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WRITING FORMS OF FICTION: GLIMPSES ON THE ESSENCE OF SELF

INTRODUCTION

The chapter to follow is structured around three story-lines. Two of these (the first and second) offer reflections from different elements of the first author’s sporting life, the third and final story draws from the sports coaching and research experiences of the second author. The opening storyline, ‘Landscapes and Lives’ is a short extract taken from the opening sections of a longer story that exists in narrative and drama script format. Part auto-ethnographic part fiction, the full story examines a young player’s life in professional football and highlights the different roles that family and friends might play any player’s life. The second, ‘Two banks of four and spot-faced rock drummer’, is a fiction based around the auto-ethnographic theme of applied sport psychology practice. The third story, ‘Little things’, is a further auto-ethnographic fiction based around the dilemmas of a coach/educator; the focal point of this final story ‘Steve’ is deployed in a creative non-fiction style to convey the frustrations and ethical challenges associated with coaching practice. Three stories, all with differential auto-ethnographic content and with different degrees of fictional content in terms of style and or people or context, yet, these stories help to reflect the authors own psyche, aspects of their own essence, in that regard they all offer a glimpse of the auto-ethnographic self.

As the text and three stories unfold I (David) have opted to maintain an opaque approach to the way I frame and introduce them and I also introduce the final story on Phil’s behalf. The stories are deliberately left in ‘mid-telling’, allowing readers to ponder on the way each story might continue and conclude. The stories have all been written at different times in different spaces and with different purposes in mind. To explain a little further, ‘Landscapes and Lives’ is taken from the opening lines of another story ‘Family, Fate, Mates and Moments’ a project that is, in writing terms, in-progress; the selection of text presented here introduces the stories main character ‘Ade’.

In contrast ‘Two Banks of Four and Spot Faced Rock Drummer’ emerged out of the strain of a dull night at a hotel in the East Riding of Yorkshire. On my own, with nothing to do, and being the only resident sat in a deserted hotel bar, I sat down to write in order to keep myself entertained. Though this might seem a harmless even trivial way to spend a few hours, yet as the story emerged I learned a little more about myself.

N. P. Short et al. (Eds.), Contemporary British Autoethnography, 157–167. © 2013 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.
Finally, ‘Little Things’ was initially written for a peer review manuscript on the topic of evidence-based practice, but as myself and Phil shared in the re-writing and drafting of his own story the tale progressed into a wider-ranging fiction. As the direction of the peer review paper also changed we (that is the author team) decided not to use Phil’s story, so we filed it away for another day. The efforts taken in talking about and writing the story did seem to consolidate Phil’s own commitment to his own auto-ethnographic journey and so it seemed like time well spent.

In these examples it seems to matter very little ‘how’ or ‘why’ or ‘when’ or ‘for what purpose’ stories might get written, for they all, in some way or other, reflect a little bit of the self in a particular moment in life, they reflect the self in a specific space-in-time and that might be revisited later through what the lines say and in how they say it. I hope you enjoy the stories, I hope they make you smile at times, and I hope they make you reflect a little on your own life and on the things that meander around in your own thinking and, possibly, in your own writing.

LANDSCAPES AND LIVES

I grew-up in Nottinghamshire and enjoy travelling back and looking at the landscape and year-on-year I find that it absorbs more and more of its industrial past. Going home is always special to me, hearing the accent makes me feel warm inside, the people have warmth about them too, they have a dry humour, going home makes me smile and it seems important, through it all, that we smile...

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A Sheffield to Nottingham train winds its way steadily across the post-industrial wastelands of Yorkshire, traverses more open greenery on the edges of Derbyshire, before, finally, travelling through flatlands that signal the Nottinghamshire border. All these counties house remnants from the days of heavy industry and coal. Old pit spoil heaps litter the landscape; many are masked now, re-seeded with ryegrass and the formulaic planting of ash and silver birch, a poor disguise to the chaotic structure of nature. Ade, one shoulder scrunched up against the carriage window, blankly surveys the late autumn landscape. Something catches his eye, a man, out walking with his dog. He strains to follow them before they disappear from view. Shuffling back into his seat he reflects on the scene, the man had looked old and limped as if his hip was sore. Ade’s fingers draw circles on the window he ponders serious things, age, life-span and death. He takes a deep breath and turns his thoughts to the man’s dog, a young energetic beast it was, he re-runs images of it bounding and sprinting and smiles, briefly. As the afternoon light fades away Ade’s mood deepens, today, on this day, his world seems cold and brutal. Another train going into Sheffield flashes past. In the seats opposite, an old couple glance in his direction and whisper. Further down the carriage two girls noisily exchange