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Chapter 10: What makes the autoethnographic analysis authentic?
David Weir, York St John University and Daniel Clarke, Dundee University

"The ability to convince readers …. that what they are reading is an authentic tale written by someone personally knowledgeable about how things are done at some place, at some time, among some people is the basis for anything else ethnography tries to do" (John Van Maanen, 2011: 232).

"…you must learn to use your life experience in your intellectual work: continually to examine and interpret it. In this sense craftsmanship is the center of yourself and you are personally involved in every intellectual product upon which you may work" (Wright Mills, 1959: 196).

Introduction

Autoethnography (AE) is currently fashionable, "a thing all on its own, not just an 'auto' linked to an 'ethnography'…" (Ellis, 2013: 9) and associated with emotion and reflexivity (Anderson, 2006: 273). It is reframed, (Tolich, 2010), repositioned as qualitative 'auto/ethnography' (Reed-Danahay 1997, as "anthropology carried out in the social context which produced it" (Strathern, 1987: 17), or 'anthropology at home' (Jackson 1987).

We position AE in the mainstream conventional ethnographic (CE) canon and related to storytelling (Boje, 1991; 2008). Van Maanen's (2011) framing of 'ethnography as work' incorporates three constitutive overlapping tasks –field, head, and textwork. Here we deal with the critiques of Delamont (2007) of AE as literally and intellectually lazy and refute that we have been lazy in our literary and intellectual work.

Daniel analyses the demands of taking up an academic position while writing scholarly articles, detailing the successions of framing within which AE was created and shared. David details the framing (Goffman, 1974) of a retrospective analysis of farming practices in which the first insights came from poetic representation subsequently validated from other accounts and secondary data.

Reflexivity is not singular (Alvesson, Hardy and Harley, 2008) but multivocal, so choices of voice have to be made (Derrida, 2001) not privileging one account over another (Derrida, 1988, 256). Reflexivity is processual rather than absolute and reflexion and critique are evolved rather than skills claimed by assertion (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2003). Part of the

craft of achieving multivocality is that of presenting versions of text and listening to feedback that subverts as well as supports. Story telling permits variety and evolution and creates opportunities for anguish (Roth, 2002) and cathartic and therapeutic benefits (Wright, 2009), externalizing internal conversations (Archer, 2003).
The energy requirements needed to do our field / head / textwork is tough, rather than lazy work. Through presenting our work at conferences and obtaining relevant feedback our research becomes "comprehensive, well-argued, and full of passion and conviction" (Adams et al., 2015: 100). It is through respecting key *principles* (Ellis & Adams, 2014: 260) and upholding the *goals* of AE (Adams et al., 2015: 102) that our autoethnographic analyses achieve *authenticity.*

Evaluating Delamont's evaluation of AE

Evaluations seek to contest or reach out (Gingrich-Philbrook, 2013: 618) explicitly incorporating emotional as well as rational response (Ellis,2009) Delamont states that her critique of AE is *deliberately controversial* and the discourse of 'pernicious', 'objections', 'cannot', 'wrong', 'entirely', 'essentially', 'dead ends', 'lazy', 'abrogates', 'abuse' to contest AE, makes for more than a challenge. Presenting six arguments against AE (see Table 1), her evaluation constitutes an outright objection and absolute denial of authenticity in *any* of the 'work' involved in the practice of it, concluding. that AE is essentially harmful and our energy is best 'put to work' doing other kinds of research. Delamont risks throwing some important and promising scholarly babies out with the bathwater of disdain. By demonstrating "evaluative flexibility" (Ellis & Adams, 2014: 270) we offer hope for the future of AE as authentic.
We accept that "budding autoethnographers may very well want the reassurance of a checklist" to ensure their text meets all the criteria and, recognise there may be a "desire to know what the rules are in order to avoid the punishment of breaking them", but because "there is no 'blueprint' for [auto]ethnography" (Humphreys & Learmonth, 2012: 326) we fear an "increased focus on formulaic papers", and "evaluations based on tick-box processes" (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016: 33). It is more important to have something interesting or relevant to say than rigorous compliance with external standards (Gabriel, 2016; Alvesson & Spicer, 2016) or strict adherence to any recipe or formula (Van Maanen, 2011: 232).

We do not review the criteria appropriate to evaluate AE texts (see Adams et al., 2015: 104 for an overview) but note that evaluations of AE, "capture efforts of real people and deploy them in arguments advancing the evaluator's own paradigm, psyche, and professional identity-work" (Gingrich-Philbrook, 2013,p.615). No evaluation enjoys an entitlement to remain untroubled (Adams et al., 2015) and we *use* our evaluation as a way to continue our "commitment to trouble the disequilibrium in the distribution of entitlements" (Gingrich-Philbrook, 2013: 625).
We have an entitlement to tell our story and respect the "right to write" but AE does not have *per se* an epistemic advantage over what it evaluates (Gingrich-Philbrook, 2013: 618). We "must still make its points by pretty much the same means that were available before these contingencies were recognized and absorbed…the appeal of any single work remains tied to the specific arguments made in a given text and referenced to particular, not general, substantive, methodological, and narrative matters" (Van Maanen, 2011: 226). It would be "narcissistic to think that we are somehow outside our studies and not subject to the same social forces and cultural conditioning as those we study or that somehow our own actions and relationships need no reflexive thought…" (Ellis & Adams, 2013: 267).

Authenticity as respecting the *principles* and upholding the *goals* of AE

Adams *et al* (2015) note four *goals* of AE:

- Making contributions to knowledge
- Valuing the personal and experiential
- Demonstrating the power, craft, and responsibilities of stories and storytelling
- Taking a relationally responsible approach to research practice and representation

So how does a situation ripe for AE analysis achieve authenticity? And how does such an evaluation of AE production become genuinely useful? Rather than seeing authentic AE as a one-off accomplishment, achieved through measuring text against a closed set of criteria, we see authenticity as *an emergent property of text*, (Adams et al, 2015) stemming from how completely the value of AE has been realised through the writing *and* has successfully achieved the core *goals* of AE. "To evaluate autoethnography in a genuinely useful way you have to open yourself up to being changed by it, to heeding its call to surrender your entitlement" (Gingrich-Philbrook, 2013: 618)

Personal experience, even anguish, can be an appropriate starting point for a sociological analysis and can link with structural issues and although we accept that w*e are not interesting enough to ourselves be the prime subject matter (*Delamont (2006), nnetheless our field of experience *may be.* In order "to pull a subject on to the stage of the world, to world the subject, to subject a world"; personal anguish can provide a way of sidling up to "a hinge onto a moment of some world's legibility" (Stewart (2013, p.667) thus worlding the subject, presenting a plausible jumping off point to "research and write for the betterment of all" (Barley, 2015: 6-7).

The use of personal experience and the need to develop a familiarity with existing research are "features that cut across almost all autoethnographic work" (Ellis & Adams (2014) p.260). A further five elements (using personal experience to describe and critique cultural experience; taking advantage of and valuing insider knowledge; breaking silence, (re)claiming voice; healing and manoeuvring through pain, confusion, anger and uncertainty; writing accessible prose) "are more specific goals, advantages, and rewards to using AE in research" (Ellis and Adams, p.260).

Daniel's story and his field / head / textwork

In late 2009 I started work on a paper to introduce lomography (Hall et al., 2007) in organizational analysis, planning to submit to the Research Methods track at the EURAM conference in Rome in 2010. However, the title (and my writing aim) soon changed.

My mother died while I was writing the paper. Though I wanted to keep on writing to meet the deadline for submission the writing became very difficult. With so much grief and emotion it was hard to concentrate. But I pushed on. "Don't give up now. Failing to meet the deadline is not an option", I told myself and continued to write.

In my attempt to write-up an 'insider account' of developing a novel research method, writing after my Mother's funeral to show my situatedness in a cultural context and shine a strange light on what I was up to (Van Maanen, 2011), I wrote:

> "I don't know what to do. I want to visit my Mum's grave at the cemetery, but I know it will make me cry again. It will make me sad and I won't be able to concentrate in order to write. I want to visit my Grandma and I want to be there for her, but I also want to visit my Dad and be there for him too, […] but I have to mark transcripts. I want to visit my Girlfriend, but I have to write that invited chapter. I want to […] do a

> 3 hour hill run […] but I have to write this paper. The EURAM 2010 deadline is fast upon us and I am not ready to submit. Will I ever be ready? Are you ever ready to submit a conference paper?"

Drawing inspiration from Wall (2008), using illustrative vignettes (Humphreys, 2005), my aim shifted and I began writing a 'writing story'. To articulate my new focus I noted:

> "This is an ethnographic memoir that describes what goes on in the backstage of struggling to develop a novel [research] method. I am studying myself in order to make cultural sense of myself".

Questioning my decision to keep on writing, I wrote:

> "I want to forge a name for myself in 'arts-based' research methods (Taylor & Ladkin, 2009) and eventually come to be known as an authority on developing 'creative' research methods for organization and management studies…[…]…its where, in the long term, I want to be. Therefore, I must write, get published and get cited!"

I was living in the thick of academic probation in my first academic appointment so learning an answer to the question *why write when I ought to be grieving and my family needs me more than ever* rested "more on a logic of discovery and happenstance than a logic of verification and plan" (Van Maanen, 2011: 220). because"for the autoethnographer, fieldwork is a bit different" Ellis & Adams (2014: 266). By writing about continuing to write when I felt I had other important things to be getting on with, such as grieving the loss of my Mother and writing a conference paper, being a fieldworker in my everyday life with a cultural identity, observing my own actions and social patterns around me; myself and the field became one.

On the subject of textwork, as a newly qualified lecturer and early career academic, trying to find a way in the academy, I did not go to the field to ask of probationers experiencing loss "How do they live? What do they do? How do they get by?" (Van Maanen, 2011: 226). Respecting the *principle* of using personal experience, pursuing self-therapy (Haynes, 2006) at my desk – where writing became a therapeutic experience, I found myself doing the textwork that would lead to an answer to these three questions. Rather than "reduce the indignity of speaking for others that some ethnographers feel" (Van Maanen, 2012: 225), I argue it is better to let the textwork show what goes on in the background of writing yet another conference paper; after all, isn't an individual experiencing it "best suited to describe his or her own experience more accurately than anyone else" (Wall, 2006: 3)? This is where I thought the potential contribution of my AE might lie.

"Tinkering" (Van Maanen, 2011: 223) with concepts and theories, my headwork involved positioning the paper as a therapeutic journey, reflecting on the effects that undertaking research was having on my identity construction (Haynes, 2006). To reflect this, in early 2010, I gave the paper a new working title (Clarke, 2010), offering details on the personal, identifying multiple identities and locating myself in order to contextualise the situation: an early career academic, struggling to write a conference paper while experiencing an "emotionally demanding phase of adult life" (borrowed and adapted from Reviewer 1 of the submitted conference paper).

However, now I recognize that I did not do enough headwork to situate my story among the relevant scholarly literature (Ellis & Adams, 2014: 267). On this, I feel I was somewhat unsuccessful in respecting the second *principle* of needing to develop a familiarity with existing research. However, now that I am more aware of the literature on becoming academic and academic literacies I feel more confident in my ability to continue writing in this vein.

Gray & Sinclair (2006: 449) observe that "We write because it has become our way of being, our way of reassuring ourselves about our own significance. I'm cited, therefore I am!" so, writing in my research diary, I noted how the experience of writing was beginning to affect me:

> "I am yet to experience how I have been transformed and to gain new insight on how I have been transformed. I know that I am still yet to gain knowledge on how I have been transformed because all I know at present is that my life is no longer the same as it once was: I am without a mother" (Jan 16, 2010).

I then went on to write in the paper "…my first year as an academic became more significant when my mother died". While this, I believe, demonstrates the "unbearable slowness of ethnography" (Van Maanen, 2012: 220) because I observe that I am yet to learn how I have been shifted by my experience of writing through the loss of my Mother; even though I tried to show how I had changed I believe now that I was unsuccessful in showing then how this experience shifted me.

Academic 'culture' is "shape shifting" (Van Maanen, 2011: 220) and while my autoethnographic writing had been "self-full", it seems that my textwork fell down in demonstrating the processes and outcomes of the ways in which my reflecting on my experiences was "self-altering" (Berry, 2008: 158). I was not explicit enough in articulating where my introspection had taken me to: my exposure of the self who is also a spectator failed to take us somewhere we couldn't have otherwise got to (Adams et al., 2015: 40). While my writing was therapeutic in that it helped me to go on living and to make sense of my loss, I now believe it was also self-altering because it prevented me from mourning properly.

To give authoritative voice to my loss, I sought to enable readers to "vicariously share" (McMahon & Dinan-Thompson, 2008: 24) my experience of writing yet another conference paper and, wanting to create a research text that "leaves readers feeling changed by what they read", I also wanted to encourage epiphany in the reader (Nicol, 2008: 323, citing Van Maanen, 1997). So, in an effort to leave readers feeling changed by reading what I had written, I penned the following paragraph in summary to my paper:

> "This is a story of transition. I know that I am now a different person but I have not yet fully experienced how I have been transformed. Therefore, I am yet to gain knowledge on how I have been transformed by this experience. Dealing with my loss, creating a place for myself in academia, developing stronger connections with my family and my intimate others, developing [a new research] method are all works in progress. That this paper was written and submitted shows that it can be done."

I made the conference submission deadline. But in doing so, I missed the opportunity to accomplish the AE *goal* of breaking silence on two fronts: first, about the limiting construct of the idealised academic identity of the 4-star researcher (Harding, 2008; Harding et al., 2010), second, about the potential for harm that the pursuit can entail for an individual. As for the *goal* of AE in taking a relationally responsible approach to research practice, while writing that my submission "shows that it [i.e. submitting a conference paper on time] can be done", making me a survivor of my own loss; it conceals my failure to experience 'good grief' (see http://www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk/).

My writing is perhaps the least successful in terms of the *principle* of reclaiming voice. In light of more recent critiques on "compliance" with the "myopic focus on publishing in highly ranked journals" (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016: 32), by not obsessing about writing a methodology paper for presentation at a conference and for eventual publication, taking heed of Adams et al's (2015: 114) plea to "not focus on or worry about publication" but instead "concentrate on doing the best AE work", and, by not taking the 'compassionate leave' that was made

available to me by my employer to grieve and be with my family, I failed to demonstrate social change "one person at a time" (Ellis & Adams, 2014: 261).

Asking the question, how is it possible I should obsess about writing when my Mum is in hospital / she has just died / on the day of her funeral / when I might otherwise be mourning our loss with my family - had I gone far and deep enough in my reflexivity, given the estranging sensitivity, mystery, breakdown and, lack of a separation between the living of life, work, research, theory, methods, AE, data; then I might have *stumbled* upon my determination to submit that paper as an occurrence that is evidence that the *machinery for its production is currently available* (adapted from Brinkmann, 2012: 723 my emphasis in italics). Breaching this everyday 'requirement' (and identity-affirming experience) to write might constitute a deliberate contrast, or breach, of academic custom (Berry, 2008). Recognising my failure to breach draws explicit attention to the possibility for myopic thinking, complacency, uniformity (Berry, 2008) and compliance (Alvesson and Spicer, 2016) in academic writing culture.

I now read my writing, however, as successful in conveying an experience of what goes on in the background of writing yet another conference paper and when I share my story of loss with other mature and early career academics, their responses bear witness to that. But perhaps one of the most important ways in which the text falls short in upholding the *goals* of AE is in that I did not realise the potential to use the power of my story about loss to critique *culture*, not going far enough in my headwork, tinkering with concepts of fear of failure (Haynes, 2006), inadequacy (Holt, 2003; Ogbonna & Harris, 2004) and fear of failing to achieve an idealised academic identity (Harding et al., 2009) to critique the culture of compliance with the idea of universities as "Four by four factories" (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016: 32). Subsequently, I was unable to 'go the distance' in my textwork, writing to allow my text to 'do' the work of ending "harmful cultural beliefs" (Adams et al., 2015: 114).

To use a sporting analogy, by writing through my loss I obeyed one of the many mantras I have since come to realize that I live(d) my life by: 'Pain is only temporary, failure is forever'. Continuing to write was to the longer-term detriment of family relations and self-care. At a time when it hurt the most, while I gained some*thing* (i.e. conference paper acceptance), by continuing to write I also suffered loss and failure. I lost the opportunity to fully experience my pain and to grieve; something which I now wish I had given myself more time and space to do. Writing prevented me from mourning properly. I failed to mourn my loss and be with my family when compassion, communion and togetherness are perhaps most needed and rewarding. That kind of failure *is* forever.

It is now 2016 and although I have failed to achieve the idealised academic identity of the 4-star researcher through publication of that conference paper, there is the delicious irony (Van Maanen, 2011) of this chapter which is potentially much more meaningful and capable of doing more 'work' in the world. Unlike the conference paper I submitted, the point of doing this AE is "not for the academic career reward that might result" from it, but it is "to figure out 'how things work' in some specified domain and get the word(s) out as best we can" (Van Maanen, 2011: 230). That I deem myself partially unsuccessful -in my original piece- in presenting a compelling and convincing argument to end harmful cultural beliefs is not so much a sign of being intellectually lazy, rather it is more an indicator of the unbearable (for some) slowness to learn answers through sustained tinkering and work on the craft of writing good autoethnographic texts.

In my current textwork, as in my role of Academic Advisor to some fifty undergraduate students, I write to lessen harm done by the similar orienting stories and limiting constructs such as "I am the journals in which I have published in" (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016: 39) and "I'm cited, therefore I am!" (Gray & Sinclair, 2006: 449). I regularly dispense advice with my Academic Advisees who are demonstrably suffering with loss and write to help make sense

of how one can make life better and offer companionship (Ellis, & Adams, 2014) to those who feel troubled about spending time grieving with their family instead of writing for their next assignment. I regularly remind students that this is what an Extenuating Circumstances Committee, External Examiners and Examination Boards are for... The grades students get in their exams can affect the rest of their lives, but so too can failing to experience good grief. Making sense of my personal anguish helps me to "*move* and *live into*" the world with others to try to shape a future together (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2013: 669 original emphasis in italics).

In my future textwork I will continue to explore and be inspired by the different genres of ethnographic writing, "a never-ending process" (Brinkmann, 2012: 722). I made the deadline but AE is never something that "can be knocked off over night" (Humphreys & Learmonth (2012) p.326). Although I discovered that embarking on AE carries significant personal and professional risk for scholars (Boyle & Parry, 2009), I did and I continue to do what I had to. Trying to make sense of my experiences and convey the meanings I attached to those experiences so the reader could feel and think about my life and their life in relation to mine (Ellis, 1999: 674, adapted); *I had to write*.

Ellis (2007) notes that in her (1985) book *Final Negotiations* which examines her 9-year relationship with her romantic partner Gene Weinstein, a sociologist, who died in 1985; by writing about their relationship, his illness and her caregiving, she "wrote her way through grief and loss" also notes the need to tell her story to achieve an "interior liberation" (Ellis, 2007: 16, adapted) and. In pursuit of this and along with Ellis, "I felt I had to tell my story to move on in my personal and professional life" (p.16). Considering my extrospective-out-hereness by writing about how my experience of loss relates to other people's loss and writing for publication within the academy, I argue that my AE goes beyond the merely experiential providing social analysis.

David's story and how a sudden vision of his life and work led on to head and textwork

One late hot summer afternoon in the 1990s found me on a train journey from London's Kings Cross station to Leeds after an "important" committee meeting in the corridors of power. When the train stopped unexpectedly I caught sight of a man in overalls picking his way through a recently-combine-harvested field and a gut-wrenching start of recognition told me that I knew that man, that I had worked with him in such fields and that something in me was stumbling with him through that dead landscape needing to find its voice. The words of a poem flowed to my pen. Something had happened and some irreversible corner had been turned.

The poem stands or falls by its merits but did win a prize in an international competition. There was a conflicted nature to my understanding nonetheless for the poem lay in a drawer for a few years until I read it one day to my daughter and her children as a means of telling them what it had been like working on a farm in the 1950s: she asked for a copy. The next I heard of it was a message out of the blue that the poem had won a competition. This was a surprise because as far as I was aware it had never been entered in a competition: but it had of course by my daughter.

A few weeks later I was as usual on a Monday evening in a Liverpool pub preparing for a vocal evening of a folk and Irish night when my friend suddenly stood up and said "we have an award winning poet in the house and he will now read you his poem." I demurred safe in the knowledge that the poem was not in my pocket. It was in his however and it was read. The following week the guitarist said "have you another poem for us then?" This became my Monday evening life pattern. One evening a bunch of lads carried on talking through my recitation. An older man suddenly stood up and in broadest Scouse shouted "Come on now lads, Respect in the house for the Poet!" A year after that a genuine, published poet joined us

for a Monday evening session: he strutted his stuff and I did mine. As we broke up he said "keep on with this. You gave a voice, you know."
A new pattern started and I became another person at least on a Monday. There had been no anguish but there was now serious disruption in my self-image and aspirations. My "inner conversation" (Archer, 2003) now contained more questions than answers: my poetry writing found its place in a cycle driven by the demands of a Monday night audience of fellow-performers to be original, entertaining and authentic in respect of a new self, an identity long covered in structural constraints, that clamoured for release. In Dennett's terms, the centre of narrative gravity of my self-hood had changed or was enabled to pursue a new path (Dennett, 1988). My autobiographical self was now differently located like it or not (Damasio, 2000)
An epiphany is an event after which life never seems quite the same (Denzin, 1989, Ellis & Adams (2014: 264), initiating an autoethnographic process by presenting an object for further study, reflection and analysis, of celebration as much as a "lament for a lost order of things" (Macklin, 1998: 20) and it became clear that this experience had changed a central understanding of my life and career. My role-set changed, not towards liminality or "somewhere in-between" (Daskalaski et al., 2016) but towards contradiction and the need for subsequent life-choices to allow suddenly available space for another way of grasping and communicating experience.
The identity-change that had occurred was brought sharply to me by a small incident at the pub where I had by now become the poet in residence. One evening one of the whistle players asked over a pint "I think I met a chap who knows you: but he says that you are a Prof at the University. He lives near us and he was talking about someone and I said that sounds like our Poet but I didn't know if that could be you, but is that right? Is that what you do?" This small conversation brought home to me the extent of the transition I had made, because I had been an academic pretty much since leaving University and a Professor since 1974, and this fact was inscribed on my cheque book so it had to be true, but now in the eyes of another constituency of interest it was a secondary role to my existence as a poet. Shortly after that incident one of the really good instrumentalists told me that he had accepted a booking for a Benefit Night for the Marie Curie Care Home "it will be me backing your poems, I have some ideas about tunes and riffs: it will be a good night and this would work great, Dave". But at the University nobody called me "Dave";

That poem (not reproduced here but I will send it to anyone interested) was a first response to being suddenly heaved out of the rut of cognitive habit (Weir, 2008). Now again my central role as a social scientist took over for I needed to recover by scholarly means what else could be known about this experience and present it in more conventional terms: a time for "headwork". So I followed my usual practice by creating a file (Mills, 1959), and sought "the literature" to position what I could add to an authentic tradition of scholarship.
I thus joined the Agricultural History Society and circulated drafts of a paper.
But the comparative literature of this genre that I sought was not to be found there so I dared to create some by writing a paper presented at several conferences describing farm work in a 1950s mixed farm in East Yorkshire (Weir, 2009a, 2009b). Some scholars said how much they had enjoyed and learned from my paper; others warned that such material had no place in their journals…and advised that if it had been related to medieval farm work, if it had a stronger statistical base or if the data had comprised other regions with maybe a European comparison…if there were a link to Foreign Direct Investment in the agricultural sector, if I had undertaken a survey of older and retired farm-workers etc etc. That was not my stuff/ it would have compromised authenticity to put my old wine into these unfriendly new bottles

however much they could have facilitated the task of "getting published and into the literature.".

So I wrote my paper as a descriptive retrospective piece of recovered ethnography and gave papers at conferences as an example of "autoethnography a posteriori "(Boncori and Vine, 2014) or "retrospective autoethnography"(Potkins and Vine, forthcoming)

One day an excited Scotsman called from an agricultural museum in Perth "Davie" he said "your paper made me jump for joy. This is how it was on the farms when I was sent tattie pickin' in Fife and naebody kens it noo, naebody cares". When I gave the paper at a Critical Management Studies conference, the room was shocked when a senior Professor of OB suddenly broke down into tears as I told my story (Weir, 2009b). Afterwards presuming that my portrayal was erroneous I asked her "how did that compare? Have I got it wrong?" She answered that she had been brought up on a farm like that in South Yorkshire and that I had indeed got it right and that what had moved her to tears was not criticism, but the sudden shock of shared accurate reminiscence. What had been epiphanic for me, was validated by an expert listener.

There is no claim that the account presented (Weir, 2009a) is *incorrigible*: but it *has not in fact been corrected*, nor been shown to be substantially inaccurate by other testimony or further and better particulars. But it attempts to position a testimony of recollection in a pattern that one would not have been able to do better (or maybe at all) at the time of those experiences.

The voyage of the self does not have to be the introverted self-obsessed self so feared by Delamont but rather the self in society for…"here" is something we never discover….we inherit a going concern…We know nothing about any of it until it is well under way…everything that has happened to us since then constitutes what is already a life. ….but to begin with, at any rate, our consciousness is not a consciousness of self…The process moves in the opposite direction: we start by being aware of things outside ourselves…and it is only by degrees that we become aware of ourselves as centres of these experiences" (Magee, 2004: 2).

The memoir is an *authentic* and well-established genre, (Verney, 1955: 20). since "*life histories are exceptionally effective historical sources* because through the totality of lived experience they reveal relations between individuals and social forces which are rarely apparent in other sources" (Lummis, 1988: 108) (my italics). The memoir is not presently "institutionalized and taken-for-granted as constitutive of the trade" (Van Maanen, 2011: 219), but perhaps it ought to be a more current issue in ethnography, for the utility, authenticity and reliability of the memoir is currently seriously debated in the disciplines of historical research. A good memoir does not privilege the solitary, solipsistic self: one comes to a knowledge or understanding of self through reflecting on what happens in interaction with others (Weir, 2016) and.

My writing included small stories, vignettes, recollections of specific events that had made their mark at the time, following Boje's account of story as "an oral or written performance involving two or more people interpreting past or anticipated experience" (Boje, 1991: 111), within the overall narrative of life and work on the farm. Here is one such mini-story.

"One day when we were stooking in the big field that bordered on the main road a Ford Popular stopped at the roadside and the driver shouted something to the gang in the field. Ron walked steadily over to speak to him and he stayed speaking to him for about fifteen minutes. Then he picked up his place with his partner, Bernard. After a respectful pause Bernard said to him "Does ta know 'im, Ron?"

"Aye" replied Ron "But aa've not seen 'im fer a while"

"What's a while, then?"

"Sin' t'war ended A think, …Aye not sin t'war ended"

“Does ‘e live local?”
“No it’s a long way off,”
“Where’s that, then? London way?”
‘Ossforth, near Leeds, but ‘es off to Brid fer ‘is holidays an ‘e thought e’d call by”
“oo ‘is he then?”
“e’s me brother.”
This was in 1954. The war had ended in 1945.” (Weir, 2009a)

That “story” illuminates the changing reality of time, distance, travel, family and consumerism between the 1950s and the 2000s as well as many a statistical account. But although I do not privilege this story above others, nonetheless I *claim* this story. No more do I wish to pre-load the analytic or sense-making attempts of others by classifying this story or others in such macro-categoric schemes as "performativity" (Lyotard, 1984) or as exemplary of a panoptic gaze or illustrative of power relations (Foucault, 1977, 1980). All cannot be sucked retrospectively into one super schema. Recasting these materials into other analytical frames and currently fashionable discourse may make them less rather than more valuable. They are shards, not yet whole pots: but to the archaeologist the shard can tell a story (Woolley, 1929) and maybe it will be the task of other scholars to more completely reconstruct these shards.

This is another story from that paper:

“On the last stint of the day, yours is the privilege of riding back to the farmyard on top of the laden cart. One day from this vantage point as we turned from the Big Field towards the lane, at around seven o’clock in the evening glow, I saw a field pattern across several miles of Wold farmland that still gleams in my inner eye. We had been reading Gerard Manley Hopkins at school and I suddenly saw “Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough” and if I thought myself not yet a tradesman worthy of “áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim” (Hopkins, 1918), this was a landscape that I had learnt albeit temporarily to be part of. That emotion has never left me.
I knew instantly that this was one of those moments where “a door opens and lets the future in” (Greene, 1939, ch 1) and that these fields and that pattern were something precious to be experienced but something complex and evolving to be grasped and explained.” (Weir, 2009b)
That story illustrates the power of the present to better illuminate and pattern a remembered past and an example of where heartwork rooted my headwork analysis because that framing conceptualisation of a landscape as a palimpsest and of ones lived life experience as being that of clambering through a layered matrix searching for connections has through my career been central to my scholarly stuff.
A third story relates to taking our morning “lowance” in the Top Field that dropped down to a dip in the Wold with a sunken streambed below the field end (the Wolds are chalk hills and there is little surface water) dividing it from the neighbour’s land.

> “We sat on hay bales to eat our bacon cake and took our mugs of tea (it is customary in these kinds of recollection to describe the tea as “steaming” but “steaming” it never was because it had come a mile up the farm on the tractor.) As we sat we heard a groaning, clanking noise from Cayley’s field and a huge engine came into view: we observed in silence. Then Ron said “its Cayley’s combine”. It was my first sight of the machine that was to take all our work away.””(Weir, 2009b)

This story refers to the potential of technological change to recast social structures, but although I can see that now, this was not apparent to me then and it could not have been

because I did not have the mental equipment, the theories, the models, the comparative frameworks to put that observation into a wider perspective. Maybe even now I am uncertain as to what framework best contains this shard: I should like more time to reflect, to study, to read around the topics, reworking the patterns as craft workers always do.

In another farm, a few miles away from ours, another boy from our school in Bradford was encountering the special landscape of the East Yorkshire Wolds for the first time. Occasionally on a Saturday we met him at the pub. He had won the Art prize at our school: I was to win the History Prize: his name was David Hockney and he returned in later life to draw and paint scenes that had surely made a similarly powerful contemporaneous impact on the inner eye (Searle, 2012). Hockney returned to the inspiration of the clear light of the East Yorkshire Wolds after a cosmopolitan experience including the highlights of California: who would criticise either of these representations for *inauthenticity*? (Benson, 2013; Hull and East Yorkshire, 2016)

Recollection and recording is part of the craft of research and part of the analytic value of my recalled experience is the purely circumstantial one that not many people now living, even on farms, remember a time before the combine harvester. If the presence of sentiment as a trigger of recall signals lack of authenticity, I argue that sentiment is always present in craft and the objectivity that claims to eradicate sentiment may itself be inauthentic. An acceptance of the ultimate honesty of others may not be a necessary condition of positive science but it is an essential bedfellow of worldly wisdom.

One dimension, often underplayed in scientific writing, is that the experience of recall is a total experience, involving more than one sense. As I write I can smell the corn, hear the clack-clack of the Reaper and Binder, and a Mantovani melody and its sweeping strings come to ears (Auric, 1952) for "the perception, preservation and presentation of personal histories and memories is by no means solely linguistic, given that our experience of the world, especially in early childhood days, is primarily sensual" (Hecht, 2001: 129). Smell is a powerful sense (Lindstrom and Kotler, 2010), if perhaps the least esteemed among social scientists (Synott, 2008).

Pat, the Irish haytime and harvest man who was my oppo the first year on the farm liked Mantovani as did Ron, the Wag or leader of the field gang who also claimed to have a soft spot for "Mantovarner and 'is Band". The title "Wag" is an abbreviation of "Waggoner" as the senior man in the field would at one time have had local control over the horse-drawn carts that took the sheaves back to the farm yard.
My mind's eye replays Bernard the stockman, who could run a rabbit down as it scampered from the last uncut area of wheat before the reaper and binder cut it down and still sees that last hapless rabbit break for cover, the uncouth way he ran after it, legs splayed apart and the little sharp crack as he broke its neck. Sparkes (2009: 34) reminds us that "*all* the senses deserve serious attention in ethnographic work if we are to better understand the life world of others and our own locations in relation to these". The totality of a set of experiences over a period of time when senses were perhaps more awake than they are now is significant.
Recall is not perfect, but neither is contemporaneous observation and *the one does not substitute for the other nor is necessarily of higher epistemologic value. Both are necessary* (Bernard-Donels, 2001). The past is a whole bundle of structures, both analytical and affective, "so information about the past comes completely with evaluations, explanations and theories which often constitute a principal value of the account and are intrinsic to its representations of reality." (Lummis, 1988: 107) Over time the mind sifts, but it is not only

the dross that remains, nor is retrospective interrogation of field material from a richer and more refined and rich set of mental constructs necessarily inferior to naïve contemporaneous observation. Sense-making is an achieved craft, not a native capacity.

Towards *genuinely useful* accounts of 'authenticity' in AE…

So what have we learnt from our successful and unsuccessful efforts in achieving authenticity in our AE. First, we refute absolutely the criticism that this is lazy work or no work at all. For both of us this intellectual journey has embodied hard graft and application of a wide range of tools of scholarship. We also believe that such a line of criticism is unworthy of our trade and that it is fundamentally unprofessional to assume that the working practices of others are somehow easier than those one personally favours.

The methodological vulnerabilities of this kind of work do not need elaborating (Holt, 2003; Dashper, 2015; Delamont, 2007; Strathern, 2007; Tolich, 2010) but we have written about our experiences as selves in evolving social processes, which we are coming to understand. Is this work authentic and is this of value? According to Delamont, it is probably not. We disagree (see Table 1).

Table 1 Delamont and authentic autoethnographic texts

Delamont	**Daniel's story**	**David's story**
1. AE cannot fight familiarity	Tries to make sense of a sudden dislocation when the familiar becomes suddenly unfamiliar. Writing of Mother's death "disturbs but also activates the self-world relation" (Stewart, 2013: 661).	Starts with what had been familiar but had been forgotten or overlain. Attempts to make sense of the unfamiliarity of the recent past by reworking material through diverse available methods
2. AE is almost impossible to write and publish *ethically.*	No one else's rights are compromised, especially since Mother is not here anymore "...and the dead can't be libelled because they cannot suffer as a result of damaged reputations" (Ellis, 2007: 14, citing Couser, 2004: 6).	No one else's rights are compromised. Secrecy and failure to bear witness are equally heinous offences against truth. The ethical canons of today's contemporary practice are equally open to debate and challenge.
3. Research is supposed to be analytic not merely experiential. AE is all experience, and is noticeably lacking in *analytic* outcome.	A principle of AE is to *value* and *use* the personal and experiential (Adams et al., 2015). The analytical emerges from the narrative.	Various analytic frameworks are available but no other scientist so far has touched this topic though it disrupts simplistic rational economic action paradigms frameworks.
4. AE focuses on the powerful and not the powerless to whom we should be directing our sociological gaze.	I became sentient to what was happening; exploring how the force of loss can hit my body; trying to understand how sensibilities circulate and become, perhaps delicately or ephemerally, collective (adapted from Stewart, 2013: 661).But this did not make me powerful..	Not correct: Anyway this is a strong value judgement about who is powerful. Are autoethnographers / sociologists / ethnographers powerful? Are the farmers in my story *the powerful*? We doubt this.
5. AE abrogates our duty to go out and collect data: we are not paid generous salaries to sit in our offices obsessing about ourselves. Sociology is an empirical discipline and we are supposed to study *the social*.	These data came as a product of an unplanned experience, "part of the life process" (Brinkmann, 2012: 722). Where does the 'field' start and end, anyway? In AE, "fieldwork is a bit different […] everyday experience can serve as relevant 'data'…" (Ellis & Adams, 2014: 266).	These data came, quite legitimately as a consequence of a field experience" (Brinkmann, 2012: 722). . Scholars don't get "generous salaries"?

	Further still, during my scheduled weekly 'drop-ins' when Advisees suffering loss sometimes come to talk with me about coping with writing deadlines, events of the world and "unbearable atmospheres" (Stewart, 2013: 666); my office becomes *the social* with "no division, in practice, between work and life" (in Brinkman, 2012, citing Ingold, 2011 who cites CW Mills). A link is forged between self and world, the "fuzzy or smudged yet precise" (Stewart, 2013: 667) and, everyday life becomes "part of an ambiguous and ever-changing field" (Ellis & Adams, 2014: 266).	
6. The important questions are *not* about the personal anguish (and most AE is about anguish).	But important and personally meaningful research questions can start there. As autoethnographers, we must then move from the "personal anguish" to a more generic framing. AE is a "…'what if' practice – a method for imagining, living into, and sharing our collective future" (Adams, Holman Jones & Ellis, 2013: 674).	No anguish. Perhaps some sentimentality in the recall or genuine mourning for the loss of a way of life?
Sociologists are a privileged group… AE is an abuse of that privilege – our duty is to go out and research the classic texts of 2050 or 2090 – not sit in our homes focusing on ourselves.	"Most scholarly work…generates little excitement and rarely gets much attention even in the domain in which it is hatched" (Van Maanen, 2011: 230), "exemplary … high quality work in any domain is … by definition, rare" (p.231). No sane person ever thinks they are going to create a "classic text". WF Whyte didn't. E. Goffman might have thought on these line. Anyway, what is this about "duty"? Our duty as scholars of the social is to reveal lives and acknowledge multiple truths*, wherever, however.* No scholarly work is uncontestable	

These stories wrote us as much as we wrote them and we are able to put all that behind us when we don our research hat. Is this a weak choice, which somehow diminishes the authenticity of our accounts, or a fact of our total life as scholars and as persons?

If there was in these experiences some "anguish", it was not a motivator. We did not wish to experience it then nor to profit from it now: these insights were not the products of a conscious choice, but having gone through and reflected on our experience of *what happens*

(Stewart, 2013) we are required to bring our trained perceptions and analytic craft to bear on the issues uncovered in our experience, including our pain.

Delamont's critique directs attention to the downside of "ego-centric" AE where the voice of the speaker is louder than that of potentially more interesting or relevant others and where the author is always the leading legend in his/her own lunchtime: we concur that such accounts are tiresome and too "confessional" (Van Maanen, 1988).

In Wacquant's (2003) boxing notebooks our attention is held because we know that this writing is the product of personally lived encounters that we have not shared but as a result of our trust in the narrative can come to empathize with. Bauman (2003: 1) describes it as "A poem in prose, a work of love and wisdom rolled into one: this is how ethnography should be written, were the ethnographers capable of writing like that". Bauman's dismissal of ethnographers is pejorative and unworthy because good ethnographers (e.g. Wacquant) can and often do write like that but Bauman implies that there is in some writing too little poetry, too little anguish and too little connection of the personal trouble with the public issue.

In our work we do not claim to be heroes and over-emphasize our successes: significant others play their parts not just as a backdrop to our story. All of our accounts are up for grabs. Anybody else who was there can have their say but as we *were* there, our claims should at least be accounted as honest reportage and stand until they can be disproved, standing or falling on their own merits testifying where we were, where we were coming from and what we have, so far, made of it all. Daniel was here. David was here. Kilroy *was* here (Kilroy, c 1942).

Personal experiences comprise learning opportunities and privileged experiences, once they are shared in a scholarly, supportive environment, offering personalized accounts as authentic templates for other framings. Over-correction towards sentimentality or retrofitting the plain story into a Procrustean theoretical frame is misleading because "to wish to make a thing look pretty or look smart is to think poorly of it in itself and to want it more conventional, and to try to improve it is to weaken and perhaps destroy it" (Ransom, 1938: 81).

"AE is not a solution to our organizational research problems. Rather it is just one more piece…" (Buchanan & Bryson, 2009: 699). The generic criteria of narrative apply: it must be parsimonious, readable and cogent and above all "engaging" as "screenplay for a historical documentary" (ibid, p.698).

Delamont's dismissive references to "anguish" imply some position on the role of emotion and affect in AE but this criticism is not restricted to AE, but to other consequences of immersion in a field experience. Per contra, does emotional identification with a field site and its participants necessarily compromise "authenticity" or is it a very likely concomitant of serious long-term engagement with a chosen field? The loving recall of "capoeiristas and the strange musical instruments they carry" (Delamont, 2007: 2) and the self-reflexive query about the Cloisterham bar scene of "why don't I feel scared in this dangerous neighbourhood?" (Delamont, op.cit, p.3) are equally implicated with emotional freight. But this is not an opportunity for disparagement or abnegation but for respect for the implied human vulnerability. "The smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the ruins of all the rest" (Proust, 2006: 48).

There *is* a need for a deeper investigation of the role played by emotion in the selection of research agenda, but it is not clear that lack of emotional involvement is more of a help than a hindrance. Interviewing potential doctoral students one seeks to establish that they are genuinely interested in their topics and emotionally involved enough to have the intellectual stamina to carry the task through. Doctoral plans framed around the supervisor's interests

alone are known like other failures of foresight to gang aft agley, however better laid they are, thus “proving foresight may be vain” (Burns, 1785, 1994).

AE is not a monolithic entity and all reportage is not interesting. Much self-reflexivity can be mere navel-gazing but our ultimate justification may be that we had at the time of the experience fewer methodological choices than we thought. Things happen (Dawes, 2016, Seely, 2010) and in the quest to understand what has happened, it is necessary to lose the illusion of control (Langer, 1975). But this does not imply an avoidance of learning and the processes of reflective functioning or mentalization are intrinsic to the realisation of self-hood (Fonaghy et al, 2004).

As these things happened to us in the emergence of our selves, we have tried to be faithful to our experience so we dealt with it by writing about it. Not to gain promotion or to publish in a 4* academic journal, but to make sense for ourselves. Hopefully, the end-product is of value to wider communities of scholarship and experience and that optimism has been justified by subsequent experience of the reaction of others.

We share the ethnographic creed (Van Maanen, 2011: 219) but a deliberate intention to “do fieldwork” in the style of a trained researcher is not the only manner in which experience occurs, and this ethnographic stance is both a matter of deliberative cognitive choice, but also one of recognising that through some process or set of events that may be completely beyond personal choice or preference, one has entered a different space and the driving-force has been an unwilled, uncontrolled emotional vector.

Affect, even anguish, are not explanations or criteria for authenticity but they may be helpful *markers* of these desiderata or offer clues to other kinds of relevance. Anguish can be a marker that something has happened or is happening to change a framing, maybe one that has never previously been interrogated. According to ccurrent neurophysiological research it is affect that drives cognition; not the other way round as rational actor theories presume (Damasio,1994).

After the epiphanic experience, one is now on the *other* side of the mirror (or even at the bottom of the rabbit-hole) from which a way out has to be sought and it is this understanding that constitutes both the beginning of meaningful work and of the possibility of an *authentic AE* giving rise to a new structure of learning opportunities. Sometimes the account of the journey becomes as valuable in the transmission to others of useful knowledge about deep experience as the presentation of the findings or data (Carolan, 2003) and while a claim of authorial presence can be destabilizing to other accounts it has to be respected at least.(Alvesson, Hardy and Harley, 2008, 489)

AE is certainly not everything, but carefully and craftfully done, including the anguish (if that is how it all starts or is triggered) definitely can become something authentic. The autoethnographer does not seek univocality and knows this can never be achieved for as Derrida asks "How many voices intersect, observe, and correct one another, argue with one another, passionately embrace or pass by one another in silence? Are we going to seek one final evaluation?" (Derrida, 2001, p.50) The social scientist as honest enough reporter even of personal emotional experience is still of value. It is only one voice but the voice of one who was there. Some stories write themselves because they have to be written.

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