Running Head Right-hand: Insecurity during and after the PhD

Running Head Left-hand: Bryn Tales and Jess Moriarty

9

Insecurity during and after the PhD

An autoethnography of mutual support

Bryn Tales and Jess Moriarty

Foreword

We met at a symposium in 2017. I was so moved and excited by Bryn's work that I asked him there and then if he would mind taking part in the book. Not knowing what would happen or what to expect, we agreed to meet up in London and somehow story what happened. Hearing Bryn talk about his PhD and the incredible work he is doing with a mining community in Sheffield, I was inspired again. We swapped our field notes from the meeting, and present a co-edited version of events here.

I initially thought I was coming to London tell Bryn something about autoethnography that might help with his PhD. Instead, his explanation of his ethical concerns and dilemmas about the writing process, and if his work would ever pass at viva, inspired me to reveal my own stories and the professional and personal insecurities and vulnerabilities I hoped would dissipate when I finished my thesis but which often dominate, overpowering my confidence and self-belief. How can I use autoethnography to share these feelings with Bryn and others, and how might autoethnographers use their writing to reduce those feelings? Autoethnography is a methodology that seeks to challenge conventional, dominant discourse including power hierarchies in HE (Moriarty, 2015), but can also be used to challenge and overcome the

Field Code Changed

dominant narratives within ourselves. Autoethnographers value highly personalised accounts that promote civil and spiritual freedom and a resistance to dominant, oppressive structures that are sometimes seen as synonymous with traditional academic work (Canagarajah, 2002). We suggest that the sharing of personal stories can dismantle these hierarchies and stimulate new ways of being in academia that are personal and "more inclusive, ethical and democratic" (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 30), and that offer a challenge to the dominant narratives within ourselves that are reductive and stifling. By sharing our writing, we identify a way of reducing feelings of insecurity and doubt, helping us to feel better connected to each other and our research, and also surer of ourselves.

Field Code Changed

Field Code Changed

Is it an ethnography or an autoethnography?

Once it is poetry, when is it social science?

Is poetry the reconstruction of ethnography into autoethnography?

the microphone falls into a squealing feedback

from the speaker-stack, the smartphone slaps the tiles, and

how to incorporate feedback; re-corporate the respirated voice?

Sang experience. Data. Qualitative PhD data

the PhD's impact, gradations of the pricing at the market

why don't you like this poem, how much will you write of you?

To speak with Jess is the reminding that writing is always a dialogue

in autoethnography, this reminding is the call to craft new characters:

not just self-realisation, but the stirring of heard words,

not just your blood to smear the white space of the page

Maybe you can come back after the PhD state? You are there,

in the community, it is OK. *When did you start to feel OK about the poem?*

When I'd drafted out the fourth wall,

no longer at one remove, but cast in auditorium darkness

hunched in the aisles before the poem's exertions,

whose breath, as mine, is seen to mist the cold

Guilt halts: the poems are tough, confusing, abstract

is that alright? To keep writing, holidaying by thracian caves, into

readings that widened my memories into a newer story of more people

sunshine bleaching into its crackled soundtrack. Here, where

my father's palms are far and gone, flat behind the coal-dust air.

tweaked at by this symbol for my own hands lost in work

And your work has been human, and full of love for others

how do you feel about the community?

I care about them, and the post-Brexit, feedbacking post-debatable

but nevertheless, who will send the subsidies?

here is my subsidy for the moment in which you read it;

a present transactable with the rhythm of our lives

Bryn Tales

Reaching out over email

Before we meet, I email Bryn my reflections from the train that include my spinning and stressed interior monologue. I tell him that as the chapter is an experiment, we can start writing and see where it takes us.

From: Jessica Moriarty

Date: 17 May 2018 at 09:17:11 BST

To: Jessica Moriarty

Commented [KZ1]: AuQ: Please state if this is the correct name for the recipient of each of the emails in this chapter.

Subject: They are handing out jellybeans at Brighton station and I go up twice . . .

They are handing out jellybeans at Brighton Station and I go up twice, apologising that I have no interest in the new Southern Rail timetable but I do have two children. I'm conscious that I will carry these beans all day. Their weight and rustle reminding me that I am away. I'm going to London not Lima, but even so, feelings of guilt creep in.

No. This is not the start of this story because every story starts like this. My guilt. My juggling of work and family. My anxiety. I am bored with this character in my own autoethnography.

This story starts with me – of course – on the train to London Bridge, rereading Bryn's poetry about a former mining community, his heritage, the call centre that now stands where

the mine once did, and Bryn. The poems are deftly crafted, there is attention to layout and structure, voice and language, politics and the ethics of representation, there is a recapturing, a reimagining a sense of loss and also love. And Bryn's voice, or at least his DNA, in each one. He is present but also not present. His feelings never overwhelm the poem but his connection and care for these communities and people is tangible throughout. He is in the stories but a conscientious observer, using his process and poems to connect/reconnect with places and people. Through his retellings and imaginings, I am connected to them too. Moved by them, provoked to think about them and what the poems mean about this community, about research, about writing, about Bryn.

I am embarrassed that I felt I had to send the poems I wrote on my walk with Christina. But the ethics of representing interview data and pressure of passing a PhD don't press on me. They were written in a tea garden near Firle, against the clock and triggered by Christina and me talking and walking as a way of recovering her motivation to make and my desire to take risks with my research.

No. Don't write about the aims and learning outcomes of the poems? Don't look back or try and connect this chapter with the last one? Just write what happened? The experience? Stop using that voice that needs to leap to a kind of defence of what you are doing? No one will want to read that! You are your own Stepford Wife (Forbes, 1975). You turn into this sanitised, REF-able voice in your writing. The Prozac version of you. Why do you do that?

Field Code Changed

Why are we meeting?

From: Jessica Moriarty

Date: 17 May 2018 at 09:47 BST

To: Jessica Moriarty

Subject: They are handing out jellybeans at Brighton station and I go up twice . . .

We are meeting, I think, to talk about community. The ethics of representing a community and how to write oneself in relation to the group understudy. How our writing helps to connect or reconnect us with a community and how our autoethnographies can link communities with ideas in our work. Bryn is doing an ethnographic PhD, looking at a former mining community and places in his heritage. Bryn wants to use his poems to reconnect himself with that community, to use his poetry as a monument to people and places, the stories that are exist there and the stories that are dying out. The building of a call centre where the mine once stood seems to embody neoliberalism: we levelled the past and put something new and ill-thought and potentially more toxic in its place. Bryn's poems put the human back into those spaces and reminds us what life was and is like there, the parallels helping with a deep meaning making that is historical, personal, relational and made via the connections Bryn makes with the/those community/communities.

Bryn

After meeting at an autoethnography conference at the University of Brighton, I recognised a kindred spirit in Jess, especially after reading her book proposal asking how we may resist neoliberalism in academia and the arts. She sent a scaffold of chapter headings for this book, and it was a very difficult decision to select which chapter to propose helping to write, as most of them had relevance to my project. I had recently been exploring the work of 'semio-capitalist' theorists such as Deleuze and Guattari, and Lazzarato. Their work examines how the relationships of subject/object, human/machine (or in my research, miner/mine) inherent in Fordist modes of employment had been replaced with the advent of free market and globalised industry. Gilles Deleuze (1992) famously recognised a shift in the worker as subject from being a coherent individual, to a fragmented 'dividual.' In the giant distribution warehouses and call

Field Code Changed

centres which now dominate employment in the Dearne Valley, it is easy to see how people now “function as points of ‘connection, junction and disjunction’ in flows and processes of global markets” (Lazzarato, 2014, p. 27). Multinational companies from places as far away as Texas and India have operated temporary call centre projects in Manvers, near Rotherham, with monolithic distribution warehouses offering zero-hours contract work on behalf of businesses such as Next. This shift was not a slow, gradual transition, but a cataclysmic consequence of the ideological battle of the 1984–1985 miners’ strike. By 1992, there were only 53 collieries left in the United Kingdom (Hill, 2001), and the trade union movement, which had been powerful enough to bring down governments through strike action in the 1970s, had been severely curtailed. I feel that my project is concerned with the potential of poetry to salvage this lost agency, with enabling participants to recover and redefine themselves through narrating their own lives: their losses, their dreams and their fears.

Commented [KZ2]: AuQ: Please state if CE correctly placed closing quotation marks before callout here, or where they should be placed.

Field Code Changed

Field Code Changed

From: Jessica Moriarty

Date: 17 May 2018 at 14:23:11 BST

To: Jessica Moriarty

Subject: They are handing out jellybeans at Brighton station and I go up twice . . .

I am early. It is easy going to London. In my head, it is this other place, far away from Brighton and hard to get to, but the train takes an hour and then I walk across the bridge, admiring London in the May sun. The Tower of London and the bridge are nearly as known to me as the South Downs and the Pier: I grew up here, but it is like walking through a film. I cannot find an independent coffee shop. First world problems, but we are definitely not in Brighton anymore. I settle on a Pret and hope he won’t judge me for holding a conversation about resisting neoliberalism in a coffee chain. He texts to say he will be late so I watch the

Channel 4 documentary with a former student entitled 'What makes a woman' (McGann, 2018). Munroe is a transgender model and activist and she talks about her evolution in parallel with a society not always as ready or willing to change or keep up. The programme looks at Munroe's life now and the resentment and abuse she faces, often from women. Often from feminists. Holding onto power and denying or undermining other women's voices strikes me as distinctly undemocratic and un-feminist. I don't see feminism as a biological issue. We should all be feminists and gender is a spectrum we can and should keep evolving. Academia also privileges what is research and what isn't. Where is autoethnography on that binary? What part can it play in making the boundaries more fluid and shifting? How can I as a white, heteronormative lecturer make a plea for a less divisive means of labelling work and what counts and what doesn't? Whose voice matters and whose can only be reduced to data? I suppose I have always seen autoethnography as a potential antidote to the male hierarchical academy. A ying and yang. Offering balance where there has been none. But actually the idea of research as a spectrum we are continuously adding to is a better. This is why I sometimes feel ambivalent about autoethnography, I have begun to feel disillusioned by the autobiographical writings I have heard and read that aren't explicitly linked to a community and/or research project. How can we support and include researchers to work autoethnographically and bring in new voices and ideas whilst maintaining it as a methodology that contributes to rigorous qualitative research? In previous work I . . .

No this is not the story! Stop trying to make everything autoethnographic? You slam every peg through the same autoethnographic hole regardless of shape and size. You are an autoethnographer? We get it! We all get it! But just tell the story!

Bryn looks younger than me . . ..

Shutupshutupshutupshutupshutupshutupshutup. This is not to feed your midlife crisis either.

Field Code Changed

I've already messaged Bryn from the train to say I've forgotten the recorder and he emailed back to reassure me that he used to write, not record, his interviews anyway. The very idea makes me anxious. Interview data is like panning for gold, especially the way I ramble and go off on tangents. But today is focused. We are talking about community, connections with and responses to. Using our writing to connect with communities and develop understanding of place, people, self. Maybe no recorder will be fine? This is meant to be about a rewilding, trying new ideas that can resist neoliberalism in HE and in me. Capturing and analysing a conversation seems to pervert that intention, but interviews are what we do? It helps me to feel academic in a way that freewheeling and remembering and reimagining the conversation still doesn't. What kind out autoethnographer does that make me?

We meet and start talking. Bryn describes his process, how he has been listening to members of the mining community and workers at the new call centre to think about the history of the space and how people have experienced it, how in the shift between mining to service industry, there have been casualties. A history has been lost that Bryn is now seeking to restore. To me, the research is innovative and distinct, his approach has been ethical and reflective, devising a process that has consciously considered the research participants and tried to maintain their voices and experiences. He has used his findings to inform his poems which make the characters and places, politics and histories present in the reader's conscience. They are beautiful. Thought provoking. Important. And I can see the link between research and process and poetry and why it matters to Bryn, academia and the communities he is writing about and for. He is preserving their narratives and consciously navigating and negotiating the ethics of telling about other people's lives. But as he talks, I sense his feeling of being slightly overwhelmed. Caught between wanting to please his supervisors and pass his PhD, and also telling the story he wants to tell, how he wants to tell it, and never quite pleasing anyone, especially not himself. His story reminds me of my own doctorate, and we talk about this for a while, freewheeling, off-piste, and I'm not writing it all down fast enough.

I tell him how much I enjoyed the poems, and he seems surprised. Writing into the dark with no encouragement or belief in your work beyond friends and family is isolating and demotivating. It makes the doctoral students feel more outside the academy, when they should feel as if they are finding their way in (Moriarty, 2013). When I first sent my supervisor the first draft of my thesis, I hoped he might want to include my work in his own research, but instead, he asked why my creative writing was in the main text and not in the appendix. When I said I was arguing for the script to be on equal footing with conventional academic work, he looked bewildered and I thought what I was writing was utterly meaningless. "Well, it must mean something to someone," he said, uncertainly.

Field Code Changed

As a supervisor, I have doubted a student as I could not see the community or culture that the work connected to. I could see the self (auto) and the graphy (research) but not the ethnos and it created tension between us.

Back to you? You muscling in on someone else's story? Listen to Bryn? Let him tell his story. What is it he is saying? Let him speak and then talk and then write? Stop controlling and pre-ordering the narrative? Be a better, more attentive critical friend? What would have helped you when you were fighting with supervisors and your own thesis?

How writing helps to connect and restore

Bryn

> The storied performances of life experiences move outwards from the selves of the person and inwards to the persons and groups that give them meaning and structure. Persons are arbitrators of their own presence in the world, and they should have the last word on this problem.
>
> (Denzin, 2014, p. 4)

Field Code Changed

As a poet, the meaning and structure I give to the stories of my research participants are matters of poetics. I am astonished when the ethics committee returns my application back as it doesn't address what I will do if the participants don't like my poems. I give the necessary guarantees that they can contact me to withdraw from the process at any time. I can't guarantee that I will write poems that everyone likes. One way, however, in which to address the arbitration of meaning within stories is via a deconstructive autoethnography. Here, "the unified speaker with full access to their thoughts and intentions is a myth" (Denzin, 2014, p. 39). I aim to allow multiple voices and perspectives within the recorded speech and events of the poetic moment as a site of subjectivity. My poem "1866 in 2016" relays an amateur dramatisation of a mining disaster which aimed to raise money for a new monument of that disaster in Barnsley. It is a performance-within-a-performance of events: the amateur teenagers act, and through their acting perform a ritual of remembrance together with the compliant, engaged audience from the community. The community are the only people who would know of, and attend, the performance. They would not seek to criticise or appraise, but enjoy it as an act fundraising and with a sense of duty. I made notes in the dark at the back. The resulting poem is an attempt to stage the apostrophic 'now' which serves to hold each of these layers of performance; irreversible narrative transformed into the present of discourse:

Field Code Changed

in a tunnel of limbs on the point of collapse,

nervous and breathing out those who have passed

through bones as everything that is inherent

in the shifting through pronouns, *their* bones, *our* bones

in the sifting of marrow and soil into place . . .

In every such poem, I have to negotiate how visible I am. The most invisible that I can be is to use only the participants' actions or spoken words and order them, construct with them. And yet I feel the need to acknowledge that I have done this. In one poem, "Post-," I close the poem with the lines "all billowed smoke/ on the wake of/ the photograph dream," indicating the imagery is borne of someone else's memory, almost objectivist in this manner. I also use the figure of a "Fugue of hibernation" to twine what is present and absent: the mine in the memory and its absence now; the dream in the present tense that is liable to be forgotten or barely remembered upon waking. My own presence and absence, ethnography and autoethnography. When we meet, Jess asks me what I want out of writing my poems. It makes me nervous to think about it, and that nervousness itself feels wrong. And to think about that, and talk through it, feels like the meeting of counselling session and confessional – feels like an intimate act in itself. I'd like to be invisible, but I am acutely aware that I am undertaking the interviews as part of a research process in order to obtain a PhD. I am also sure of my motivations in wanting to reclaim the stories of the people of that area, and to understand my own relationship to this place and people. It is massively reassuring to me that Jess, a senior academic who has 'made it,' is validating these concerns, seeing how I have negotiated the poems. Is kind. I feel the lifting of a weight from my shoulders.

Jess

Bryn spoke about his PhD and how moving back to Leeds has helped him to feel more connected to his studies; that in Sheffield, over an hour away, there was a disconnection and

loneliness that came charged with guilt. We are lucky to be academics. We are lucky to study and write poems. It is a privilege. How dare we not just get down to it and do it and do it well, effortlessly? I tell him that the academics I interviewed for my thesis all veered between feeling lucky and also feeling repressed. Sikes argues that the relentless restructuring, fees and the pressure on HEIs to function as a business has disturbed the majority of academic staff, making them feel anxious and unclear about their professional identities and "leaving them feeling generally inadequate" (Sikes, 2007, p. 563). But feeling lucky and grateful can result in the normalising and naturalising of features of neoliberal discourses and practices that actually need interrupting in order to "initiate the process of decomposing the neoliberal subjects we have become" (Sparkes, 2013, p. 13). "Don't feel guilty," I say, and then I feel guilty because I always feel guilty, and it isn't honest or fair to tell him to stop. I am reminded of the voices of my interviewees, two of whom had been successful academics – published and lauded by internal and external peers – for many years and were now approaching retirement.

> the voice that I use in academic mode, is it mine, or is the voice of my profession, my 'ought to' voice, the voice that I've been taught to use? The voice I use today, it is my own; I recognise in it myself, the person who is really me. To find again that voice restores to me myself, it makes me whole, it wake me up. Oh, that I could reconcile those two voices to be me, myself in every situation. And I suppose that's how I felt.
>
> Dee (Senior lecturer – late career)

> I suppose this is a development from your retreat which was really good and it was great to be there, but there was a thing about for me about being real erm versus being I don't know being pretend, you have to make so many compromises, don't you?
>
> Miles (Principal lecturer – mid-career)

Commented [KZ3]: AuQ: Please provide full form/explanation of "HEIs" here.

Commented [AuQ4]: Please add complete source information for [[Sikes, 2007]] to the Reference list.

Field Code Changed

Commented [KZ5]: AuQ: Please check if this word should be "wakes" rather than "wake" here.

Commented [KZ6]: AuQ: OK to make this reported speech read as follows to account for apparent pauses in speaking?

I suppose this is a development from your retreat which was really good and it was great to be there, but there was a thing about for me about being real . . . erm versus being . . . I don't know – being pretend. You have to make so many compromises, don't you?

Both academics advised me and shared insights into what their professional life had been like, insights and stories that made me feel less alone. One of them continues to mentor me now, and I am still buffeted up by his encouragement and guidance when the shifting culture in HE gets me down. “Actually, feel guilty, but feel OK about it? If we have a responsibility to the community we are researching, it will help us to work more ethically, no?” Thinking of his interviewees as data doesn’t sit well with Bryn, but the responsibility to bring them to life and keep them as real people in his writing is noticeable in his writing and it enhances it, makes it even stronger. He is committed to crafting poems they will recognise themselves in, and poems such that their community and the spaces in it continue to be theirs, not dictated by an outsider’s judgement on them. He could have coded their stories and analysed them and put them into graphs and charts and used these to make a point, but instead, Bryn has reimagined their life stories as poems and is using this to capture experiences that might otherwise fade. He has taken care of these stories and used them to say something personal and cultural and researched, and he has used the process of looking back to provide cultural insights on the present and the transforming lifestyles and cultures in the mining town and community.

In this way, I can learn from Bryn, as this is how I have used my interviews with academics; by enabling them to look back and also comment on the present, I can see the contrast and shifts in what our roles have come to mean and do. I agree with Thomas Docherty that, “We no longer teach as we wish, but according to the logic of cuts and its attendant economics” (Docherty, 2012, p. 52), and that this has had huge repercussions on academic freedom and how we teach, research, work. Bryn’s work makes me think about changing cultural and political landscapes in his own work and also in HE, and how those changes also change the communities that exist there.

Field Code Changed

> They [academics] started to question why university life had to be that way, why they had to be removed from their work, why only certain forms of discourse counted as knowledge, why they didn’t feel more connected to those

> they studied, why their mind should be split from their body, why they had to keep their emotions in check, why they could not speak from the heart.
>
> (Pelias, 2004, p. 11)

Field Code Changed

Bryn's poetry allows Bryn – and also his subjects – to speak from the heart, and it motivates me to do the same.

Bryn

The European Union (EU) referendum occurred in the first summer of my PhD, and seemed to make everything I had been writing about up until then seem out of date. The post-mining community I was studying had been dismantled by the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s, only beginning to recover with grants from the European Social Fund from the 1990s onwards. The EU landscaped the polluted area and regenerated it into industrial parks and leisure amenities; to me, it seemed natural that its residents would wish to vote remain. Although the EU, in facilitating free trade and freedom of movement, can be seen as something of a neoliberal institution, surely people would see it as being more likely that wealth would be redistributed to deprived areas through that institution than the current serving government? I was wrong, and it led me to question even more my role in researching the community. I shouldn't have been surprised. As Thorleifsson (2016) describes the neighbouring post-mining community of Doncaster, following neoliberalism: "A few chose to align themselves with cosmopolitan globalism (but) others embraced Ukip's anti-immigration and anti-EU politics when faced with existential uncertainty." The threat of the community's continued existence, and the subsequent lack of agency and disenfranchisement from the political system in the UK, meant that Brexit offered a rare democratic moment to give voice to decades of abandonment. I wrote a few Brexit poems which unravelled in streams of shocked consciousness. I wondered what this meant for my PhD, which, at that point, had been focusing on Muriel Rukeyser's

Commented [KZ7]: AuQ: OK that explanation of EU was moved from later in paragraph to first mention here?

Field Code Changed

capacity to create poetic symbols with which to spur collective action in the wake of a mining disaster in 1930s America. Rukeyser was interested in delineating "the patterns of those linked even in the middle of their suffering, where people fight against an evil condition so that other people need not go through the same fight" (Dayton, 2003, p. 146). Between this work and Chapter 2 of my thesis on the miners' strike in 1984–1985, there seemed to be a narrative arc to be traced. But in 2016, Brexit seemed to me to be a blind act of protest and fury, not linked to any one political movement, but rather a rejection of the entire status quo. Later, I told Jess that my father's decision to stop working as an electrician in a coal mine came after an epiphany one afternoon in which the air around him was so dusty that he could not see his own outstretched hands. She suggested that perhaps this was the perfect autoethnographic metaphor to capture my own position; a moment of self-awareness amidst the blinding haze of the matter, noises and voices of community.

Commented [AuQ8]: Please add complete source information for [[Dayton 2003]] to the Reference list.

Jess

As I reread Bryn's poems, it is hard to imagine anyone being anything other than delighted that they are visible in these works. They are sad, and there is a sense of loss in them, but they are also a poignant and vivid reminder of a war that the miners and their families and communities lost. And in the aftermath of Thatcher's victory, the Tories began dismantling the NHS, undermining free education and opened the gates on privatisation and selling off trades in this country that gave people and place their identity. Bryn's poetry is a way of preserving stories we might otherwise lose forever. But the process of collecting these narratives and reimagining them has challenged him, too:

- Does he belong in this community now that he is an academic?
- Is it OK for him to take their stories?

- Interviewing people in an area where 70% committed to leave during Brexit has caused him to ask: does he even belong here?

But the poems are a potential way of connecting and understanding and this is a reciprocal process. Through the telling of the stories, do the former miners and present call centre workers come to know themselves and Bryn a little better, or a little differently? And when they read or hear his poems, I expect this process will happen again. He doesn't judge in the poems; he observes faithfully, his voice and lack of judgement never disrupting what he is trying to bear witness to. And the result is moving and multi-dimensional and absorbing, and triggers meaning-making by the reader. You have to think with and about the text (Kant, 1794) and the people in it – all of them.

Field Code Changed

I see this process as vitally important for autoethnography. Bryn doesn't bleed on the page and neither do his interviewees. It is keenly observed, and he has employed a range of techniques to show shift and distinction in each one. While the interviewees are passing on stories to Bryn, he then reaches back with a new story, a well-crafted story, and the retelling is beautiful. This process of dialogue and shared narratives and craft elevates the poems, refines and enriches them. They are researched, but they also give back to the spaces and people under study. In autoethnography, the self is sometimes so present and so full of feeling that the community they are connecting with is lost or overshadowed. But autoethnographers make sense of the world in dialogue with others, and that is where the emphasis should lie. It is the ethical data collection and crafting of stories that makes this possible.

[Insert 15032-3214-P3-009-UnFigure-001 Here]

Bryn tells me a story about his dad being down the mine and not being able to see his hand and having an epiphany that he has to get out of this job. Sometimes as autoethnographers, we are so busy looking at our hands and at ourselves that we can't see anything else. And maybe that's when we need to get out, too.

I ask if he will read the poems to the participants and get their feedback, but he isn't yet sure. He is stuck at present between wanting to tell his story and wanting to please his supervisors, of wanting to do the right work and passing his viva. But he will do both. Sometimes when you can't see your hand, you have to keep going, is all.

Conclusion – what might this story mean, and what does it mean to Bryn and me?

Bryn

Is it enough that through the creation of these poems, we all know ourselves a little better? This is an allowance that comes from our conversation. On the train to London, I read Jess's first question to me. She likes the line "I think identity comes from those who work together to stay hilarious, alive," and wants to use this as a starting point to the discussion. This puts me at ease. 'Hilarious' was one of five words that a famous local poet I interviewed used to define the people of the community that I have worked with. I think there is something of resistance in the sharing of laughter: of collective, shared values or a shared awareness of dispositions and absurdities through shifting times. In the sense of the new industries such as the call centres, which demand a level of emotional labour, the repressing of one's own expressive language in favour of banks of stock phrases and procedural politeness, this seems even more important. Jess asks me: "Do we give ourselves permission to laugh or be funny in academia?" And it's a great question. What do we *give ourselves*? As a PhD candidate, I have rarely felt that I can give myself things, but rather must hone myself, tone myself, fashion a 'dividual' from my 'self' which can meet the rigours of what I am *asking myself* to do. I think academia, increasingly commodified and profit-driven, encourages this.

Here's one example: I take a break from a chapter in which I argue that the infamous Conservative 'Ridley Plan' of 1977 used martial semantics of casus belli to territorialise the

planned ideological imposition of neoliberalism upon mining communities. Then I check my emails. **Academic Bootcamp. Book Now!** I'm pretty sure that Bootcamps have their origin in the military, but the term also brings to mind pained souls in flourescents scrambling across city parks. When I search, the top four options are a correctional facility for adolescents in the USA, a training camp for learning various skills, an intensive form of fitness training and, finally, military recruit training. Whichever the etymology is derived from, it is a case of an intense external pressure to transform from within in order to meet a goal of society: a desirable body, the readiness for a temporary job opportunity. Another email advertising a university service: **Developing Resilience: Week 4.** If you do nothing else this week . . . then at least do this. This is the ambient guilt that drones in the ever-present university online. Clicking on this link brings inspirational quotations from Nelson Mandela ("Do not judge me by my success. Judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again") and W. Mitchell, a motivational speaker, businessman, burn victim and paraplegic ("It's not what happens to you, it's what you DO about it"). I find it hard to square the experiences of these disparate figures with the experience of undertaking a PhD. Am I honestly being asked to compare my doubts, loneliness and insecurities as a post-graduate student in academia to, respectively: a legendary, inspirational political figure who was incarcerated for decades due to systemic racism and apartheid; and a successful businessman who suffered horrific burns in a motorbike accident and then became paralysed from the waist down in an aeroplane crash? What does this resource say about our expectations for students and the PhD experience now? And whilst pondering my place in all of this, I can look upon various crystalline images which would not look out of place in a coffee table recipe book, or in a glossy catalogue at a wedding fayre. A daisy which has fallen (/been meticulously placed) onto a marble work surface so that one of its petals cradles a tiny drop of dew. Or here, consider developing resilience by looking at "Developing Resilience" in a tasteful font, upon a banner image of ivory-lit, tiled, dandelion clock seeds. They are delicately beautiful, but they are strong, see? A hurricane would be welcomed; it would power their ability to fly and land into creating new things. Or perhaps it is that they have naturally fanned

themselves into a clutch of ethereal umbrellas, impermeable. It is up to each of us to handle whatever storm. It is at times like this that I find myself despising academia. It feels as though every act is disingenuous – is apparently the pursuit of academic learning, knowledge and culture – but is actually the process of shaping ourselves to fit the ever-shifting systems that sustain increasing profit-making and productivity. Mindfulness techniques, offered amongst other workshops in finding a 'niche' for your research, and making yourself more employable, seem to me to be palliative measures offered to students, rather than consciousness-raising tools that might lead to the introspective awareness of our true position and potential within the academic system. Ivor Southwood (2011, p. 15) describes the nature of this atmosphere of precarity as a fear which presents as "emanating from inside the individual rather than a deliberate external arrangement of power." My guilt in being complicit in this – in how much I really believe in what I am doing, and how much I am going through the motions of gaining a certificate – drives my approach in poetry. I believe it is necessary to draw attention to the physical presence of participants through their speech acts in order to reveal the consequences of these external arrangements of power on our identity. As Juliana Spahr asserts in her 2015 poem, "Brent Crude," "we must "call attention to the material life of the artist, as a person, who in addition to being creator . . . to a body of work, possesses a physical body, and real financial, medical and social needs." I feel that this designation of creator necessarily applies to the participants in ethnographies, too.

Field Code Changed

Field Code Changed

Commented [KZ9]: AuQ: Please state which of these opening quotation marks should be deleted (is "we must" part of the quotation?).

It was important to me to try to dismantle any hierarchy between myself as a member of the academy and those members of the community I interviewed. I didn't record using audio or visual equipment, as they would have been possible barriers to the spontaneous moment, to honesty. I wrote up what I saw as the key refrains in each interviewee's narrative. This isn't a perfect process, of course: in using what surfaced in my own memory from the field notes I made, so I would feature obliquely in each poem. Refrains emphasise the most pressing concerns and dreams of the speaker, and also have a performative quality as they repeat, which

allows a reading in poetry to break out of received narratives, prone to nostalgia and fixity. For Franco Berardi, the refrain in the increasingly deterritorialised neoliberal workplace allows a person "to find identification points, and to territorialise herself, and to represent herself in relation to the surrounding world according to reproducible and communicable formats" (2012, p. 130). Where individuals are subject to what Berardi describes as "an overloading of collective attention" in the highly-commodified digital, communicative spaces of social media and the internet, then re-territorialising comes internally within the body, the breath. Poetry is language which cannot be codified in the language of market exchanges, cannot be fixed as every image and sign will be interpreted differently by each ear receiving each utterance. As such, as the "singular vibration of the voice," poetry can both restore and locate the speaker, but also through its vibrations, resonate with an audience to 'produce common space" Berardi (2012, p. 147). I wanted the breath of each poem to be painted of the breath of the speakers, to be the "Oh . . ." that "connects mouth and event" (Culler, 2015, p. 223) when addressing the experience of community.

Field Code Changed

Field Code Changed

Field Code Changed

Jess and I struggled to decide on the name of this chapter, before Jess suggests "Autoethnography as process for dismantling hierarchies in mentoring." I like this, as it opens the reflexive space by which I can work out what we are really doing. In dismantling, then, we must first recognise and expose these hierarchies. Meeting Jess was a key moment for me, as she met me as a senior academic in the process of editing a book, but spoke to me full of enthusiasm and wonder as to the possibilities of autoethnography and poetry. Over the briefest hour with coffee, she helped me to believe in what I was doing. Partly that was the support of her kind praise of the poems, and partly it was in her having faith in my motivations, and in the position and strategies I had taken. And partly again, it was in her sharing of her own experiences, and in creating a shared commons of experience and solidarity within that conversation.

‘Hilarious’ was one of the words that a famous local poet I interviewed used to describe the people of the community that I have worked with. Your question struck me in that it made me wonder why laughter was important at the end of the poem I wrote from his words. I think there is something of resistance in the sharing of laughter: of collective, shared values, or a shared awareness of dispositions and absurdities through shifting times. In the sense of the new industries such as the call centres, which demand a level of emotional labour, the repressing of one’s own expressive language in favour of banks of stock phrases and procedural politeness, this seems even more important.

Jess

I thought we were meeting in London to discuss community, that I would tell Bryn something about autoethnography and help him to feel more connected to the methodology and research therein. But Bryn’s poems have reminded me of what autoethnography can and should do: autoethnographers need to focus on the voices in our research and represent them ethically, paying attention to other’s lives and evolving our craft is a way to do that. Hearing Bryn speak about his PhD, I am reminded of how challenging and confusing the doctoral journey is – but trying to please supervisors/managers and panels/committees whilst slowly relinquishing the dream of pleasing yourself doesn’t stop with the viva. Autoethnography can and should deepen our connection with an ever-evolving tribe of autoethnographers, but also, it should help us to feel surer about who we are and the value of our work, sharing insecurities and anxieties in a safe and supported space – dialogues and the writing – in order to move on and up together.

That’s the story. Or the start of one, anyway.

Bibliography

Berardi, F. (2012). *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* (pp. 130–147). South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e).

Canagarajah, A. S. (2002). *Geopolitics of Academic Writing*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Culler, J. (2015). *Theory of the Lyric* (p. 223). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Deleuze, G. (1992). *Postscript on the Societies of Control* in October (Winter) (Vol. 59, pp. 3–7). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Denzin, N. (2014). *Interpretive Autoethnography* (pp. 4–39). London: Sage.

Docherty, T. (2012). Research by numbers. *Index on Censorship*, 41(46), 46–54.

Forbes, B. (1975). *The Stepford Wives*. Palomar Pictures.

Hill, A. (2001). *The South Yorkshire Coalfield* (p. 51). Stroud: Tempus.

Kant, I. (1794, 1996). An answer to the question: What is enlightenment? In M. J. Gregor (Ed.), *Practical Philosophy* (pp. 23–35). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lazzarato, M. (2014). *Signs and Machines* (p. 27). Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e).

McGann, K. (2018). *What Makes a Woman?* Antidote Productions. Channel 4.

Moriarty, J. (2013). Leaving the blood in: Experiences with an autoethnographic doctoral thesis. In N. Short, L. Turner, & A. Grant (Eds.), *Contemporary British Autoethnography* (pp. 63–78). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. Studies in Professional Life and Work.

Moriarty, J. (2015). *Analytical Autoethnodrama*. Rotterdam, Boston, and Taipei: Sense Publishers.

Pelias, R. (2004). *A Methodology of the Heart: Evoking Academic and Daily Life*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Sikes, P. (2006). Working in a 'new' university: In the shadow of the research assessment exercise? *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(5), 555–568. doi:10.1080/03075070600922758.

Southwood, I. (2011). *Non-Stop Inertia* (p. 15). Winchester: Zero Books.

Spahr, J. (2015). *'Brent Crude' from that Winter the Wolf Came* (p. 22). Oakland, CA: Commune Editions.

Sparkes, A. C. (2013). Qualitative research in sport, exercise and health in the era of neoliberalism, audit and new public management: Understanding the conditions for the (im)possibilities of a new paradigm dialogue. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*. doi:10.1080/2159676X.2013.796493.

Thorleifsson, C. (2016). From coal to Ukip: The struggle over identity in post-industrial Doncaster. *History and Anthropology*, 27(5), 555–568. doi:10.1080/02757206.2016.1219354.

Formatted: English (United Kingdom)