Let Us Pretend! Imaginative Identification: A Form of Cultural Nonviolence

Anita Clarke

May 2016

NCPACS Working Paper No: 2016/1
Let Us Pretend! Imaginative Identification: A Form of Cultural Nonviolence.
Anita Clarke
National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Otago

This essay investigates writing style as a way of explaining the gap that a number of scholars have observed between social scientists, their own societies and the societies they study. It identifies various practices of distancing in the writing conventions that have become customary in most social sciences and considers how these practices function to obfuscate and thereby reproduce the violence at the heart of a social structure that vests the professional academic with the epistemic authority to story social phenomena experienced and suffered by others who are not granted such authority. The essay explores the potential of autoethnographic narrative to make visible this fact of violence. By refusing to exclude personal experience and emotion, autoethnographic narrative enables intimacies that can communicate an essential unity of social reality and bring into view the violent underside of the social structure that connects the writer and reader to the people at the heart of the investigation.

Keywords: voice, autoethnography, narrative, cultural violence, cultural nonviolence
The power of what is erects the boundaries into which our consciousness crashes.
We must seek to crash through them.

(Theodor Adorno)

From the moment we arrive at university, if not earlier, students of social science are trained to write in a particular style. The vast majority of articles we are assigned to read are written this way and it is expected that the essays we produce are too. We rarely consider alternative ways of presenting research. It is important we are aware that the style in which we are trained to write, referred to here as the ‘academic voice’, is not without history or implication. It is a style of writing rooted in a specific, Western mode of thinking about, knowing and being in the world. It is important we are aware that the academic voice is not the only valuable way of presenting research - it is just one style amongst a vast and rich array of valid alternatives. This essay explores ways of writing differently – ways of shifting the boundaries of what we can say and who we can say it to – ways of writing which may be considered more honest, holistic and humane than the academic voice.

Firstly, I will trace the use of the academic voice in the social sciences back to the colonial era. Considering this historical background enables us to understand how the academic voice came to possess epistemic authority and how it continues to function within a wider social context as a form of what Johan Galtung called ‘cultural violence’. When Elizabeth Dauphinee was confronted by what the dictates of her profession required her to exclude from her research, she began writing differently and created her 2011 novel, The Politics of Exile, in the form of an autoethnographic narrative. The second part of this essay will consider how this writing style has the potential to function as a form of cultural nonviolence. Whereas conventional academic writing functions to separate social reality and create distance between fragmented parts, autoethnographic narrative can enable intimacies – between observer and observed, between the various parts of the world and its holistic constitution and between writer and reader - that communicate an essential unity of social reality.
PART 1 – A Distanced Past

The academic voice demystified

Roxanne Doty observes that most academic writing possesses the characteristics of a style referred to by Roland Barthes as ‘zero degree writing’ – ‘a colourless, stylistically ‘neutral’ form of writing’.¹ ‘Since the 17th century’, she writes,

> Western science has excluded certain modes of expression from what is deemed legitimate writing. This exclusion was (is) based on a series of oppositions including rhetoric versus transparent signification, fiction versus fact, and subjectivity versus objectivity. The first terms in this series were assigned to the category of literature, where emotions, passions, desires of writers were considered legitimate. The instability and plurality of meaning inherent in literary writing were scientifically condemned as an obstacle to the neutral, objective stance deemed necessary for getting closer to the truth.²

This process of division and exclusion has allowed academic writing to take on the authority of a kind of value-free ‘truth writing’.³ But Barthes accuses: zero degree writing is not so much a neutral style but rather a ‘style of neutrality’.⁴ This accusation negates the idea that academic writing is merely a form of language, which facilitates communication via a series of previously determined codes, and instead positions it as a biographical and biological style, rooted in the author’s ‘personal and secret mythology’.⁵ This style of writing is imposed on and acquired by students and scholars throughout their education and career by what Doty refers to as ‘the amorphous and rather ill-defined, but powerful dictates of ‘the profession’’.⁶ Adherence is both a requirement for good marks in undergraduate and graduate essays and for any scholarship which seeks to be published and taken seriously.⁷ It becomes ‘absorbed into the fabric of our beings’, says Doty, as a result of the sheer volume of it students and scholars are required to consume and produce.⁸

---

¹ Roxanne Doty, “Maladies of Our Souls: Identity and Voice in the Writing of
² Ibid.
⁴ Doty, “Maladies of Our Souls,” 386.
⁵ Ibid., 383.
⁶ Ibid., 380.
⁷ Ibid.
⁸ Ibid.
Doty (as well as a number of others whose voices appear in this essay) speaks as a scholar of International Relations. The academic voice is also imposed on, acquired and absorbed by students and scholars of Peace Studies. Take one of the field’s most prominent journals, the Journal of Peace Research, for example. The journal doesn’t overtly prescribe a certain style of writing, other than to advise that ‘clarity of expression’ must be prioritised over ‘elegance of style’; and yet the vast majority of articles are written in the anonymous neutrality of the academic voice. It is simply expected that research is produced in this style, unless stated otherwise. In this way, we may consider the academic voice to be hegemonic in Peace Studies. Edward Said reminds us that all writing styles have to be demystified of their complicity with the power that allows them to be there.

**Empire of Knowledge**

This particular demystification begins with the recognition that not all are not empowered to speak and write equally. Professional academics possess a certain privilege when it comes to storying the world that others do not. Dauphinee explores this hierarchy of epistemic authority in *The Politics of Exile*. The book follows the development of the relationship between Dauphinee’s autobiographical protagonist, the Professor, and Stojan Sokolović, the Serbian man she hires to proof the Serbo-Croatian in her manuscript, which she describes to him as ‘an ethical meditation on the aftermath of the war in Bosnia’. The Professor overcomes the temptation to ask Stojan what his objections to her book were. ‘I reminded myself that it was not up to him to make that determination. It would be decided by academics.’ Stojan will most certainly not be asked to review her book. As Himadeep Muppidi notes, he may have fluency, have participated, have a view and stories about himself and others, but his knowledge holds less veracity than the Professor’s account, which her academic privilege allows to be considered a kind of ‘truth writing’. He does not command theory. He is not her peer in the ‘empire of knowledge’. He faces the Professor: ‘I can tell you what I really think about it, but it won’t matter, because I don’t matter. If I say it is right, you will still wonder if it’s

---

10 Doty, “Maladies of Our Souls,” 386.
13 Ibid., 25.
16 Dauphinee, “The ethics of autoethnography,” 816.
wrong. If I say it's wrong, you will tell yourself that I'm a Serbian peasant who doesn't understand what he's read.'

It is not the veracity of any particular claim which is of interest here, but rather the question of how that veracity is generated and by whom. Dauphinee suggests that it is not the institution that vests academics with the power of expertise that allows them to ‘forge our way through other people’s countries gathering data in an effort to produce the ‘truths’ of the world’, rather, it is the position the institution occupies within a wider matrix of political relations.

**Coloniality: the darker side of modernity**

The racial and patriarchal underlying organisation of knowledge-making (the enunciation) put together and maintain the colonial matrix of power that daily becomes less visible because of the loss of holistic views promoted by the modern emphasis on expertise and on the division and sub-division of scientific labour and knowledge.

In order to unpack Walter Mignolo's charge we must go back and uncover the role played by academia in the dynamics through which the West staked out and asserted its epistemic privilege over others. Michael Shapiro informs us that the technical version of social analysis which is currently hegemonic in most social sciences emerged within what has been appropriately designated as ‘the colour line century’. ‘It proceeded without acknowledging that the historical moment contained racialized fault lines’, he writes, ‘to adopt an orientation that was insensitive to a history of racial oppression’. Said traces this form of social analysis to the period between 1815 and 1914 – a period of immense advance in the institutions and study of Orientalism. Orientalism, Said tells us, ‘is knowledge of the Orient that places things Oriental in class, court, prison or manual for scrutiny,

---

19 Ibid., 817.
22 Ibid.
study, judgement, discipline, or governing’.24 This period of ascendancy of Orientalist scholarship also happened to be one of unparalleled European expansion.25 The exercise of cultural strength that saw European direct colonial dominion expand from about 35 percent to about 85 percent of the earth’s surface during this time26 drew from the intellectual power of Orientalism:

Knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control.27

‘The story of modern Western science’, writes Arlene Tickner, ‘is one of construed superiority’.28 A tendency at the core of Orientalist theory was to channel thought into distinct ‘West’ and ‘East’ compartments. Put simply, the former is rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion; the latter is none of these things.29 The Orientalist’s gaze contained and represented its subjects within a dominating framework established upon this division. It offered no avenue for its subjects to speak back - they were spoken for by a race that ‘knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves’.30 A respected field of social science, no merely asserted generality was denied the dignity of truth; no theoretical list of Oriental attributes was without application to the behaviour of Orientals in the real world.31

Let us consider the way in which the world remains divided in this binary opposition. Said gives the example of Henry Kissinger’s essay ‘Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy’, which divides the world into two halves: West/Occident and East/Orient find their contemporary counterparts in the ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ worlds.32 Both the traditional Orientalist and Kissinger conceive of the difference between cultures ‘first, as creating a battlefront that separates them, and second, as inviting the West to control, contain and otherwise govern the Other’.33 It

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 40-41.
27 Ibid., 36.
29 Said, Orientalism, 49.
30 Ibid., 34-35.
31 Ibid., 49.
32 Ibid., 46.
33 Ibid., 47-48.
is this thought structure that underlies the contemporary War on Terror.\textsuperscript{34} Just as colonial elites drew from the intellectual power of the Orientalist as they sought to expand their empires, so too do contemporary Western leaders draw on the power of the academic ‘expert’ as they seek to justify their wars.

It cannot be denied that some academic fields are much closer to power than others. However, we might note that the majority of Peace Studies research is conducted from universities in so-called developed countries, and much of it focuses on conflicts in the so-called developing world. The above discussion alerts us to a history which would suggest that this is not a coincidence. Many non-Western scholars are engaged in the production of Peace Studies research. However, we might take note of a sort of academic socialisation, which Said calls ‘professionalisation’, whereby ‘actors entering a given field necessarily succumb to the power relations that characterise it’.\textsuperscript{35} This process establishes legitimate speakers and rules of the game that reinforce the status quo.\textsuperscript{36} Within this status quo, the professional academic of every variety finds herself in a position of relative epistemic privilege established via a history of complicity with colonial power. This status quo enables Dauphinee to come and go in Stojan’s country as she pleases when he can’t even consider the reverse.\textsuperscript{37} This status quo vests Peace Studies researchers, from Uppsala to Dunedin, with the authority to produce legitimate knowledge about conflicts in the developing world.

\textbf{An Economy of Colonial Truth}

Ashis Nandy points to the colonisation of the mind as the ultimate violence which colonialism does to its victims.\textsuperscript{38} A process ‘almost always unconscious and almost always ignored’,\textsuperscript{39} it ‘creates a culture in which the ruled are constantly tempted to fight their rulers within the psychological limits set by the latter’.\textsuperscript{40} Jacques Rancière points to a similar process when he speaks of the Distribution of the Sensible.\textsuperscript{41} A specific distribution of power becomes so self-evident that the dominance of some is rendered unspeakable - it appears simply as \textit{the way it is}. It becomes absorbed into the common-sense frameworks within which we examine events. Ways of thinking,

\textsuperscript{34} See, for example, “President Bush Axis of Evil Speech.” Available at \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btkJhAM7hZw}

\textsuperscript{35} Tickner, “By way of conclusion: forget IR?” 217.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 218.

\textsuperscript{37} Dauphinee, “The ethics of autoethnography,” 814.

\textsuperscript{38} Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy: Loss and recovery of self under colonialism (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 3.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.

knowing and being in the world which fall beyond the carefully mapped out boundaries of common-sense are banished from the Realm of Thinkability. Muppidi warns that the power that vests the academic with the authority to represent others colonises the academy and engages in a form of epistemic cleansing as it expands outwards in the process of burying, once and for all, other orders of learning and other ways of thinking the world elsewhere.42

Rancière contends that:

> Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time.43

Nandy laments that important voices from around the world cannot be heard because they do not speak in the language of the Western academy.44 Doty laments that the conventions of a discipline can colonise a writer’s own soul, ‘forcing us to write in sanitized, anonymous voices’.45 Keep in mind Robert Cox’s famous reminder to the academic: ‘Theory is always for someone, and for some purpose’,46 and Arundhati Roy’s contention that there’s no such thing as the voiceless (‘there are only the deliberately silenced or the preferably unheard’).47

Roland Bleiker contends that political reality doesn’t exist in an a priori way but rather comes into being through a process of representation.

> Even the most thorough empirical analysis can’t depict its object of inquiry in an authentic way.(…) It remains a form of interpretation and therefore an inherently political exercise. It says just as much, if not more, about the artistic choices of the interpreter as the object of interpretation.48

Every act of representation is therefore an act of power. Bleiker tells us that ‘this power is at its peak in a form of representation that is able to disguise its subjective

44 Roland Bleiker, Aesthetics and World Politics (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 171.
48 Bleiker, Aesthetics and World Politics, 7.
origins and values.’49 Academic writing presumes a neutral observer and the separation of object and subject. ‘Ideally’, writes Bleiker, ‘it erases all traces of human interference so the end product looks just like the original.’50 To write in the anonymous voice is to deem the identity of the writer irrelevant. To do so is to disguise the subjective origins and values which have informed the process of interpretation: representative power at its peak.

This is not to say that facts do not exist: exist, they do; speak for themselves, they do not. Rather, they require a socially acceptable narrative to ‘absorb, sustain and circulate’ them.51 Often, our perception of facts and phenomena becomes so self-evident that we no longer realise that they exclude as much as they reveal.52 The limits set by dominant, common-sense narratives, which ‘absorb, sustain and circulate’ facts about the world, function to channel thinking in particular directions, making permissible some routes to understanding whilst simultaneously blocking off others.53 The dominant route to knowledge in the social sciences engages the power of the colonial gaze. Dauphinee re-deploys the terminology and speaks of the ‘Academic Gaze’:

> It seeks to make sense of everything it encounters and, more significantly, to *master* what it encounters. With respect to field research, this is accomplished by a touristic move into a targeted environment that has usually already been made ‘known’ through the scholarship one reads prior to departure. Unlike tourism, however, fieldwork is justified, legitimated and funded by institutions whose primary claim is to produce and secure what counts as knowledge. (...) The informant has no mechanism through which to speak back.54

There is no need for an avenue through which the subject may respond when the subject and his surroundings are already suffuse with explanation. The possibility of coming to understand the subject dialogically is blocked off. An objective route to the truth requires his silence and exclusion: this is the only permissible academic route.

50 Ibid., 511.
53 Ibid., 5.
54 Dauphinee, “The ethics of autoethnography,” 806.
Cultural Violence

Through the concept of structural violence, Galtung makes visible the way in which acts of violence which cannot be directly linked to a specific agent can be just as harmful and destructive as direct, physical violence.55 He explores the roots of structural and direct violence in his article ‘Cultural Violence’.56 The study of cultural violence, he says, is the study of ‘the way in which the act of direct violence and the fact of structural violence are legitimised and thus rendered acceptable in society’.57 One way cultural violence works is by ‘making reality opaque, so that we do not see the violent act or fact, or at least not as violent’.58 According to Galtung, exploitation is a form of structural violence.59 In fact, it is the centre-piece of the archetypal violent structure – ‘this simply means that some, the topdogs, get much more out of the interaction in the structure than others, the underdogs’.60 Stojan wonders why the Professor wanted to write about Bosnia:

“Maybe it’s more exciting than writing about what your people have done to the world.” He stopped, considering. And then he said, “Or maybe you wrote it so that you will get promoted.” This last statement fell between us like a block of ice. Whether I had written it for that reason or not, promotion would be the outcome.61

We may consider Stojan’s character to be representative of the subjects of scholarly research. The Professors of the world profit from writing about wars experienced and suffered not by them, but by the Stojans of the world. And the Stojans of the world are not granted the authority to respond to their matter-of-fact accounts. To profit from a relationship is one thing. To profit from a relationship which is mediated by a structure that is unequal to the extent that one party has no possibility of mutually profiting, is to exploit. This relationship is made inevitable by the colonial matrix of power within which it takes place. It is made acceptable by a distribution of the sensible which is reproduced through what Muppidi calls an ‘economy of colonial truth’.62 The absence of personal voice from academic writing obscures the privilege that allows the researcher to produce knowledge about social phenomena experienced and suffered by others who do not possess such privilege.

57 Ibid., 292.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., 293.
It renders the author’s identity irrelevant, suggesting that the account could have been written by anyone. The fact that the Professor can produce truths about Bosnia, and Stojan cannot, appears simply as the way it is. The violent fact that one will get much more out of their interaction than the other is obscured. The academic voice may therefore be considered a form of cultural violence.

‘I was only following the rubrics of acceptable scholarship’, protests Dauphinee. ‘Who can be convicted for having followed the letter of the law?’\(^{63}\) Could it be that the laws which dictate the production of academic knowledge function to obscure a form of structural violence which would implicate Peace Studies researchers in the reproduction of a colonial matrix of power? Gillian Rose tells us that the journey towards greater comprehension of socio-political realities is struggle-filled and requires we see how we are implicated and that we take the risk to act politically.\(^{64}\) South African anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko advised Reverend Bob Scott to ‘work with your community, not ours’.\(^{65}\) Robbie Shilliam explains: ‘the privileged must invest their own sense of worth into a common struggle against their own structural supremacy’.\(^{66}\) This means defying the laws which ensure the reproduction of that structure, especially those which privilege ourselves, personally. Dauphinee intentionally defied the dictates of her discipline when she wrote *The Politics of Exile*. Richard Jackson brought the struggle to Peace Studies when he wrote his 2014 novel, *Confessions of a Terrorist*.\(^{67}\) They have set in motion the transformation of a form of cultural violence by writing not about, not for, but with the people.\(^{68}\)

**Cultural Nonviolence**

Galtung declared: ‘the opposite of cultural violence would be ‘cultural peace’’.\(^{69}\) However, recent scholarship, pointing out the conceptual instability of the word ‘peace’ and the interaction between reflection and action (praxis) necessary for transformation, has conceived of ‘cultural nonviolence’ as the functional opposite of

\(^{63}\) Dauphinee, “The ethics of autoethnography,” 816.


\(^{66}\) Ibid., 139.


\(^{69}\) Galtung, “Cultural Violence,” 291.
cultural violence.70 ‘If we say that cultural violence is an aspect of culture that legitimises direct and structural forms of violence’, writes Katerina Standish, ‘then, we should equally be able to say that cultural nonviolence are ‘aspects’ of culture that delegitimise direct and structural forms of violence’.71

If one way cultural violence works to legitimise direct and structural violence is by ‘making reality opaque, so that we do not see the violent act or fact, or at least not as violent’,72 then it would follow that one way cultural nonviolence may work to delegitimise direct or structural violence would be by making visible a violent act or fact, and making it visible as violent. A style of writing consistent with cultural nonviolence must make visible the relationship between researcher and subject as well as the violent structure that mediates it. In order to gain clues as to how this may be achieved, let’s look briefly towards an existing model of cultural nonviolence.

Standish demonstrates how Gandhian ahimsā (a Sanskrit word which can be translated as non-harming or not-hurting) may be considered a form of cultural nonviolence.73 It incorporates both restraint and observation – ‘doing minimal harm while giving love’.74 Gandhi conceived of love as the ‘identification with and service of all living beings’,75 which ‘builds on an openness that enables a person to find a unity and mutuality with others’.76 Through love, ahimsā is brought into an ‘integral, dialectical, and mutually interacting and reinforcing relation’ with satya. Douglas Allen describes satya as absolute truth, which manifests itself in terms of ‘permanence underlying change, unity underlying diversity, and the most profound ethical and spiritual realisation of the indivisible oneness and interconnectedness of all of reality’.77 Gandhian ahimsā delegitimises direct violence by incorporating an ideological prohibition on doing harm to others. It delegitimises structural violence by perceiving of an essential unity of life.78 Considering Gandhian ahimsā as a model of cultural nonviolence teaches us that one way of delegitimizing structural violence

71 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., 49.
76 Ibid.
78 Standish, “Cultural Nonviolence,” 52.
is to conceive of an essential unity of social reality. Does academic writing communicate a conception of social reality as a whole, interacting, or does it separate it into fragmented parts? 79

**Distance and Intimacy**

Epistemological distancing has been systematically developed into what we call social science, says Naeem Inayatullah. 80 He explains: ‘Distance and separation are created between writer and reader, observer and observed, and between the various parts of the world and its holistic constitution’. 81 Inayatullah understands the centrality of distancing to be a *differentia specifica* of the modern Western understanding of life. 82 Rather than sustaining distance, he suggests that social science may benefit from developing a sense of continuity and intimacy: ‘by acknowledging the presence of intimacy and feeling within our thinking we begin to understand life more holistically – with both mind *and* body, thought *and* emotion, and an analytic distance *with* an awareness of our familiarity and complicity in life’s construction’. 83 Generating intimacy does not require the complete rejection of the benefits of precise analysis offered by distancing, rather, Inayatullah conceives of the two practices as inherently related opposites that we should seek to find balance between. He suggests social science has ‘pushed the pendulum too far towards distancing’ and would become more humane and holistic if more intimacies were enabled. 84

Remember now Mignolo’s charge: the colonial matrix of power daily becomes less visible because of the ‘loss of holistic views’ promoted by the modern emphasis on expertise and on the *division and sub-division* of scientific labour and knowledge. 85 In the following sections of this essay, I will demonstrate how academic writing divides and sub-divides social reality and maximises distance between the fragmented parts. I will also consider how those separated parts may begin to be bonded and unified through the intimacies enabled by autoethnographic narrative writing. In doing so, I will follow the example of Inayatullah and (for purposes of

---

79 Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 76.
81 Ibid., 195.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., 196.
84 Ibid., 211.
clarity) present the contrasts between the two styles of writing starkly while recognising that such distinctions are really matters of degree.86

PART 2: Literary Intimacies

Self and Other: enabling intimacies between observer and observed

The loss of Self
When Stojan asks, 'What is your book about?', the Professor has a strange and telling thought: 'I taught these things to hundreds of students every year, and I couldn't explain them to a man over dinner'.87 Just as she could not explain her academic life to Stojan, Dauphinee also struggled to talk about her experiences in Bosnia in the language of her academic discipline – ‘I thought these things which I was sure my discipline would never provide a place for me to say’.88

The academic self is frequently cut off from the personal, experiential self.89 Arthur Bochner considers this separation to be ‘an essential part of our academic socialisation’.90 Conferences and journals rarely talk about personal lives91 and the vast majority of theory has ignored explicit consideration of what Neta Crawford refers to as 'the passions'.92 This separation helps to maintain the illusion that the academic self hasn’t been prejudiced by the interests of what is implied is the ‘soft-minded, self-indulgent and unprofessional’ personal self.93 We learn to hide our personal selves behind a veneer of theoretical detachment.94 The price we pay for sustaining this detachment is an alienated and alienating form of writing. Because making connections involves a personal aspect,95 the expulsion of the personal results in the production of work that fails to make human connections, alienating academic writing from ‘everyone except ourselves’.96

86 Inayatullah, “Distance and Intimacy,” 207.
90 Ibid., 432.
91 Ibid.
93 Bochner, “It’s About Time,” 433.
94 Ibid.
96 Doty, “Maladies of Our Souls,” 381.
With no ‘personality on the page’, social science prose is often ‘boring, dry, inaccessible work the public barely knows exists’, as Bochner puts it. Oded Löwenheim too confesses:

> throughout my years in academe, I, as Laurel Richardson says, have ‘yawned my way’ through numerous supposedly exemplary articles and books. (...) The impersonal way of writing does not create in the reader the emotional response that connects them to the text.

Impersonal writing breeds indifference to the fate of the human beings at the centre of social research – they become ‘actors’ in a ‘case study’ rather than human beings in real life situations. Anthony Lake and Roger Morris raise concern about reducing foreign policy to a ‘lifeless, bloodless set of abstractions’. 'To talk of suffering is to lose “effectiveness”, almost to lose one’s grip’, they write. 'It is seen as a sign that one’s “rational” arguments are weak. (...) The implied choice is posed between “people” and the “effectiveness” of a policy. Lake and Morris warn of the implications of such an approach: disembodied and dehumanised terms encourage easy inattention to and dull our awareness of the real people whose lives policy decisions affect or even end. According to Lake and Morris, ‘this conceptual approach is shared in our school classrooms no less than in our bureaucrats’ offices’. Kate Schick shares their concern: an education system which does not allow the expression of emotions breeds hardness (indifference towards pain) and coldness (indifference towards others). This has led to what Bochner refers to as

---

97 Ibid.
98 Bochner, “It’s About Time,” 433.
102 Ibid., 160.
103 Ibid., 159.
104 Ibid.
105 Kate Schick, “‘To Lend a Voice to Suffering is a Condition for All Truth’: Adorno and International Political Thought,” *Journal of International Political Theory* 5, no. 2 (2009): 151.
a ‘moral crisis’ within academia - the further one's academic socialisation progresses, the more the intellectual self becomes detached from the personal (emotional, experiential) self until... ‘we stop caring’.\textsuperscript{106} 'In an odd form of ritual alchemy, I become what I perform,' writes Jennifer Riggan, ‘I fake it until I make it and then I actually believe in this ‘I’ that I barely recognized a moment before. I have become the performance'.\textsuperscript{107}

'Knowledge without ethics is not so much bad ethics as inferior knowledge’, concludes Nandy.\textsuperscript{108} When we hide behind a veneer of theoretical detachment, we efface ‘the heartbeat hidden in the interstices of our big box words and our ever proliferating isms'; we erase ‘the blood that might otherwise drip from our narratives';\textsuperscript{109} we eliminate the bodily and emotional pain that ‘tells our knowledge that suffering ought not to be, that things should be different’.\textsuperscript{110} This is why, Theodor Adorno informs us, ‘to lend a voice to suffering is a condition for all truth'.\textsuperscript{111} Academic writing conventions require the researcher to separate reason and passion in a hierarchy which exalts one to the status of truth whilst condemning the other as an obstacle to the truth. They require the writer to hide or minimise the often very personal motivations for engaging in scholarship.\textsuperscript{112} Bochner points out that 'it is rare to find a productive scholar whose work is unconnected to his or her personal history'.\textsuperscript{113}

**The recovery of Self**

Doty was troubled by the divide between the writing in her journal and that deemed acceptable for scholarship – ‘I was clearly ‘there’ in one but anonymous in the other’.\textsuperscript{114} She came to think that her encounters with the social world must ‘strive to go beyond the fundamental alienation of turning social relations into just things we know and toward our own reckoning with how we are in these stories, with how

\textsuperscript{106} Bochner, “It's About Time,” 433.
\textsuperscript{108} Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*, 113.
\textsuperscript{109} Doty, “Maladies of Our Souls,” 381.
\textsuperscript{110} Schick, “To Lend a Voice to Suffering is a Condition for All Truth,” 139.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{112} Dauphinee, “The ethics of autoethnography,” 799.
\textsuperscript{113} Bochner, “It's About Time,” 433.
\textsuperscript{114} Doty, “Autoethnography – making human connections,” 1048.
they change us',¹¹⁵ She has since begun to ‘write differently’¹¹⁶ and has contributed to a growing body of literature called autoethnography, which explores the self as an explicit resource. Central to autoethnography is the recognition that the researcher is not a mere messenger or unveiler of facts, but rather serves as a hub through which the world becomes known.¹¹⁷ Reflecting on the journey that has shaped the viewpoint of the writer allows a fuller assessment of the conclusions the academic derives from her research because it allows both reader and writer to ‘retrace the steps we took to arrive at them’.¹¹⁸ “The voyage cannot be erased”, write Morgan Brigg and Roland Bleiker, ‘and neither can the framing, fading and restoration work. To erase the author is to erase potentially important insights: it leaves us with less knowledge rather than more’.¹¹⁹ Autoethnography is simply a case of the researcher dropping the pretence that she was not ‘there’ and revealing the process of production behind her work.¹²⁰

Inayatullah believes that social scientists should admit to and demonstrate how their work is an intimate part of themselves.¹²¹ According to Doty, one of the most significant things about the ‘turn’ to autoethnography is its potential to make human connections – it makes it clear that writers are part of their work and part of the stories they tell.¹²² She maintains that ‘making connections entails a personal aspect’.¹²³ Dauphinee demonstrates such intimacy in *The Politics of Exile*. Stojan wants the Professor to write differently about Bosnia. He becomes frustrated because she does not know what he wants her to say:

‘You’re building your whole career on what I lost, and you never came to even ask me what that was like’.

‘What would you like me to do?’ (...) ¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Brigg and Bleiker, “Autoethnographic International Relations,” 780.
¹²¹ Inayatullah, “Distance and Intimacy,” 211.
¹²³ Ibid., 1048.
‘I don’t know. Say anything but what you’re saying now. Come and live inside my skin.’

‘Indifference to suffering is not clever at all,’ Chinua Achebe proposes. ‘A person who is insensitive to the suffering of his fellows is that way because he lacks the imaginative power to get under the skin of another human being and see the world through eyes other than his own’. When Stojan says ‘Come and live inside my skin’, he is asking the Professor to engage in a process which Achebe calls ‘self-encounter’ or ‘imaginative identification’. The Politics of Exile not only allows us to hear what Dauphinee has to say about war, exile and exploitation. By allowing us to live under her skin and look through her eyes, she transforms us into initiates.

Things are then not really happening before we are happening, by the power and force of imaginative identification, to us. We not only see; we suffer alongside the hero (...).

Without having to undergo personally the ordeals which Stojan and the Professor go through, we become, through an act of our imagination, beneficiaries of their stories. Without having to write and then shred an entire manuscript, we are able to learn that there are things which academics ought to be saying which cannot be said in the style of the academic voice.

‘Imaginative identification is the opposite of indifference; it is human connectedness at its most intimate’. Through the self-encounters made possible by autoethnographic narrative, Dauphinee connects herself and her reader to the people at the centre of her research. She enables us to suffer with her as she becomes closer to the pain of Stojan’s experiences of the war. It is this that makes the direct violence of the war and the structural violence that enables the Professor to build her career on that war, suffered not by her but by Stojan (and many others who may or may not look like him), without even coming to ask him what it was like, feel wrong – or at least not right.

Dauphinee’s decision to write differently enables intimacies and human connections between writer, subject and reader that are absent from traditional academic accounts. Her change in writing form also allows her to bring all three of us into

126 Ibid., 99.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid., 103.
closer relation with the social forces that shape, and are shaped by, each and all of our lives.

**Structure and Agency: enabling intimacies between the various parts of the world and its holistic constitution**

Hidemi Suganami says that when we explain an event we are trying to answer how the relevant segment of the world moved from the point where the event had not taken place to the point at which it has, or, how certain inputs produce certain outputs because of the arrangement of things in which the process takes place. The end is the event/output, the beginning is decided by the researcher and 'we fill in the gap in the middle by telling a story of how the transition took place using three conventional ingredients': chance coincidences, mechanistic processes and human acts.\(^{130}\) Mechanistic processes relate to patterns of events and the idea of an automatic propelling of the empirical world in a given direction established by these patterns: structure. Human acts relates to decisions made by relevant actors and what led to them, as well as analysis of the particular context in which the acts took place: agency. While historical investigations typically construct causal *narratives*, which include all three ingredients, there is an assumed distinction in the social sciences between the search for mechanistic causes and the investigation of agential reasons. Social scientists are concerned with the construction of causal *theories*, which typically present answers specifically in respect to mechanistic causes.\(^{131}\)

All are attempts at making intelligible segments of the empirical world (…). It’s just that some are about the occurrence of events under descriptions deemed noteworthy as being particular to themselves, while others are about the recurrence of a type of event under some general descriptions.\(^{132}\)

Muppidi wonders: ‘are our texts on world politics riddled with so much explanation of patterns that little is left alive, nothing comes fresh, and no event is noteworthy?’\(^{133}\) Solely mechanistic approaches to explanation are characteristic of the aforementioned academic gaze – an optic which is able to make sense of and master what it encounters because what it encounters is already ‘shot through with

---


\(^{131}\) Ibid., 338.

\(^{132}\) Ibid., 340.

explanation'\textsuperscript{134} established by ‘generalisations we call theories’.\textsuperscript{135} Knowledge in the social sciences travels outside-in - particular subjects are \textit{made known} through analysis of general patterns by those who ‘know them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves’.\textsuperscript{136}

Suganami maintains that there is no rigid boundary between mechanistic causes and human acts. Rather, ‘both constitute a broader notion of cause’ as both are given in answer to the same type of question: ‘what contributed towards the outcome’s realization?’. Geoffrey Roberts similarly problematises the separate categorization of structural and agentic cause, suggesting that they should be seen as elements of a single identity. He explains that individuals are unique and particular while at the same time being inseparable from their conditions and contexts.\textsuperscript{137} Schick too explains how the two concepts mediate one another: ‘thought is shaped by societal discourses and institutions, and society is shaped by thought and practice’. The two following examples demonstrate why it is essential to consider particular human acts and general mechanistic processes as elements of a single identity.

Valerie Hudson et al’s \textit{Sex and World Peace} puts forward the idea that the treatment of women is an ‘unseen foundation’ for many of the phenomena we see as important in international affairs.\textsuperscript{138} They explain how the little things experienced by women day after day create a general context of violence and exploitation at the societal level that affects politics and security at both national and international levels. ‘What is happening at the most intimate levels can be viewed as a microcosm of the larger society’, they write. ‘While each specific act may seem inconsequential to human society, the cumulative impact of millions of acts is enormous and is one of the taproots of violence at all levels’.\textsuperscript{139} These ‘little things’, which the authors refer to as ‘microaggressions’, are rarely explored in academic analyses of political violence, which tend to focus on the movements of mechanistic processes. This

\textsuperscript{135} Muppidi, “On The Politics of Exile,” 301.
\textsuperscript{136} Said, \textit{Orientalism}, 34-35.
\textsuperscript{138} Valerie Hudson, Bonnie Ballif-Spa
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 19.
exclusion allows them to become ‘as natural and invisible to the next generation as air itself’.\textsuperscript{140}

While Hudson et al demonstrate the cumulative significance of individual human acts in building and maintaining structural forces of oppression, James Scott makes a similar argument in relation to class resistance\textsuperscript{141}. He contends that ‘everyday forms of resistance’, by which he means individual acts which are not open and declared in the usual sense of politics but which nevertheless undermine the laws which maintain class divisions, may be considered the most vital means by which lower classes manifest their political interests.\textsuperscript{142} Such acts may appear trivial, but when considered cumulatively, they may have aggregate consequences out of proportion to their banality when considered individually. Scott suggests that many large rebellions and revolutions can be found to have a prehistory rooted in patterns of ‘quiet resistance’.\textsuperscript{143} The revolutionary actions might well have been prefigured in their practices of resistance and in their off-stage discourse.\textsuperscript{144} The vast majority of research into political conflict focuses solely on large events and open political actions and habitually overlooks the day to day acts and private, hidden transcripts of everyday resisters. This communicates a ‘damagingly narrow and poverty-stricken view of political action’.\textsuperscript{145}

To limit research in the social sciences to strictly mechanistic explanations imposes an ‘unnecessary restriction on what can be known’.\textsuperscript{146} ‘Subsumption of the particular under the general doesn’t explain the particular’, writes Suganami. ‘Saying ‘it always happens like that’ does not explain but may make the listener stop asking further questions’.\textsuperscript{147} According to Schick, a more comprehensive understanding of social reality can be gained by ‘moving back and forth in continual interplay’ between structural and agentic causes.\textsuperscript{148} Suganami points out that scientific and intersubjective approaches can be, and often are, combined in stories to show how, as a result of a number of different kinds of things happening or not

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{142} For contemporary examples, see Dead Prez, “Hell Yea (Pimp the System),” \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5-e0KFGs6w}
\textsuperscript{143} Scott, “Everyday Forms of Resistance,” 58.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 59.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 33.
\textsuperscript{146} Suganami, “Narrative Explanation and International Relations,” 347.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 333.
\textsuperscript{148} Schick, “To Lend a Voice to Suffering is a Condition for All Truth,” 146.
happening, some event came to occur.\textsuperscript{149} Roberts seems to concur: ‘narratives bring together people, actions, ideas, circumstances, conditions, results and consequences in the form of an overall interpretation and characterization of a set of events and outcomes’.\textsuperscript{150} Inayatullah observes that literary narratives attend to the way in which \textit{all structures work through human action}.\textsuperscript{151}

In scientific texts, such [abstract] forces are common currency. Indeed, scientific texts rarely contain active characters or agents. Of course, the force of abstract ideals and structures (...) push and pull a novel’s characters. But such forces are not reified. Structural operations are revealed by the feelings, thoughts, gestures and actions of specific actors.\textsuperscript{152}

Causal narratives explain both particular human acts and, by extension, general structural forces. ‘Society itself becomes more and more important to the serious novelist and indeed turns into a character itself, perhaps the chief character’, writes Achebe.\textsuperscript{153}

Consider Achebe’s first and most famous novel, \textit{Things Fall Apart}, a story which brings to life an Ibo man named Okonkwo who lived in a village on the east bank of the Niger around the turn of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{154} Achebe leads us on a journey from Okonkwo’s early days to the day he is found dangling from a tree behind his compound. In the final pages, Achebe throws into stark relief the differences between causal narrative and theory by tying the story to a book which would be written by the District Commissioner called \textit{The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger}. ‘The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading’, thought the District Commissioner. ‘One could almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details’.\textsuperscript{155} The District Commissioner is able to reduce his explanation of Okonkwo to a ‘reasonable paragraph’ because he is not interested in anything more than a ‘thin slice’ of the man – ‘what he foresees as an essential (tid)bit’, writes Muppidi, ‘a biometric, in contemporary terms, that will allow him to

\textsuperscript{149} Suganami, ”Narrative Explanation and International Relations,” 346.
\textsuperscript{150} Roberts, “History, Theory and the Narrative Turn in IR,” 712.
\textsuperscript{151} Inayatullah, “Distance and Intimacy,” 209.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} Chinua Achebe, \textit{Things Fall Apart} (London: Everyman’s Library, 1992), 179.
complete the story he already knows'.\textsuperscript{156} Okonkwo is \textit{made known} before he has uttered a single word in the ‘nasty, British and short’\textsuperscript{157} account written by the District Commissioner. In \textit{Things Fall Apart}, on the other hand, it is the details, the ‘little things’, that Achebe delicately brings to life that allow us to gain a deeper understanding of Okonkwo and the structural forces that push and pull his life. Achebe does not refer to colonisation as an abstract force. Rather, he sinks it into the life of Okonkwo and brings it out again through his feelings, thoughts, words, gestures and actions.

Kwame Anthony Appiah notes that Achebe’s account of the colonization of Iboland is ‘remarkably true to the historical record’.\textsuperscript{158}

When the British arrived and ‘pacified’ this region in the early decades of the twentieth century, they did so with a great deal of brutality. The practice of communal punishment, described in chapter fifteen in the story of Abame, in which communities were attacked and people slaughtered as reprisal for offences, really occurred: as did the business of inviting elders to a meeting and then arresting or executing them. The British recruited Africans from other parts of the country to carry out their orders – and they were often able to abuse their position as intermediaries, as they do in this novel.\textsuperscript{159}

Jackson states that ‘narrative form can allow for the exploration of theoretical concepts in the lived human conditions and the human implications they entail, in ways professional academic writing is rarely able to’.\textsuperscript{160} In \textit{Things Fall Apart}, colonisation manifests in the blood-coloured lake at Abame,\textsuperscript{161} in the fifty bags of cowries added to the villagers’ fine by the court messengers\textsuperscript{162} and in the long stripes on Okonkwo’s back where the warder’s whip had cut into his flesh.\textsuperscript{163} It emerges from Okonkwo when he grinds his teeth with bitterness,\textsuperscript{164} when he chokes and trembles with hate,\textsuperscript{165} and when he bows his head in sadness as he mourns for

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{157} Achebe, “The Truth of Fiction,” 100. See Thomas Hobbes’ famous explanation of life in \textit{The Leviathan}.
\bibitem{158} Appiah, “Introduction,” xv.
\bibitem{159} Ibid., xvi.
\bibitem{161} Achebe, \textit{Things Fall Apart}, 118-123
\bibitem{162} Ibid., 169.
\bibitem{163} Ibid., 171.
\bibitem{164} Ibid., 172.
\bibitem{165} Ibid., 168 and 175.
\end{thebibliography}
his clan which he sees breaking up and falling apart.\footnote{Ibid., 151 and 157.} Most significantly, colonisation manifests in Okonkwo's death. His friend Obierika states plainly: ‘That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog...’\footnote{Ibid., 178-179.}

The academic gaze and its communicative counterpart, the academic voice do not allow particular subjects room to explain themselves, but rather shoots them through with explanations established on the basis of wider social patterns observed by those granted the authority to observe them. Narrative accounts allow us to get to know an individual intimately. We listen to his thoughts and feelings; we witness his gestures and actions. We become familiar with him...and then, bit by bit, through him, an understanding of wider social forces begins to emerge. The deep image of the individual agent offered by narrative, an agent constituted by and constitutive of a whole social structure, demonstrates that if you ‘pull a thread here (...) you'll find that it's attached to the rest of the world’.\footnote{Naeem Inayatullah, “Pulling threads: Intimate systematicity in The Politics of Exile,” Security Dialogue 44, no. 4 (2013): 335.} Knowledge in literary narratives travels inside-out - we begin with the life of a particular individual and we end with a deep understanding of wider social patterns.

Violence and Death encircle the subject matter of Peace Studies. ‘Keep your mind in hell and despair not,’ Rose repeats to herself.\footnote{Gillian Rose, Love’s Work (Great Britain: Vintage, 1997).} While it may appear so at first sight, stories rarely end in despair. Because their creators trust and have faith in their reader, from within them rises an Eternal Hope.

**Means and Ends: enabling intimacies between writer and reader**

‘Life is short and art is long, said the ancients. We can mitigate the brevity of one with the longevity of the other’.\footnote{Achebe, “The Truth of Fiction,” 100.} My standard two teacher told me about a time when the Sun and the North Wind had a contest to decide which was the most powerful. The one who could first strip a man of his coat would be the winner. While the mighty force of the Wind only caused the man to cling tighter to his coat, he willingly accepted the Sun’s warm invitation to take it off.

Scientific prose is driven by an argument.\footnote{Inayatullah, “Distance and Intimacy,” 208.} The strategy is to forcefully insist that the reader ‘submit to the truth being demonstrated’.

---

\footnotetext[166]{Ibid., 151 and 157.}
\footnotetext[167]{Ibid., 178-179.}
\footnotetext[169]{Gillian Rose, Love’s Work (Great Britain: Vintage, 1997).}
\footnotetext[170]{Achebe, “The Truth of Fiction,” 100.}
\footnotetext[171]{Inayatullah, “Distance and Intimacy,” 208.}
approached in such a way, according to Inayatullah, is to ‘suspect, resist and expose’.173 The late feminist scholar, Grace Jantzen, explains:

> Once the model of a battle is taken as central to philosophical thinking, then the likelihood increases that instead of engaging in creative exploration of the issues, a student who is trying to learn to think philosophically will think not of what gives her insight or how that insight could be extended, but of how her position could be attacked and what she needs to do about it.174

Dauphinee suggests there is a pressing need to cease rewarding the ‘intellectual aggression’ which characterizes the academic voice, a form of writing which ‘serves to mimic established rubrics of conflict’.175

While scientific prose raises the reader’s guard, it usually does not insist that the reader construct an interpretation beyond the one intended by the author.176 The author’s work is considered incomplete unless she brings closure to substantive issue. Dauphinee suggests that such writing is often ‘stagnant and exclusionary’ as it requires the erasure of revelations of ambiguity and ambivalence.177 ‘Why are we not ashamed’, she asks, ‘to return to our institutions from ‘the field’ and impart only the things that fit in to our pre-designed research agendas?’178

Paulo Freire is critical of what he terms the ‘banking concept’ of education, whereby the teacher presents knowledge in the form of a monologue for the students to memorise. The students’ role is confined to ‘storing the deposits entrusted to them’.179 In other words, students are required to passively ‘submit to the truth being demonstrated’.180 Freire proposes an alternative, which he calls ‘problem-posing education’, whereby the teacher should ‘re-present the universe to the people from whom he first received it, and re-present it not as a lecture, but as a

---

172 Ibid., 210.
175 Ibid.
176 Inayatullah, “Distance and Intimacy,” 209.
178 Dauphinee, “The ethics of autoethnography,” 817
problem’. Unlike banking education, which situates the student as ‘the possessor of an empty consciousness which can be filled’, problem-posing education recognizes the student as a conscious being who makes up a part of the reality being investigated. It trusts that they are active, able and creative producers and invites them to participate in the production of knowledge dialogically by presenting them with open questions and problems, not closed answers and pre-determined endings.

Literary narratives require the active participation of the reader. ‘While literature initially relaxes the guard of the reader’, writes Inayatullah, ‘it also demands, at the other end, that the reader engage in the act of interpreting the work as a whole.’ ‘It is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one produces it,’ writes Walter Benjamin. A ‘finished work’ of literature attains closure aesthetically in order to remain open politically – it aims to create a world containing multiple insights from which it may call upon the reader to interpret things encountered in that world the way she understands them. By remaining exploratory and open-ended, literary narratives make it the reader’s job to uncover messages and to secure particular interpretations. They do not dictate answers, but (dis)place us into a world which (dis)rupts our typical ways of being and knowing. There are no neat and easy answers. The ‘chaos of literature’, as Olivia Harrison calls it, confronts us. We are not forced into submission, but, certainly, ‘we are forced into thought’.

The truth of fiction
Frank Kermode defines literary fiction as ‘something we know does not exist but which helps us to make sense of, and move in, the world’. Artistic representations of life, such as those created by the fiction writer, cannot be a carbon copy of life and in this specific sense, cannot be ‘true’. But, writes Achebe, ‘if art may dispense with the constraining exactitude of literal truth, it does acquire in return incalculable

---

181 Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 86.
182 Ibid., 49.
183 Ibid.
184 Inayatullah, "Distance and Intimacy," 209.
186 Ibid.
187 Inayatullah, “Distance and Intimacy,” 208.
189 Shapiro, “Go west, go east: War’s exilic subjects,” 326.
powers of persuasion in the imagination’,\textsuperscript{191} He makes a point to note that when reading literary fiction, our disbelief is \textit{suspended}, not abolished; our submersion in the story is \textit{experimental}, not permanent.\textsuperscript{192} We say ‘let us pretend’ like grace before our act, and ‘our revels now are ended’ like a benediction when we have finished.\textsuperscript{193} And yet, we are able to ‘draw from this insubstantial pageant essential insights and wisdoms for making our way in the real world’.\textsuperscript{194} Works of narrative literature pursue what Inayatullah suggests is a ‘more modest, but perhaps more effective goal’ than that of theories – they do not demand we submit to a truth being demonstrated, but rather invite us to engage in the world of their creation so that when we return to our own world we may notice within us a small shift in our consciousness.\textsuperscript{195}

The End in literature does not function to bring closure. It may act as an opening up of our perception of the world around us – the point at which we re-enter the real world with new and valuable insights. Obierika told Okonkwo’s story in three parts: ‘That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog…’.\textsuperscript{196} ‘The beginning. The middle; and the end…’ Notice it ends not with a full stop, but with a … The … (literal or implied) of literary narrative ‘endings’ act like an unwritten question: ‘what will happen next?’, or perhaps rather: ‘what \textit{should} happen next?’. Dauphinee leaves us with a … at the conclusion of \textit{The Politics of Exile}: The Professor returns to her office after seeing Stojan for the last time on a street near her university. She sits at her computer, considers a moment, and then writes: ‘I am building my career on the loss of a man named Stojan Sokolović, and on the loss of many millions of others, who may or may not resemble him. And one night, he told me…’.\textsuperscript{197} How can she write about the things that Stojan has revealed to her? How \textit{should} she write about them? The sclerotic rigidity of the academic voice make it ‘deeply ill at ease’\textsuperscript{198} with the way Stojan blurs the boundaries between guilt and innocence, victim and perpetrator, researcher and subject. The Professor must change the form of her writing if she does not wish to exclude him from it. The … is the point of her transition from one form to another. It is the point of trans-form-ation.

\textsuperscript{191} Ibid, 95.
\textsuperscript{192} Ibid, 96.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., 104.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{195} Inayatullah, “Distance and Intimacy,” 210.
\textsuperscript{196} Achebe, \textit{Things Fall Apart}, 178-179.
\textsuperscript{197} Dauphinee, \textit{The Politics of Exile}, 208.
\textsuperscript{198} Dauphinee, “Critical Methodological and Narrative Developments in IR: A Forum.”
Löwenheim believes that narrativistic research can have the potential to ‘rebuild some sense of community among authors and their readers’. In every work of literary resistance, writes Jackson,

the author’s act of resistance includes an invitation to the reader to also resist; but the reader has to symbolically accept this invitation for the work of art to become effective outside itself. Aesthetics are not in themselves empowering but can become so if author and reader jointly make this decision.

The … Dauphinee leaves us with are an invitation to resist the rubrics of acceptable scholarship and to think about what a new form of writing research could, or should, look like. While the alternative world that a work of literature submerges the reader in is produced by the writer, the knowledge that flows from that world is produced jointly by the writer and the reader through the reader’s interpretations of open endings. The knowledge that flows from literature is produced dialogically with the reader. It is for this reason that stories outlive theories. Benjamin tells us:

The value of information does not survive the moment in which it was new. It lives only in that moment; it has to surrender to it completely and explain itself to it without losing any time. A story is different. It does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time.

Stories retain their ‘germinative power’ because they combine the experiences of one person in one place and time (the writer) with those of another person in another place and time (the reader). They ‘long to be used rather than analysed, to be told and retold rather than theorised and settled,’ writes Bochner. They promise the companionship of intimate detail as a substitute for the loneliness of abstracted facts, touching readers where they live and offering details that ‘linger in the mind’. Dauphinee’s novel is an invitation into her mind. She carries us with her on the journey which led her to be able to see the violence at the heart of her writing. When our revels are ended and we leave the world she has created, her (view)point lingers - we are able to look at our own world through her eyes and locate our own implicatedness in the violent structure she has made visible.

---

199 Löwenheim, “Oxygen: Impressions from the Workshop.”
201 Ibid.
202 Bochner, “It’s About Time,” 434.
Discussion

Nandy warns that the dominant idea of rationality is the first strand of consciousness to be co-opted by any successful structure of institutionalised oppression. He advises that when such co-option has taken place, ‘resistance as well as survival demands some access to the larger whole, howsoever self-defeating that process may seem in the light of conventional reason and day-to-day politics’. The tendency to reject that beyond which we can see or control is characteristic of the academic gaze, which seeks to make sense of and master what it encounters. ‘We may find ourselves more invested in what we can verify, rather than in what we can’t, not because the issues are always more important ethically or politically, but because we can verify,’ notes Dauphinee. This limits research to finite questions which can be answered within the parameters of rational frameworks of understanding. It does not allow for the exploration of a very important question: ‘can you imagine...?’. ‘The streams, rivers and oceans of life are too overflowing, too rich and too interconnected to be cut with tools of surgical precision and then stored in the mutually exclusive containers of modern science’, writes Inayatullah. To ask ‘can you imagine...?’ is to ask: can you transcend those containers? Can you crash through the boundaries they erect in search for what ought, or ought not, to be?

Literary forms of writing do not tell the reader ‘I can verify’, rather, they ask the reader, ‘can you imagine...?’ and in doing so begin to break down the boundaries that divide and separate the constituent parts of a social totality. They create an opening which allows for the emergence of a larger whole which ‘transcends the system’s analytic categories and/or stands them on their head’. There emerges a ‘profound ethical and spiritual realisation of the indivisible oneness and interconnectedness of all of reality’. Resistance, as well as survival, demands we ask this question.

In conclusion

Inayatullah said that social science has pushed the pendulum too far towards distancing. It trains the researcher to write about the subjects of her research in the cool, detached and highly formalistic anonymity of the academic voice. To write

\[\text{\textsuperscript{203} Nandy, The Intimate Enemy, 113.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{204} Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{205} Dauphinee, “The ethics of autoethnography,” 806.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., 812.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{207} Inayatullah, “Distance and Intimacy,” 212.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{208} Nandy, The Intimate Enemy, 113.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{209} Allen, “Mahatma Gandhi on Violence and Peace Education,” 302.}\]
‘about’ or ‘for’ from a position of epistemic privilege within a social structure rooted in coloniality is inevitably to silence and to exploit. The scholarly distancing act that requires the researcher to detach her personal self from the structure that connects her to her reader and to the humans at the centre of her research, allows that to feel right, or at least not wrong. This essay is an attempt to pull back that pendulum towards intimacy and search for ways of writing and producing knowledge dialogically with: with personality, with the humans at the centre of social research and with the reader. Autoethnographic narratives make these human connections possible in the first instance by refusing to exclude personal experience and emotion. By way of a most intimate connection – imaginative identification – such writing allows us to get under the skin of another and look at the world through their eyes. Benign from the point of view of the privileged, the darker underside of the social structure that connects us comes into full view. The way it is suddenly feels wrong, or at least not right.

Desmond Tutu believed that ‘if you are neutral in situations of injustice you have chosen the side of the oppressor’. Although hegemonic in the social sciences, the academic gaze is just one of many ways of looking at the world; the academic voice just one of many styles of writing. They are not the only valuable ways to conduct and present scholarly research. You can choose differently! The resistance of established laws and norms has always preceded social transformation and has always involved risk: maybe you won’t get a good mark for your assignment; maybe you won’t get promoted; maybe you won’t get published or taken seriously by other academics. On the other hand, maybe writing differently will allow you to reach people outside of the university who had never read your work before; maybe it will make space for voices (your own and those of others) that you never listened to before and maybe they will say things that you had never considered before; maybe writing differently will reveal your implication in a violent and unjust social structure and allow you to feel that violence like you never have before. The question is whether or not you deem the benefits of investment in the struggle against that structure valuable enough to outweigh the losses that investment will incur in terms of the privileges you derive from it...

References


Schick, Kate. “‘To Lend a Voice to Suffering is a Condition for All Truth’: Adorno and International Political Thought.” Journal of International Political Theory 5, no. 2 (2009), 138-160.


