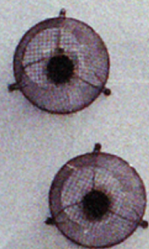


International Perspectives on Autoethnographic Research and Practice



Edited by
Lydia Turner
Nigel P. Short
Alec Grant
Tony E. Adams

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

International Perspectives on Autoethnographic Research and Practice is the first volume of international scholarship on autoethnography. This culturally and academically diverse collection combines perspectives on contemporary autoethnographic thinking from scholars working within a variety of disciplines, contexts, and formats. The first section provides an introduction and demonstration of the different types and uses of autoethnography, the second explores the potential issues and questions associated with its practice, and the third offers perspectives on evaluation and assessment. Concluding with a reflective discussion between the editors, this is the premier resource for researchers and students interested in autoethnography, life writing, and qualitative research.

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*Edited by Lydia Turner, Nigel P. Short,
Alec Grant, and Tony E. Adams*

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For Daniel, Jacob, Christopher, Josh, and Emily – **Lydia**

For Ophelia Mary Walker, Journey Rae Strahl, and all
at Resto Classics – **Nigel**

For my wife, Mary Grant; my daughters, Amy and Anna;
my son-in-law, Mark; and my grandchildren, Charlotte and
James – **Alec**

For Art, Carolyn, Keith, Sheri, and Jerry – **Tony**



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FOREWORD

Ken Gale

Autoethnography sits on the multi-faceted cusp of numerous academic and research based twists and turns. While, in large part, autoethnographic practice has freed itself from the positivistic proclivities and intentions of the ethnographic milieu from which it emerged in late twentieth-century research practices in the social sciences and the humanities, it continues to stand in dynamic and often problematic relation to the influence of poststructural and posthumanist thinking, and practice that has emerged in recent years. Post-structuralism's concerns with multiple perspectives and deconstructive strategies of thought and inquiry and posthumanism's intention to de-centre the human agent in relation to an engagement with the entanglements of discourse and materiality both play a substantial part in troubling the status of autoethnography as a recognised, valid, and credible mode of thought and inquiry. Therefore, the arrival of a book containing a collection of chapters to do with *International Perspectives on Autoethnographic Research and Practice* is both timely and welcome within the context of this highly volatile and contested field of theory and inquiry based practice.

By drawing upon multiple texts written by authors from a wide variety of national, cultural, and academic backgrounds, and by offering chapters on an extensive and diverse range of disciplinary and subject based areas of research, inquiry, and investigation, the editors have provided, through carefully nuanced practices of selection, curation, and incisive observation, a range of significant, insightful, and illuminating texts with which autoethnography and its associated practices can be examined from a variety of new and different perspectives.

So, in this collection and by way of example, the book offers the opportunity to travel from Norman K. Denzin's opening performance ethnography, which bends an American past to an American present, through Kitrina

Douglas's evocation of stories that breathe and chart their own course; then by way of Marilyn Metta's autoethnographic journey through mythology, story-telling, and performance, with its insights into abuse and domestic violence, via Bénard's autoethnographic engagements with the consequences of family life in Mexico City on through Susanne Gannon's movements with vignettes of memory, autoethnographic fragments, and everyday life with birds in Western Australia and on to concluding with Sophie Tamas's dealing with the public and private dilemmas, and consequences of publishing autoethnographic work. These and the other high quality chapters in the book provide the reader with a number of powerful 'real-life' accounts, which are highly substantive in terms of what autoethnography can do as well as tentatively suggesting and troubling more academically inflected perspectives and notions of how autoethnography might be conceptualised.

The chapters of this carefully edited collection are organised within a fluid and logical structure to provide the reader with a carefully crafted arrangement of sections dealing with different aspects of autoethnography, both in terms of how it might be conceptualised and how it is practised. So, within this structural form, the book moves from original conception, through the provision of varying accounts of how autoethnographic research and practice is designed and used, in and through different subject and topic areas. In this way, the book also encourages readers to engage with and to make movements towards consideration of the active processes of, and ethical issues involved in, working with autoethnographic practice within diverse practices and multiple contexts. These sections of the book clearly convey, in extremely vivid ways, that engaging in autoethnographic inquiry is not an easy option for the researcher who is about to embark upon this kind of research. The autoethnographic fieldwork that is described in the book is suffused with encounters to do with issues of voice, authorial intent, and audience response, and, in these respects, this collection is extremely valuable, both in terms of providing accounts of these encounters and in offering both implicit and explicit suggestions about the ways in which such issues might be addressed.

The final section of the book takes this task head on when it offers illustrations and engagements with the challenges involved in dealing with autoethnography in the context of teaching and learning practices. Here, the book offers chapters that deal with the kinds of problems that might be encountered when working with students in institutional settings: problems to do with teaching, learning, mentoring, supervision, writing, and so on. In these chapters, we are brought face to face with examples of autoethnography that do not simply tell us about the world within the context of the formal academic languages of established theory and accepted rhetoric but rather involve performatively bringing these worlds to life through practices of showing and of actively doing something with them. Then, as the possibilities of publication come to life, questions about criteria are offered, presented, and engaged

with in terms of how autoethnographic practices might be evaluated in worlds that might seem to be alien to the original inquiries. The final stage in the emergence of this hugely informative and often exciting collection of autoethnographic accounts echoes with tangible resonance the deep and sometimes complex content of the book as a whole.

The autoethnographic accounts in the chapter and sections of this collection embody thoughtful and pragmatic approaches to research and inquiry so that, in this important respect, as readers of these accounts, we can move our thinking towards the vagaries and complexities of autoethnographic practices. Thinking about what autoethnography *does* seems to be a far more important venture than grappling with the epistemological entanglements of what it *means* or perhaps, more importantly in relation to the many different perspectives available on the subject, what it *might* mean. Since the earliest years of its emergence from the positivistic limitations of its ethnographic roots, autoethnography, and those who claim to practise it, has struggled with issues of identity, representation, interpretation, and critical controversy, a number of which find their place in this collection. The many and diverse possibilities, which grow out of this multiplicity, give strength to the potency of autoethnography. This collection allows it to move, and, to use Manning's (2016) phrase, it offers a 'minor gesture' in the micro politics of resistance and the productive desire of those who use it to make it do something: in short, to employ it in practices of world making. In her book *Ordinary Affects*, Kathleen Stewart attempts to 'slow the quick jump to representational thinking and evaluative critique long enough to find ways of approaching the complex and uncertain objects that fascinate because they literally hit us or exert a pull on us' (2007: 4). This seems to be both an important trajectory and a sensible pace of movement for autoethnography to take. As this collection vividly shows, autoethnographers are clearly fascinated by these encounters with the world. The vibrant writings in this exciting and valuable book and the writings that are offered of these encounters are all involved in creating new events. In metonymic associations that glimpse, bounce, rub, shimmer, and sometimes swarm, these writings offer proximities, connections, and intensities that emerge out of and give life to the ordinary. Therefore, and significantly, this book can be used to encourage other autoethnographers to begin to make the important shift away from representational thinking and concomitant interpretive and critical practice, and move towards what Massumi (2002: 17) describes as the use of 'examples' and processes of 'exemplification' to trouble the constraints of such limiting practices. Therefore, the chapters within this book provide valuable stopping off points of engagement, where, in transversal movements and moments, it is possible to carry ideas, points of interest, and certain practices to other chapters or stopping off points in an ongoing process of activating detail and relational inquiry. In doing this, and in helping others who read this book to do this, the many vivid and luminous writings provided here offer a powerful narrative

of how autoethnography does important work as a research methodology in many disciplines and subject areas. In achieving this, the book also clearly and helpfully demonstrates how autoethnographers can be active, energetic, and pragmatic in using and promoting exemplary research methods; in engaging in active practices of resistance; and in offering exciting new directions and creative ways forward in these difficult and challenging neoliberal times.

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FOREWORD

Pat Sykes

Receiving an email from the editors inviting me to write a foreword to this book, I felt flattered and honoured, concerned and apprehensive. Flattered and honoured for obvious reasons; concerned and apprehensive because I wasn't convinced I could say anything that I hadn't already said elsewhere. Flattery – but also curiosity and the chance to see what new things people might be saying about the practice and state of autoethnography – won out, so I agreed and set about reading a draft copy of the book. What a treat of a reading day I had! And what an interesting compilation the editors have put together!

For a start, I found the way in which the book has been organised helpful. The chapters – all of which are written by practising autoethnographers – are presented in three sections that neophytes and those with experience alike should find useful in developing their thinking about and their approaches to doing autoethnography. *Section 1 – Understanding Autoethnography* – provides examples of different types and conceptualisations of autoethnography, showing that it can be used to address a range of topics and issues arising across academic disciplines and also in therapeutic and work related spaces. *Section 2 – Doing and Representing Autoethnography* – raises important issues around the enactment of autoethnography and its reception by various audiences. *Section 3 – Supervising, Sharing, and Evaluating Autoethnography* – offers useful pointers for teachers, supervisors, and assessors, those seeking to publish, and peer reviewers.

As I read, I found that the individual chapters were stimulating, provoking, and speaking to me specifically as a researcher with a history of using autobiographical approaches, including autoethnography. Isn't this sort of personal stimulation and provocation one of the characteristics of effective autoethnography? I think so. It certainly led me to think again about what I had done and why and how it was that I had. Consequently, I decided, on the basis of my engagement with the text, that I wanted to share some new reflections on how,

over 40+ years as a researcher and academic in the wide and diverse field of education, I have sought to stimulate and provoke by employing methodologies, methods, and forms of representation that draw on, and occasionally privilege, my personal experiences, perceptions, beliefs, and values.

Most of the chapters in this collection are, inevitably, similarly personally grounded and in many cases touch on areas and concerns I too have encountered. In common with the contributors, I would argue that – in using my own and others' lives as starting points – I have not been indulging in a 'vanity project'. Long before I was aware of C. Wright Mills's (1959/70) exhortation to use the sociological imagination to make personal troubles public concerns, I believed that personal stories – for all their craftedness and temporality – are essential for making sense of our own and others' lives lived within specific social settings. Like William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, I see life records, in this case, stories, as constituting 'the perfect' sociological data (1918–1920). Thus, for me, as for Ivor Goodson (Goodson and Sikes, 2001), Lawrence Stenhouse's (1975) emphasis on setting 'stories of action within theories of context' has been central to my work and the studies that I have been involved in. These studies have usually been aimed at adding to understanding of how individuals experience precisely located aspects of social life, with a view to informing personal, local, national, and international practice and policy. The chapters are certainly within the tradition of autobiographical sociology (Stanley, 1993), and some might say they are examples of analytic autoethnography. I do believe though that other variants of autoethnography, some of which are represented in this book – be they evocative, therapeutic, cathartic, performative, pedagogical, or however else a researcher/writer names and frames their work – can also be seen as 'stories of action within theories of context', with transformative possibilities at individual and personal, and/or wider and political, levels. What is of paramount importance though, and as Section 3 of the book makes clear, is that autoethnographies should be 'good' – ethically 'good', 'good' with respect to criticality, 'good' with regard to the appropriateness of the approach to the task in hand, and 'good' in terms of the quality of their writing and construction. Of course, there will always be those who denigrate autoethnographical work, but those of us who use it, review it for journals, or 'teach' it to our students have a responsibility to hold to high standards: Only by doing this is there any chance of countering critiques.

But returning to my intention to reflect on my academic career: Looking back over four decades, where have I implicitly or explicitly engaged in auto/biography and autoethnography? And what have been the consequences of that engagement for me and for others? Were I to detail every occurrence, I would quickly run out of the words allotted to me, so I'm going to very selectively pick, and succinctly present instances that, on my reading, articulate with what the various chapters in this volume have to say about some of the outcomes of autoethnography, how it can be used, and its transformative potential.

Learning my place – personal understanding and growth through autoethnography: In 1974, I went to a teacher training college in the north of England. My large family's social positioning was complex, but essentially, most of us were probably best described (in UK, rather than North American, terms) as 'respectable' or 'upper' working class. I was the second member of the family to enter higher education since the early 1800s, when my paternal grandfather's grandfather attended Edinburgh University and became a doctor. In sociology lectures, I was taught about 'the working class' – i.e. me and my family. *Inter alia*, I was told what our beliefs, values, aspirations, and practices in various areas of life were; how we spent our leisure time; and about our inability to defer gratification. I didn't recognise my experience in what the lecturers said or in what I read. In the UK, becoming a teacher has long been a means of social mobility from working to middle class. Furthermore, according to research reported in the literature, having dinner parties is a first step on the road to embourgeoisement. My college recognised this and in their, no doubt well meant, concern to help us 'fit in' or 'pass', and a formal dinner was held during our first week. We were advised what to wear, how to use cutlery and glasses, and what to talk about. Most of us – and especially those students from prestigious fee-paying schools who had ended up at the college because they'd failed to get the grades to get into their first choice universities – found this unnecessary and patronising. Reflecting on all of it, and more, and daring to write an assessed sociology assignment on how my life experience conflicted with the teaching and how it had made me feel was my first excursion into autoethnography, had I but known it. I was lucky in having lecturers who were prepared to reflect on their content and pedagogy encourage my critique and actually give me a high mark for my efforts. Their encouragement fired my interest in sociology and, ultimately, led to me doing a PhD.

Illuminative evaluation – influencing policy and practice through autoethnography: In the early 1980s, Mrs Thatcher's Conservative government launched a major revolutionary and heavily funded curriculum intervention, the "Technical and Vocational Educational Initiative" (TVEI) in English secondary schools. The aim was to address youth unemployment and to align education more closely with the needs of local industries. A requirement for receiving funding was that TVEI schemes be independently evaluated by universities, and many educational researchers, including me, were employed as evaluators. We had considerable scope to design the form that the evaluations would take. I was convinced of the appropriateness of Malcolm Parlett and David Hamilton's (1972) model of illuminative evaluation. This model challenged traditional positivist approaches and adopted ethnographic methodology, employing qualitative methods. Thus, I was able to be a participant observer, attending, reflecting on, and writing about the catering, theatre arts, and residential courses that were part of the TVEI schemes I was responsible for. Perhaps surprisingly, what I now see as the autoethnographic reports I produced were taken into education authority committee rooms and used to inform policy and practice.

The perceptions and experiences of children and young people who have a parent with young onset dementia – validating experience and making a difference through autoethnography: Around 14 years ago, when my children were 13 and 15, their 55-year-old father began behaving strangely. Long story short, he was eventually diagnosed with vascular and posterior cortical atrophy dementias. Observing the kids' discombobulation and distress as his illness progressed and discovering the total absence of resources and support available to help them (and me and their dad) and others in a similar position, I decided that I had no choice but to research and re-present what it is like to be a child, adolescent, or 20 something with a parent with young onset dementia. I put together a project proposal and gained funding from the Alzheimer's Society UK, and with the help of a wonderful research officer, Dr Mel Hall, have spent the last few years engaged in an explicitly narrative autoethnographic and autobiographical study aimed at eliciting data to inform service providers. We have begun to make a difference as the needs of these youngsters are now articulated and out there.

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I have no doubt that autoethnography offers unique and privileged access to knowledge that can contribute to understandings that can be a basis for social and personal transformation. I also wonder whether the role and potential of autoethnography for sharing and making sense of stories might not be especially important in these current days, when it can seem difficult to understand what our neighbours (locally, nationally, and globally) are thinking and why they make the choices and decisions they make. This book offers us pointers on to how to do it well.

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Thanks to Cathal Abberton for his thoughtfulness in selecting and allowing us to use his representation of the ‘Hong Kong post-it note democracy wall, historically the Democracy Wall of 1978 in Beijing, showing post it notes of passing thoughts, random mutterings, quotes, and scribbled pictures in residential areas to signify almost a bubble of unruly-ness’. We felt it captures the essence of the collection.

Nigel: My humble contributions to this edited collection have been thought about and written about in many different places: for example, libraries, museums, my garden, and during many walks with friends. I’d like to thank *all* my walking companions. My other ‘language’ is music. Music has been a lifelong companion. Thanks to Mum and Dad for buying me my first record player. Thanks to Paul Weller, Andy Partridge (XTC), Elvis Costello, Squeeze, The Smiths, Talk Talk, Tamla Motown, and numerous others.

Tony: I am thankful for many others who have made my autoethnographic life possible, especially Mitch Allen, Keith Berry, Bernard Brommel, Derek Bolen, Robin Boylorn, Marcy Chvasta, Norman K. Denzin, Andrew Herrmann, Stacy Holman Jones, Lenore Langsdorf, Jimmie Manning, Ron Pelias, Sandy Pensoneau-Conway, Sharon Rome, Jillian Tullis, and Jonathan Wyatt; my co-editors, Alec Grant, Nigel Short, and Lydia Turner; my current colleagues at Bradley University and my former colleagues at Northeastern Illinois University; my mentors, Art Bochner and Carolyn Ellis; and my patient and loving partner, Gerardo (Jerry) Moreno.

Alec: I first got into autoethnography after reading *Investigating Subjectivity: Research on Lived Experience* by Carolyn Ellis and Michael G. Flaherty, back

in the mid-1990s. Thank you. There have been many other literary and human/social science sources of inspiration since then, too numerous to mention. However, the stories of the great Stephen King especially have fired my internal muse and imagination. Thank you, Mr King!

Lydia: I would like to thank my fellow editors and my colleagues on the Therapeutic Courses Team at the University of Sussex for their support.

INTRODUCTION

A Place to Start

Lydia Turner

Julian Barnes wrote *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* (Barnes 1989). In the first chapter, he tells the story of Noah and the Ark from the view of a woodworm. Woodworms were stowaways on the Ark, it wasn't considered a very helpful idea to have woodworms on a wooden boat when the integrity of the wooden vessel was the only thing between a secure future for mankind and perishing in a catastrophic flood that would destroy all living things on earth. The woodworm flippantly tells us about the culture of the Ark through its eyes. I quite like the idea of stowing away, hanging around, and 'eating up' my fill of my surroundings while I observe. If I am to introduce you to this book, however, my role here cannot be so hidden; I can't really lurk in the shadows and observe, quietly soaking up the richness of the words encapsulated here, I need to play a more active role. I will therefore choose a role of curator instead of woodworm. As editors, we have curated. We have made decisions as to what subjects, chapters, and people to include in this book, and we have made decisions about what to leave out. We have decided on an order, a 'display design' of our collection, if you will, a collection to capture your interest, something a little different perhaps, and within this collection, we have chosen what we might like to draw your attention to.

I've visited many art galleries over the years, often with Nigel. I've been to grand established galleries, such as the Museo Del Prado and the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid; The Tate, National and Portrait galleries in London; The Louvre in Paris; and local boutique galleries, with small collections tucked away in back allies and out of the way places. I've seen famous works of art that have brought me to tears and not so well known pieces that nevertheless, have stayed with me. I have also seen a great deal of art that does absolutely nothing for me and other (quite revered) work that I would probably describe as ridiculous and a waste of both my and the artists' time. But who am I to judge?

I could probably justify my opinion, explain my choices, measure the associated depth of feeling in order to try to explain why that piece of art and not that one, but at the end of the day, its whether it 'does it for me' on that day at that time. Whether it meets my needs, answers my questions, fulfils my thirst to see and experience.

So, what is this collection? Something interesting? A scholarly addition to your study? An emotional experience? Something to capture your imagination? While we were organising this collection, I tried to imagine what you might like to read, what might pique your interest, what would appeal. The difficulty with this, however, is that my ideas, my interests, my opinions might not be yours. Added to this is subjective experience: What we propose to *sell* to you might not be what you think you are *buying*. Whatever editors think they are presenting, or the author *thinks* they are writing about, the listener/reader/observer has agency to interpret what they see/hear/read, and depending on the 'me', they find themselves to be at the point of passing, take us up on our offer, or simply walk by. Autoethnographic work might involve methodical analysis, heaps of emotion, or discussion on the minutiae of the mundane in everyday life, or it might say 'come over here and have a look at this, it's interesting', or 'you need to know about this, it's important'. It might give a small voice to the oppressed or a megaphone to the angry voice; it might provide a gentle benign subject of interest, or it might break your heart. It's up to you to decide: You may find a common thread between you and the collection, or it might fail to hit the mark.

All writing provides the author or authors with public platforms on which to 'tout their wares', a platform upon which they can try to persuade passing trade of the merits of their products; autoethnography is no exception. This collection is a display of autoethnography that hopes to provide spaces in which questions can be asked. We aim to create dissonance in established thinking and to disturb, prod, poke at ideas, boundaries, and established patterns of norm within the field.

While compiling this book, I have had a few intrusions playing around my head, like those little flies on a summer's day that won't be shushed away. Questions that have continued to grow and take on many different possibilities of answers rather than just one. As well as the ideas explored directly within the chapters, these questions are other 'meta-themes' that felt themselves through the chapters rhizomatically. The chapters contained within the book are autoethnographies. Although we gave guidance to the invited authors on the subject matter, they each chose how they were to represent those subjects. Some of my questions are touched upon directly by the chapter authors, and some are held in that quiet space just out of reach. So, my questions are as follows:

Why do we write, what we write, what is its purpose or its function?

How do we write to order?

Who else is involved in our stories and our writings?

How do we decide what to leave in and what to take out?

How do we know that what we have written is any good, especially when it is so subjective?

Different authors might write for many different reasons ‘with’ (either literally or metaphorically) different people. They might write to heal themselves from past or present trauma, or possibly to free themselves from the legacy of ‘others’ (Pennebaker 1997, 2004; Pennebaker and Evans 2014). They might write to ‘make a statement’ (about their story), or they might write specifically as research, to publish and move thinking on. If we write to heal and write to share our experiences in order to heal and perhaps share experience that might develop others’ thinking around the subject, what happens to the story? Does writing our autoethnographies help us to heal, or can we become stuck in an autoethnographic journey, continuously circling? As Herrmann (2014) reminds us,

the undead are simultaneously the people they used to be as well as the apparitions they are now. They connect the past with the present. They, like the past, are dead but very much alive in the present as they haunt places and people.

(Herrmann 2014, p. 328)

If we keep our stories as they were/are, their undeadness keeps it and us stuck. And if we develop rules and stories of convention (around these narratives), ways of doing things, terms that define our doings, terms of reference, parameters, then these traditional approaches can cement our stuckness. Wyatt (2005, 2008) wrote two autoethnographies about the loss of his father: One explored the loss (from his perspective), and the other moved on from the newness of the loss to a post loss time and space. Perhaps, one of the purposes of autoethnography is to move us all on, author and audience.

I wonder if we might write for more benign reasons, perhaps taking some time to wander around with a story, with some thoughts or feelings. An opportunity for some personal space and time and scholarly pursuit. And then, of course, there is writing to order.

What do you write about when you don’t want to write, when you think or feel you have got nothing to say, when you are bored and at a bit of a loose end, especially when deadlines are bearing down on you, and there is nowhere to hide? If we are to pursue autoethnography as a form of research purposefully with the aim of providing a vehicle for ‘new thinking’, we need to take it seriously and apply ourselves, especially if ‘churning out’ research and publications at an acceptable rate is part of what we are employed to do. It would be fine if we chose to write and reflect, and reflect and write, as a leisure pursuit, to see where our thinking took us as we interacted with our world(s), our culture(s), ourselves. We would have all the time in the world. We wouldn’t have our

Heads of Faculty pressing us for our termly or yearly outputs (Smith 2013; Sparkes 2013), our grant figures, number of publications, etc. Book editors gently reminding us (again) that we had passed our agreed deadlines, supervisors enquiring where we are up to in our studies and reminding us that submission dates are fast approaching. So, how do we write if and when we are completely unmotivated, physically unwell, depressed, bereaved, or just wanting to dive headlong off the treadmill? What if we struggle to get our thoughts together (Muncey 2005), or our story just isn't ready to be told? Perhaps there is a difference between being ready in your head with a story but not being ready to write it or being unable to write it?

We might end up writing about writing (see Wall 2008), much as I am doing here. I sat down to write with an idea of introducing you to the sections and chapters in this book, and here I am, writing about writing. If we assume that most of us engaged in autoethnography are writing and researching within these contextual variations, how do we navigate our way through our lives, our cultures, our distress, our daily working schedule in such a way that we can produce something that might be meaningful to our audience?

As editors of this book, we approached a number of autoethnographers from around the world and asked them if they would be interested in writing an autoethnographic chapter for this book. Some accepted straight away; others delayed their reply, maybe taking their time to consider the proposal; some declined because they were understandably too busy; and some were initially willing and able to contribute, but life got in the way. I guess this is the nature of most edited books. What I think is unique about this book, however, is that such a wide range of international authors and scholars were willing to take the time and the effort to contribute to it.

I have fantasised that all authors who contributed to the book were able to sit down with focus and interest, attending to the 'editor-led' topic we asked them to cover, with simple skill and dexterity. I imagine them in a variety of scholarly rooms, some in academic offices in universities, some in their home in a quiet study. I have images of what some of these scholarly spaces might look like: walls lined with books, large expansive desks, or perhaps even secluded summer houses, dappled shade playing around the room as the authors write. I imagine hot, dusty rural landscapes or vibrant cosmopolitan cities. When I mentioned these fantasies about how others write to Nigel, he told me he also often used to think that scholarly people just sat down and wrote things. He said he didn't give it a thought that they also might have wastepaper bins full of screwed up pieces of paper (or the electronic equivalent). He reminded me that authors of fiction may take years to write a book. So, my fantasies are probably both romantic and inaccurate. I guess indulging with these fantasies feeds my uncertainty about my role as an editor. I lack the (perceived) self-assurance of my published colleagues, my scholarly colleagues whose jobs are to produce research, to produce autoethnography, for a living.