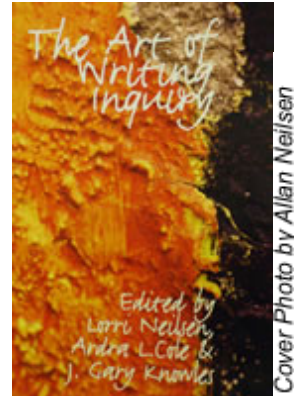


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Sharing in the Research Journey: A response to *The Art of Writing Inquiry*

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Reading the *Art of Writing Inquiry* is a journey of meeting like-minded researchers, artfully presenting their own practice in poems and stories and insisting that we be unique in our research. Every contributor, from Rishma Dunlop's "Excerpts from *Boundary Bay: A Novel as Educational Research*" to Gary Rasberry's "if this is a bird course" reminds me that we researchers are on a journey.

Everyone is on a journey. We think we know the end place because destinations have been the object of our travel ever since we can imagine. We pass sites of interest along the way, but these are only temporary lingerings; we cannot dwell here. The destination drives us forward, calling us forward cruelly as if somehow the destination were the be-all and end-all of our existence: as if to not reach a destination makes one incomplete, inadequate, or unfocussed.

So runs the metaphor for research. Research ought not to be about the final product, the destinations, publication, or curriculum vitae: no-no. Research lies between the lines and in the margins and often off the page.

I've been conversing with my friend, Mark Daley, about how we ought to linger longer in our research. For him, it is the only valid approach. Below I share a snippet of his words from one of our email conversations:

Discovery seems endless between you and I, BUT, for me it MUST have an integrity for my BEING and not for its academic import or how it might give me a name. In short, I want to take ALL my discoveries as being active listening to the spirit.

As well, in reading *The Art of Writing Inquiry* I've heard other voices sharing a similar heart-felt message about the nature of research.

I want research that begins in a place of unknowing, with a leap of faith, a courageous

willingness to embark on a journey. I want research that seeks out mysteries and acknowledges even the muddled, mad, mesmerizing miasma that rises up as a kind of breath and breathing, connected with the pulsing and compelling rhythms of the heart (Leggo, 180).

I yearn for conversations about people's passions, their complicated and messy relationships, their dreams. Even the lost ones. I want to know what they live for, when and how they've encountered death. And how they chose to live. I want to know their struggles and their moments of celebrated triumph (Crowe, 128).

It is essential that research re-presents lives with authenticity and reflects the complexities and multi-dimensionality of the human condition. It must be evocative and intersect with the lives of others in a moving way; it must provoke deeper thought and transport the reader/audience to new worlds (Cole, 274).

I use the poetic mode to find the places where critical analysis cannot go, and to push my own boundaries of engagement and understanding (O'Connor, 84).

Arts-informed research accounts are written, performed, or revealed with the express purpose of connecting, in an holistic way with the hearts, souls, and minds of readers. They are intended to have an evocative quality and a high level of resonance for audiences of all kind (Cole, 216).

...[the researcher] would be one of those who dare to handle paradoxes and use them wisely, who dare to combine and create, and who dare to treat methodology as methodology, which sometimes means treating it as more than methodology (Weber, 198).

Artful writing and artful inquiry do not need a password or a lexicon. There is no vocabulary test for this work: we simply write what we see (and hear and touch and smell and sense), who we are, what we believe, what we rejoice, discern, dream—creating from our many emerging and imagining selves lines to connect beyond (Neilsen, 267).

This belief, that we all have the potential to be artist-researchers, is tied to my belief that art exists in the everyday, in ways of being, and processes and relationships between people (McIntyre, 225).

The self changes in research—it lies between the lines. Its existence is between, in tension. The self is located here, but also “lies” about being located here. I like the play, the pun. So, let us look closer at the poetic line: the self lies. Yes, it does. We do not know its truth; its motivations often remain hidden to us. Looking in the mirror does not get us beneath the surface for there are many masks. We form masks (methods) quickly and easily; the external quickly forms because we prefer the substitute—it is tractable. The real is too unruly. And so, “the skin thickens” (Ticktin, 108).

The Magician's Masks

new
slick
and altered
an interruption
to expectation
more
will
come

We need research that opens up a space for dialogue, that takes off the academic veneer of sophistication and ceases to pretend genius or off-the-scale IQ. I quickly tire of research that pretends. What interests me are changes that the researcher undergoes, not how he changes the phenomenon by

his presence, not even how the phenomenon changes him, but how the process of searching changes him. This is the journey.

Take, for example, the notion of being an unobtrusive researcher: even while trying to be unobtrusive, the researcher changes the phenomenon she is observing simply by walking into the room, into the environment of the observed. Given that the researcher always stands in such a “located” place, the traditional approach has been to shore-up validity by removing the researcher’s presence. But in what is being called “arts-informed inquiry” the researcher’s presence is made all the more evident. Not overtly so as the story of research is hindered by the author, but deliberate, so that the readers can see how the researcher (author) is influencing the telling (research). As Daley has said, in the introduction to this volume, “the substance of this point is honesty.” An honest researcher does not hide her presence. Instead, what emerges is the possibility for the researcher to reflect on her presence, how her presence is changed via the journey.

Everyone is on a journey.

Nor, I believe, should the researcher flaunt his presence. It is simply there in the same way a fingerprint in part of my hand: when I leave fingerprints my presence is not denied. At the same time, it is not my intention to touch every part so that I leave my mark. Instead, we say that “arts-informed inquiry” intends to intersect with the lives of *others*. Research ought to be about life and cause us to consider life more deeply.

I think the point is that we not become constrained by our research, particularly in our ways of conducting it. That is, we need to explore methodology as not simply a method but a way of living. We must capture our passions, and out of them will emerge the proper method or “form.” Research is not about finding a form for your passions. Quite the opposite: the passion comes first. Passion sustains; it is intrinsically worthwhile.

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