



Reverie

SYMPOSIUM

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

27 APRIL 2018

THE SIR DUNCAN RICE LIBRARY · 7TH FLOOR · MEETING ROOM 1 · 10.30–17.30

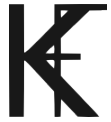
As part of the Knowing From the Inside (KFI) research project this day-long symposium brings together a variety of disciplinary approaches (psychological, psychoanalytic, artistic, religious, anthropological) to study reverie as a phenomenon or state whereby strong concentration and focus appear to meet unself-conscious effortlessness and potential.

Psychoanalytical descriptions of reverie suggest the need for a degree of personal safety when surrendering to the vulnerability of 'losing' oneself in its states. Filmmaker Jean Rouch's writing on *ciné trance* and Marion Milner's on painting and drawing suggest reverie can be induced by absorption in a process, practice or material. While psychoanalytic definitions draw comparisons with daydreaming, they also appear to share some characteristics with 'flow' as identified in psychology, together with artists' descriptions of 'being in the zone'. Are

these (and other variations such as meditation, mindfulness and so on) different states, different phases or instantiations of the same state, different analytical perspectives on different states—or some other possibility?

The symposium features exploratory position papers in order to characterize reverie and associated variations to better understand how it is regarded in a variety of fields and situations, and whether it transcends disciplinary borders. We will also provide room for discussion to address the settings and/or relations that promote reverie, and ask how it is studied as a phenomenon, how it is used as a method by researchers and interlocutors, and for what purposes.

The symposium is convened by Amanda Ravetz and Tilo Reifenstein. For enquiries please contact t.reifenstein@mmu.ac.uk.



UNIVERSITY OF
ABERDEEN

MANCHESTER
SCHOOL OF ART

Reverie Symposium

Friday, 27 April 2018

University of Aberdeen · The Sir Duncan Rice Library · 7th Floor · Meeting Room 1

- 10.30-10.50 Arrival / Refreshments
- 10.50-11.00 Welcome
- Amanda Ravetz
- 11.00-12.00 Session 1 Psychoanalysis / Psychology
- Eystein Våpenstad (20 min) *'Send me the pillow—the one that you dream on'*
 - Paul Stenner (20 min) *Reverie, flow and the idea of 'liminal affective technologies'*
 - Discussion (20 min)
- 12.00-13.00 Lunch
- 13.00-14.00 Session 2 Neuroscience / Literature / Theology
- Rachel Genn (20 min) *Might regret be a roadblock to reverie?*
 - Eleanor Peers (20 min) *Through the looking glass: the politics of trance in north-east Siberia*
 - Discussion (20 min)
- 14.00-14.15 Break
- 14.15-15.15 Session 3 Knowing From the Inside
- Melina Bernardi (video presentation) *Exploring reverie*
 - Lesley Halliwell (10 min) *At the coal face—a practitioner's perspective*
 - William Tittley (10 min) *Art as reverie for reverie*
 - Paolo Maccagno / Anne Douglas (10 min) *'Essi temevano la gioia eccessiva': Reverie and the practice of the limit*
 - Katie Sollohub (10 min) *Reverie in my painting and teaching*
 - Discussion (10 min)
- 15.15-15.30 Refreshments
- 15.30-16.30 Session 4 Art / Anthropology
- Jenny Eden (20 min) *On responding to a painting*
 - Andrew Irving (video presentation) *The limits of science*
 - Discussion (20 min)
- 16.30-17.30 Plenary Discussion
- Discussant: Tim Ingold
- 19.00 Dinner

Abstracts and biographical notes

Eystein Victor Våpenstad

‘Send me the pillow—the one that you dream on’

The title is a line from a song by the Smiths and I think it illustrates Reverie as both conscious and unconscious intersubjective communication. Reverie starts as part of a preverbal embodied protoconversation that can develop into more elaborate communication and understanding. Reverie can be an active, but demanding, way of discovering the emotional truth of the situation, and it is often grounded in an aesthetic experience. I will try to illustrate this from a psychoanalytic viewpoint.

Eystein Victor Våpenstad, Associate professor, Dr.Philos, VID Specialized University, Oslo, Norway and UNI Research, Bergen University, Norway. Child and adult psychoanalyst and clinical psychologist. Member Norwegian psychoanalytical society. Has worked for over 20 years in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy with infants, children and adults in public and private practice.

Reverie, flow and the idea of 'liminal affective technologies'

Whether identical or not, there are evidently close connections between the concept of 'reverie' and that of a 'flow state' (often called 'being in the zone'). Crudely, both are reportedly 'extraordinary' experiences that involve some kind of desirable 'loss of identity' in the midst of an activity. It is tempting to characterize the former as a withdrawal from immediate perceptual awareness (sinking out of the 'now' of perception into a daydream stream of symbolic thought) and the latter as its intensification (a deeper immersion into the 'now' of real time sensory-motor circuits), but this is likely an oversimplification. To add contextual complexity, I would like to pursue a recent interest in thinking through the relationship of 'flow' experiences to experiences of liminality.¹ Are flow and reverie experiences merely experiences that 'happen' to us or do we also contrive them and, if so, are there 'technologies', softly understood, that help to 'devise' such experiences?

In my recently published book *Liminality and Experience*,² I propose that there are, and that we might call them 'liminal affective technologies'. This idea involves two related distinctions. First, between *liminal* and *pivotal* situations or occasions of experience (crudely, pivotal experience is dominated by positions and stations, and liminal experience by transitions and relations). Second, between spontaneous and devised liminal experiences. Crudely, the former 'happen' to us whenever the world of our pivotal experience is ruptured by a disruptive or transformative event, while the latter we 'do to ourselves', typically by means of liminal affective technologies. The value of these distinctions lies in the contrasts and relations they afford. Specifically, that the devised liminal experiences help us to make sense of the spontaneous variety.

It is well known that the notion of the liminal was originally introduced by van Gennep as a term for the middle phase of a rite of passage, but liminality does not belong only to rituals. Rather rites of passage can be viewed as cultural resources for managing and navigating the ambivalent affective potentials associated with delicate occasions of real transformation. Ritual might thus be considered the mother of the liminal affective technologies. Born from the matrix of ritual, the arts came to specialise in generating *aesthetic* experience, whilst games/sports form a group of LATs producing *ludic* experience. But ludic and aesthetic liminal affectivity never quite sheds the sense of its *sacred* origin.

Paul Stenner is Professor of Social Psychology at the Open University, UK. He works with a critical transdisciplinary approach to psychosocial issues. He has published widely on a range of topics including health, political subjectivity and affectivity / emotions, and he has a particular interest in 'liminal' experiences of transformation. The theoretical approach he adopts is informed by process thinking and supported by qualitative methods and q-methodology. He is author and co-author of several books, most recently including *Liminality and Experience: a Transdisciplinary Approach to the Psychosocial* (Palgrave, 2017), *Theoretical Psychology: Global Transformations and Challenges* (Captus, 2011) and *Psychology without Foundations* (with Steve Brown, Sage, 2009). With Monica Greco and Johanna Motzkau he recently edited a Special Issue of *Theory and Psychology* which introduces the concept of 'liminal hotspots' (2017). He is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and President of the International Society for Theoretical Psychology. paul.stenner@open.ac.uk

1 Stenner, Paul (2017) 'Being in the zone and vital subjectivity: on the liminal sources of sport and art', in Jordan, Tim, Woodward, Kath and McClure, Brigid (eds) *Culture, Identity and Intense Performativity: Being in the Zone*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 10–31.

2 Stenner, Paul (2017) *Liminality and Experience: A Transdisciplinary Approach to the Psychosocial*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

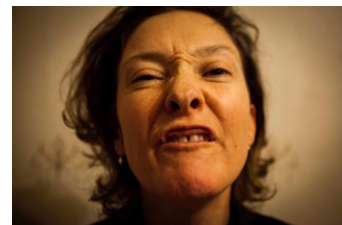
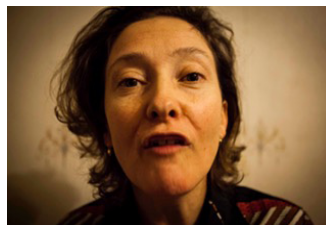
Rachel Genn

Might regret be a roadblock to reverie?

Mental representations of counterfactual possibilities (e.g., imagined past events or future outcomes not yet at hand) provide the basis for learning from past experience, enable planning and prediction, support creativity and insight, and give rise to emotions and social attributions (e.g., regret and blame).¹ That regret requires an imagined perspective outside the present, might be one way it inhibits the experience of flow and reverie. Differing definitions between flow and reverie might be traced to cognitive mechanisms, and separable psychological constructs such as wanting and liking, thought to subserve either or both. I briefly examine the relationship between these states, to uncover perhaps differential roles for emotions in the state of flow and / or the kindling of reverie. I will use literary examples to highlight the importance of metaphor in directing my scientific inquiry into the emotions and states under discussion.

1 Van Hoeck, Nicole, Watson, Patrick D. and Barbey, Aron K. (2015) 'Cognitive neuroscience of human counterfactual thought, *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 23 July. Full text: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnhum.2015.00420/full>

Barrelling - Slattern. Photograph by Connor Matheson.



Dr **Rachel Genn**: Formerly a Neuroscientist, I have written two novels *The Cure* (2011) and *What You Could Have Won*, due 2019. I was Leverhulme Artist-in-Residence (2015/16), University of Sheffield, creating a quasi-institution called *The National Facility for the Regulation of Regret*, spanning installation art, VR, film and non-fiction. @RachelGenn

Through the looking glass: the politics of trance in north-east Siberia

The focus of this paper is a state of consciousness I often hear about in Sakha (Yakutia), north-eastern Siberia, called *turuk*. This word is from the Sakha language, still widely used among Sakha (Yakutia)'s largest indigenous community, the Sakha people. *Turuk* is the mode Sakha spiritual healers and singers have to access, if they are to achieve the interconnection with their surroundings they need to heal or communicate in song. In *turuk*, a person perceives the communities and interrelations that stand behind our immediate experience—and is thus able to initiate a purposeful exchange, generally for the benefit of a specific individual or group. The self is dissipated into all the relationships it touches, so that other subjectivities—nowadays known as spirits – speak, and are spoken to in their turn. Like Amanda Ravetz' description of reverie in this symposium's call for contributions, *turuk* requires an internal focus, along with complete attention to everything that presents itself to one's perception. I have left a translated section of an old Sakha Olonkho epic in the suggested reading folder, to give a sense of the universe *turuk* reveals, and the way that a person in *turuk*—in this case, the Olonkho bard—moves through it, and acts.

As my reference to spirits implies, *turuk* is part of a phenomenon currently glossed in both English and Russian as 'shamanism': the word *turuk* has been translated to me as 'trance'. The term 'shamanism' and the discussions associated with it have emerged out of the ethnographic production of knowledge about indigenous Siberians—and hence also a colonialist political setting, intertwined with its own set of assumptions about person, interrelation, perception and action. And this production of knowledge shapes the practice it describes, in its turn. In the 1960s, the word *turuk* meant 'state/condition', rather than 'trance'; its current usage could even refer to the Russian phrase 'altered state of consciousness' (измененное состояние сознания), an important theme in the contemporary study of shamanism in Russia. At the symposium, I will present contrasting cases of *turuk*, exploring the ways in which Sakha (Yakutia)'s changing political and technological setting is generating different practices, disciplines and discussions of this condition. I hope that this comparison will help us firstly to expand or locate an understanding of reverie; secondly, to explore the importance of specific political circumstances in the constitution of reverie; and, thirdly, to examine the way our own political setting is framing our approaches to this phenomenon.

Eleanor Peers: I have spent most of my career investigating Siberia—specifically, the Republics of Buryatia and Sakha (Yakutia). I have pursued this research from departments of Journalism, Sociology, and Social Anthropology, at the London College of Printing, Cambridge University, the Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology and the University of Aberdeen, respectively.

Melina Bernardi

Exploring reverie

My video is a brief presentation of reverie within the context of music therapy based on my master's thesis in music therapy, entitled "Exploring Reverie".

I discuss the theories of different psychoanalysts, such as Ogden, Bion and Våpenstad, who are central to our understanding of reverie in the context of psychoanalysis. I also talk about the work of a music therapist De Backer and his take on reverie as applied to music therapy. I discuss two case studies, one from Våpenstad and one from De Backer: in both cases, reverie is essential to the healing process and the hope it can foster. In conclusion, I state that part of reverie's importance lies in the fact that it is interdisciplinary and a stance that can help anyone in their creative expression.

Melina Bernardi is an Italian-American music therapist from Assisi, Italy. While she was getting her BA in philosophy at the University of Florence, she completed a two-year diploma in music therapy at the Centro Studi Musica ed Arte, also in Florence, Italy. She continued her studies in music therapy at an MA degree course at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, and wrote her master's thesis on reverie. She has completed music therapy internships in Italy, India, Finland and New York.

At the coal face—a practitioner’s perspective

This talk will look at the notion of ‘flow’ from the perspective of a creative practitioner. Using three specific examples taken from a visual-arts practice spanning 30 years, I report from within the experience. I propose to look at:

- the importance of (re)creating a space in which to paint
- the role of repetition and
- rhythmic flow.

I discuss moments during the painting and drawing process that cast light on what it means to ‘be in the zone’, what it feels like and how it may impact on the artworks made.



Lesley Halliwell is an artist currently undertaking a practice-based PhD (NWCDTP Award holder 2014-2020) at Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University. She has an MA in Art History, Goldsmith’s College, University of London (1995), an MA in Fine Art from Manchester Metropolitan University (2001) and a BA (Hons) from Nottingham Trent.

Lesley’s research is about the surface of the pictorial plane looking specifically at the interplay between the outward-facing and the inward-supporting components of the picture plane. Recently, she has looked to other cultural traditions to aid her understanding of different pattern generating systems.

Lesley has exhibited her work widely. Exhibitions include: *Bloombergs New Contemporaries*, *The Jerwood Drawing Prize*, *Superabundant* at Turner Contemporary, Margate, *Pattern Recognition* at Leicester City Art Gallery, *The Drawing Show*, Castlefield Gallery, Manchester, and *Beauty is the First Test* at Pumphouse Gallery, London. Lesley is currently Director of Suite Studios, Salford.

William Titley



Art as reverie for reverie

Focusing on a project with a small group of men who cared for a loved one at home, I propose to discuss the creative processes of socially engaged art practice, and highlight moments where both artist and participants grapple with the potential of themselves and of physical materials through a process that might be one of collective reverie. Looking back at my practice, this state appears to be present in most projects, either hidden in the dialogical process or directly provoking its appearance through recollection and tacit understanding of place.

An artwork emerged from that project called *Gentleman's Wardrobe*, which can be experienced via observation (as a free-standing art object), or one can sit inside it and be a part of it. It seats one or two people and once inside, it is an intimate place for reverie, and offers a glimpse of the soul of its makers and its audience. The den-like construction of two antique gentleman's wardrobes presents the audience with sound recordings of everyday chores of the men who care, including a poem about caring for a loved one with Stage Two Dementia.

The *Gentleman's Wardrobe* is on show at The Harris Museum & Art Gallery, Preston from 17 to 30 April.



William Titley: I use qualitative research that is ethnographic in focus, with an emphasis on my role as participant observer. I write as a participant, as an artist and as a member of the local community. By adopting artistic research methods and, specifically, by making work in the place where I live, my research analyses social artistic processes from the perspective of the artist, adding to debates around what social arts practice is, and what its limits are in its original social context and within the gallery and documentary systems of dissemination.

Senior Lecturer, MA Fine Art Course Leader at University of Central Lancashire.

Founding director of 'In-Situ', an embedded artist-led organisation in East Lancashire.

PhD candidate at the Manchester Institute for Research and Innovation in Art and Design at Manchester Metropolitan University.

‘Essi temevano la gioia eccessiva’
Reverie and the practice of the limit



Essi temevano la gioia eccessiva
(They feared excessive joy, translation by the author)
—Elvio Fachinelli, *La mente estatica*

Italian psychoanalyst Elvio Fachinelli uses the words in excerpt in talking about ecstasy and evoking the notion of reverie. He says that ecstasy as well as reverie usually emerge in liminal experiences and these are generally refused for their dangerous anthropological power of dissolution.

Is reverie a limit experience? How can the notion of limit possibly enrich the one of reverie and vice versa? Through my presentation and my future paper, I would like to explore these questions. I will therefore introduce the notion of limit which does not coincide with border. It is not a line that separates. It is more a space as a desert, a swamp, a virgin forest as highlighted by anthropologist van Gennep (2012: 16). Starting from my biographical experience as a Feldenkrais practitioner and from a few ongoing projects in marginal contexts conceived as practices of the limit (marathon running in prison, running north, whiteout), my contribution aims to highlight the potentialities of a ‘limit experience’ (Foucault 1994:43) ‘that undermine the subject’ (Jay 1995: 158) directing the gaze towards a void of meaning (Weil 2008) and create ‘the very condition of possibility for once unthinkable social emergences’ (Dave 2012: 3). At the edge of suffering (despair), exertion (pain) and joy (ecstasy), humans discover the possibility of facing emptiness with a movement of exposure beyond meaning in a desert place, where freedom lies. As Foucault described, the limit-experience is an active ‘pratique de liberte’ (practice of freedom) where freedom

is tightly connected to ethics, as care of the Self (Holmes et al. 2006).

My feeling is that limit and reverie are ‘discoveries’ to be explored for their potential in healing. Rather than purely speculative my interest is therefore in practices of care and recoveries which show a path of healing for humans from what Fachinelli calls ‘the fear of weakness’ (Fachinelli 1989: 12). Can this path be a healing practice for academia, too? If joy is a common experience arising from reverie, what is truth and what about knowledge? If incommensurability is characteristic of episodes of reverie which register a shift from the ordinary and represent a crack in time, how can we talk about them? Which language can we use? In finding inspirations in the above mentioned case studies, I will focus on ecstasy, intuition and attention as three main notions emerging from both limit experiences and reverie to explore these questions.

Paolo Maccagno: Anthropologist—Feldenkrais practitioner®—Marathoner. After more than 15 years as a landscape architect, my ongoing life-research concentrates on the notion of limit focusing on movement, body and touch. I am currently doing a PhD in anthropology at the University of Aberdeen.

Web links: Aberdeen University (<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/profiles/paolo.maccagno/>), Feldenkrais Guild UK (<http://www.feldenkrais.co.uk/profile.php?id=363>)

Katie Sollohub

Reverie in my painting and teaching

In my presentation I will show work whilst talking about reverie in relation to my painting and drawing practice and my teaching. I will cover my working practice and methodology and the importance of reverie as a state of mind for my creative work; artists I am inspired by with reference to reverie, their working methods and philosophies; setting the conditions for reverie as a teacher; the role of critical judgement.



Dreamspace, 2013/2018. Oil on canvas. 30x30cm.

Katie Sollohub studied Anthropology and Fine Art. She is a Sussex artist and teacher who is interested in documenting and recording the places she lives and works in through drawing, painting, photography and performance. She is fascinated by interior spaces and starting with observation of space, light, line and colour, is drawn into memory, stories and personal experience. In 2014 she received an Arts Council award for a residency at JMW Turner's House in Twickenham 2014/15, which has led to a series of similar projects, including Strawberry Hill House. She is currently working at West Horsley Place, Surrey. Solo shows include *Eternal Sunshine* at the Stables Gallery, Orleans House, Twickenham, and *A Guest in Turner's House* at Winchester City Gallery 2017. She has been selected for the *Jerwood Drawing Prize* exhibition, *The Royal Academy Summer Show*, *Lynne Painter Stainers Prize* and the *Discerning Eye*. She is currently represented by Candida Stevens Gallery, Chichester.

On responding to a painting

To address reverie in my painting practice, I must call on the (sought-after) *sustained togetherness* of the painter-painting relationship. Accessed by (the ritual of) slowing down (thinking) and emptying the mind of unnecessary thoughts, I am able to respond appropriately to the painting's needs. Governed also by the conscious and unconscious forces in this relationship—something I am calling *relational dynamics*—opposing characteristics of *being / staying with* the painting or *putting distance* between us, are common. Reverie, therefore, will be positioned as being concerned with managing (painting) knowledge and intention whilst reading the painting's own trajectory in the (time) space of the painting activity.



Roused from a deep sleep, 2018.
Oil on calico. 42x30 cm.

Jenny Eden: I am painter currently studying a PhD by Practice at Manchester School of Art following an MFA in Fine Art (also MSoA) and an MA in Art Psychotherapy Practice (Leeds Metropolitan University). My work is driven by process and the *relational dynamics* involved in the painter-painting relationship.

Session 4 Art / Anthropology

Andrew Irving

The limits of science

It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible.

—Oscar Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray*

As Oscar Wilde observes, because there is so much to be gained by observing surfaces, their study should not be seen as shallow, superficial or trivial. Nonetheless, a few pages after declaring allegiance to the realm of appearances, Wilde cautioned: ‘those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril’. With this warning in mind, I argue it has become necessary for anthropology to place itself in greater ‘peril’ by venturing beneath the observable and audible surfaces of urban life in order to gain a better understanding of the interior dialogues and imaginative lifeworlds that constitute people’s lived experience. The capacity for a rich and imaginative inner life—that simultaneously encompasses streams of inner dialogue and reverie, as well as inchoate, non-linguistic or image-based forms of thought and expression that

Andrew Irving is Professor of Social Anthropology and Director of the Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology at the University of Manchester. His research areas include sensory perception, time, illness, death, urban anthropology and experimental methods, film and multi-media.

Recent books include: *The Art of Life and Death: Radical Aesthetics and Ethnographic Practice*, HAU Malinowski Monograph Series, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2017); *Anthropology and Futures: Researching Emerging and Uncertain Worlds* (2017 with Sarah



exist beyond third-party observation—is an integral part of what makes us human and is central to the negotiation of social life, from routine practices to extraordinary moments of existential crisis. The complex streams of consciousness and amalgams of inner dialogue and reverie that emerge in social life, action and practice are rarely the primary focus of anthropological research or monographs. As such anthropology, the quintessential study of humanity, risks only being able to tell half the story of human life. This presents a deep-seated problem for anthropology and cognate disciplines based on empirical evidence insofar as it is primarily a methodological and practical problem rather than a conceptual one. In response, this presentation is based on an experimental practice-based, research project for which I recorded more than a hundred interior dialogues of random strangers encountered in public places as they moved around New York City.

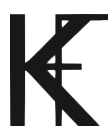
Pink, Juan Salazar and Johannes Sjöberg, Bloomsbury); *Beyond Text: Critical Practices and Sensory Anthropology*, (2016 with Rupert Cox and Christopher Wright, Manchester University Press); *Whose Cosmopolitanism? Critical Cosmopolitanisms, Rationalities and Discontents* (2014 with Nina Glick-Schiller, Berghahn Press).

Recent film and multi-media works include *Wandering Scholars: Or How to Get in Touch with Strangers* (Live film and sound installation: Österreichisches Museum für Volkskunde, Vienna, 2016); *Live Platform* (Bogota 2015); the play *The Man Who Almost Killed Himself* (2014) in collaboration with Josh Azouz and Don Boyd, which was shown on BBC Arts, BBC iPlayer, Odeon Cinemas and at the Edinburgh Festival; and the *New York Stories Project* (2013), which is currently hosted on more than thirty websites including Scientific American, National Public Radio and the Wenner Gren. My current research investigates the lifeworlds of deaf children in South Africa and uses film and photography as means of co-creation.

For further information on the *Knowing From the Inside* project see:

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/research/kfi/>

The convenors would like to thank:



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