

Situating the 'author'

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Not 'author' in the conventional sense of course – the words that follow have emerged as a result of reading and thinking about the special issue; I didn't really know what would transpire, and certainly didn't expect the appearance of 'the new puppy' (below).

The post-qualitative turn has largely bypassed Psychology, the (disciplined) discipline where I am situated, and so I am a relative outsider and perhaps overly formed by mainstream qualitative inquiry.

Although, like many, I had been *seduced* by the postmodern turn some years ago. I remember the pleasure, dizziness and confusion experienced as I wrestled with French theory as a doctoral student in the early 1990s. But I kind of gave up on Theory – Psychology is an empirical enterprise first and foremost, so I ended up embracing forms of discourse analysis nestled within an overarching social constructionist frame.

But this engagement was serious rather than playful, determined to yield insights from intensive analyses, in particular to tackle social issues, like covert sexism and homophobia.

This focus on discourse, and discourse as practice, also neglected the material – I found it difficult to 'go beyond discourse'. I did try. I flirted with blending psychoanalytic and discursive concepts to create more embodied interpretations and in doing so was influenced by other social psychologists also attempting, in different ways, to wrestle with the limitations of discourse-based approaches (cf Margie Wetherell, Wendy Hollway, Stephen Frosh).

So, I am familiar with efforts to incorporate the material [body] as well as the semiotic as applied to analysis of the other/s – but also to the researcher/analyst/author. Which led me towards the now commonplace concept of reflexivity together with my colleague and co-editor Linda Finlay (Finlay & Gough, 2003) and which prompted me to fashion a text (book chapter) which operated primarily as a deconstruction of reflexivity, a critique of the self-aware analyst (Gough, 2003).

And more recently, I have started to read more stuff on post-qualitative inquiry, and in this am indebted to Svend Brinkmann who published a very helpful paper on this topic addressed to psychologists (and others) (Brinkmann, 2017) and gave an enlightening keynote lecture at a qualitative methods conference I attended.

I suppose I am sharing this info in order to contextualise my response to the idea of *seduction[s]* as an 'undisciplined' intervention in [post-]qualitative endeavours. Although arts-based approaches to qualitative research are filtering into Qualitative Psychology (see Chamberlain, McGuigan, Anstiss & Marshall, 2018), I am not accustomed to such unruly post-qualitative conceptual experimentation...

Post-qualitative *ambivalence*

(I am enjoying experimenting with font)

So what is my response?

I do enjoy the postmodern playfulness, pastiche and inter-textuality but, in a word, I am ambivalent!

Other words:

- Irritating!
- Indulgent!
- Infantile!

... but some arresting, thought-provoking (*seductive*) phrases, images, gems:

- 'concepts as light seductions'
- 'seduction can lead to productive entanglements'
- 'qualitative interviews as betrayal/abandonment/misrepresentation of the other'

Reading the special issue also generated Lacanian vibes – writing/creating as unconscious, eluding discipline, brimming with free association, unsolicited images and sequences, transgressions and juxtapositions, the Real and the Symbolic... *seductions*. Strange that the psychoanalytic canon is not invoked much in the special issue, especially since the body – and (*seductive*) desire - is foregrounded?

The new puppy

We recently acquired a puppy – my daughter had been pestering us for years and, perhaps because of lockdown, the eldest child being away at university, etc. – but the dog has insinuated his way into this text on post-qualitative work. Why? It is playful and animal, driven by biological urges (requiring some discipline), at times feral and then docile, sociable and self-contained, immature and undisciplined, compelled towards

(seduced by?) others as we walk in the local green: an apposite materialization of post-qualitative endeavour? Full of contradictory impulses, tendencies, affects. Treating each day as a new adventure, with energy, 'bite', joie de vivre.

Seduction?

Seduction[s] is a provocative concept, bedevilled by heteronormative histories and controversies. Can it be reclaimed to signal a more horizontal, less intentional relation to others/ideas/objects? Is it helpful? It certainly chimes with the turn towards affect in social theory, usefully embedding bodily desires into [post-]qualitative enquiry. I like how it applies to ideas – our investments in theories, theorists, texts are often underplayed. Being mindful of seduction means we do not have to 'give in' – we can acknowledge our attachments, but also resist or reimagine these as we encounter other ideas. Seduction facilitates play, creativity, risk-taking – but if taken too far can perhaps lead to fixation, myopia, amnesia. Hence the importance of collaborative [post-]qualitative inquiry, with colleagues and co-participants, who may 'discipline' any extreme attachments and/or seduce us in other ways so that research (and researcher) is enriched and interventions can be more compelling.

References

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