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Introduction

Auto/biography and Mobilities in the Time of Climate Emergency

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Abstract

The auto/biographical genre offers theoretical and methodological starting points that are key to a just and ecological mobilities transformation. Just as the COVID-19 pandemic response and its impacts made diverse lifecourse visible, climate change and its contingencies will have similar effects. Simultaneously, digital cultures provide new scope for practising auto/biography and telling about diverse life stories. Through a critical review of the literature and drawing on the new insights of this Special Issue, the paper argues that a research agenda grounded in the auto/biographical is a priority. In contrast to some of the anti-biographical positions that have been influential in mobilities scholarship, the paper argues that: i) the feminist auto/biographical genre accommodates a human subject that is social and historical before being individual, with its performativity being a crucial form for unheard voices to be heard; 2) that it plays a significant role in contesting the frameworks of lifecourse that inform institutional and policy contexts; and, 3) that there is scope for a re-engagement of the non-human and the more-than-human within auto/biographical studies, which though contentious, provides a way to radically re-think how diverse life stories are (im)mobile, and the ways that human and non-human lives are valued.

How does mobility - both as a concept and a practice - impact upon the stories we tell to make sense of our lives - or, indeed, those that are told about us? And how are those stories being rewritten in the context of climate change? These were the questions that inspired the event which gave rise to this special issue: an international symposium which took place at Lancaster University in July 2022 as part of a UKRI-funded 'South Korea Connections' networking grant.[1] The symposium was jointly hosted by CeMoRe (Lancaster, UK) and the Academy of Mobility Humanities (Konkuk, South Korea), and papers were delivered by scholars from a wide range of disciplines including English and Korean Literary Studies, Creative Writing, Cultural and Historical Geography, Performance Studies and Sociology. Five of those papers, expanded and revised, feature here (**Kim, Lee, Murray, Rau and Matern, Spurling**) along with a sixth - a fascinating anthropological investigation of car-driving in the dreams of young adults, by Robin **Sheriff;** this was spotted by the journal's former managing editor, Pennie Drinkall, whose contribution (both here, and over the past twenty years) we wish to pay tribute to. Taken together, these papers engage with the special issue's key concepts and concerns - auto/biography, mobilities and climate change - in diverse, sometimes elliptical, ways and

whose synergies and significance we attempt to draw out in this Introduction.

Our opening propositions are twofold. The first is that 'the advancement of a just and ecological mobilities transformation' (REF) should be a key aim for mobilities scholarship at the current time. This is because both the impacts of anthropogenic climate change, and efforts to mitigate against it are inextricably bound up with mobilities of every kind and scale. Second and alongside this, the new millennium has seen major, though often unspoken, changes to the ways in which individuals and societies are contemplating, and then negotiating, the different phases of the lifecourse – a contested concept that refers to the sequence of successive events and transitions of a life trajectory - in the context of an uncertain future.

The Covid-19 pandemic made key transition points - e.g., from teens to young adulthood, non-parenthood to parenthood, and middle-age to retirement - newly topical as single people, couples and family groups (of various kinds) reviewed the choices available to them or confronted situations that were beyond their control. This, in turn, prompted us (as editors) to consider the extent to which climate change has also begun to impact upon the directions that diverse lives may take and the stories that are being told to make sense of them: for example, the choice of where to live and work; the frequency of travel and holidaying; how 'Living Apart Together' relationships are practised; the implications of having/ not having children; how far we should live from parents/family/friends; what it means to have a 'good' retirement. Every one of these examples entails a complex subtext that, for the moment, remains largely unspoken except amongst the environmentally-aware for whom such decisions may be undertaken as a matter of principle as well as practicality. However, across the globe, environmental change - and its social consequences - are already impacting the domestic lives of the wider population as a matter of necessity. For some, this might mean figuring out ways of making an (affordable) transition to cleaner forms of transport, avoiding moving to certain neighbourhoods liable to flooding, experiencing forced displacement (Barbosa, 2021) or intersections of climate and migration (Spiegel et al, 2022); in others, dealing with drought, failing crops or coordinating community action amongst abandoned coastal homeowners (Checker, 2017). As a consequence, lifecourse mobilities are being covertly and overtly redirected in order to side-step, or escape, the everyday complications brought about by a rapidly warming climate - even though the ability to make such choices is, itself, typically a mark of privilege (Sheller 2018; Sheller 2022; Adey et al 2022). Part of the rationale for this Special Issue was thus a desire to establish a conversation about how auto/biography - as a reflexively-aware practice and/or academic method is: (1) already performatively opening up a rich diversity of life stories related to such change; (2) providing a means of analysing the inadequacies of assumptions regarding the life trajectories that underpin policy and

thinking in sectors and domains (albeit often in implicit ways); and (3),could help individuals and communities negotiate such change by scripting new life-stories for themselves and future generations, While the latter inevitably risks confronting many frightening and dystopian scenarios - not least the prospect that there is no longer any possibility that the planet, and its multiple non-human worlds, will survive our personal mortality - there is also the potential (as demonstrated in recent 'Cli-Fi fiction - see **Lee** following) to explore alternative ways of 'living with' the planet that makes everyday life feel more positive and productive, if no less precarious (see **Rau and Matern** following).

This said, the extent to which *anyone* can or cannot 'steer' their lifecourse is arguably as much a matter of discourse and the circulation of knowledge as it is of material circumstances. Not only is the opportunity to make sense of a life by submitting it to narrative explanation itself socially and culturally specific, but the stories told are themselves subject to intersectional discourses and ideologies. In other words, even those who find empowerment in telling their lifecourse narratives and sharing them with others will have had those stories shaped (and sometimes denied) by the discourses that are available at any given time and place (see **Spurling** following). To summarise, the extent to which diverse subjects get to write their own lives, have that life written for them or, indeed, to exercise their right to mobility - has always depended upon a complex nexus of historically-specific factors: social and economic privilege, geographical location, and available discourse. Meanwhile, the emerging impact(s) of climate change ~~is articulating with each of these factors to~~ are bringing about a radically new lifeworld in which the biographies of human animals and other species must necessarily evolve in ways that we have only just begun to be imagined. Further - and as explored in the papers by **Kim** and **Lee** following - the belated recognition that Earth's very survival, in habitable form, is itself dependent upon a rejection of the hierarchies that have prioritised the rights of some animal, plant, fungal, oceanic and microbial species over others raises profound questions not only about *whose* 'bio' matters most but also whether any epistemology which privileges the singular life over the communal is the way forward. While recognising the power of this argument (which aligns with Nigel Thrift's rejection of both autobiography and biography in his definition of Non Representational Theory (Thrift 2007, 7)), we trust that the papers which follow will make the case for why the 'bio' - if expanded to include all manner of non-human and more-than-human categories of life - remains an enabling concept to work with. For while, for Thrift and others, auto/biography may signal 'a spurious sense of [human-centric] wholeness' (Thrift 2007, 7) it is surely also one of the

most effective means of communicating the fragility, transience and supreme interconnectivity of each and every 'thing' that passes this way.

With these caveats in mind, this special issue approaches the thematics of auto/biography, mobilities and climate change, and the intersections between them, both directly and obliquely. The articles represent the different constituencies of auto/biographical research across the humanities and social sciences - e.g., the biographical interview (**Rau and Matern, Sheriff);** performative autobiography (in the context of digital support networks) (**Spurling);** autobiography and/as autoethnography (**Murray);** Sci-Fi and speculative fiction (**Lee);** the post-human biography of things (**Kim) -** and engage with a wide range of mobilities' concerns. These include attention to both the historical-material mobilities of everyday life **(Rau and Matern, Murray),** and the (im)mobilities of life-narratives themselves (**Murray, Sheriff, Spurling)** in line with our previous point regarding auto/biography being a potentiality in discourse as well as an enunciation of lived experience. Meanwhile, although the engagement with climate change is both explicit (**Kim, Lee and Rau and Matern**) and tangential (**Murray, Sheriff, Spurling)**, all the articles speak to what it means to rethink the lifecourse *in the time of climate change* in new and thought-provoking ways. In particular, the discussions collapse the distance between the geological time of the Anthropocene and the temporalities of everyday decision-making. For example, while those approaching retirement may once have construed the impact of climate change - however regrettable - as a concern for future generations, the alarming speed of the change is already informing decisions about where, and how, to holiday responsibly (as explored in the late Russell Hitching's work (Hitchings, Venn and Day 2018; Day, Hitchings et al 2018). All life now - both human and non-human - must prepare for a future circumscribed by adjustment, adaptation, attrition, compromise and loss. The measure of this transition is vividly captured in the collection of papers presented here in which considerations of how we respond to change in the contemporary present (**Spurling, Rau and Matern**) are set alongside those **(Kim, Lee**) concerned with (re)imagining a future that is already upon us.

On this last point, we would also like to acknowledge what we consider to be the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to the climate change debate. While climate change research may have been led by colleagues working in the natural sciences and environmental studies, it is clear that the humanities and social sciences have a great deal to bring to the discussions through their focus on the diverse lives that have already embarked upon a period of momentous transformation. As well as a complex theoretical understanding of autobiographical practice and the processes of story-telling, literary and

cultural scholars (for example) are able to draw upon a rich archive of texts which have already envisioned our social and environmental future (dystopian and otherwise) and to give prominence (where appropriate) to associated emotions and affects. Sociologists and anthropologists, meanwhile - although more likely to focus on the social rather than the individual subject - are similarly invested in research that can explore the present and future impacts of climate change on everyday lives, especially with regards everyday life and social practices (e.g. Shove et al, 2012; Shove and Spurling, 2013; **Rau and Matern** following). With these considerations to the fore, we now offer a brief overview of how autobiography - and, indeed, auto/biography [emphasising the slash] - have been theorised and conceptualised by scholars working across the humanities and social sciences and connect this body of work with the papers collected together here.

Auto/biography - Whose Story?

In literary studies, autobiography is distinguished from other modes of life-writing - i.e., diaries, letters and memoirs - by its retrospective standpoint and linear narration of significant phases and events in the author's life. It is also typically regarded as the 'public face' of life-writing. For while some authors (famous and otherwise) may write their autobiographies 'for themselves' or their immediate family, as a literary genre it is historically associated with the (en)titled, rich and famous; in other words, authors with a public profile writing with an equally public audience in mind. Construed thus, both the 'auto' and the 'bio' elements of autobiographical practice invite political scrutiny as issues of access and entitlement are brought to the fore. This was a hot topic in feminist literary studies in the 1980s and 1990s as scholars began to explore, and define, the differences between men's and women's life-writing (e.g., Hoffmann and Culley 1985; Heilbrun 1997 [1998]; Benstock 1988; Miller 1991; Freedman and Frey 1994; Marcus 1994). Across this body of literature, the general consensus was that women's life-writing (including autobiography) could be distinguished by the fact that it was (*inter alia*): more focused on the private rather than the public self; more 'relational' than men's autobiographies (i.e., inclined to narrate the life vis-a-vis significant others); more 'fragmented, discontinuous and miscellaneous' (Jelinek 1980) than men's autobiographies; more self-reflexive about the (im)possibility of telling the truth; more inclined to position the audience as equals; more likely to be written *without* publication in mind; and more likely to embrace fictional elements. For those who have taught in the field (e.g., Pearce), it was always easy to endorse, and demonstrate, these propositions and to contrast the practice of the women writers with that of their male counterparts (for whom an ego-centric 'hero narrative' was

the dominant narratological mode). It is in large-part thanks to these interventions that more marginal, less normative, and less overtly successful life-stories have since been reclaimed and welcomed into the genre.

While autobiography continues to boom as a literary category (Riley and Pearce 2016; Riley 2018), the genre now includes a far greater variety of voices and the (still-ubiquitous) hero narrative has been supplemented by more nuanced and precarious life stories. Here it is also important to note that this modernisation of the genre has developed in tandem with the post-millennial popularity of online blogs and other modes of electronic self-publishing, such at the life-narratives shared between members of social media groups (see **Spurling** following). This return and proliferation of auto/biography in new digital, and thus somewhat democratized form, adds weight to our argument that a revisiting of auto/biography and its potential is particularly relevant in the current moment. From a proliferation of new 'bottom-up' publishing formats including self-, digital- and crowd-sourced publications to blogs, podcasts, vlogs and digital communities, the last three decades have seen transformative change in the ways that lives are told and shared. In this context the ongoing project of auto/biographical work and its role in relation to self and society is ripe for re-analysis and a new theoretical understanding.

During the 1990s, British sociologist, Liz Stanley, made a major contribution to these debates by arguing (amongst other things) for the extent to which everyone's life is now authored for them as the result of 'audit culture' (Stanley 2000). Subjects are biographically profiled from the moment they are born through records of various kinds (e.g., birth certificates, national insurance numbers, passports, medical records, ID cards), challenging the purported autonomy and agency of the biographical subject; in other words, how can we *ever* write our own lives when so many identity-markers are always-already authored for us? For Stanley, this relates to the wider issue of the false distinction between biography and autobiography and her decision to present the two as inextricably related, as graphically signalled by the slash (i.e., auto/slash biography): 'auto-slash-biography . . . disputes the conventional genre distinction between biography and autobiography as well as the divisions between self/other, public/private and immediacy/memory' (Stanley 1993b). Casting doubt on the 'auto' in autobiographical in this way, Stanley was also able to make the case for an explicitly 'sociological' autobiography that recognises the way in which the 'autobiographical' is not only entwined with 'biographical' but 'the larger history' (Merton 1988: 18) in which the subject is situated, the times in which a life is lived (Stanley 1993a: 43). Significantly, the three contributors to this special issue whose work engages most explicitly with the notion of an

autobiographical subject **(Murray, Sheriff, Spurling)** appear to do so in full knowledge of this slash inasmuch as their autonomy is both relative and socially inscribed.

And yet, agreement with Stanley's powerful intervention notwithstanding, it remains crucial that we continue to attend to who does, and who doesn't, get the opportunity to speak, or write, their (life) story in practical terms. Across history and culture, access to storying has always been uneven and often echoes the mobilities - both geographical and social - of the subject(s) concerned. Both Clare Holdsworth (Holdsworth 2013) and Lynne Pearce (Pearce 2019) have demonstrated this point through their research on the choices (or not) available to subjects at different stages of the lifecourse, as has Lesley Murray in her work on mobility and generation (Murray and Robertson 2018; Murray 2020). What emerges from this research is that 'real-life' outcomes are inseparable from the social and cultural context in which the subject finds themselves; to execute change (e.g., 'leaving the parental home' (Holdsworth 2013), the move in question has both to be sanctioned by societal norms and fit within a narrative to which the subject can relate - something that is also evidenced in several of the papers included here (**Murray, Spurling, Sheriff**). Despite the fact that the auto/biographical lives explored by these three contributors are mostly (though not exclusively) white, mobile and economically privileged (when set within a global context), all demonstrate significant challenges not only to ways of telling one's story but also to living it. For **Murray**, this is indexed by the intergenerational agencies of social class and gender which demonstrates how, even today, reconstructing one's life-story as an erstwhile working-class women is liable to 'discontinuity and fragmentation' (Jelinek 1985); for **Spurling,** the challenge resides in the immobilisation of meaningful narratives which tell of life without children in nuanced and unstigmatising ways; while, in the case of **Sheriff's** college students, a variety of societal pressures - as manifested in their dreams - render the transition into adulthood rather less than straightforward. Extended globally, and incorporating the disadvantages of ethnicity and other markers of marginality, the differential access to such 'authorship' (again, both material and discursive) is especially stark. An example here can be found in Mendes Barbosa et al's research on climate risk mapping and the forced mobilities of favela removals in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Mendes Barbosa and Walker, 2020; Mendes Barbosa and Coates, 2021) which analyses the contentious emerging practices of 'preventative displacement' – a type of resettlement programme made possible by the narratives of anticipatory climate risk data. In this instance questions are raised about which narratives of the future matter for decision makers, and which are not heard. As mobilities scholarship has been keen to point out, the lives of many millions of people are

permanently 'stuck' (Hannam, Sheller and Urry, 2006) in terms of their life-trajectories (both material and discursive): an inequality that the enforced mobilities and immobilities related to climate change has rendered newly visible (Sheller 2018; 2022). Despite organisations such as COP [Conference of the Parties] trying to ensure that the voices and first-hand experiences of climate-impacted societies are heard at their summits, the very need to engineer such a forum itself speaks to the problem.

The second issue illuminated by the critical literature on autobiography, extends the question of who gets to *author* their lives to who gets to *order* them? Ever since the purported benefits of Sigmund Freud's 'talking cure' entered the public and psychiatric domain in the early twentieth century,[2] its popularity as a means of dealing with the long-lasting impacts of trauma has been immense and its principle incorporated into wide-ranging therapies, many of which remain current today. Most depend upon a process of encountering memories of a traumatic past, bringing repressed elements to consciousness, and then re-ordering the material to render it more logical and less painful. Because this process depends upon narrativisation techniques - i.e., 'telling the story otherwise' - it has been a favourite topic amongst literary scholars for several decades inasmuch as literary fiction frequently dramatises these processes at work in its characters (e.g., Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987); Pat Barker's *Regeneration* (1991)) and mimics them in the narrative structure of the text itself (e.g., the reader is drip-fed information of a past trauma in tandem with the character making their self-discovery). In every case, the imposition of (conscious) order onto (unconscious) chaos is key to the cure, and this includes locating past events in a particular sequence. The extent to which autobiographical texts attempt and achieve such orders is, however, variable and relates to other crucial aspects of storytelling such as how the story ends. Not all autobiographers are able to marshal a conclusive end-point for their life-stories thus far, and others may not wish to do so; as soon as we admit external factors into the equation - such as the impact of climate change on our future lives (both individual, and at a societal scale) - it becomes increasingly difficult to bring the narrative to a finite conclusion, which is why Sci-Fi and speculative fiction often substitute endings with possible futures (see **Lee** following), for better or worse. Indeed, it could be argued that this is also what has happened to academic debates concerning climate change; over the past fifty years, the sequence of environmental tipping points that have brought us to where we are today has become increasingly clear, but it is a narrative whose denouement could follow any number of plot lines (see Urry 2016; also **Rau and Matern** following). And this, in turn, impacts upon the stories we are able to tell about our own lives whose futures are so entwined not only

with environmental consequences of climate change but also the contingencies that will be implemented to confront them. As a consequence, attempts to order the twenty-first century lifecourse have become increasingly provisional, especially with respect to those future generations (the 'children and grandchildren' frequently invoked by politicians talking about climate change) that previously brought so many auto/biographical texts to a close (**Spurling** following).

Along with the questions of 'who gets to author' and 'who gets to order', any critique of auto/biography as a practice or methodology also needs to consider 'who gets to hear'. While, historically, literary autobiography - as opposed to other modes of life-writing - is presumed to have been written with an audience in mind, it is sadly the case that marginalised voices often command minority audiences unless the publishers, or other third-parties succeed in selling the work to the public at large. Celebrated examples of this include nineteenth-century American slave narratives which depended upon campaigners (who frequently penned a Preface to the volumes) to act as intermediaries between the text and its audience (see Jacobs 2019) while, today, academics arguably perform a similar role by ensuring that the life stories and testimonies of marginalised or forgotten groups are heard. This was one of the key objectives of the AHRC-funded project, 'Moving Manchester' (2006-10) and, more recently, the UKRI-funded 'Music, Migration and Mobility' project.[3] Such mediation is not without its own ethical issues, however, especially when it involves ventriloquising the voices of those unable to speak for themselves or when the context (e.g., the furtherance of academic research) may be seen to be exploitative by the communities concerned (see introduction to Pearce, Fowler and Crawshaw 2011). At the same time, there is a counter-argument that academics - and other commentators - may perform a crucial role in helping publics, of various kinds, to 'tune in' to the stories of mundane lives, including the conversations taking place between the human and the non-human (or more-than-human) actors. Artist Jen Southern's recent work on barnacles as part of the 'Rocky Climates' project is a good example of this[4], deploying innovative art-practice to ask how we can learn to listen to the life narratives of the more-than-human, while Taehee **Kim's** paper (following) makes a similar case for granting non-human objects auto/biographical status in the quest to tackle climate change. Meanwhile, it will also be argued that the issue of 'who listens?' to the stories of marginalised lives has been successfully addressed in the contemporary world through online technologies which are able to bring voices into dialogue with one another without the need for mediation. Nicola **Spurling's** article (following) demonstrates this with reference to the digital and face-to-face communities that have formed for those living

without children (through infertility, choice or circumstance). These communities support members to engage in the creation and circulation of auto/biography, and access the experiences of others ; life narratives that until very recently were not shared and 'immobile'. In this regard, Spurling's article may also be seen to capture the value of auto/biography as both an object of study and a methodology for mobilities studies; not only is it important to attend to the way in which lives are often invisibly shaped by the social and environmental processes and discourses, but also to explore, and discriminate between, the most appropriate means of enabling their stories to be heard.

Auto/biography and Auto/mobility

The articulation of auto/biography and auto/mobility is extremely suggestive conceptually and can be taken in any number of directions. In this section, we share some thoughts of our own in response to the articles featured in this special issue, paying particular attention to the wider context of climate change.

Following on from the previous discussion, the first point of connection between the two 'slashed' concepts - auto/biography and auto/mobility - is the extreme relativity (even precarity) of the 'auto' in the practice of both 'speaking' and 'moving' the self. Having expounded just some of the ways in which the auto/biographical subject is compromised in the process of 'giving voice', it is not difficult to draw connections with the multiple and dynamic constraints which impact the subject's physical mobilities - regardless of the means of transport they are using, including walking. The back catalogue of this journal features more articles than are possible to cite here which provide evidence of the obstacles that stand in the way of sustainable transport mobilities, especially. However, it is also important to recognise the extent to which the mode of transport that has become synonymous with automobility - the car - has *never* afforded drivers the absolute freedom of movement with which it has become hyperbolically associated (Dennis and Urry 2009), which is not to minimise its unique, if controversial, benefits (Pearce 2016). Assuming a phenomenological standpoint, the similarities between the often blocked, fragmented and circuitous nature of the most common modes of auto-mobility (i.e., walking, cycling and driving) and the convoluted routes and pathways of the lifecourse (see Pearce 2019) become manifest, and compromise is the key to both. In the same way that human subjects can propel their movement around the world *to an extent*, so can they fashion their life stories (and life choices), but only to an extent; further, and as noted above, the social, economic and geographical factors which determine who has access to mobility (Sheller and Urry 2006; Sheller 2018) also determine who gets to speak.

In this special issue, three of the papers - **Murray, Rau and Matern and Sheriff** - engage the auto/biography-auto/mobility nexus with specific reference to cars and driving (though in the case of **Murray and Rau and Matern**, this is set alongside the alternative auto-mobilities of walking and cycling). In every case, the autonomy and agency associated with car-travel is called into question and put into social-historical context. For **Sheriff,** it is the 'car trouble' that features in the recurrent dreams of young adults that connects the materialities of automotive transport with a critical moment in the lifecourse. While most of the college students Sheriff interviews have access to a car and/or experience of driving, their dreams of failed brakes and 'driving from the back seat' speak to wider social anxieties, many of them relating to their transition to 'responsible adulthood'. Sheriff nevertheless rejects overtly symbolic analysis of the dream texts, arguing, instead, for a continuity between sleeping and waking thought (including the social and cultural context of the dream scenario). As a consequence, these dreams may be seen to comment powerfully on the continued significance of cars and car culture in the lives of American citizens, including the compromised nature of the auto-mobility they afford. Expense, risk and their propensity for mechanical failure all render cars a less-than-ideal mode of transport. Further, although cars clearly play an important role in the students' rite of passage from teenager to young adult, they no longer figure as the archetypal gateway to maturity and liberation in way that they did for their parents and grandparents (Kerouac 2000 [1957] ; Seiler 2008; Pearce 2016). The diminishing value of the car as the epitome of auto-mobility also sits at the heart of **Rau and Matern**'s article based upon biographical interviews with non-car users in Munich. Her social-practice theory approach reveals that the decision to 'go carless' is linked to key moments in the lifecourse (e.g, having a family, moving job) in much the same way that 'coming of age' as a young adult was once seen as a reason for getting one. For **Rau and Matern**'s interviewees, the 'auto' in auto-mobility is felt more keenly in sustainable alternatives (walking and cycling) than it is in driving in congested urban areas, and the interviews are testament to the way in which new lifestyles can precipitate new life stories. In **Murray's** article, meanwhile, the changing historical significance of the car as a means of transport and symbol of social mobility is traced across three generations. While her father, an ('unmarked') taxi-driver in Belfast during the Troubles valued his car not only as a status-symbol but a means of making a living, her English grandfather was killed by one (in Leeds) in the 1930s. Taken together, these stories speak not only to the uneven history of car ownership and its consequences (who owns one, who gets run over by one), but also the way in which all auto-mobility is in constant danger of being knocked off-course, both

literally and figuratively (Murray's father actually has his 'taxi' car-jacked, at gunpoint, in one of the stories).

Another way of thinking about the articulation of auto/biography and auto/mobility is the way the two are connected via the imagination (Salazar 2020). As already observed, **Sheriff's** article explores this nexus through the medium of dream-consciousness, but several of our contributions recognise the value of mobility as a *potentiality* as well as a materiality, especially in shaping the narrative of our 'future selves'. This last point is central to Jinhyoung **Lee's** reading of Kim Gi Chang's 'Cli-Fi' dystopia which contrasts the highly-constrained mobilities/biographies of those living both inside and outside the 'domed' city (built to protect its citizens from temperatures in excess 50 degrees celsius) with the alternative future that the text's central protagonists dare to imagine for themselves. Central to the text - and Lee's reading of it - is the understanding that this future must attend to the needs of others - including non-human/'planetary' life - and for auto/biography be to reconfigured in more relational terms (see discussion of women's autobiography above). This is a conclusion which chimes with Taehee **Kim's** call for biographical status to be given to non-human objects in his philosophical reflections on the Anthropocene. In both papers, the imagination is invoked as a methodology to move both academics and the public at large beyond the impasse of the present with respect to the climate emergency: an imagination which prioritises other (non-human) biographies and *their* mobilities. To this end, Kim's paper reflects upon what the movements of non-human objects can tell us about the changes that are already upon us - and where they are headed. For **Spurling**, too, reconceptualising auto/biography in such a way that it takes account of the genealogies of those who do not have children (for whatever reason) will require an effort of the imagination. In this instance, the challenge is to discover new ways of mapping family networks that do not figure the childless as an immobile end-point (Spurling 2022). When placed alongside the papers of Lee and Kim, Spurling's proposition acquires particular significance. In the age of climate emergency, the need to radically re-think which lives are valued was never more important.

Spurling's article also speaks to the way in which a focus on mobility in terms *other* than physical movement is still relatively uncommon within the field of mobilities studies, and we present this as another benefit of yoking auto/mobility with auto/biography. Although most of the papers featured here *do* index physical movement of some kind, it is by no means the only mobility that informs the lives of those under consideration. As noted here in the introduction, discourses and ideologies may be as important in shaping the lifecourse as material factors, and - as is the case with s*ocial*

mobility (see Holdsworth 2013) - the two are often inseparable. Thus, while Sheller and Urry (Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007) conceived the New Mobilities Paradigm as a concept that would incorporate 'imaginative travel', 'virtual travel' and the 'communicative travel' of the internet (Urry 2007: 47), a focus on the auto/biographical journey (both human and non-human) as sampled here demonstrates the need to push the paradigm further to take account of mobilities that do not entail physical movement of any kind, and the insights that such an emphasis can provide. This is not least due to the fact that, with the emergence of social media, the ubiquity of digital platforms and the democratisation of content creation, practicing auto/biography (or what Smith and Watson refer to as 'getting a life', 1996) is newly reinvented in a digital world (Friedman, M. and Schultermandl, S. 2018). Rendering stories mobile (and understanding for whom, how and why this is not possible) is a question that arises anew. Virtual and communicative travel forges emergent local and global connections, and new physical and political mobilisations can arise. At the intersection of changing cultural and environmental climates, emerging lifecourse and transformed mobilities, the auto/biographical has new material instantiations and analytic possibilities.

Auto/biography and the Lifecourse

It is difficult to talk about auto/biography without also invoking ideas of lifecourse and generation. Although overlapping, it is valuable to retain, and remain critical, of these discrete concepts. It is only necessary to refer back to our discussion of Stanley's (1993a, 1993b, 2000) contribution earlier in this introduction to exemplify this point. The slash (auto/biography) indicates that everyone's life is, partly, authored for them through a whole variety of social institutions, including the family and the workplace, education and health. In these settings, reified ideas of how a life unfolds can create dominant narratives which legitimise certain lives and identities, placing them firmly on the map; and, simultaneously rendering others less visible (Stauber et al, 2022: 4). In particular what social scientists and geographers refer to as lifecourse tends to foreground white, heteronormative, Western lives, unfolding through genealogical categories and specific moments and phases of the family – for example, daughter/son, wife/husband/partner, mother/father, grandmother/grandfather (Pearce, 2019:7). Much has been done in the last two decades to complicate these ideas, reflecting both the inadequacies of such theoretical understanding in the first place(e.g. Halberstam, 2005); and the observable empirical changes in institutional structures of lifecourse that have substantially shifted from the 'tripartite' model that dominated in the mid-twentieth century: education at the start, work

in the middle, leisure and retirement at the end (Kohli, 1985, in Stauber et al, 2022: 4). Nevertheless, conservative ideas alongside misrepresentations of alternative life scripts often abound: Archetti's (2020) analysis of (predominantly negative) representations of childless women's lifecourse in European film is just one example. As seen in some of the developments on lifecourse within mobilities scholarship, new domains of society – including systems of mobility – both structure and are structured by lifecourse trajectories, a point which we develop below.

Within sociological studies, lifecourse transitions (the short or longer phases of the lifecourse which involve identity work and changing social role/status) have received particular attention (e.g. Stauber et al, 2022). This is not least because of the implications of such transitions, and their timing at specific ages, in particular sequences, and within limited temporalities, for the reproduction of social inequalities. More recently, in the context of climate change, studies have focused on the fact that transitions in different domains of lifecourse (education, work, health, housing, mobilities, family) have implications for each other. Some examples include Thompson et al's (2011) '*Moments of Change',* Groves et al's (2016) work on energy biographies, Burningham et al's (2014) study of changing shopping practices in new motherhood and Venn et al's (2016) exploration of grocery shopping for those transitioning into retirement. Within this special issue, **Rau and Matern** develops and extends this work. She does so by taking a 'moment of change' in the mobility lifecourse – becoming car-free – as an entry point to analyse the complex lifecourse trajectories and changes in other life domains with which such a transition intersects.

The contributions from **Rau and Matern** and **Sheriff** also highlight a third analytic potential of lifecourse concepts (in addition to the notions of *life trajectories in different domains*, and *lifecourse transitions* noted above). This is the exploration of how the different temporalities of lifecourse shape each other – both how socialization and experience in earlier life phases subsequently shapes lifecourse and identity; but also how anticipated future lifecourse shapes the present. In Sheriff's paper, the dreams of car trouble amongst young people (in the transition to adulthood/automobility) are already shaped by their experience and a lifetime of enculturated automotive memories. In Rau and Matern's paper the relationship between different phases of lifecourse is discussed in an exploration of how socialization into mobility practices, via 'mobility milestones' intersects with 'incisive life events' shaping later-life mobility, whilst anticipations of lifecourse transitions in the near future simultaneously shape how people reconfigure their mobile lives. In both cases, the exploration of this theme is dependent on use of

auto/biographical methods alongside lifecourse frameworks – a combination that is brought together in both papers.

One risk of uncritically bringing frameworks of lifecourse transition into empirical research design is that the framing of new research and the questions asked stay within the reified and dominant ideas of lifecourse circulating within society. The studies mentioned above that hone in on new motherhood and transitions to retirement, if not balanced with studies of alternative lifecourse, could be critiqued from this point of view. As Stauber et al, 2022 note, what initially appears as no transition is itself a kind of transition (ibid: 4). Concepts of lifecourse, and approaches that emphasise auto/biography thus exist in a productive tension with each other. Performative auto/biographical theories (such as Powell, 2021) highlight precisely this. Powell discusses how traditions of feminist auto/biography often exist because life narratives available within society, which as noted above have a normative dimension to them, inadequately tell the stories of particular identities, groups and experiences. Performative auto/biographical authorship subverts dominant narratives of lifecourse and identity, functioning as a kind of activism (ibid). Such performative autobiography makes new identities and life transitions visible. It also provides a means of revealing the institutional reification and privileging of particular trajectories above others. In this special issue, **Spurling's** contribution takes performative auto/biography as a starting point, and scopes the potential of understanding underexplored 'lives without children' through positioning recently mobilized auto/biography as legitimate knowledge. Even as new narratives of lifecourse are made mobile, remaining critical is key, as such new narratives can themselves become reified, and although previously sidelined lives are legitimized, the seen/unseen still exists albeit with a new pattern.

Working with ideas of lifecourse thus requires an awareness of potential pitfalls related to the reification of lifecourse in institutions and culture that can blinker the design of empirical work in unhelpful ways. It is, however, possible and productive to work critically with lifecourse concepts. It is possible to recognize both the diversity of lifecourse and its dynamic emergent character at the intersection of individual and society, whilst also recognizing that in any given time and place lifecourse takes form within an envelope of possibility that shifts through time. These possibilities exist at the intersection of: social and cultural change and how different identities are situated and represented within society; transforming institutions, and how different identities are viewed and performed within them; changing cultural, environmental and economic climates; developments in medical science which impacts the length of lives, as well as of different life phases.

As hinted at in these observations, 'generation' is a third concept that can usefully be brought into dialogue with both auto/biography and lifecourse. Hitchings et al's (2018) explorations of the transition to retirement and older age travel, as it is specifically characterized for the baby boomer generation, provides one example of this approach. **Murray's** contribution to this special issue provides another. Murray draws the idea of generation into her research design to explore the gendering of mobilities and biographies in family stories. Her analysis considers the connections of the mobilities described in the stories to the wider socio-cultural and political landscape; but also how these landscapes shape which stories are made mobile (and which are not) across generations. She observes and critiques the connections between the two, recognising that (masculine) stories of the spectacular travel, whilst (feminine) stories of the mundane do not, thus revealing the ways that 'the immobilisation of stories tells us of the immobilisations of subjects' too. Auto/biography as a concept and a method, when brought into dialogue with 'lifecourse' and 'generation' reveal overlaps, areas of critique and empirical and analytic possibility.

Auto/biography, Mobilities and Climate Change

In their 2020 manifesto for 'Climate Emergency Mobilities Research' (Spurling et al, 2020), the Centre for Mobilities Research [CeMoRe] at Lancaster set-out the potential of mobilities scholarship in addressing a diverse range of pressing climate change issues in relation to both the impacts of anthropogenic climate change, and efforts to mitigate it:

> The impacts of anthropogenic climate change disrupt vital mobilities, create uninhabitable geographies, force human climate mobilities, and foreground that the capacity to move is unevenly distributed. Meanwhile, the transformation in local and global mobilities (from local transport to the large-scale movements of people, resources, and information around the world) is the most significant mitigation challenge.

A key aim for mobilities scholarship within this context, they suggest, is to advance a just and ecological mobilities transformation. The term mobilities within this agenda refers to much more than everyday transport of individuals, and to the entire range of themes and analyses that have emerged in response to the mobilities paradigm, to understand social life and human experience in a global and increasingly mobile world. This Special Issue contributes to this agenda, by considering what we believe to be one of the key theoretical and methodological starting points that must be foregrounded if such just and ecological

transformations are to be achieved. Namely, auto/biographical research. In this final section of the paper, we reprise some of the key points of the paper and draw out their significance for climate emergency mobilities research.

First, auto/biography places diversity foremost in explorations of lifecourse in changing climates – due to its emphasis on untold narratives (**Spurling; Murray**). The relationship between auto/biography and feminist research traditions, and the possibilities that auto/biography creates for diverse lives to be spoken, and for the analysis of the dynamics of sense-making related to them, mean that auto/biography should be central to the analysis and co-creation of the mobilities transformation that is upon us. How do diverse lifecourse trajectories intersect with and respond to the emerging material and discursive realities of climate change? As we have noted in our discussion this needs to be moderated with an awareness of the ethical dilemmas of auto/biographical method, and remaining cognisant of the fact that as previously unheard narratives are told and circulated, a new pattern of the unspoken and unheard emerges. This is not least because the social, economic and geographic factors which determine who has access to mobility also determine who gets to speak.

Second, auto/biography recognises a difference between the story told by the individual and the story told in dominant discourses, for example, through the structures, policies and audit mechanisms of institutions, and representations in various media (**Murray, Rau and Matern, Spurling**). In a context of climate emergency mobilities, the latter point should be extended to the narratives of energy, transport and planning policies related to mitigation; or similarly to policies of disaster response, which narrate and order lives in a similar way (e.g. see Mort et al, 2018 who retells children's narratives in the context of floods in the UK; and Mort et al, 2020 who extend this analysis to more than 550 children internationally, making an argument for a radical transformation in the role of children's voices in disaster response). Recognising this aspect of the auto/biographical (emphasising the slash) is significant for the just and ecological mobilities transformation. It encourages that attention is given to both the ways that it is represented and shaped by emerging regional, national and international responses to the climate emergency; and to how it is experienced and told within diverse lives. On this point, attention should be given to the climate stories that are emerging within institutional and policy contexts, and the ways that these stories connect history and anticipated futures at the scale of society, and individuals. Both of these temporalities shape action in the present, as was foregrounded through the COVID-19 pandemic in which individuals were contemplating and negotiating different phases of the lifecourse in

new ways. Those who get to write their own lives – or have that life written for them – has aways depended upon a complex nexus of both historically- specific and anticipatory factors.

Third, and extending points one and two above, auto/biographical practice and method has the potential to be performative (**Spurling**). How lives and the stories about them evolve and circulate, and the ways in which they transgress dominant narratives, can perform transformation, re-shaping how changing climates are done. This point is particularly pertinent given the emergence of new formats and genres of autobiographical practice in the context of a digital society. These practices are, to a degree, opening up and democratising auto/biography. Examples such as the youth climate movement, and Checker's flood risk communities (discussed earlier in this introduction) alongside other cases in this special issue, demonstrate how through such platforms marginalised voices are grouping together and supporting each other. These emerging trends in auto/biography promote a rethinking of which stories are valued. This context raises the ethical dilemmas associated with auto/biography anew. Recognising that such emerging genres still (re)produce inequalities and silences, challenges social scientists to consider who is facilitated to tell their stories through these platforms, and what is being newly made immobile.

Fourth, the research tradition focused on mobility biographies hints at the potential of new auto/biographical methods for mobilities studies (**Lee**, **Rau and Matern**, **Kim**). However, as discussed in contributions to this special issue, there is much to be developed on this topic. Understanding mobility biographies is important in climate change contexts, because it offers insights into relationships with problematic fossil fuel dependent forms of movement and of their alternatives. This is especially so in relation to aspects of mobility socialisation, the overspilling of lifecourse transitions into other domains of life that impact mobility biographies and the recognition that biographies of the non-human as well as the human need to be attended to. A question that emerges here is how the trajectory of mobility biographies is best conceptualised. For example, do existing notions of 'emerging automobility' ,or 'mobility milestones' (as specific lifecourse transitions), remain useful? Or do they become redundant as individuals, families and communities of all ages grapple with the impacts of climate change? On this point, **Rau and Matern's** notion of non-linear and 'punctuated' mobility biographies is a potentially useful new way of conceptualising the social and cultural change that is upon us. Yet the bigger point here is that engaging with auto/biographical and mobile methods offers a window on cultural

lifecourse changes, *vis a vis* aspects of high carbon lifestyles, that would otherwise remain invisible.

Fifth, in a context of just and ecologically-sensitive mobilities transformations, debates on the non-human and more-than-human in the context of auto/biographical traditions should be engaged with anew (**Kim**). In this SI, an argument is made that it is necessary to listen to the biographies of birds, bricks, stones. Including the non- and more-than-human within the discussion and analysis highlights the interconnectedness of the whole assemblage, constituted of many trajectories that weave in and out of each other's biographies. In this context the conceptual and ethical challenges of the auto/biographical arise in new ways, and overlap with other debates – most notably around questions of agency. There are also methodological challenges; how can researchers 'tune-in' to non- and more-than-human stories? What is the positionality of researchers in such endeavours? However, many of the key issues raised in the context of human auto/biographical research translate and persist within this context, such as questions of how narratives of the non- and more-than-human are authored through structures, policies and audit mechanisms; and how such narratives are situated in histories and anticipated futures.

Finally, a focus on auto/biography brings transitions in different parts of the lifecourse into the frame, and this is meant in two ways. On the one hand, it draws attention to different phases and paths of lifecourse such as child, adult, parent, non-parent, and raises questions as to how those at different stages and on different paths are positioned within dominant life scripts. Analysis and intervention in this space might be seen as a significant interdisciplinary aspiration for social scientists and humanities scholars. On the other hand, it highlights that lifecourse trajectories exist in different domains (education, work, health, housing, mobilities, family), each with implications for each other. Layered onto this, making more radical transitions in ways of life as part of an ecological mobilities transformation, that intersect at different life moments, might be anticipated in the years to come. Here, the social sciences and humanities may play a role in supporting the retelling of such disrupted narratives and creating new endings (**Lee**) that vastly diverge from those stories and genres handed down and deeply embedded in society and culture.

Conclusion

As noted at the head of this paper, one of Thrift's means of distinguishing the novelty and importance of Non Representational Theory was that it was 'resolutely anti-biographical'

Given that Thrift's work has informed a good deal of mobilities research - especially amongst geographers - this is clearly a criticism that needs to be negotiated if the case for auto/biography is to be made. Alongside those mobilities scholars who have favoured Actor Network Theory (see Urry 2007: 45), Thrift is motivated by a desire to foreground the fact that 'the world is made up all kinds of things brought into relation to one another' and, by implication, a de-centring of the human. With this in mind, our call for mobilities research to (re)embrace autobiography and biography as both methodology and object of study may appear surprising. However, our hope is that this Introduction, and the papers which, follow will make the case for auto/biographical mobilities research that *can* accommodate the non-human and more-than-human alongside the human, and for a human subject that is social and historical before they are individual. At the same time, the autobiographical genre - whether in the form of written text or new online digital forms - remains a crucial platform for previously unheard voices to be heard in the interest of diversity and disenfranchisement. Contrary to Thrift's claim, across history, life-writing has been one of the few mechanisms by which those excluded from mainstream culture and discourse can articulate their difference and opposition. Further, and as noted above, the performative nature of recent auto/biographical and auto/ethnographic research has a crucial role to play in contesting the morphology of concepts such as 'lifestyle' and 'lifecourse' which can perpetuate problematic orthodoxies. Finally, it is the recognition that any attempt to ameliorate the course of climate change will depend upon the collective efforts and adaptations of billions of individual lives that calls for them to be brought back into the conversation. However, this need not be at the expense of those more-than-human actors whose own mobile biographies must continue to be written and whose unfamiliar voices we must learn to hear.

Dedication
The special issue is dedicated to the memory of our colleague, Russell Hitchings, Professor of Geography at University College London, who passed away in May 2024. Russell

contributed an inspiring and insightful talk at the Symposium in 2022 in which he eloquently engaged with the relationships between the three themes auto/biography, mobilities and climate change, and his ideas and insights are frequently cited in our Introduction. We remember him with great respect; his intellectual contributions, and his kindhearted and welcoming presence will be missed by all who knew him.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1   The conference was co-hosted by the Academy of Mobility Humanities (AMH), Konkuk University, South Korea and the Centre for Mobilities Studies (CeMoRe), Lancaster University,UK, and funded by the UKRI South Korea Networking Grant 'Connecting Mobilities' (see Funding Declaration) and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2018S1A6A3A03043497).

2   Freud's 'talking cure': although this term originates in Josef Breuer's work on hysteria and, in particular, his treatment of 'Anna O', it was subsequently adopted by Freud who acknowledged Breuer's first use of the term in a lecture on psychoanalysis in 1904 (see Freud 1995). Today the term refers more widely to counselling models that employ conversation to access repressed memories and confront traumatic experience.

3   Grant details: AHRC-funded 'Moving Manchester: How Migration Informed Writing in Manchester from 1960 - to the Present'. Reference: AH/19248/1. PI: Lynne Pearce, Lancaster University. 2006-2010; UKRI-funded ''Music, Migration and Mobility: The Legacy of Migrant Musicians from Nazi-Germany in Britain'. Reference: AH/S013032/1. PI: Norbert Meyn, Royal College of Music. 2019-2023.

4   Details of Jen Southern's work as part of the 'Rocky Climates' project may be found at: https://wp.lancs.ac.uk/rocky-climates/ and https://www.jensouthern.net/rock-up. The 'Rock Up!' event was hosted by Art Houses in 2022 http://arthouses.net/ah22/rockup/index.html

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