horror writer she wants to interview; she then falls for the “dark-eyed master of seduction” and fulfils her own desire to become a novelist.¹¹ Mark McCrum’s 2014 crime novel *Fest* is based at the fictional Mold-on-Wold Literary Festival, where a body is found, past relationships rear their heads, and one of the writers turns detective to discover whodunnit. Kevin MacNeil’s *The Brilliant and Forever* (2016) steers the literary festival in an absurdist direction, with Archie the Alpaca competing in his island’s storytelling festival alongside a cast of characters from home and abroad.¹² Like sociological approaches, these narratives often reinscribe the structure and typical elements of the book festival.

Other authorial accounts delve more closely into interiority. A.L. Kennedy’s *On Writing* (2013) and Robin Robertson’s edited collection *Mortification* (2003) provide memoirs of difficult journeys to and from festivals, uncomfortable and peculiar lodgings, writers’ pain at public performances, and the occasional difficult encounter with authors and audiences. The frequency of both fictional and non-fictional accounts of festivals suggests their prominence in writers’ minds as part of their “literature-adjacent”¹³ authorship activities, as well as being expressions of their search to express various forms of interiority and characterization. These textual creations have partially inspired our own creative modes of expressing personhood at festivals. What these accounts by authors do not often do, however—what remains for us to do—is explore the festival from additional perspectives

beyond those on the stage. In exploring divergent perspectives, we are interested not only in examining individual positions, but in interrogating the boundaries between roles. To do that, we draw on autoethnographic and phenomenological modes.

Ethnography is a reflexive form of social research, most closely associated with the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, and usually involving “research and writing about groups of people by systematically observing and participating (to a greater or lesser degree) in the lives of the people they study”; historically, ethnography has investigated the exotic “other.”¹⁴ Ethnography tends to pursue qualitative inquiry based on fieldwork, case studies and/or interviews.¹⁵ Already a loose term, ethnography has spawned variations, including digital or virtual ethnography, where the principal object of enquiry is online communications, and sensory ethnography, where the qualitative methods use the full range of the senses.¹⁶ The term ethnography encompasses much of the sociological qualitative research on book fairs and festivals done to date, including the Frankfurt fieldwork and observations of Simone Murray, the tweets analyzed by Beth Driscoll, and the observations and interviews conducted by Millicent Weber.¹⁷

Dell H. Hymes observes that ethnography is often framed as a residual category, “associated with the study of people not ourselves and with the use of methods other than those of experimental design and quantitative measurement.”¹⁸ Autoethnography removes one of Hymes’s elements of residuality in ethnography, because the people studied include (prominently) the researchers themselves. As Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner define it, “Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno).”¹⁹ Autoethnography increases the level of active participation of the researcher, reducing the conceptual distance between the researcher and the rest of the social group being studied.

Autoethnographic research into book fairs and festivals is scarcer than sociological work, but includes reflective pieces written by journalists and publishing professionals,²⁰ as well as our own articles “Serious Fun: Gaming the Book Festival” and “The Sleaze-O-Meter: Sexual Harassment in the Publishing Industry,” which use creative methods to explore personal

experiences with book festivals.²¹ In this article, we further pursue creative autoethnography through experiments that include ourselves—as Twitter users, as paper dolls, and as questionnaire collectors.

Our autoethnographic research is also phenomenologically informed, drawing on our sensory, lived experience of festivals. Phenomenology is a branch of study focused upon the interaction between humans and objects; on experience and consciousness. Phenomenology has broad utility for the study of events, drawing attention to their “experiential, existential and ontological dimensions,” and it has been used in research on tourism, event management, and geography.²² Phenomenology has informed research on Norwegian festivals and their connection to landscape,²³ and on UK music festivals as experienced by volunteers and local residents.²⁴ Phenomenological research on trade fairs includes work on art fairs in Finland, as well as Taipei trade fairs and fashion markets.²⁵ Phenomenological research into book festivals, specifically, includes the reflective work by Ellen Wiles.²⁶

Our Approach: Ullapoolism

Our research into people at contemporary book festivals, then, draws on rich scholarly traditions and approaches from sociology and creative industries, and from autoethnography, phenomenology, and creative writing. We use these disciplinary modes within an overall methodology that we have developed, which we term Ullapoolism.²⁷ Ullapoolism is a post-data, activist and interventionist epistemology for contemporary book culture studies. Ullapoolism’s manifesto sets out commitments to playfulness, art, and materiality,²⁸ and this current article uses participatory, arts-based creative methods to probe and challenge power relations. It also extends the game-inspired thinking that we presented in “Serious Fun” (2018). In this article, Ullapoolism drives playful, make-and-do experiments with Twitter, paper, scissors, and crayons.

Ullapoolism is also the source of the two guiding spirits of this article, Nunu and Otot. Nunu and Otot derive from one of Ullapoolism’s slogans: No Insight Without Inside, No Inside Without Outside. When these words are stacked in four rows of two words, with the centres aligned, the words Nunu and Otot can be read vertically, as viewed in Figure 1.

NO INSIGHT
WITHOUT INSIDE
NO INSIDE
WITHOUT OUTSIDE



Figure 1: Nunu Otot button badge.

Nunu and Otot are the names of little wormlike creatures whose purpose is to remind us of the slogan: that insiderness and outsidersness are integral dynamics of contemporary book cultures (including demographic positionings as well as people's interior experiences, such as enjoyment and nervous anxiety), and that in autoethnographic research there is a need to move between these states while keeping both in mind. They also remind us that the concepts of inside and outside can sometimes be construed as acts of inclusion and exclusion, thus acquiring a political edge which meets another Ullapoolist manifesto item, Scholarly Direct Action.

The three experiments in book festival personhood that we designed and carried out, and which we analyze below, are a Twitter account that takes on the persona of a backstage area at the Edinburgh International Book Festival (“@AuthorsYurt”); paper dolls that represent different audience members, including ourselves; and an unusual audience questionnaire handed out at Bute Noir, a small island-based crime festival. These experiments required us to take up different levels of active digital, analogue, and creative engagement, and examine our own closeness, distance, and sometimes off-to-the-sideness in relation to book festivals. Each experiment also offers a twist on standard forms of knowledge generation by adding imaginative elements. They are material and digital thought experiments.

Experiment 1: @AuthorsYurt

The book festival is ripe for satire: in the carnivalesque potential that undercuts commercial operations; in the hierarchical encounters of A-list and B-list writers; in the wishes and desires of readers who come to hear the writers; and in the reverential way in which festivals are sometimes discussed in the media and by their own organizers. This reverence constructs them as among the few remaining locations for mannerly debate, and hence saviours of modern democracy. An extreme example of this discourse is a puff article from the *Observer*, reporting on its Welsh (and now global) book festival partner, Hay. Citing Bill Clinton's oft-repeated "Woodstock of the mind" tagline for the Hay Festival, and in the context of a recent terrorist atrocity elsewhere in the UK, Dan Glaister wrote:

But even in this oasis of learning, of erudition, of inquiry, the outside intrudes: armed police mingle, machine guns cradled in their hands. "Are those Tasers or real guns?", one woman asks her companion.²⁹

In its own response to the question, the article turned unintentionally comedic: "The enemy here, such as it is, is data." This rhetoric places imagination, human connection, and emotion above a seemingly automated, quantitative culture of artificial intelligence, a stance not infrequently taken by the publishing industry but an awkward parallel to a discussion of terrorism.³⁰

The portentousness of statements about book festivals' central role in democracy and public discourse also sits uncomfortably alongside the often homogenous nature of their demographics: white, middle-class, male authors and female audiences largely populate the events.³¹ The statements also downplay the lighter and absurdist nature of book festivals, the comedy of the encounters between writers and their peers and readers. The gap between aspirational claims and absurd reality has led to festivals being the target of satirical interventions. In 2002, in response to what he perceived as "conservatism and elitism" at the Melbourne Writers Festival, the writer Tom Cho constructed a parody program, which he then printed and distributed around the festival site. Events included:

4pm Young Writers They're young. They're hip. They're even writers. This is their panel. Grunge drugs sex risk-taking behaviours swearing those young scallywags

youth of today no respect for their elders coloured hair multiple piercings bla bla blee. Features Token Young Writer and Writer Who Is Under Forty-Five At Any Rate.³²

Ten years later, the anonymous, satirical Twitter account @WFQuestions (WritersFestQuestions) was set up, initially to parody the style of audience questions, but later to target the literary world more broadly.

Our first experiment with book festival people was established in this satirical spirit. It was also a development of character and voice, a masquerade which participated in the digital interactions surrounding a literary festival, all the while emulating a very physical object: the yurt. It was simultaneously inside and outside, meditating on the meanings of insideness and outsideness at a book festival.

What We Did

In August 2016, Claire attended her first event in that year's Edinburgh International Book Festival. An excited hubbub filled the tent as the audience chattered and waited for the speakers: Scotland's First Minister and its Makar (poet laureate). The lights dimmed and the speakers came onto the stage, led by the Festival Director. He welcomed the audience, telling its members how special the festival is for readers. Then he spoke about his own experience of being the Festival Director, welcoming famous writers and guests from all over the world to the city. He talked about being in the green room, which at Edinburgh is housed in the legendary Authors' Yurt. "What's said in the yurt," the Director said, "stays in the yurt."

Later that evening, Claire wondered what would happen if the yurt could speak. Claire and Beth held a consultation over Facebook Messenger, discussing the potential for satire, and resolving that an anonymous Twitter account, written from the perspective of the yurt, would be a productive way to play with these ideas. Claire, remembering that yurts come from Mongolia, did some not very thorough research on Mongolian sentence structure and proverbs, and thought about character and voice. She imagined how a yurt might react upon awakening, finding itself in the middle of a noisy festival city, far from home. She guessed that a yurt would be very interested in any mention of animals, and in particular horses.

And thus the satirical Twitter account @AuthorsYurt began: with silence, then a distinctive turn of phrase, and a not-so-subtle nod to Shakespeare (read the screenshot in Figure 2 from the bottom to re-create chronological order):



Figure 2: @AuthorsYurt awakes.

@AuthorsYurt developed a distinctive and adaptable welcome message (based on a Mongolian proverb), which was used to reply to authors on Twitter who announced their presence at the book festival: “Welcome, welcome. Peacefully your horses tie up.”³³

With this persona established, the @AuthorsYurt Twitter account was well positioned to gently mock distinctive festival features. These features include the lanyards, understood by @AuthorsYurt as badges of belonging conferring power of access: “Around their necks coloured strings they wear” and “Their clan it must show.”³⁴ In a sly reference to the Festival Director’s edict, the account mentioned the authors’ conversations in the yurt: “Most interesting things they are saying” and “I have been told of these interesting things I cannot speak.”³⁵ It also tweeted the response in Figure 3 to someone directly quoting this edict:³⁶



Figure 3: @AuthorsYurt achieves consciousness of its role.

@AuthorsYurt also retweeted the sharp observation in Figure 4 about the overuse of the word “yurt” at the festival, to emphasize both the Yurt’s cultural and physical (dis)location, and the satirical intent of the account:³⁷



Figure 4: @AuthorsYurt discovers its location.

More playfully, @AuthorsYurt noticed that there was a horse statue at the centre of the festival site in Charlotte Square, and began to feel more at home.³⁸ It made fun of the Scottish summer weather, responding to a tweet showing the fire in the yurt by asking “The season, which it is?”³⁹ It commented on the sartorial choices of the people it witnessed, and entered the festival’s “flash fiction” contest, announcing its presence at the festival by using the official hashtag.

Self-reflexively, @AuthorsYurt noticed when people discussed the materiality of the yurt, retweeting photos people had taken of the yurt and adding comments such as “ceiling” and “floor.”⁴⁰ @AuthorsYurt also responded to people when they mentioned they were feeling anxious, or uncertain about entering the yurt. @AuthorsYurt observed that it wasn’t on the map of the festival site (Figure 5), a subtle nod to the exclusivity of the green room location, after a series of tweets in which visitors to the Yurt had praised its friendliness.⁴¹



Figure 5: @AuthorsYurt notes it is not on the map.

Some authors enthusiastically embraced the possibility of having an online conversation with @AuthorsYurt, taking advantage of Twitter’s interactivity. A.L. Kennedy, whose observations in *On Writing* we referred to earlier, seemed particularly taken with @AuthorsYurt, comparing its turns-of-phrase to Yoda’s, and sending a series of cheeky tweets. Adding to the humour, a second Authors Yurt account was set up (by person or persons unknown to us), then a third joined the fray, flirting with horse gifs and the lure of the Mongolian plains. The original @AuthorsYurt took the opportunity to satirize the quantification tendency of creative industries discourse, by counting the number of Authors’ Yurt accounts. In response to a journalist’s tweet that reported festival “ticket sales up 3.5% and more than 62,000 books sold this year,” @AuthorsYurt tweeted, “Also, talking yurts 3 from 0 up.”⁴²

Individuals on Twitter began to wonder who the voice behind @AuthorsYurt could be. In general, there seemed to be much love for this playful Twitter account, which added an interactive, lightly magical realist and slightly satirical dimension to the festival experience. The official festival account soon realized that—apart from poking a bit of fun—@AuthorsYurt wasn’t malicious, and both accepted and boosted the account, as the exchange in Figure 6 demonstrates.⁴³



Figure 6: @AuthorsYurt’s exchanges with the official Edinburgh International Book Festival Twitter account.

There were exceptions to this warm reaction, however. The Festival Director seemed less enamoured. When @AuthorsYurt sent a tweet that read “Confused, I am,” the Director responded by quoting it with the single-word commentary, “Limpid”, a response ironically lacking in clarity. @AuthorsYurt replied deferentially: “I understand. The drawstrings are tightly sealed.”⁴⁴ When the festival eventually ended, @AuthorsYurt signed off—but not without the Festival Director declaring his wish to put @AuthorsYurt and @authorsyurtie (the more active of the additional accounts) back in a box (Figure 7).



Figure 7: @AuthorsYurt goes back in the box.

What We Thought

The @AuthorsYurt Twitter account developed from Claire’s experience as an audience member at one specific Edinburgh International Book Festival event, from our broader experiences at book festivals, and from our insider-outsider status as academics who study the book industry and its cultures. The experiment took an extreme and parodic approach in order to depict the subjectivity of an aspect of the festival (the green room) that is usually not seen as having mental interiority (although physically, it has an interior, complete with rugs and a fireplace). As the experiment went on, @AuthorsYurt’s commentary and the conversations it provoked illuminated the experiential nature of this festival: how it felt to be in (or not in) the green room. The tweet about the yurt not being on the map referenced its exclusivity as a location, and its tweets about silence and secret-keeping were in striking contrast to the public accessibility of its tweets. In this way, the account drew attention to the varied levels of access possessed by people in different positions at the festival: the Festival Director, staff, and authors were “insiders” (though some felt less so than others, particularly on their first visit), whereas audience members were “outsiders.”

@AuthorsYurt was a disrupter, but one which invited people (principally, people attending the Edinburgh International Book Festival) to become insiders by joining the joke, creating a new form of hierarchy based on humour and Twitter usage. Writing about the satirical Twitter accounts Trip

and Codex (@AustLitTrip and @AustLitCodex), Weber and Driscoll argue that “[h]umour on social media can be ... a community-creating exercise; or, conversely, cut across or work against existing communities or conversations.”⁴⁵ @AuthorsYurt did both, creating a community of individuals who grew to love the account, but at the same time presenting a disruptive challenge to those running the festival. There was an intruder in their (digital) midst. The experiment also showed the potential for creative writing and imagination as a method to form connections between people and reveal aspects of book culture. As the multiplying other yurt accounts showed, creativity can spiral beyond original intentions to instigate surprising new interactions.

Experiment 2: Paper Dolls

In the era of late capitalism, cultural tourism, Etsy, and quirky merchandising, it is not very surprising to come across dolls made to resemble literary figures. Fans of writers can buy such products as an expression of their enthusiasm, just as they may buy other literary merchandise, or undertake pilgrimages to literary sites and writers’ houses.⁴⁶ On a tour of Massachusetts writers’ houses in 2019, for example, we bought paper doll cards of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, adorning them with quotable stickers. We also bought socks that feature a doll-like image of Louisa May Alcott under the slogan “We March On” (see Figure 8).



Figure 8: Literary tourism: Transcendentalist paper doll cards and socks.

Dolls are not only souvenirs. They also function as abstracted models. They reference materiality—the body of the author—while simplifying the object they copy, (normally) reducing its size, distilling it to a handful of key features (perhaps replicating an iconic photo, or focusing on key features such as glasses and hair), and, in the case of paper dolls (and socks), removing the dimension of depth. Handling an icon of an author rendered in commodified form is both intimate and oddly detached.

But what happens when it is not an author who is given the doll treatment, but a reader? Would switching the objectification from author to reader make readers feel more special? More simplified, misunderstood, or just awkward? As noted above, the practice of dividing consumers into “types” is common within the publishing industry and the creative industries more broadly, but this objectification is usually in-house and commercial-in-confidence, rather than public-facing. Our experiment with readers as paper dolls was a way to engage with and respond to these practices and ideas.

What We Did

We made paper dolls over a couple of days on Salt Spring Island, BC, Canada. We were staying at an Airbnb after a conference, during which we had presented our work on book festival board and card games.⁴⁷ Our readers’ game failure was fresh in our mind. We were struck, too, by Salt Spring Island, its hippie vibe, and our discovery that in past years it had hosted a literary festival. Using scraps of paper and a packet of crayons we bought at the local supermarket, we sat together at a glass coffee table and sketched and cut, wondering about typical audience members at different festivals and creating paper dolls of these imaginary people. We talked to each other as we did this, an important part of the method, as we jointly dreamed up stories for different dolls and worked out what we thought they were thinking and doing. For each person, we cut out body shapes, along with clothes and accessories which could be attached to the bodies with little paper tags. We also wrote very short text stories to accompany each doll, which we detail for legibility purposes in the footnotes.

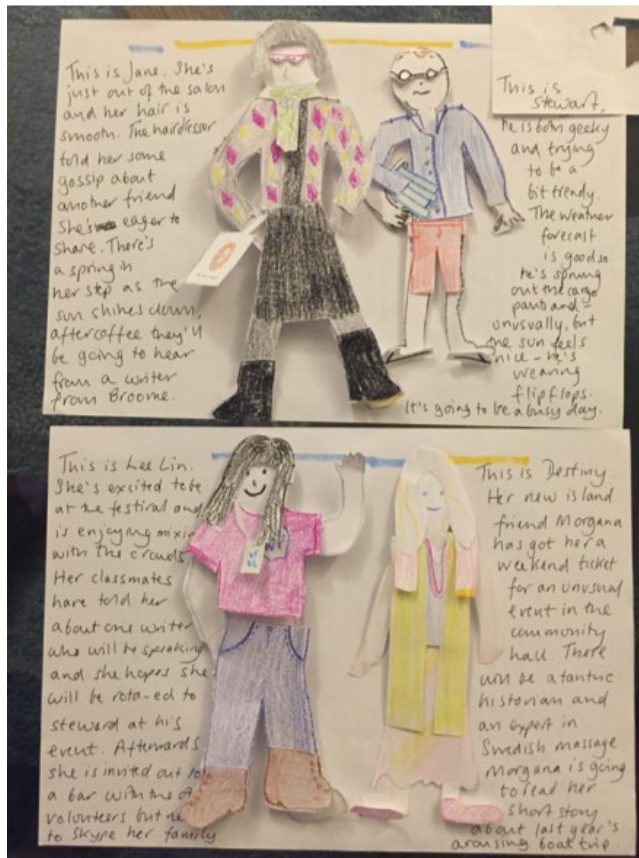


Figure 9: Paper dolls: Jane, Stewart, Destiny, and Lee Lin.

Figure 9 depicts, clockwise from top right, Jane, attending the Melbourne Writers Festival (Australia); Stewart, attending the Edinburgh International Book Festival (Scotland); Destiny, attending the Salt Spring Island Festival (Canada); and Lee Lin, also attending the Melbourne Writers Festival.

Jane's hair is cut in an angular silver bob, and she wears geometrically interesting red spectacles. Her dress is black, worn over dark grey opaque tights with shiny black high-heeled boots, and topped with a dramatically patterned grey, red, and yellow jacket and a finespun green and grey cashmere scarf. She is carrying a tote⁴⁸ adorned with the Penguin Books logo, and her story notes her buoyant mood as she anticipates meeting with friends at the festival.⁴⁹ Lee Lin, a volunteer at the same festival, has long black hair. She's wearing an official MWF blocky pink T-shirt, denim jeans, and brown boots. She has a lanyard around her neck with a WF VOL pass on it. She's raising her arm, waving, with a big smile on her face. Her story notes that she is a student, and captures her excitement and enthusiasm about an attending writer, as well as—at the back of her mind—her need to

call her family back home.⁵⁰ Stewart's glasses are small and round with thick black frames. He's wearing a blue blazer and red cargo shorts with flip flops, and carrying a stack of hardcover books. His story conveys his expectation of a busy day.⁵¹ Destiny has long flowing blonde hair. She's wearing multiple long necklaces and floaty, drapey clothing, including a pink scarf, a chartreuse gilet, and a billowing pink and yellow skirt. Her shoes are a darker pink and flat. Her story explains her anticipation of some rather unusual (imaginary) book festival events.⁵²

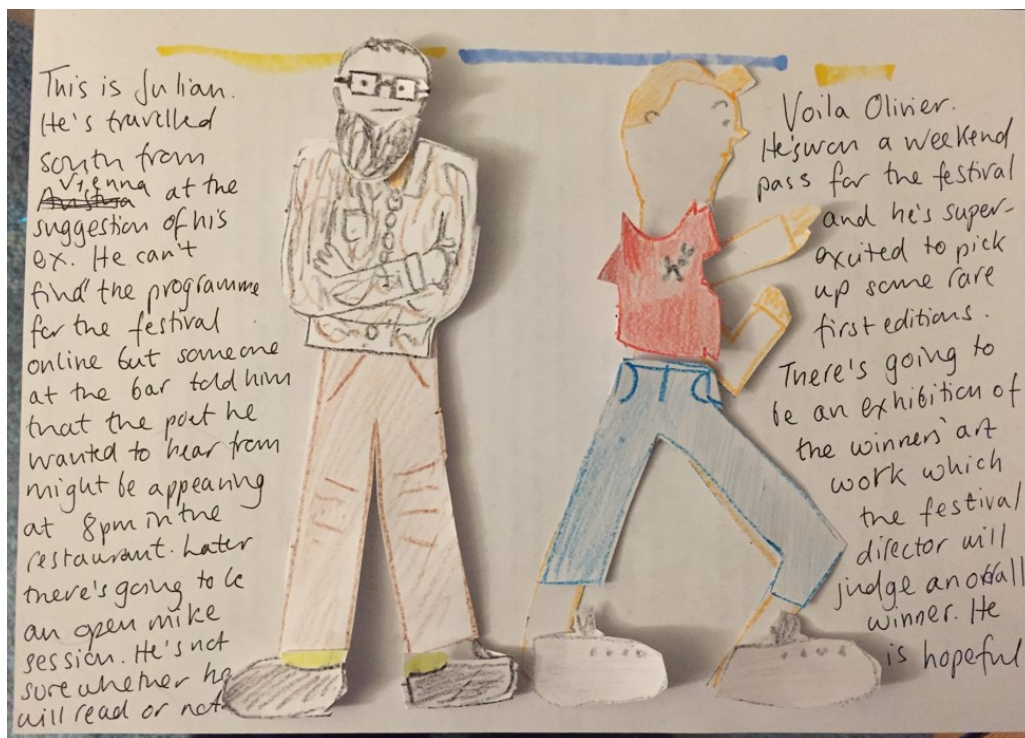


Figure 10: Julian and Olivier.

Figure 10 depicts Julian (left), attending Versoteque in Ptuj (Slovenia); and Olivier, attending the Angoulême International Comics Festival (France). Julian has a hipster beard, dark hair, and glasses. He is wearing a boxy cropped wool jacket, all buttoned up, and brown, slightly crumpled trousers. He has yellow socks and black shoes. His story notes that he can't find the festival's online program, and is wondering about reading his poetry at an open mic session.⁵³ Olivier is quite a different sort of audience member—a comic books fan.⁵⁴ He has a strawberry blond quiff and a bright red t-shirt with a dog motif. He is wearing cut-off jeans and plimsolls, and almost looks like a cartoon character himself.

At a certain point in the creation of these six characters, one of us became uncomfortable with the objectification and simplification that our paper doll experiment involved, and demanded that we make paper dolls of ourselves as well. We made dolls of each other (Figure 11), a process which required a lot of trust (“Don’t make me look hideous!”) and pre-emptive forgiveness (“I’m sorry I’m so bad at drawing!”).



Figure 11: Paper dolls: Claire and Beth.

Claire (left) is at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. Claire’s hair is long, dark, and curly, and she’s got red lipstick on. Her jacket has a check print and large round buttons, and she’s wearing it with a green A-line skirt, patterned tights and low-heeled brown shoes. An iPhone is peeping out of her skirt pocket but her hands are behind her back, there is definitely no mischievous tweeting going on. Her story depicts her wondering about reading in the sun instead of going to the Authors’ Yurt.⁵⁵ Beth (right) is at the Ullapool Book Festival. Beth’s hair is shoulder length and blondy-brown. She’s dressed warmly in jeans, brown shoes, a black top, and a green jacket, and is carrying a large woollen scarf. In her pocket is a hip flask. Her story includes her reservations about asking a question after an author talk.⁵⁶ Our own dolls worked out beautifully, in our view (for a time we used them as our Facebook profile photos), indicating (perhaps unexpectedly) the satisfaction in becoming an object.

What We Thought

By using our imaginations and our cutting, drawing, colouring, and writing skills, the paper dolls activity enabled us to experiment with accessing the interiority of individual, made-up festival attendees, as well as of ourselves as reader-participants at real book festivals we had attended. Representing such individuals through creative methods was an attempt to depict the experiences of book festival people: their hopes, desires, plans, and possibilities. The sartorial choices made by individuals—influenced by the weather, the location, their cultures, their finances—showed us a version of the “outside” of individual attendees; their bodies and the ways in which they performed individuality and group belonging. The stories accompanying the bodies added a harder-to-access interiority—a fleeting insight into the thought processes of one real or imagined individual.

At the same time, we encountered moments of difficulty and limitations in this project. Our hesitations about drawing each other were echoed in other absences and hesitations. We found it uncomfortable to objectify readers, and did not draw people from a wide range of countries, backgrounds and demographics (Lee Lin was the only non-white character). Indeed, this method’s playful stereotyping of dress, posture, and attitude became much more problematic when we wanted to incorporate ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity. The building of paper doll representations made us aware of the issues that surround coding physical identity, and of how festival participants may feel unusually visible or, conversely, invisible. Most of the imagined types of audience members we gently mocked through the paper dolls were white, middle-class, and confident in their cultural inclusion. Our comfort in drawing, and satirizing, some kinds of participants and not others speaks to the limited ability of people from some groups, or with some characteristics, to enter the literary festival as insiders, as well as our own caution at depicting people not in our own demographic groups.

This method’s use of imagined characters also raises intriguing questions about the overlaps between sociological and creative approaches to audience research. Juxtaposing this experiment with the more conventional forms of sociological research into audiences at book festivals identified at the beginning of this article illuminates how our method goes beyond group, crowd, or aggregated audience approaches. Our imaginary (and in the case of ourselves, real) readers at real or imaginary festivals offer an

epistemological mode that instead draws on creative, autoethnographic, and phenomenological approaches. In pursuing our creative methods we drew on our own impressions of the types of readers we had encountered, which we then filtered through our imagination. Even as we focused on the experiential and the phenomenological, therefore, we found we could not escape the urge to typify, categorize, and make distinctions through imaginative generalizations.⁵⁷ This struggle was productive and thought-provoking. Our experiment also constitutes an argument: that within the broader sociological and creative industries understandings of book festivals, we must persist in attempting to make space for an understanding of personal trajectories, and not assume that the experiences of individuals can ever be entirely encapsulated within broader typologies, even while we recognize the ongoing power and effects of these types.

Experiment 3: ClueButeDo

There are a number of ways in which book festival organizers typically elicit and receive responses and feedback from audiences. These include, within an individual event itself, the moment of the audience Q&A: when hands are raised and the chair selects a questioner (or commenter, as sometimes transpires, a scenario satirized by the @WFQuestions Twitter account mentioned earlier). These questions (or comments) are directed towards the writer rather than explicitly as feedback to the festival organizers, although the minutes devoted to the Q&A—in addition to verbal and non-verbal responses during the event (laughter, clapping, a fixed attention)—make the audience feeling palpable.

To gauge audience response more systematically, festival organizers have a range of mechanisms at their disposal, including the metric of ticket sales or attendance at free events, plus reactions on social media, whether people are using the event hashtag, tweeting at the event's handle, or sub-tweeting, if the organizers are on the watch for back-channel conversations. In addition to these modes, festivals frequently use audience surveys, either completed in person and collected during the event on paper or a digital device, or subsequently through the post or online.

The audience survey is a tool particularly valorized for collecting data, be it information about the demographic spread of its audiences (or lack thereof;

book festivals are frequently critiqued for the homogeneity of their audiences, as mentioned above), feedback about particular events, venues, or overall programming; or suggestions for future programming. Aggregated (and quantified) material from surveys can be used by festival organizers in narratives about and evaluation of their audience base, orientation, and engagement, including in applications for funding. Evidence derived about audiences in this way can contribute towards creative economy policy and discourse that makes the quantification of culture primary, as well as demonstrating and enforcing its competitiveness.⁵⁸

Yet it is hard to imagine an audience member who has not suffered from questionnaire fatigue or—indeed—a cultural worker not fatigued from designing, collecting, aggregating, and analyzing them. Our aim in this final experiment was to subvert the audience survey by engaging audiences' imaginations and creativity.

What We Did

Our ClueButeDo experiment was created in collaboration with the Director of the festival Bute Noir. Bute Noir is a small crime fiction festival established in 2016, which runs over an August weekend on the Scottish island of Bute, a short journey “doon the watter” from Glasgow.⁵⁹ The Festival Director (himself a crime writer) was aware of our book festival board and card games, and in collaboration we developed the idea of a feedback questionnaire created in the style of the murder mystery board game Cluedo (or Clue, in some countries).

We took as inspiration the Cluedo elimination form, used in the game for working out suspects, murder weapons, and locations. Through the collaborative virtual design process,⁶⁰ we wondered whether such a fake audience survey could be used to make the feedback process more fun, but also to disrupt some of the established processes of literary festivals and shift power relations. There is also a metaphorical dimension to this form, akin to our work with Bookfestivalopoly, which sees writers travel around the board in the search of critical and commercial acclaim. Our form draws attention to the way in which festival organizers orchestrate authors and locations, just as Cluedo murder suspects move across the game board.



Figure 12: ClueButedo forms and Bute map.

The two-sided form we created, dubbed “ClueButedo” (a portmanteau of Cluedo and Bute), began with information about how to return the form, including a Gmail address and a Twitter handle (both of which would be quite difficult ways to return a paper form). The form asked the respondent to tick their location, with boxes indicating various festival sites: Bute Museum, the open top bus, Print Point (the bookshop), Rothesay Library, or elsewhere. Next, it asked, “Do you have any suggestions?”, with several lines of space for free-text answers. The jump to this open question, without asking for any further information other than current location (that is, missing out typical demographic information) was intentionally done to disrupt the standard questionnaire pattern. The respondent was then prompted to go overleaf with the text, “Would you like to make an accusation? Turn the page...” (An “accusation” in Cluedo terms is used when one of the players suspects they have sufficient evidence to state the details of the murder.) On turning the page, respondents were then asked to tick boxes of “Whodunnit?” (with choices of names of authors appearing at the festival), “With what weapon?” (featuring items from the Bute Museum used in its Facebook promotion of the festival), and “Where was the murder

location?” (listing sites from across the island, including its local ice cream/fish and chip parlour, and its Victorian toilets, which are currently number 3 among the island’s TripAdvisor Top Attractions).⁶¹

Claire then set off on bike, train, and ferry to Bute with copies of the blank forms and a map in her cycle panniers (Figure 12). On arrival, she purchased some 20 stripy pens for £1 from a seafront shop (pleasingly, these looked like thin versions of rock, a typical British seaside sweet). Meanwhile, Beth had set up the project’s Twitter account (@ClueButeDo), and began to tweet, responding to authors arriving on the island and audience members excited about meeting them, and using alliterative phrases to establish the account’s voice and perspective on mysterious matters.



Figure 13: ClueButeDo forms on bookshop chairs.

In consultation with venue managers at the festival events, Claire used various methods to distribute the forms, including leaving them on seats at venues (where she observed people picking them up and laughing; Figure 13) and handing them directly to audience members (Figure 14), explaining in brief detail that it was a “sort of feedback form.” Several individuals expressed confusion about the forms. Explaining that it was intended as fun, and modelled on Cluedo, seemed to assuage some audience

members' anxiety, though others were still discombobulated. Some festival attendees asked questions about the form, including whether it was designed to elicit a particular kind of feedback, and whether it would be compared to other datasets, including to see whether more people reply than normal.⁶² These were all very sensible questions, but at odds with our actual research aim, which was to play creatively with ideas of feedback and participation.



Figure 14: ClueButeDo forms and stripy pens on the open top bus tour.

At the same time as forms were being filled in, the Twitter account @ClueButeDo continued to be active. Beth did most of this tweeting from Australia, which created some temporal lags due to time zones. This Twitter account adopted a Sherlockian catchphrase formula, using two alliterative words and an exclamation mark to end most tweets: for example, Erasures & Enigmas! Mysteries & Mayhem! Disguise & Discombobulation! The Twitter account retweeted other attendees' tweets from the festival, nudging them towards the Cluedo game theme by turning descriptions into possible accusations, and occasionally urging people to fill in forms (see Figure 15 for examples).



Figure 15: @ClueButeDo’s Sherlockian interventions.

After the online and in-person promotion of the feedback form, there were eventually 36 forms returned (in person, to Claire plus a few to venue staff), a response rate of approximately 4 percent of ticket sales (we did not have figures for individual attendee numbers). We aggregated the data and created a report for the Festival Director, which we also shared with the venue managers at the museum, library, and bookshop. In our feedback we noted that (as predicted) some individuals found the format of the form perplexing, but others got into the spirit of it. Some did wonder if there were clues they should be looking for, which perhaps could be integrated into an event the following year. We suggested that as many people attended multiple events, constructing an activity based on ClueButedo to run across the festival might work well.

The qualitative feedback (garnered via the “Do you have any suggestions?” question) included suggestions for improvement (to do with matters such as audibility, sightlines, and time gaps between events), suggestions for new elements to add in future years (e.g., children’s and YA events, a murder mystery dinner, workshops, a weekend ticket price), thanks and praise, and more unusual suggestions (e.g., a caution to “keep an eye on the rather tall man in the pale blue shirt”). The most common accusation was Dr Sokoloff, with the fishing hook, in the Victorian toilets (a close-run competition, apart from the Victorian toilets, which were a clear winner). We understand that the data gathered in these forms on behalf of the festival was, in fact, used in a subsequent funding application.

What We Thought

This experiment was conducted in association with festival organizers themselves, and—unlike @AuthorsYurt—was not a direct satire. At the same time, it was playfully disruptive. Its target was the overuse of audience surveys by cultural institutions and events, and the way in which these forms lock people into specific roles: the arts worker who hands out the form, the audience member who “evaluates” the event, the organizers and the authors (or other performers) who are evaluated. While traditional feedback unsettles some power dynamics, it contributes to others, by reserving creativity for the performers and criticality for the audience. Our form successfully prevented audience members from evaluating the festival in a straightforward fashion—although it did allow for some evaluation.

Whether ClueButeDo allowed audience members to tap into their own creativity and playfulness is another question. Certainly for some people this worked—they made “accusations” in the murder game, or tweeted mischievously. But this activity was not for everyone. We can perhaps conclude that a gentler (in the sense of being more fully explained, with more time to complete) creative activity for audience members might have been more effective. Or, perhaps, some audience members do not seek creative expression at festivals—listening and commenting might be enough, as the core of their enjoyable experience. The fact that some authors enthusiastically interacted with the Twitter account shows that they had an appetite for additional creative expression. If our aim was to blur the line between the “stage” and the “audience,” then this was only partially achieved. And yet, a partial disruption may be enough. Perhaps all that is needed is to introduce an element of doubt that ensures these categories—themselves akin to the categories used in sociology—do not overly dominate the thinking of arts organizers and funders. A disruptive form indicates that new ways of engaging audiences and writers in meaningful feedback remain possible.

Conclusion

Each of the three experiments detailed above revealed aspects of personhood at book festivals, engaging with ideas of interiority, individuality, and experientiality. Each experiment demonstrated that personhood exceeds sociological categories, and that book festival

experiences might additionally, and fruitfully, be accessed, articulated, and understood through imaginative means. Our aim in this article has been to supplement the established methodological mix of sociology and creative industries research with an approach which is creative, autoethnographic, phenomenological, and also—following the promptings of our Ullapoolistic epistemology—lateral, playful, and experimental.

With @AuthorsYurt, our Twitter persona explored—through a digital interface—aspects of the physical green room spaces, as well as the social dynamics of a book festival, in a way that is substantially different from predominant sociological modes. It yielded insights into authors’ and cultural workers’ feelings about the space, and their capacity to enter—for the first time, or for one of many repeat visits—the carefully guarded and much-loved yurt. The account also highlighted and depicted insider-outsider dynamics, inclusions, and exclusions. The digitization of the yurt via Twitter offered the public an experience of “insiderness”—or, to borrow one Twitter user’s phrase, “yurtual reality”—at a book festival.⁶³

With the creation of our paper dolls, we focused upon interior thought processes and their exterior manifestations by inventing an internal narrative and manifesting, through craft, the associated sartorial choices of each of the characters. In the attempt to access their interiority, and express the ease or otherwise with which our individuals fitted into the social networks around them, we drew particularly upon phenomenological modes coupled with an imaginative engagement which united the presence of physical bodies with internal thought patterns. The fleeting insights offered a glimpse of the richness and individuality of book festival personhood, using real and imaginary examples.

Finally, ClueButeDo presented our most obvious disruption of standard ways of ascertaining the opinions of audience members at a cultural event, through the means of an unusual, game-inspired questionnaire. Operating in collaboration with the Director of the Bute Noir festival, we experimented with creative means of eliciting feedback, introducing surprising elements to the process via the recognizable but non-conventional form. While there were limits to our particular process, we gathered feedback that was both practical and imaginative, and usefully drew attention to the creativity of audiences by unsettling typical modes of gathering data.

Indeed, as with our very first experiment in the creation of a reader-focused race game, our experiments still reveal lacunae in understanding, failures in the representation of fleeting moments of interiority, and the continual challenge of understanding personhood within social settings: the difficulty of moving between individual units of analysis (for example, a specific festival) and macro-level conceptualizations. Yet despite these limitations, the creation of character through @AuthorsYurt, paper dolls and ClueButeDo demonstrates a generative way of opening up space in epistemological enquiry into book cultures.

This investigatory space is underpinned by our own personhood as autoethnographic scholar-participants, or Nunu Otots. Operating from inside sites of book culture—as well-networked academics familiar with the festivals we analyzed—offered us access and some insights into interior experiences. At the same time, we tracked and performed such feelings and perspectives from the “outside,” both by imagining the interiority of “outsiders” at festivals (and, sometimes, being physically distant from the festivals ourselves), and also by bringing critical, sometimes satirical, understandings of festivals to the work, derived both from existing scholarship and from our own ongoing mischievous interventions. We acknowledge the limitations and possible intrusiveness of imagining the experiences of others; we maintain that the effort to understand and imagine is worthwhile. Our experiments demonstrate the value of considering personhood and disrupting sociological types through playful and creative means, imaginatively exploring other people’s interiority, and worming our way, via the real and imaginary, into empathy with book festival people.

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the Book in Britain Volume 7: The Twentieth Century and Beyond. With Beth Driscoll, she is co-founder of the Ullapoolism movement.

Notes

¹ For a full explanation of Ullapoolism, see Beth Driscoll and Claire Squires, “The Epistemology of Ullapoolism: Making Mischief from Within Contemporary Book Cultures,” *Angelaki* 25, no. 5 (forthcoming 2020). We thank the two anonymous peer reviewers of this article, particularly in their encouragement for us to think further, and with greater self-reflection, about questions of types, groups, and individual identity.

² Beth Driscoll and Claire Squires, “Serious Fun: Gaming the Book Festival,” *Mémoires Du Livre/Studies in Book Culture* 9, no. 2 (2018): 1–37.

³ Driscoll and Squires, “Serious Fun,” 11.

⁴ See as examples Beth Driscoll, *The New Literary Middlebrow: Tastemakers and Reading in the Twenty-First Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) and Millicent Weber, *Literary Festivals and Contemporary Book Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). For the Bourdieusian underpinning, see Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).

⁵ For example, see Richard L. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Brian Moeran and Jesper Strandgaard Pedersen, eds., *Negotiating Values in the Creative Industries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Simone Murray, *The Adaptation Industry: The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Sarah Brouillette, *Literature and the Creative Economy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014); Beth Driscoll, “Local Places and Cultural Distinction: The Booktown Model,” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 21, no. 4 (2018): 401–17, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549416656856>. See Driscoll and Squires, “Serious Fun,” for an additional review of existing literature.

⁶ We address in greater detail question of scale and perspective in “The Epistemology of Ullapoolism”; for the most notable example of microhistory see Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013). For an example of an extended study see Weber, *Literary Festivals*.

⁷ Beth Driscoll, “Sentiment Analysis and the Literary Festival Audience,” *Continuum* 29, no. 6 (2015): 861–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2015.1040729>.

⁸ For a history of conceptualizations of the audience, see Richard Butsch, *The Citizen Audience: Crowds, Publics, and Individuals* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

⁹ See for example Katya Johanson and Robin Freeman, “The Reader as Audience: The Appeal of the Writers’ Festival to the Contemporary Audience,” *Continuum* 26, no. 2 (2012): 303–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2011.590575>; Weber, *Literary Festivals*.

¹⁰ For a non-fictionalized example, in an interview conducted for the Australian Research Council Discovery Project “Genre Worlds: Australian Popular Fiction in the Twenty-First Century,” one publisher said that their multinational company did “a huge amount of research into the customer, which I’m sure the other publishers have got as well. You know, and you name them—there’s Brenda and there’s Caroline and there’s—you know, there’s James and there’s, you know, Bruce, which the marketing people use perhaps more than the publishers do. But they will think about, okay, so Bruce will only read two books a year and he’ll tend to buy them from K-Mart and, you know, Caroline might read 20 books a year and she’s in a book club and that’s how we kind of—they kind of think of them, which helps them strategically work out where to advertise and where to position the book.” For more information on this project, see the related publication Beth Driscoll, Lisa Fletcher, Kim Wilkins & David Carter, “The Publishing Ecosystems of Contemporary Australian Genre Fiction,” *Creative Industries Journal* 11, no.2 (2018), 203–221. DOI: [10.1080/17510694.2018.1480851](https://doi.org/10.1080/17510694.2018.1480851).

¹¹ The quote is from the back cover blurb, and also appears on location 9 of the Kindle edition: Nora Roberts, *Second Nature: The Classic Story from the Queen of Romance That You Won’t Be Able to Put Down*, Kindle edition (Mills & Boon, 2011).

¹² For further examples, see Rachel Cusk, *Transit* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016); and Myra Duffy, *Dark Deeds at Bute Noir* (Feedaread.com Publishing, 2017).

¹³ Dan Dixon, “‘Just a Person’: Race and the Australian Literati,” *Overland*, May 31, 2017, <https://overland.org.au/2017/05/just-a-person-race-and-the-australian-literati/>.

¹⁴ Raymond Madden, *Being Ethnographic: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2017), 15.

¹⁵ See Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 3rd edition (New York: Routledge, 2007).

¹⁶ Dhiraj Murthy, “Digital Ethnography: An Examination of the Use of New Technologies for Social Research,” *Sociology* 42, no. 5 (2008): 837–55; Sarah Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009).

¹⁷ Murray, “Adaptation Industry”; Driscoll, “Sentiment Analysis”; Weber, *Literary Festivals*.

¹⁸ Dell H. Hymes, “What Is Ethnography?,” in *Children in and out of School: Ethnography and Education*, eds. Perry Gilmore and Allan A. Glatthorn (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982), 21–32.

¹⁹ Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner, “Autoethnography: An Overview,” *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 36, no. 4 (138) (2011): 273–90.

²⁰ For an influential example of this, see Gideon Lewis-Kraus, “The Last Book Party,” *Harper’s Magazine*, March 2009, <https://harpers.org/archive/2009/03/the-last-book-party/5/>.

²¹ Driscoll and Squires, “Serious Fun”; Claire Squires and Beth Driscoll, “The Sleaze-O-Meter: Sexual Harassment in the Publishing Industry,” *Interscript*, March 8, 2018, <https://www.interscriptjournal.com/online-magazine/sleaze-o-meter>.

²² Vassilios Ziakas and Nikolaos Boukas, “Contextualizing Phenomenology in Event Management Research,” *International Journal of Event and Festival Management* 5, no. 1 (2014): 56–73, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEFM-08-2012-0023>.

²³ Anne Wally Ryan and Gjermund Wollan, “Festivals, Landscapes, and Aesthetic Engagement: A Phenomenological Approach to Four Norwegian Festivals,” *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift—Norwegian Journal of Geography* 67, no. 2 (2013): 99–112, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00291951.2013.784352>.

²⁴ Diana Clayton, “Volunteers’ Knowledge Activities at UK Music Festivals: A Hermeneutic-Phenomenological Exploration of Individuals’ Experiences,” *Journal of Knowledge Management* 20, no. 1 (2016): 162–80, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-05-2015-0182>; Jennifer Laing and Judith Mair, “Music Festivals and Social Inclusion—the Festival Organizers’ Perspective,” *Leisure Sciences* 37, no. 3 (2015): 252–68.

²⁵ Eeva-Katri Ahola, “Producing Experience in Marketplace Encounters: A Study of Consumption Experiences in Art Exhibitions and Trade Fairs,” PhD dissertation, Helsinki School of Economics, 2007, <https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/11505/a299.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>; Michael Andreae, Jinn-yuh Hsu, and Glen Norcliffe, “Performing the Trade Show: The Case of the Taipei International Cycle Show,” *Geoforum* 49 (2013): 193–201; Patrik Aspers, *Markets in Fashion: A Phenomenological Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

²⁶ See Ellen Wiles, *Live Literature and Cultural Value: Explorations in Experiential Literary Ethnography*, PhD dissertation, University of Stirling, 2019, <https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/handle/1893/30332#.XjRBvmj7Q2w>, as well as “Three Branches of Literary Anthropology: Sources, Styles, Subject Matter,” *Ethnography*, March 28, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138118762958>.

²⁷ See Driscoll and Squires, “The Epistemology of Ullapoolism.”

²⁸ See <https://ullapoolism.wordpress.com/manifesto/>

²⁹ Dan Glaister, “Thirty Years on, Hay Festival Is Still Thinking, Talking and Laughing,” *The Observer*, May 28, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/may/28/thirty-years-on-hay-festival-still-thinking-talking-laughing>.

³⁰ See Claire Squires, “Taste and/or Big Data?: Post-Digital Editorial Selection,” *Critical Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2017): 24–38, <https://doi.org/10.1111/criq.12361>.

³¹ See Driscoll, *The New Literary Middlebrow*, Ch 5. On the skewed gender of speakers at literary festivals, see the research report by Christina Neuwirth, “ROAR: Findings from a Study of Scottish Book Publishing, Book Reviewing and Book Festivals, Jan-Dec 2017,” accessed September 27, 2019, <https://roar.scot/2019/07/25/roar-2017-research-findings.html>.

³² Tom Cho, “Melbourne Writers’ Festival Parody Program,” *Tom Cho 曹勵善* (blog), January 9, 2002, <http://tomcho.com/wp/project/melbourne-writers-festival-parody-program/>.

³³ <https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/766554792172802048?s=20>

³⁴ <https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/766553722390351872?s=20>

<https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/766554366291550208?s=20>

³⁵ <https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/766559681774952448?s=20>

<https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/766560467976278016?s=20>

<https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/766597031146188800?s=20>

³⁶ <https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/766647529794592768?s=20>

³⁷ <https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/766601884551512067?s=20>

<https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/766609199619043329?s=20>

³⁸ <https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/768088667013443588>

³⁹ <https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/766640662066388992?s=20>

<https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/766641092582334464?s=20>

⁴⁰ <https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/769838514447982592>

<https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/768388399019491328>

⁴¹ <https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/767049372584534017?s=20>

⁴² <https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/770603310717992960>

⁴³ As we write this article during the summer of 2019, a further satirical Twitter account focused on the Edinburgh International Book Festival was set up (not by us). However, its insider status as the Diary of a Book Festival Worker, and its spikier persona, made it a more perturbing proposition, and the account was shut down. There are potential consequences for satirists: Tom Cho, in discussion of his parody Melbourne Writers Festival program, described it as a “prank,” but also mentioned his cognizance of “the power of literary festivals as institutions,” and his fear of the implications of carrying out such a prank might have for its creator, both from the festival itself and via its networks. See *Tom Cho 曹勵善* (blog), January 9, 2002, <http://tomcho.com/wp/project/melbourne-writers-festival-parody-program/>.

⁴⁴ <https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/767790329286328320>.

⁴⁵ Millicent Weber and Beth Driscoll, “Playful Twitter Accounts and the Socialisation of Literary Institutions,” *First Monday* 24, no. 3 (2019), <https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/9486/7734>.

⁴⁶ For scholarship on writers’ houses and literary tourism, see Clare Fawcett and Patricia Cormack, “Guarding Authenticity at Literary Tourism Sites,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 28, no. 3 (2001): 686–704, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(00\)00062-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(00)00062-1); Harald Hendrix, *Writers’ Houses and the Making of Memory*, vol. 11 (New York: Routledge, 2008); Shelagh J. Squire, “The Cultural Values of Literary Tourism,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 21, no. 1 (1994): 103–20, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(94\)90007-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(94)90007-8); Anne Trubek, *A Skeptic’s Guide to Writers’ Houses* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), and Nicola J. Watson, *The Literary Tourist: Readers and Places in Romantic & Victorian Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) and *The Authors’ Effects: On the Writer’s House Museum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), among others. On literary merchandizing see Elizabeth Booth and Deborah Hayes, “Authoring the Brand: Literary Licensing,” *Young Consumers*, December 31, 2005, <https://doi.org/10.1108/17473610610701385>; and Allison Thompson, “Trinkets and Treasures: Consuming Jane Austen,” *Persuasions On-Line* 28, no. 2 (2008).

⁴⁷ The journey from this conference is also detailed in our article “Oh Look, a Ferry; or, The Smell of Paper Books,” which meditates on print and digital materiality: Beth Driscoll and Claire Squires, “‘Oh Look, a Ferry’; or ‘The Smell of Paper Books,’” *The Lifted Brow*, October 24, 2018, <https://www.theliftedbrow.com/liftedbrow/2018/10/24/oh-look-a-ferry-or-the-smell-of-paper-books-by-beth-driscoll-and-claire-squires>. The home we stayed in on Salt Spring Island is no longer available via Airbnb, but should you wish to engage in academic tourism and visit the site, follow this url: <https://www.google.com/maps/place/358+Old+Scott+Rd,+Salt+Spring+Island,+BC+V8K+2L9,+Canada/@48.8475478,-123.4574321,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x548f59db1d6d49d7:0x918a17e9d46c0e19!8m2!3d48.8475478!4d-123.4552434>.

⁴⁸ See in the present issue Alexandra Dane, “Cultural Capital as Performance: Tote Bags and Contemporary Literary Festivals”, *Mémoires du livre / Studies in Book Culture* 11, no. 2(2020).

⁴⁹ “*This is Jane. She’s just out of the salon and her hair is smooth. The hairdresser told her some gossip about another friend she’s eager to share. There’s a spring in her step as the sun shines down. After coffee they’ll be going to hear from a writer from Broome.*”

⁵⁰ “*This is Lee Lin. She’s excited to be at the festival and is enjoying mixing with the crowds. Her classmates have told her about one writer who will be speaking and she hopes she will be rota-ed to steward at his event. Afterwards she is invited out to a bar with the other volunteers but needs to Skype her family.*”

⁵¹ “*This is Stewart. He is both geeky and trying to be a bit trendy. The weather forecast is good so he’s sprung out the cargo pants and—unusually, but the sun feels nice—he’s wearing flip flops. It’s going to be a busy day.*”

⁵² “*This is Destiny. Her new island friend Morgana has got her a weekend ticket for an unusual event in the community hall. There will be a tantric historian and an expert in Swedish massage. Morgana is going to read her short story about last year’s arousing boat trip.*”

⁵³ “This is Julian. He’s travelled south from Vienna at the suggestion of his ex. He can’t find the programme for the festival online but someone at the bar told him that the poet he wanted to hear from might be appearing at 8 pm in the restaurant. Later there’s going to be an open mike [sic] session. He’s not sure whether he’ll read or not.”

⁵⁴ “Voila Olivier. He’s won a weekend pass for the festival and he’s super-excited to pick up some rare first editions. There’s going to be an exhibition of the winners’ art work [at] which the festival director will judge an overall winner. He is hopeful.”

⁵⁵ “This is Claire. She’s looking forward to seeing some familiar faces and sending some messages to her friends who can’t be there. She has a pass to the author’s green room—the famous yurt—but she’s thinking she might just read a book in the sun for a while instead.”

⁵⁶ “This is Beth. She’s picked up some souvenirs and has sneaked into the back row. When it gets to the Q+A she has a couple of questions but saves them for later. Everyone is very welcoming but occasionally their comments show she is far from home. She’s had a great time road tripping with her friend.”

⁵⁷ This is a point made by one of the anonymous peer reviewers of this article. We are grateful for their insight and their push to make more nuanced our understanding of groups and individuals.

⁵⁸ See discussion with regards to Edinburgh’s *Thundering Hooves* report in Driscoll and Squires, “Serious Fun.”

⁵⁹ Bute was a key destination for Glaswegians in the olden days, when heavily laden ferries would shuttle holidaymakers from the city centre to the island.

⁶⁰ We acknowledge and thank Millicent Weber for her design assistance.

⁶¹ See https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attractions-g551923-Activities-Isle_of_Bute_Argyll_and_Bute_Scotland.html, accessed September 26, 2019.

⁶² Indeed, Rothesay Library had its own feedback form for its venue, which compounded confusion among staff and audience members.

⁶³ <https://twitter.com/AuthorsYurt/status/769515891025383424>

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