

**How can therapeutic creative writing uncover a more  
nuanced story of a past self?**

Elisabeth Winkler

# The Great Unreality



them on the other side of my eyes. I want them  
with me in my brain. I can't accept the distance,  
(distance) therefore they cease to be real, for they  
I have come too close.)

I thought Walter was far away. I was irritating  
+ angry + hateful towards him. It is a defense. It is  
easier to hate him. But once I see him properly, it's  
O.K. I want to love him.

At college, I get lost. I cannot be funny all the  
time, Oh fuck, I can't think.

It's me me me all the time. I won't write  
anymore because I am sick of it being continually me. I  
could write about George: he is ~~ex~~ experienced

No.

I will go.

I don't



# Data

Journal excerpts

A photograph

Three historic poems



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# MSc in Creative Writing for Therapeutic Purposes

# Therapeutic

Compassion is key

# Autoethnography



Auto

Self

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Ethno

Culture

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Graphy

Writing

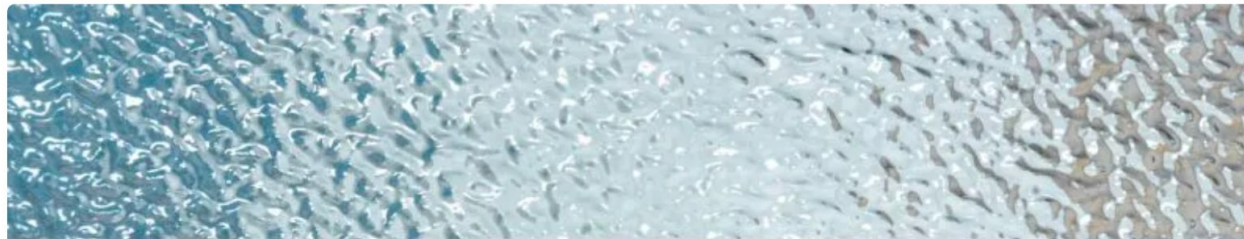
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autoethnography comes from three core aspects: self, culture, and writing. So,

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## Feeling unreal: depersonalisation / derealisation disorder

Written by Carolyn Spring | 30 January 2018



Feeling unreal:



Transient or temporary symptoms

# Acronyms

DP

DDD

DPD

DP/DR

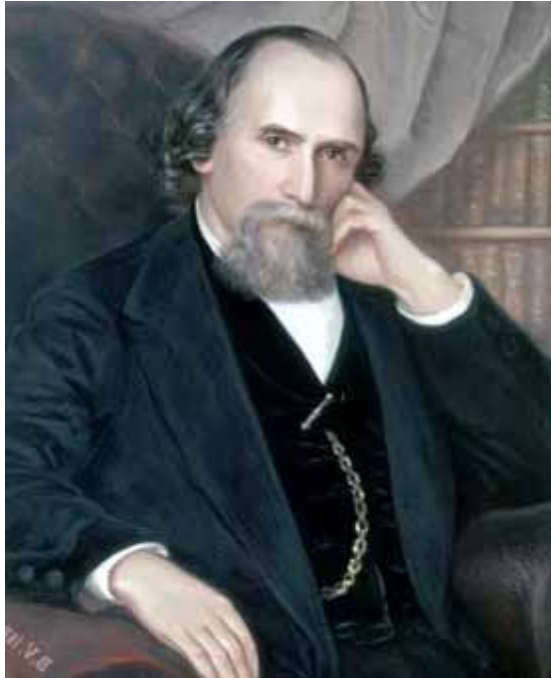
DPDR

DDS

DPAFU

# Depersonalisation

Henri-Frédéric Amiel



Let us write 1.

# I cross a bridge

Describe the bridge, weather, landscape.

Where is the bridge coming from and going to?

What is it made of?

What's it crossing over?

# **David Hanauer: Poetic autoethnography**

Poetry to explore a researcher's experience



# A particular type of autoethnography

“...that uses the special features of poetry...to enhance insight, emotional clarity and critical engagement with one's own personal experience.”

*Hanauer 2022*

# Special features of poetry writing

Succinct, condensed

Open to interpretation

Can elicit emotion

Say the unsayable through metaphor or image.

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## Life Writing and Poetic Autoethnography Full ...



by Creative Research

Playlist • 18 videos • 1,087 views

This playlist consists of a full academic course that develops the understandings, knowledge and skills ...more



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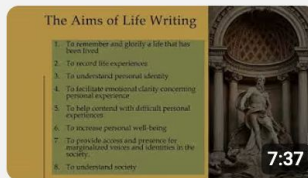


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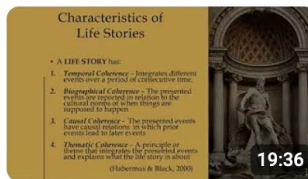
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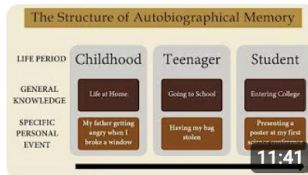
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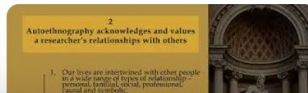
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4



11:41

5



# Poetic autoethnography

“considers **poetry written in the past** as a form of historical documentation through which personal experience can be investigated.”

*Hanauer 2021 p.431*

## **Vile inhuman deadness**

Dead creeping singing in the marshes  
a sometimes relic of what was once human  
Its last form long remembered  
As a crying baby crying in the wilderness.

Heart knows a cool land a green land a fresh land

Heart knows a path to get there

Heart frozen and rosy yearns warm and cosy

And head is a dead-man barring the way.



Rewriting the narrative

# Self-research - a challenge

Prompts in method

Ethics

Self-care

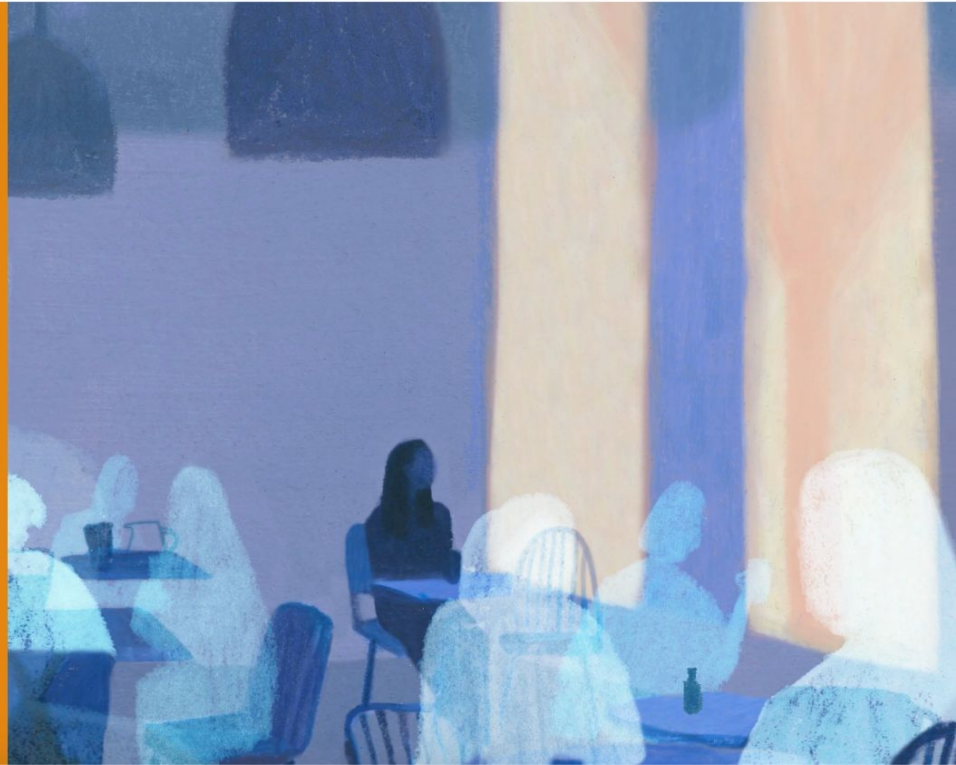
# Risks to researcher

Self care

Triggers can be illuminating

# Peer support

Are you experiencing Depersonalisation and/or Derealisation? Would you like to be able to meet other people who understand what you are going through to support and learn from each other?





# LIRIC Journal

Research and writing for wellbeing

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Let us write 2.

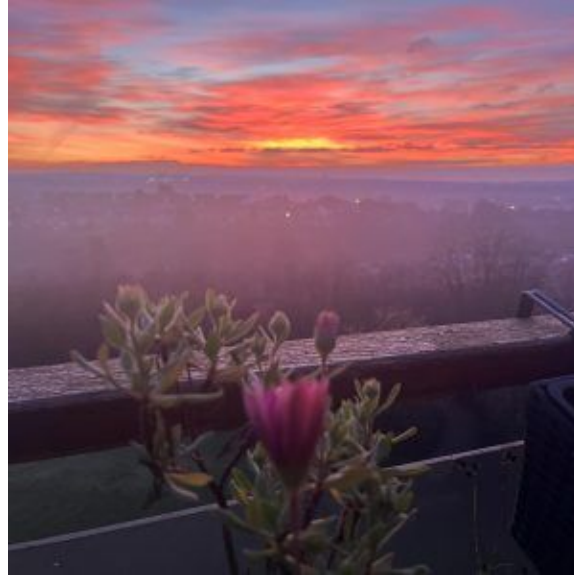


# Treasure chest

Open the lid and see what is inside

What treasure do you choose for now?

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**Winter writing January 2026**