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Andrea Salter
Commentary on The Professor's Chair

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Livholts' 'The Professor's Chair' points up the importance of using different modes and genres of writing in representing (academic) lives and the connections of this to understanding and reworking academic and broader social power relations outwith the text. Two related points arise from this.

Firstly, Livholts' assorted use of letters, verse, first-person, second-person and academic prose echoes and facilitates her inscription of a non-coherent, non-singular, contextually-embedded in (or out of) time and place, written self. She deploys this decentred self subversively, challenging formal genre boundaries and 'conventional' 'self' portrayals by utilising (re)interpretive creativity to buttress her conceptual points as part of a larger project of problematising structures of power in academia.

Secondly, the strong interplay between Livholts' writing and conceptual ideas suggests a 'praxis' approach to academic biographising. As part of this, her paper encourages me to 'critically reflect' on my position regarding the Professor's Chair, concerning the academic writing I produce, the knowledge-claims I use it to make, the hierarchies I position myself within, and of course concerning my position in the academic power structure, as an early stage academic who has found a thread from the Professor's Chair and hopes to pull it.