



## BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

McCann, Lucy (2024) Gender and Sexuality Reading Group Discussion on June 24 2024 - Review of Yergeau's introduction to "Authoring Autism". Other. Birkbeck, University of London. (Unpublished)

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/53804/>

*Usage Guidelines:*

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html>  
contact [lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk).

or alternatively

## **Gender and Sexuality Reading Group's third meeting**

The Gender and Sexuality Reading Group met for the third time on Monday 24 June to discuss the introduction of **Melanie Yergeau's *Authoring Autism: On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness*** (2017).<sup>1</sup>

We firstly discussed the author's use of a narrative methodology which weaves storytelling and personal experiences into the academic text. We agreed that such a methodology is valuable in terms of adding marginalised voices to the record, but needs to be done in a way that avoids homogenisation. Regarding autism, for example, we noted the need to be cognisant of generalising one person's experiences onto others who have the condition. This led into a wider discussion of the ethics around the requirement that is sometimes placed on narrators to disclose their subject position in order to prove a connection to their research subject.

We then discussed the links that the author identifies between autism and queerness, which many of us agreed was a new way of thinking about queerness. We discussed how both autism and queerness challenge heteronormativity, and how autism directly informs individuals' experiences of sexuality and gender in an intersectional way. We noted the value of using 'queer' as a broader lens to challenge how we think about, for example, time.

Finally, we talked about the fascinating and disturbing ways in which applied behaviour analysis (ABA) that has been widely used with autistic people has its roots in conversion therapy for queer and trans communities. We noted that ABA is used to teach autistic people to behave in a more neurotypical way, and that similar projects have been used against queer and intersex people to ensure that they only exhibit behaviours associated with their sex assigned at birth.

The group will meet again in October after the summer break. We welcome any recommendations for readings, so please do get in touch!

Lucy McCann  
PhD History

---

<sup>1</sup> Yergeau, Melanie. *Authoring Autism: On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.