

## **Writing of the Heart: Auto-ethnographic Writing as Subversive Story Telling**

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How do we write of 'academic depression' (Jago, 2002), of the heartfelt stories of academic lives that feel like death? I want to speak of such writing, of my first-person autoethnographic account of falling into academic depression. And in doing this I want to speak of the struggle to create an authentic articulation between my personal and professional selves (Bochner, 1997), a struggle that reflects the lived experience of inauthenticity, of a life where relations with myself and with others were overdetermined by the demands of performativity. As such, I want to speak of autoethnographic writing as a form of re-moralisation (Frank, 2000). Re-moralisation relates to Arthur Frank's argument for stories of illness as voicing the experience of those categorised by expert knowledge, defined as without voice. And as a form of re-moralisation I want to suggest that it defines a certain ethical standpoint; a recognition that the voice of those suffering depression was like an absent presence in the academic literature.

Having provided an account of the re-moralising power of autoethnographic writing it seems apt to outline particular strategies for conducting writing as a kind of care of the self. I will therefore explain how Carol Rambo Ronai (Ronai, 1998) helped me formulate a layered account, and how I was able to provide a structure for this layering through adopting the structure of alternating between the poetic reflection of 'being there' with the necessary engagement with academic debates and considerations (Spry, 2001). This kind of structured layering draws on Carolyn Ellis' (Ellis, 2007) invitation to write in a way that moves back and forth between personal introspection and academic reflection, or Behar's (Lindisfarne, 2010) discussion of the shifts between novelistic and scholarly voices. This movement back and forth, these different voices mirror again Bochner's concern about the splitting of our personal and academic selves. I argue that the very structure of the writing both reflects and challenges this rupture, and in challenging contributes to autoethnographic writing as acts of re-moralisation.

Finally, I want to say something about the political importance of the specific nuancing of the text. I want to argue that the use of autoethnographic writing has power because of the way it makes it possible for others to see their own stories validated (Ellis, 1999). When faced with resigning themselves to institutional advancement, such stories of vulnerability can be empowering, as 'subversive stories' (Ewick & Silbey, 1995), that challenge hegemonic stories of academic life by reconnecting private troubles with public issues.

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