

## Post-qualitative seductions: (Re)turning research(er) bodies

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### Abstract

The contribution is an uncertain experiment; a series of fractured and fabulated video (re)turnings that tell on and in the seductive forces making (im)possible claims to know, and takes the form of fragmentary visual re-tellings of the becoming research(er) body. These visual re-tellings are assembled in video format and can be viewed at this link <https://youtu.be/aulMQNEDhGo>. This 'paper' contributes to ongoing debates that seek shifts from representationalist research foundations. The (re)turnings (the visual re-tellings) offered here pose questions of what is at stake for qualitative researchers in (dis)claiming the 'I' that legitimates them as researching bodies; they expose the limits of reason, the precarity of being thus – seduced by and in discipline, reason and rigor, and contained in and by bodies of research.

**Keywords:** Duoethnography, non-representational methodologies, video research, 'post-s', seduction

*Imagination, a licentious and vagrant faculty, unsusceptible of limitations, and impatient of restraint, has always endeavoured to baffle the logician, to perplex the confines of distinction, and burst the enclosures of regularity (Samuel Johnson cited in Ramsden 2011, p.342)*

This contribution is a multi-media composition that merely signals its attempts at meaning, its musings on seduction scholarship through two parallel non-representational methodological (Vannini, 2015) modes of signification: a video which can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/aulMQNEDhGo>, and the following written musings. Each signals and flags. Neither work to capture.

This contribution has the bent aim of exploring (perhaps more to exploding) the fabulated idea(l) of the authentic and rational researcher. The contribution finds inspirations in, and takes cues from, a range of 'posts' that recognise the pollutions of signifying practices in describing or intervening in our multiple entanglements as researcher bodies (Braidotti, 2014). That range of 'posts' also envision a shift away from the humanist entrapments of existing (qualitative) research (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013). In particular, Lather and St. Pierre asked:

If we give up 'human' as separate from non-human, how do we exist? Can there be there an instituting 'I' left to inquire, to know? Dare we give up that 'I,' that fiction – the doer before the deed? How are we anyway in entanglement? How might we become in becoming? Isn't this question affirmative? Experimental? Ethical? Insistent? Are we willing to take on this question that is so hard to think but that might enable different lives?

All these questions are enabled by the 'post' ontologies. So what will happen, is happening, to inquiry in this afterward? (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 631)

Through this contribution, we have the presumption and the 'arrogance' to try to address, but not to answer, these provocations. We forefront the idea that becomings in/to/as researching bodies (bodies of/and that research) are an effect of forces beyond the intentionality of the centred and coherent human researcher. In this case, we take seriously the (un)productive forces of seduction – and their countervailing opposites: of repulsions – as shaping (these) speaking/writing/affective research(er) bodies. The contribution conceives seduction as a set of productive entanglements between and with/in researching bodies together with the space-time-matter of this research project, and of our researcher-researching practices more generally. We wonder how and in what ways our senses of such entanglement – as represented in this/these 'outputs' – will have resonance with our reader/viewers/listeners.

The contribution is an uncertain experiment, a series of fractured and fabulated (re)turnings (Barad, 2014) and takes the form of fragmentary visual tellings of the becoming research(er) body that gesture to(wards) the seductive forces that make (im)possible claims for knowledge. These visual tellings are assembled in video format; one that leans on the fragmented and fragmenting trope adopted by Fernand Léger with his collaborator Dudley Murphy in the film: *Ballet Mécanique* (1924, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOvnQ9Vqptw>). Léger, echoed in Kuh (1953), suggests that his film " ... set out to prove that it was possible to find a new life on the screen without a scenario, through making use of simple objects, fragments of objects — of mechanical elements, of rhythmic repetitions copied from certain objects of commonplace nature and 'artistic' in the least possible degree." The video that makes up this contribution is likewise a series of fragmented, montaged, and inchoate scenes and sounds that fail to cohere in a modernist narrative structure.

The fracture and fail of memory are harnessed in (re)collecting junctures of stall, of movement, of push and pull, of those seductive forces that propel and compel researcher lives. Memory's imperfections are embraced in the mundane flows of uncanny (re)turnings that are occasioned in the solitary and crowded encounters with/in a life: flows that feed on and avoid the spectral

shadows of the still-birthing and cast-off lives (already/not yet) lived. The power of imagination, of fantasy and fabulation provide alternative, queered and queerying technologies - (an)architectures (Halberstam, 2018) of imaginary (ir)realities - by which these researching bodies perform some (re)turnings to the 'glow' (MacLure, 2013) of seemingly mundane (auto)ethnographical 'data' (re)collecting and (re)incarnating researcher lives. Images, sounds, movements, (spoken) personal notes and narratives provide surfaces of pro/(e)vocation against and through which the (re)turnings effected in this contribution take place. Saints, scholars, songs and songsters; angels, angles and alter-boys; work and worry, take centre stage in the fractured re-tellings of how seductive forces (re/mis)shape these researching bodies in the push and pull dynamics of art and artistry, the sacred and secular, the prophetic and parrhesiastic, the ordained and ordinary.

The video is a filmic surface of serial sliding signifiers: a loosely-coupled montage of duoethnographic storytelling. As montage, the video enters with/in an economy of uncertainty and emerges as a melange of baroque excess: "One says: order, measure reason, rule, and that is classicism. One says on the other hand: disorder, excess, imagination, freedom and that'll be baroque. Cosmos and chaos: balance and turbulence. It is true and it is false" (Rousset, 1954:242. Cited in and translated by Watson, 2009a). The video is a Wunderkammer – a cabinet of curiosities – that phenomenon of the sixteenth century which "brought together in a room various pieces from the world around us, a world deemed wonderful and full of amazing surprises. In the Wunderkammer, very different objects and materials – naturalia et artificialia – were juxtaposed, being placed alongside each other in daring combinations" (Benozzo & Gherardi, 2020, p. 151). Likewise, this video assemblage of different pieces from the world, provoke(d) and evoke(d), as a wondrous "meta-historical category that has been defined all along the eighteenth century, didactically first and foremost, as a form of knowledge, that is, a very special half-way stage, a kind of mental suspension that lies between ignorance and knowledge, which marks the end of ignorance and the beginning of knowledge" (Lugli, 2006, p. 126).

In Barthian terms (1974), it is a 'writerly' text that merely intimates and insinuates itself for both producer and consumer. Such are the ephemeral comprehensions afforded by those forces of seduction that forge attractions, site pleasures, give joys, but also have the potential to nullify and repel these authoring researcher bodies. In its failure to represent in any simplistic way what seduction can be, the video offers a series of hints, suggestions and indications only, of the seductive forces that operate in and on those bodies of research that produce knowledge. And, like the researching and researcher lives about and to which it speaks, the video refuses finality both in its form as text and as an outcome of a process of duoethnographic analysis. Like many research projects and processes referred to as 'post', the video embraces a willingness to problematize how notions of representation, truth, and validity and are then put to work in the service of research (Watson, 2009b).

The operations of seduction (and repulsion) circle and leak from the video and act as a means to interrogate more traditional positionings of researchers as integral, integrated, centred, neutral instruments in the research process. Just as forces of seduction are at work in shaping research(er) bodies, so too we consider seductions' forces in the production of research

knowledge that powers and shapes policy and polity.

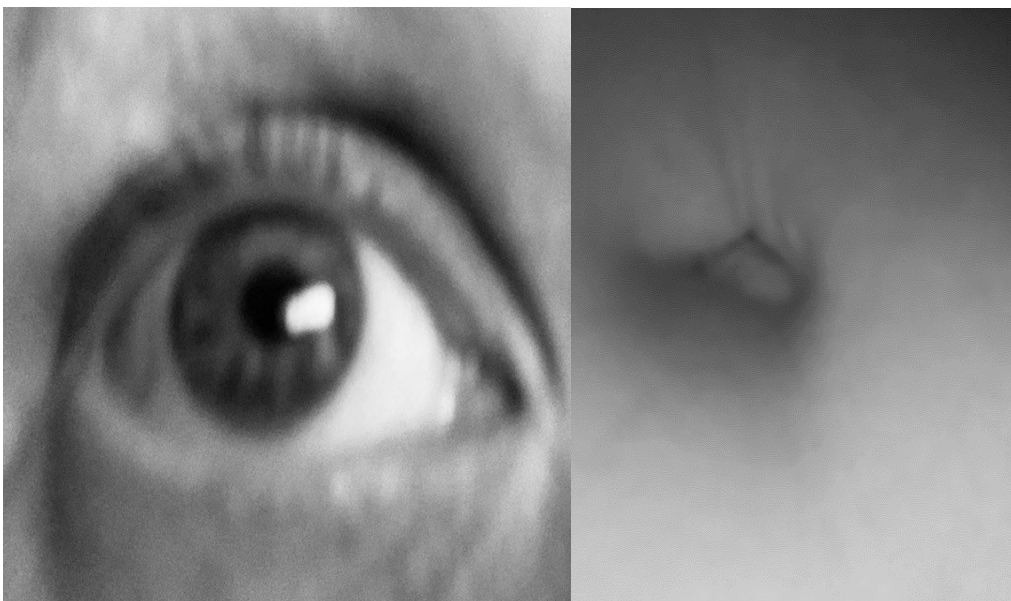
The video is the product of a collaboration: with and between those researching subjects identified as authors here. However, it is difficult to distinguish an 'I' now in this production. Even a 'we' fails to territorialise the authorship of this contribution. Perhaps, and more especially, the video is a collaboration with the many (im)materialities that haunt, hull and hide seemingly identifiable researching bodies: spectres of lives not fully lived, of those not yet placed; of technologies that produce such lives, as well as the myriad other materialities that bind, bound and boost experimentation and expression in the seductive settings of research/academic livings.

This contribution offers a palimpsest, ripe for other/further writing/reading, of those forces of seduction that pull and propel (these and/or other) researcher bodies. The (re)turnings offered in this (video) contribution and in some brief (re)turns to the AERA panel for which it was produced and at which it had its only showing, pose questions of what is at stake for qualitative researchers in (dis)claiming the 'I' that legitimates them as centred researching bodies (see also Ch. 7 in Fairchild et al, 2022). We hope that these (com)posed fragments and fragmentations expose the limits of reason, the precarity of being and claiming such a status – seduced by (in)discipline, reason and rigour, and contained in and by bodies of research.

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Dear research bodies,

Thank you for the very provocative film and accompanying musings. We enjoyed and were greatly moved. It was also quite seductive. Images were beautiful, music and sounds intriguing, and reflections insightful. Very pleasurable experience. Almost too pleasurable; so pleasurable that we began to miss our love handles, forehead wrinkles, moles on our arms. We remembered one crooked tooth that our orthodontists were unsuccessful in lining up and fixing. We wanted to bring the ugliness, aging, disgust, laziness of our (research) bodies into the article.



Where were your hearts, neurons, muscles, joints, fingernails, hormones, bacteria and body waste? What about your research DNA and its seductive forces? Whose repulsion and seduction did you refer to?

We also wondered if (your research) bodies were seducing or being seduced. It seemed like maybe moves were made in this paper. However, we were not sure, and wanted some clarification on that. In addition, your narrative/text/prose was somewhat abstracted from the (researcher) bodies and seductive action. How did you live through some of those seductive forces that you illuminated through your imaginary? If you were to move from images (both metaphorical and actual) toward flesh, what could happen?

You made references to post-qualitative research. We want some clarification why you saw connections to post-qualitative research as productive in this context. How do you vision your contributions to post-qualitative literature? How does seduction fit into those discourses? Similar questions could be asked about duo-ethnography? What does that bring? How did duo-ethnography help you to live/think through seduction? What became possible and what stayed impossible?

We were intrigued by the shadow bodies and found them quite productive and provocative. Shadow work has interesting potential to create non-stories, non-seduction, the absent present, and virtual '(non-) realness' of researcher bodies. Could you maybe build more of that aspect of your paper?

Yours forever,

Slowly beating hearts

Ooh, we think these seductions are multiple! They make our body feel and our skin permeable as they are letting your sensations through. Feeling is not the same as being affected, but as the body feels it moves within your musings and sings with your music. Feeling is more personalized than being affected but here feeling is collective and, as a force, it is able to be transmitted to other bodies that are ready to receive and respond to it 😊.

The shadows which are at play in your piece make the seductions even more real but yet illusory and inviting. As the shadows work simultaneously within the real and illusional/illusory, they produce alternative realities that are more real than the present real we know. They invite us to believe (as researchers and academics) that the alternatives are real and we are not being seduced – or, if we are, then it is all necessary as we are living (in) the real illusion.

The link between us as bodies and as academics is blurred – but is it unclear for real? Aren't we the writing-bodies, eating-bodies, feeling-bodies and thinking-bodies without a mention? In other words, we live (within) all our (s)paces, memories and their affects at once in the real. So, we are entangled in these material-discursive encounters where factual and figural aspects are materialized as well as represented (Haraway, 1997). The illusions are as real as the real itself can

be, or are they seduced and illusional enough to believe that?

Your illusional real feelers.

### **This is not a review!**

We (Neil and Angelo) were asked to continue to play with the review started by Mirka and Tejia. This was not an easy task because we were also the authors of the paper and of the video.

In what follows we present some lines of flight/free floating thoughts/weird reflections that originated from our discussion on how to deal with the request to act as reviewers of our own contributions to this special issue on seduction scholarship. Is what follows a review or a dialogue with Mirka and Tejia's initial review, or is it something else? We do not know exactly what it is, but what *exactly it is*, is perhaps not so relevant in our attempts to muse and compose further with/in seduction scholarship.

Positioning us as reviewers – even though we are (also) the authors of this contribution – does something strange, produces some strange effects and affects. There are forces at play here that (dis)orient in their demand/requirement for us to act as reviewers. These forces require us to blur some of those boundaries – many of which we were not so keenly or deeply aware of until this seriously playful re-viewing process presented itself – between authors and readers, between writers and reviewers, between reviewers and editors. These forces demand that we inhabit spaces that are not well-scripted, are barely recognisable as we try to locate ourselves in the in-betweens of otherwise boundaried, individualised and disciplined roles that take up and enact the labour of the academic publishing process. In effect, in requiring that our original contribution be positioned as an object for objective review, this invitation to re-view opens up a series of text-body-matter disorienting entanglements that marks (in) our (in)ability to fix terrain, and to get lost in the potential seductions of blurring multiple roles in relation to our seduction text(s).

We were both attracted to and annoyed by all those questions in the upper part of this review, and we realized how they hail us (the writers) as authors, as writers and as academics. They position us as the authors of the text, and as authors who might be compelled to put things right, to tidy and straighten. In orienting ourselves thus, we feel our backs straightening to respond and focus better on the texts. And, as authors, we have the authority and a felt obligation to respond: to explain, to reply to some questions and comments, to clarify, to justify, to read some more literature, to build more on some aspects, to theorize. In effect, we feel the conviction, the lure, to do something else, to be better, to be ... MORE!

However, we resist this seductive pull. We rebel against the interpellation to be the author of the text that is implicit in this call to re-view. As a strategy of resistance, of refusal, we now enact the death of the author (Barthes, 1977; Foucault, 1984). There is no more 'us' (we) as some originary authors of this paper. Let's see how we enact some different positionalities, some further seductive lines of flight to these texts, to these re-viewings . . .

These reviewers and their questions are luring the writers. These reviewers and their re-viewings are asking for the authors' body. They are desiring the authors' flesh, they demand that the writers return as authors, with authority.

The questions, comments and observations from the reviewers seek to resurrect the authors from the grave. But the authors of this text are dead, they are just ghosts of "the authors". They are an illusion/allusion. The authors are only a faint shadow of themselves; they are already seduced by the idea of the end, of oblivion.

### **Time-shift: an orphaned text must stand now on its own.**

The passing of time since this contribution's inception and execution does not allow them (the dead authors) to re-examine their relation to this strange text – this lively lifelessness. The reviewers might want to act as judge and jury, to make the text stand on trial, to make and mark the text as evidence of the authors' engagement. And, as judge and jury, the reviewers can sentence the dead authors and their text(s) to death: cut off their heads; guillotine their edges; annihilate those margins that, more usually in life, might have afforded them their faculty of thought. Simultaneously, and as an experimentation in following possibilities for/of seduction, these dead authors move to disown the text in this re-view. In their ghostly formations, they become with Peter: before the cock (crows), three times avowedly disavowing their entanglements with this (textual) body. They align with Judas. Pay them 30 pieces of silver and they'll be gone ... no further hanging (around) here.

### **A (possible/alternative) strategy for thinking forward for how these dead authors might dialogue with this review: queer necromantic seductions**

Queering the reviewing process – these dead authors are hard to reach, hard to engage; they are still not straight about what they might do here. In any case, why would they want to be straight? Many of the seductions that were, simultaneously, veiled and evinced in the original contribution, signaled the passing, the pretense, the closetedness, the hiding and the 'comings out' of gay men into the academy. These barely-seen bodily seductions were, in the first place, hardly legitimate or legible in an academy that regulated such seductions in a largely heteronormative frame. In the life of these dead authors, those bodily seductions demanded by this review – and lived in an erotophobic and heteronormative academy – were already too contorted in their alignment to the straightness of the academy. Such alignments demanded those bodies invest in seductions that were seen as 'normal', as acceptable, as countable and legitimate academic interests. However, as these dead authors have now gone beyond the stiffness of both the academy, and the rigor mortis of acceptable methodologies/reviewings, then it's unlikely that they would re-engage with explaining further, justifying more.

Perhaps, as a sop and a folly, they might pick up the questions in this review and do something else. One suggestion that floats in the graveyard of possibility is that they refract/distract these questions into random, seemingly unrelated topics. A second suggestion is that they watch the video, stop at irregular times, and do a decomposing fleshly discussion about their re-turns to that

video. In addition, they might (decom)pose those discussions as the (unrelated) responses to each of the questions levelled in the review and plead a deadly ignorance of the need to make connections (back) to seduction. Perhaps these are strategies that you, our readers, might try . . . if you're that way inclined!

So, in dialoguing with the original text it is (im)possible to react in any straight way to the reviews from Teija & Mirka. The writers/dead authors are que(e)rying the reviewing process itself; they are being unruly/unmannerly/undisciplined and, more than this: they are putting into question why such a review is aimed at them, given that there is no longer any author(s) of and for this contribution. The author(s) of the contribution are already dead. The seducer-authors-seduced do not exist anymore. So! If they do speak, then they can only do so from the grave. They are merely engaged as spirit talk: a ghostly kind of talk; haunting talk in search of a medium, a spiritualist, through whom these dead authors might find authoritative voice.

These are the (disem)bodied, dead-blind and blinded re-viewings of some academic seductions alluded to by once-alive authors. But otherwise, and henceforth, this contribution will have to stand-run-stand on its own. Or, given the lay of these once live authors, this contribution will have to lie in/to those grave and deadly seductions to which any authorless text might be consigned.

## Séance!!!



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