

Dr. Deborah Britzman: 2017 Keynote Speaker

Biography



Dr. Deborah Britzman is Distinguished Professor of Research at York University in Toronto, Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and psychoanalyst, with a small private practice. Prior to her doctoral work, Dr. Britzman taught secondary high school English and reading for five years in Hartford, Connecticut. She holds her doctorate degree from the University of Massachusetts (1985), taught at the State University of New York (Binghamton) for six years, and then in 1993, moved to Canada to assume a Faculty position at York University. She is a member of the Faculty of Education

and holds numerous graduate cross appointments.

Dr. Britzman is author of nine books, seven of which address the field of psychoanalysis and education. Her most recent books are, *The Very Thought of Education: Psychoanalysis and the Impossible Professions* (2009); *Freud and Education* (2011); *A Psychoanalyst in the Classroom* (2015); and *Melanie Klein: Early Analysis, Play and the Question of Freedom* (2016).

Dr. Britzman's current research involves studies in mental health with an emphasis on the emotional world of affecting education. Highlighted are literary, clinical, historical, and narrative representations of the education and practices of teachers, professors, students and psychoanalysts. Her most cited book remains, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach* 2nd edition (2003).

Abstract

Once again, but this time with feeling

Deborah Britzman, Distinguished Research Professor
York University Research Chair in Pedagogy and Psychosocial transformations

A text, like a dream, has its day's residues

J. - B. Pontalis

There is a dream-like quality in expressing the act of writing as developing from a kernel of the writer's incoherence. We wish for a smooth transition from omnipotence to experience to words and from the reservations of words to communication. Neither the force of inheritance nor unsettled ideas, however, follow the logic of the wish or mastery. Instead, we are implicated in affect. The psychoanalytic conviction is that writing mirrors unconscious impressions of our earliest infantile learning that then felt as appeals to the writer's inheritance of her emotional situation. The paper leans on the idea that writing emerges where experience and communication fail and nowhere is this more evident than when the writer asks, what is missing? Writing from the self to the lives of others gives us these dilemmas and writers may dissociate from the force of emotional ties through depersonalization as if to defend against the shock of affect and loss. The paper asks, what comes before the writing and what kind of history can the writer face? How may the writer express the act of writing as concern for the world of others? In associating to a small circle of authors who express the course of life through dreams, fictions, and the force of inheritance, I make a slow case for the writer's transformations and entanglements in the unconscious, imagination, and the world of others. I treat the act of writing as composed from traces of our earliest developmental ties of learning that gradually become the creations for the third space of culture.