

The Story of the Story: Ethics, Therapy, and Life Writing

28th–30th September 2009



The Story of the Story Conference invites you to apply to attend A MASTERCLASS WITH DR MARGARETTA JOLLY LIFE WRITING: AN ETHICS KIT (30th Sept, 2009)

'Meditating on the breakdown of narrative identity, the collapse, as it were, of 'life writing' in any of its forms, has led me to think of ethics as the deep subject of autobiographical discourse'. Paul John Eakin, 'Mapping the Ethics of Life Writing', *The Ethics of Life Writing*, Cornell University Press, 2004, p. 6)

'Immanuel Kant's guide to ethical behaviour remains the principle of research ethics: people must be treated as ends in themselves, not as means to an end. The reality is that as interviewers we do use people for our ends.' Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History*, Altamira Press, 2005, p. 129

'[Tom] Couser, the champion of 'vulnerable subjects', for the most part would appear to be a likely defender of the constraints imposed upon the biographer by the Human Research Ethics regime enforced by Australian universities. Yet even he thoughtfully calls for a more reasoned and reasonable interpretation of appropriate ethical principles in life writing (compared, one might suggest, to other forms of social science research), when he asserts that 'Life Writing is far too complex and variable to be subjected to a set of abstract, unvarying, and presumably universal principles.' David T. Hill, 'Ethics and Institutions in Biographical Writing on Indonesian Subjects', *Life Writing*, Vol 4, No. 2, Oct 2007, p 225-26

This master class will develop ongoing debates about the moral possibilities of life story work. We will do this through considering a number of different codes and attempted solutions by biographers, life writing critics, oral and life historians, and life-story therapists. Can these codes be assembled into a useful 'ethics kit'? We will do our best. To prepare, please think about these quotes, and bring your own examples of ethical dilemmas in life story research to discuss. Please also read about my own, as described in the Introduction and Part IV, 'The Afterlife of Letters' in my book *In Love and Struggle: Letters in Contemporary Feminism*, Gender and Culture. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

In order to make this meeting as productive as possible, participant numbers will be capped. Please send an expression of interest (a short bio, description of your research area, relation of the Masterclass to your work – no more than 400 words in total) by FRIDAY 14TH AUGUST to Kylie.Cardell@flinders.edu.au or Kate.Douglas@flinders.edu.au

For more information please visit: <http://fhrc.flinders.edu.au/events/story/home.htm>