

Molly Andrews, Abstracts of Keynote presentations 2012-2104

Conference: Narrative Matters 2014 Paris June 2014

Title:

Knowledge, Reason and Imagination:
Narrating the Self Over Time

Abstract:

This paper explores the relationship between narrative, knowledge, and imagination, arguing the following points: 1) objective knowledge is always partial; what and how one knows is situated, 2) knowledge of the real – or what we call facts – is always in relation to other possible truths, things which could have happened but didn't, things which still might happen; in other words knowledge and imagination are closely connected and are relational 3) like knowledge, the imagination is also situated; 4) the position from which one knows or imagines changes over time; 5) it is this standing on shifting ground, with shifting viewpoints which allow for both greater and more limited viewpoints, which characterises the narration of the self over time. The second half of the papers uses data from a longitudinal study with East German activists as they look back on the vision which guided their political activism a quarter of a century ago

Conference: The First International Symposium on Narrative Criminology, University of Oslo, May 2014.

Too Late?:

Time, Forgiveness, and Accountability

Abstract:

This paper explores the relationship between narrative, apology, and time, and the moral and ethical boundaries between them. Is there a period of time, after which it is simply too late to apologise? Based on interviews conducted with East Germans nearly twenty-five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, I will explore the complexity of this topic, as it has impacted on those who in former times lived their lives under the microscope of the Stasi.

Symposium: Political Narratives Symposium., University of Warwick, May 2013

Title:
Exploring Political Narratives

Abstract:

Narratives are not only the means by which individuals breathe public life into personal experience, they are a primary tool by which individuals recognise and affirm themselves as members of a group, thereby often acting as a catalyst for the raising of political consciousness. Narratives can thus play a vital role in de-individualising that which is personal; rendering experience into a narrative form can help individuals to become more actively engaged in shaping the conditions of their lives. Using a range of different kinds of political talk, this session will explore the relationship between micro and macro narratives of political change

Conference: Narration and Narratives as an Interdisciplinary Field of Study, Örebro University, Örebro Sweden. October 2012.

Title:
“‘An elementary transformation of one’s existence’:
Narrating moments of acute political change”

Abstract:

Hannah Arendt has argued that storytelling is the bridge by which we transform that which is private and individual into that which is public, and in this capacity, it is one of the key components of social life (Arendt 1958: 50). Stories - both personal and communal - are pivotal to the way in which politics operates, both in people's minds (i.e. how they understand politics, and their place within and outside of the formal political sphere) as well as to how politics is practiced. These stories, as it were, are not just within the domain of the individual, but are built upon the collective memory of a group, just as they help to create how that memory is mobilised and for what purposes. This paper will explore the relationship between micro and macro political narratives, in other words the dynamic interplay between the stories of individuals (both told and untold) and the contested stories of the communities in which they live. The paper will be framed around a case study of one East German dissident’s challenge to emotionally negotiate the opening of the Berlin Wall.

Conference: After the Crisis: An Interdisciplinary Conference on Narrative of Traumatic Events, University of Agder, Krsitiansand, Norway. June 2012.

Title:

“Traumatic Narratives and the Problems of Limits”

Abstract:

This paper will explore the limits and possibilities of narratives in which individuals turn to language to communicate the inexpressibility of experiences they have endured. The central dilemma for many survivors of trauma is that they must tell their stories, and yet their stories cannot be told. Traumatic experiences often defy understanding; testimony of those who have survived can be marked by what is not there: coherence, structure, meaning, comprehensibility. The actual emplotment of trauma testimony into conventional narrative configurations - contained in time- transforms them into something which they are not: experiences which are endowed with a particular wholeness, which occurred in the past, and which have now ended. The paper concludes with a discussion of the relationship between language and silence in traumatic testimony.