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SPECIAL ISSUE

A/r/tography
and the Literary and
Performing Arts

Volume 3 | Issue 2 | 2013

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Guest Editors *Rita L. Irwin*
Anita Sinner

Editor
Associate Editor
Designer

Lindy Joubert
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ABOUT THE E-JOURNAL

The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is based within the Graduate School of Education at The University of Melbourne, Australia. The journal promotes multi-disciplinary research in the Arts and Education and arose out of a recognised need for knowledge sharing in the field. The publication of diverse arts and cultural experiences within a multi-disciplinary context informs the development of future initiatives in this expanding field. There are many instances where the arts work successfully in collaboration with formerly non-traditional partners such as the sciences and health care, and this peer-reviewed journal aims to publish examples of excellence.

Valuable contributions from international researchers are providing evidence of the impact of the arts on individuals, groups and organisations across all sectors of society. The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is a clearing house of research which can be used to support advocacy processes; to improve practice; influence policy making, and benefit the integration of the arts in formal and non-formal educational systems across communities, regions and countries.

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Special Issue: A/r/tography and the Arts

Guest Editors

Rita L. Irwin | Anita Sinner

THEME

To be engaged in the practice of a/r/tography means to inquire in the world through an ongoing process of art making in any art form and writing not separate or illustrative of each other but interconnected and woven through each other to create relational and/or enhanced meanings. A/r/tographical work are often rendered through the methodological concepts of contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations and excess, which are enacted and presented/performed when a relational aesthetic inquiry condition is envisioned as embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text, and between and among the broadly conceived identities of artist/researcher/teacher. A/r/tography is inherently about self as artist/researcher/teacher yet it is also social when groups or communities of a/r/tographers come together to engage in shared inquiries, act as critical friends, articulate an evolution of research questions, and present their collective evocative/provocative works to others (see <http://m1.cust.educ.ubc.ca/Artography/>).

This special issue of Multi-Disciplinary Research in the Arts invites original creative and scholarly inquiry that engages in critical debates and issues regarding a/r/tographical methodologies; are exemplars of critical approaches to a/r/tographical research; and/or extend the boundaries of inquiry-based research. Contributions are welcome from disciplines across the arts, humanities and social sciences and in a wide range of formats including articles, essays, and artistic interludes, which explore diverse forms of the arts from drama, dance, poetry, narrative, music, visual arts, digital media and more.

This is the beauty: song as a/r/tographical exploration

Danny Bakan

MA, PhD (ABD)

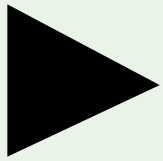
University of British Columbia

ABSTRACT

This essay, centered on the creation and performance of a song, documents an autoethnographic and a/r/tographical inquiry focused on issues of personal/professional transition from musician/pedagogue to artist/researcher. As artists are called to bring their practice to the academic research process, a common thread of identity transition marks many of our journeys—especially those of musicians. In this paper, reflections on the content and process of songwriting extend into a theoretical conceptualization that demonstrates the unique potential of song to render meaning, teach, address ethical issues, and enhance knowledge-communities. The result embodies research through practice, and integrates music, lyric, story, and exposition to display theory in action.

KEYWORDS

Arts-based research, a/r/tography, artography, song, songwriting, folk music, music education, composition, lyric, artist identity.



The Beauty of Song



THIS IS THE BEAUTY: SONG AS A/R/TOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATION

*"I am out to sing songs that will prove to you that this is your world."
Woody Guthrie (as cited in Cray, 2004, p. 285)*

PART ONE: A FEW OPENING CHORDS...

i
Readers can view and listen to a performance of *The Beauty of Song* on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMe0dbWXGYk>.

ii
A full exploration of the connections between autoethnographic methods and musical identity is a subject beyond the scope of this current article and will be the focus of a future work.

"The Beauty of Song" (Bakan, 2010) is a taunt, a celebration, a position paper, and a rallying call.ⁱ It is both autoethnographicⁱⁱ and a/r/tographic, and is an example of song as artistry, research and teaching—an embodiment of a/r/tography.ⁱⁱⁱ The song is (in part) an exposition on arts-based research theory. It is supported by the knowledge that—with a well-articulated arts-based methodology, a legacy of artistic/scholarly works in university catalogues, and a growing international community of practitioners and advocates—arts-based representation has become a vigorous form of scholarly discourse, especially in education (Leavy, 2009; Prendergast, Leggo, & Sameshima, 2009; Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis & Grauer, 2006; Sullivan, 2010; Van Halen-Faber & Diamond, 2008; Gouzouasis, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2012). Influenced by North American 20th century folk music (especially protest songs and "songs of persuasion"), "The Beauty of Song" is a celebratory and uppity statement that musically affirms through practice a form of artistic scholarship that is communicative, visceral, musical, playful, sensuous, interactive, and creative. Artist/researchers/teachers have wiggled out a space to sing, dance, act, write, sculpt, and paint our inquiries in artistic and poetic forms (Leavy, 2009; Prendergast, Leggo, & Sameshima, 2009; Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis & Grauer, 2006; Sullivan, 2010; Van Halen-Faber & Diamond, 2008). This song, and the performance moment captured in the attached video, celebrates that wiggle room. As such, this song is a personal anthem of liberation that sings proudly into the negotiated space of scholarship to claim an artist's voice in the academy.

For more on autoethnography please see references above for Reed-Danahay, 1997; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Ellis, 2004; and Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2010 as starting points. For more on a/r/tography please see Irwin & De Cosson, 2004; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008; Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Sinner, Irwin, Leggo, Gouzouasis, & Grauer, 2006; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008.

I wrote the song “The Beauty of Song” as part of an a/r/tographical inquiry undertaken in a graduate seminar taught by Rita Irwin during my second year of doctoral studies in Curriculum and Pedagogy at the University of British Columbia. The attached video is a documentation of the “birth” of the song. It is not a perfected artistic rendering, but rather a field note that informs my research process. The song and video represents a transitory moment in my a/r/tographical queries into song as research and pedagogy. Poetic inquiry (Prendergast, Leggo, & Sameshima, 2009; Prendergast, 2009; Prendergast, Gouzouasis, Leggo & Irwin, 2009), lyrical inquiry (Nielsen, 2008) and the multiple expressions of a/r/tography (Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, & Grauer, 2006; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008) informed me. Gouzouasis (2006, 2007, 2008, 2012), Lee (2004) and Gouzouasis and Lee (2002, 2007) assisted in conceptualizing the unique challenges and opportunities offered by music as a/r/tographical research.

This song documents a transitory curricular moment in my scholarship process. The autoethnographical journey represented is one in which an artist seeks to understand and occupy the theoretical domain of arts-based academic research in an emergent identity as a new doctoral student in education. This transition from artist to researcher is important to the study of arts-based educational research and a/r/tography. Artists have been called to join the research endeavor and are empowered to create artistic works with recognition of the scholarship embodied in what Richardson (2000) calls *Creative Analytical Practices*. In response to this call, artists are seeking ways to think of themselves as researchers, just as researchers are repositioning their identities as artists (Bickel, 2005). Through this song, and the reflective prose here offered to support it, I attempt to articulate and celebrate the blurring of the boundaries between the roles of artist, researcher, and pedagogue.

The rendering of this work, as documented in the video attached and in this essay/artist statement, is three-fold: (1) I engage an exegetical exposition of autobiographical and artistic knowing in and through song; (2) I offer a poetic and practice-based musical/scholarly rendering that brings to bear the challenges and compromises faced by artists as they negotiate the creation and articulation of academic knowledge; and (3) I engage in a theoretical inquiry toward understanding the unique qualities embodied in song as a/r/tographical exploration. To these three ends I will first explore the autobiographical/autoethnographical contextualization of this project, I will then provide some context for understanding lyric, song, and songwriting in the North American folk music tradition, and I will conclude with a close read of segments of the song and reflect upon the theory behind song as research, practice, and pedagogy.

PART TWO: THE SINGER GRIEVES, THE THEORY SINGS

A/r/tography is seen as a form of lived practice-based inquiry (Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Sinner, Irwin, Leggo, Gouzouasis, & Grauer, 2006; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008). Inquiries are formed as a questioning, a curiosity, a troubling, which ask us to “live the questions” as Rilke directed his young poet to do (1903/1986, p. 34-35). The term “inquiry” provides for embodied open-ended research processes. In an a/r/tographical inquiry, we enter the process and bear witness to what emerges

as it influences our thinking, writing, and art-making. This process changes our thoughts and practices, and this, in a hermeneutic circle of creation and interpretation, informs our work. We share our learning with others without ever diminishing the artistic rendering as a meaning-making process. Inquiry does not assume a simple question to which we are finding a simple answer, but allows multiple, complicated, simultaneous, and even contradictory viewpoints to be held.

“The Beauty of Song” documents an a/r/tographical inquiry focused on issues around the liminal personal/professional transition from musician/pedagogue to artist/researcher. The song uses the craft and art of songwriting and performance, informed by my many years of practice, to form and understand the pedagogical and theoretical results. As artists are called to bring their practice to the academic research process, a common thread of identity transition marks many of our journeys—especially those of musicians (Gouzouasis, 2006, 2007, 2012; Lee, 2004; Gouzouasis & Lee, 2002). My story represents one such case—one in which an artist/musician seeks to theorize and understand their work in the context of scholarship. My engagement with doctoral studies followed three decades as a professional musician, theater artist, and arts educator. I did not come to my graduate work fresh out of college, but rather as a seasoned performer and cultural worker in mid-life.^{iv} This song documents my journey of identity as I transitioned in my creative and learning process from artist to scholar.

Another point of reference is that I wrote the song in the months following my mother’s death. Thus, the loss of my mother is an underlying theme in the work, and as a result, the song embodies both my journey as a novice scholar and in the grieving of a beloved parent. But “The Beauty of Song” is more than just a personal song; it is also a song about theory. This topic of theory is appropriate to my grieving process. My mother, Mildred (Millie) Bakan was Professor Emeritus of philosophy and social science at York University in Toronto, Canada. Her areas of study included phenomenology and hermeneutics. Her interests were diverse, but they centered on understanding the phenomenon of being, exploring interpretation, and the embodiment of ethical action. She wrote on the relationship between psychology and philosophy as fields of study and criticized behaviorist reductionism (1962). She wrote on Husserl and temporality (1978), about subjectivity and insight (1998) and on education and the work of Martin Buber (1984). Millie reveled in art, music, and story. She loved what she might have called the “being-ness of being.” Her work interweaves with mine, creating a narrative legacy that connects us, even after her passing. A detailed discussion of Millie’s work is beyond the scope of this current essay, but she would have appreciated a/r/tography, and was fluent in the philosophical traditions on which a/r/tography continues to be built. The chorus and musical coda of the song repeats: *Mama oh mama can’t you see I’m gonna sing my way to a Ph.D.* These lines are sung in celebration and acknowledgement of the work she and her generation did in creating the philosophical foundations for interpretive and creative research practices. *Thanks for the blessing and the methodology* says the song, *I’m gonna sing my way to a Ph.D.*

My discovery process included my grieving, as well as an illumination of theory that connected me to my mother—and the philosophy of a/r/tography—through song in practice. It was the initial intention of this project to use song to explore issues arising from my extension from the social role of artist/teacher into that of researcher. But I

began to see, through my autobiographical troubling of identity and the experiences of my grieving, that song itself was a unique form of arts-based educational research. I found myself searching for an understanding of song as method, and discovered a rich –and largely unexplored–domain that connected song, autoethnography, narrative theory, poetic inquiry, and theory to community through music. Through this work I have come to believe that song offers unique opportunities for meta-disciplinary pedagogy and research. And so, this song, along with this essay/artist statement, in addition to bearing witness to my grieving and transition from artist to teacher to researcher, is also offered as a beginning articulation of using song in a/r/tographical music research, in honor of my mother. “The Beauty of Song” is an autoethnographic song about theory...but it is also a song about song as a/r/tography.

v
*This is not to be
confused with the ill
conceived “music is a
universal language”
cliché. Music is not
universal language...
more likely language
is a kind of music.*

PART THREE: IF I COULD SAY IT I WOULDN'T HAVE TO SING IT

Praxial music philosophers and sociologists use the terms “musicing” and “musicking” (see Elliott, 1995 and Small, 1998, respectively) to describe the varied ways we interact with music, through performing, improvising, composing, dancing, and listening. In all our musicing, according to the praxialists, music is an action-based, and extremely unique, form of situated semiotic meaning-making (Regelski & Gates, 2009; Goble, 2010). Elliott (1995) believes music to be a form of “practical” knowing that can be compared to sports or the finely tuned handiwork of a surgeon. The action is the knowing, and the knowing informs the action. As Elliott explains “... the actions of music making can be seen, fundamentally, as the ‘em-body-ment’ of musical thinking, knowing, and understanding” (p. 58).

Songs are a form of embodied musicing in which words are married with melody, pitch, rhythm, form, and other expressive elements (e.g., dynamic, articulation, timbre) of sound. It is not too broad a generalization to say that song—as text married to music—may be considered a universal human practice. v Song practices are found cross culturally and date back as far as the use of language itself (Frith, 1989; Levitin, 2008). Though not all cultures perceive song in the way it has been constructed in the West, there is not a human culture or society that does not have some kind of sound/text in its social practice.

In song, music ideas interweave with linguistic ones to enhance both. Communicating in words as well as in musically organized sounds, songs provide their textual meaning in multiple domains. Lyrics evoke symbolic resonance through language, story, narrative, rhythm, and rhyme. Songs are used to learn and teach, to define communities, to pray, to organize, to celebrate, to soothe the infant and the infirm, to march to war, to protest for peace, and to woo and mourn beloveds. These functions transcend the disciplinary separations of music from other types of knowing, and yet song is unique in that it is embedded with an irreplaceable musicality. It creates a creative, engaged and interpretive text in the form of poetics, movement, and sound. Song offers a unique expression of emotion, meaning, sentiment and collectivity that cannot be reduced to exposition - to do so denies the song its musical meaning.

Gouzouasis (2007, 2008, 2012) shows that musical knowing can, and does, inform its own unique form of scholarship. Taking an amodernist approach, Gouzouasis points

to form itself as holding theory and theory being the basis for form. Musical forms—such as a sonata, a fugue, or even the macro and micro musical structures found in “free” improvisational jazz—articulate musical knowing through and of the form of that knowing (Gouzouasis, 2007, p. 38). The music makes sense of the music. Echoing the organizational form of a musical fugue, Gouzouasis and Lee (2002) use narrative, poetry, exposition and dialogue to point to the resonance of music as a means for getting at “the truth.” Gouzouasis writes: “I always find truth in music...Whether in music composition, music improvisation, music listening, or music performance; whether I’m working solo or in a group, music has always provided me with truthful insights” (p. 135). Given the fluidity of knowing in our post-modern context, Lee and Gouzouasis (2002) discuss how musicians and the action of making music creates and nurtures a resonant social space of meaning. As Gouzouasis (2007) makes clear, the kind of knowing and representation that is contained in music cannot be reduced to other forms of expression. This resonance of truth is not unique to music, though musical truth is unique. This theoretical stance acknowledges that music, as music, contains and communicates meanings that lose their “truth” when reduced to non-musical forms. Gouzouasis (2007, 2008) enjoys the use of musical forms as a way of structuring his writing, but as he well knows, writing prose is not music. Only music is music.

Although I stand with Gouzouasis in his articulations of the essential irreducibility of music as music, one can also look at song semiotically, which is not contradictory to his amodernist perspective. As Tagg (1997) and Goble (2010) have articulated, musical sounds are interpreted through a culturally situated process. Frith (1989), in his discussions of popular song, extends interpretation beyond the music itself to understand the context of the communities that are evident in stylistic and situational diversities of musical expression. Frith argues that different songs create, or fantasize, different kinds of communities:

In analyzing song words we must refer to performing conventions which are used to construct our sense of both the singers and ourselves, as listeners. It’s not just what they sing, but the way they sing it that determines what a singer means to us and how we are placed, as an audience, in relationship to them. (p. 90).

A song, for Frith, is not defined merely by the words and music themselves, but also by the signs and symbols that communicate the context of its expression. And so, though I am in agreement with Gouzouasis that only music is music, and only music can contain musical meaning, there is a context to my artistic practice that is worthy of explication.

The songs I play are based in the North American folk revival tradition. Sonically, this form of music reflects Western and European approaches to music making. The music holds history in its tonalities, and reveals its roots in its audiated harmonic and rhythmic structures. It is based on tonic, dominant, and subdominant major and minor chord forms with harmonies and rhythms influenced by early immigration and colonial occupation from Europe and later with rhythms from Africa (influenced by the slave trade to North America). It is generally played using notes found in the diatonic scale (i.e., scales composed of 7 pitches, separated by whole steps and half steps). Some exceptions to strict diatonic tonality may be found in the “bent” notes of the blues and the sliding sounds of fretless instruments such as the fiddle and

traditional fretless banjo. The major, dorian, aeolian, mixolydian, and the “harmonic minor” diatonic modes (a term used synonymously with tonality) are most common. Pentatonic scalar influences are heard in the blues and other music styles that were influenced by blues. Mexican, Spanish, Middle Eastern (e.g., Greek, Jewish, Turkish, Armenian, Lebanese, Egyptian) and other musical influences emerge as migration and immigration in the 19th and 20th century influenced the sounds. North American indigenous music making is only marginally represented if at all. Music from China and Asia is rarely present in the North American folk music genre, but still there are musical grammars used that strongly coincides with the major pentatonic music forms –such as those found in blues and other North American folk music. ^{vi}

This music has a long tradition of engaging humanitarian artists who use words and music together to learn, teach, inquire, and share. Songs with meaningful lyrics and themes of social justice, civil rights, peace and other activism have histories in the works of writer/performer/activist/musicians such as Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie. This history of song in “folk music” and the “folk music revival” can be traced back to the late 1930s and the progressive activist work of an organization called “The People’s Song Movement” (Denisoff, 1971; Lieberman, 1989). This movement embraced the combination of words and music to craft “songs of persuasion” for the labor, civil rights and social justice movements. Their legacy influenced the works of song/poets such as Bob Dylan, John Lennon, Ani Defranco, Bruce Cockburn, Buffy Sainte Marie, Leonard Cohen and a host of others (Gruning, 2006). A song such as “Where Have All the Flowers Gone” (written by Pete Seeger and Joe Hickerson) captures in words and music a narrative of loss and regret in the face of war. Buffy Sainte Marie’s “Universal Soldier,” Bob Dylan’s “The Times They Are A Changing,” John Lennon’s “Imagine,” Bruce Cockburn’s “If I Had A Rocket Launcher” and Leonard Cohen’s “Democracy” are just a few examples of songs that communicate ethical, musical, textual, and social knowing simultaneously in lyric and music. “The Beauty of Song” stands as influenced by these kinds of socially engaged songs. It uses words and music to make a case for a practice that challenges the hegemony of traditional academic discourse. The lyric uses scholarly language and adapts it to melody, rhyme and rhythm to act as a song of persuasion.

Also, as influenced by the folk revival tradition, the performance of “The Beauty of Song” encourages the audience to sing along—in fact the song is composed to require it. This is true to my mentors: the artist/activists of the folk music revival strove to break down the walls between performer and audience by celebrating singing and making music together in a live concert setting, engaging the audience in collective music making through words and music. Recordings of Pete Seeger in concert throughout the 1960’s feature him leading thousands of voices in harmony together. This tradition found moments of historical significance during the civil rights movement, the protests against the war in Vietnam, and even during the first inauguration of President Barack Obama, in which Pete Seeger (at age 90) joined Bruce Springsteen in leading the crowd gathered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial Building in singing Woody Guthrie’s “This Land is Your Land” (Seeger, Seeger & Springsteen, 2009).

In encouraging the audience to sing along, to take ownership of the musical moment, the musician—who now stands as facilitator, pedagogue and activist as well as artist—offers a narrative musical form through which community can be strengthened,

defined, nurtured, and reinforced. This is the role Seeger and others stepped into and it is this tradition that supports me. It is this music into which I place my voice. And it is this tradition that supports the celebratory sing-along documented in the attached video artifact.

This song was sung for a community of a/r/tographers. It is a song for a specific community at a specific time. It is offered as an anthem, one that reaches beyond my story, to interweave with the story of others – the specific others in my graduate seminar, and now my readers in this journal—a community of practice defined by our theoretical and practice-based interest in a/r/tography. It stands as a performative lyrical expression that is musically bonded with musical and scholarly history, community, and the ethical moment of my subjective present. It is a song to express my lived experience, and one crafted to give lyrical voice to the experience of others in the context of a community of practice (Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Irwin, 2008; Springgay, Irwin, Kind, 2008; Wenger, 2006). A song may be formed out of a community and may be informed by definitions birthed by specific cultural narratives. This interconnected enacted text may then be performed situationally. A songster sings into a context of knowing and reaches the specific situation of its performance. This social and pedagogical knowing is precisely what I aspired to demonstrate and embody in the performance of “The Beauty of Song”. As Frith (1989) informs us, song allows conventional language to be used in poetic ways. In “The Beauty of Song,” the unconventional academic language is rhymed and timed. In doing so I reclaim the language as a creative expression. With the addition of music—with its tones, timbres, rhythms and pulse, adding layers to the multiple meanings of the lyrical text—a new spectre of knowledge making can be explored building on poetic inquiry and written creative prose.

PART FOUR: RESONANCES

This is the beauty.

This is the beauty of song.

This is the beauty of song it resonates.

This is the beauty of song it resonates so long..

Lyric, and music itself, are forms of embodied knowing that stand in contrast to expository prose (Bresler, 2008; Neilsen, 2008). Lyric allows ordinary speech to take on multiple and metaphoric meanings. Lyric makes words unfold over time in musical ways. The opening lines of the attached song: *this is the beauty of song it resonates so long*, cannot hold its layers of meaning without the resonance of a sung lyric. As Leavy (2009), writes:

...space surrounds every musical note, and singers and musicians can manipulate or sculpt these spaces... to produce the desired audience response and, correspondingly, impart meaning. The transformation of musical composition into audible sound thus unleashes its potential to access or feel emotions as well as to elicit emotional responses from listeners. (p. 114).

The opening of “The Beauty of Song” contains a lyrical build. Each line stands on its own before being added to in the next musical phrase. This poetic use of lyric allows new meanings to emerge from each set of words. “The Beauty of Song,” communicates multiple layers of concurrent meanings that unfold lyrically and musically over time. In order to offer thin slices of my a/r/tographical inquiry in practice, I will look, phrase by phrase, at the opening section of the song (knowing full well, that any interpretation I offer is insufficient to the multitude of experiences the sung lyric offers to listeners).

This is the beauty.

The musical introduction to the song uses first position triads and rhythmic strumming to establish the musical frame of the song. Sonically this moment establishes musical elements, grammars and symbols that arise from the North American folk music tradition described above. It uses a diatonic scale and a simple tonic, subdominant, dominant (i.e., I, IV, V) chord progression to create the harmony. It is performed on a steel string acoustic guitar and felt in duple meter (with a 4/4 meter signature). The use of a capo at the fifth fret transposes the sound of the instrument so that G chords sound as C chords, giving the guitar a lovely treble tone. My instrument’s body, made by world-renowned luthier Linda Manzer (Toronto), of aged and played hand cut spruce and rosewood, vibrate, and resonate under my touch.

The first line of lyric, and the music that supports it, embody multiple meanings. The sonic vocabulary and instrumentation semiotically represent the folk music tradition of my artistic practice (i.e., this song would have been a very different semiotic experience if say, it was performed with a heavy metal quartet of drums, electric throbbing bass and two electric guitars with screamed atonal vocals or was written as a European style art-song for piano and trained classical voice). The musical and imagistic information informs the listener, and places the context for the work. The lyrical line points directly to the topic of aesthetics: beauty. Perception of beauty, however defined, is a trait of our species, perhaps offering evolutionary advantage (Dissanayake, 1992). Music is formed in semiotic expressions that hold meaning based on interpretation of sonic signs and symbols (Tagg, 1999; Goble, 2010). Perceiving these sounds as beautiful requires aesthetic judgment. This judgment is grounded in a multitude of practices, narratives and experiences, which inform perception.

The words point the listener to beauty itself. They point to multitudes of narratives about beauty that are offered by scholarship and lived-experience. Ultimately, the narratives become less (and more) specific, as the opening lines establish their musical meaning. There is a cascade of sound in temporal acoustic space; the resonance of the musical mind takes note.

This is the beauty of song.

Here the lyric becomes self-referential. It informs the listeners that song itself is the object of the aesthetic statement. As shown above, song is musical text. It is a unique form of cultural expression marrying lyric and music. There is a power inherent in the articulation of words entwined with music. Frith (1989) believes that song allows conventional language to be used in poetic ways through the emotional and musical expression of human voice. Neilsen (2008) cites lyrical knowing as a form of embodied writing that reaches across the divide of the other to form ethical relationships.

Gouzouasis (2012) believes that elements of music such as tonality, meter, and form play a powerful role in shaping music as knowing. Bressler (2008) points to musical composition and performance as forming Buberian i-thou relationships in which we become a whole with the other. All of these thinkers support the conclusion that the combination of music, music performance and lyrical expression through song are a transformative means of human knowing and communicating. The song itself points to the song itself.

This is the beauty of song it resonates.

Music is made up of resonating vibrations. The pitch A, which resonates at 440 vibrations per second, has harmonic relationships to overtones that vibrate at different frequencies. Some of these resonances create familiar sounds to our ears. For Western ears, influenced by “la contenance Angloise,” we hear the harmony of thirds and major sixths as aesthetically pleasing. This pleasure is informed by cultural bias that informs our judgment, but is also grounded in the vibrational resonance of the sound itself.

One can also speak of resonance in a different manner. “Resonance” is not only to the musical phenomenon, but also can be found in the shared cultural experience of a community of practice and in the limbic brain connections formed as we engage in musicing together. When we gather around song a collective is drawn together. We resonate in our values, our stories, our interests, beliefs, and our epistemologies. Our communities are formed by a narrative resonance. Biologically, through this connection with others we achieve limbic resonance—literally syncopated stimulation of our brain activity (Lewis, Amani, & Lannon, 2000). The symbolic, emotional, spiritual, playful, metaphoric and dream-like neural stimulation of the music experience draws us to each other. Music is a whole brain activity, with rhythms and tone creating a light show of neural response in both listeners and performers. Musical rhythms resonate with our deepest neural anatomy; musical meaning-making is biological as well as semiotic (Frith, 1989; Sacks, 2008; Levitin, 2007, 2008). The deep regions of our brain respond to patterns of rhythm associated with movement and coordination (Levitin, 2006). The neo-cortex processes words, symbol systems, patterns, and tone. The stimulation of the neo-cortex through the signs and symbols of words and music creates an emotional/symbolic connection with the limbic brain. It is the limbic system that triggers feelings, images, memories and deeply imprinted patterns. The limbic brain is stimulated by intimacy with other limbic brains. It is this part of our brain at play when we weep, laugh, or are moved by a song or a touch. Music reaches into us and creates a resonance, which allows us to know that we are not alone. Our beings, mind, and body resonate together, literally and metaphorically, through song.

This is the beauty of song it resonates so.

Here the musical and lyrical meanings coalesce into a single statement. At this point in the song, the listeners have begun to be familiar with the melody. As each new word is added the meaning of the phrase transforms. The music remains constant. This frames each word in unspoken rhythms. This line—*this is the beauty of song it resonates so*—hovers expectantly over the last note of the phrase. It rings over the silence reveling in the unspoken. This musical expectation, hearing a silence where the ear craves something to fill it, allows this lyric to hang deliciously in the air.

This is the beauty of song it resonates so long.

Now the listener is given resolution in the complete lyrical line. This line spans the entire space of the now familiar melody. At this point the performance, as represented in the attached video document, comes to a pedagogical moment. This complete line is repeated. In terms of music pedagogy, this introductory section was teaching the audience their “part” of the song. By the end of the song the listeners will be singing this line with the singer. Having offered the instruction in a stepwise progression, adding more lyrics as the musical phrase is repeated, the singer has embedded the musical information in the listenership. With each singing of the repeated chorus, the singer/facilitator (i.e., artist-pedagogue) will ask the listeners to sing more and more of the chorus, allowing it to build into three distinct harmonizing parts by the end of the song. This will build until the entire room, and a community of practice of a/r/tographers, will sing the song together. If you listen closely at the end of the video, you can hear someone say “I can see we have a class song now.” Following this there is laughter, and then someone else says “the a/r/tography song.”

This sense of the song being one that belongs to the community is not unintentional. As an artist, I wrote this song within the context of expectation of performing it for a group of a/r/tographers. I used language in the lyric that would resonate with this community. My training as a performer/musician/facilitator who uses song as a way of entertaining, teaching, and celebrating communities informs my work. The pedagogical and musical introduction of the song laid the scaffold for the community to sing together during the finale and musical coda. The facilitative pedagogical progression that unfolds in performance is informed by years of practice and hundreds of hours of stage time. This embodied knowing through music in practice in the context of community is what provides the very richness of resonance that is addressed in the lyric.

PART FIVE: A FEW VERSES ON THEORY

*Gonna sing my way to a Ph.D.
It feels like a clash of identities
Who I am and who I'll be
And how they find their harmony.*

*Sing my way to a Ph.D.
To embody arts based inquiry
There's art at the heart of the academy
And you can sing all the way to a Ph.D.*

*Emerging from phenomenology
And hermeneutic epistemology
Is a practice-based inquiry
That forms around a/r/tography*

*There's interpretation in what we know and see
And this informs my methodology
I've attached the footnotes in solid APA
And persevere with Gadamer and trace him to today.*

*An interstitial flexibility
Can deconstruct identity
And life happens in spite of me
And I find myself at university.*

*We are all becoming in our quest to understand.
The medium holds the meanings in praxis of the hand
So this is poetic inquiry
That embraces the liminality.*

A/r/tography enables a space for musical and sung lyrical expression to be understood as a form of research inquiry marked by relationship, creativity, play, performance, and lived-practice. Hermeneutics, phenomenology, feminist thought, post-colonial theory, post-modern analysis, and post-structuralism have coalesced to call us to question positivistic and post-positivistic assumptions about research and forge new kinds of scholarship (Denzin, 1997, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Sparkes, 2002; Irwin & Springgay, 2009; Sullivan, 2010; Popkewitz, 1997). Theorists have charged the academy to recognize that art-making can stand, not only as a tool for more “legitimate” forms of research, but also as a valid and worthy form of knowing in its own right (Neilsen, 2008; Richardson, 2000; Gouzouasis & Lee, 2002; Gouzouasis, 2007; Gouzouasis; 2008).

An array of examples of arts-based educational research has begun to fill the libraries, setting the stage for on-going and further exploration (Van Halen-Faber & Diamond, 2008). A/r/tography as a method has emerged from this theory and practice to articulate the connected and situated place of artists as researchers and teachers. The roles of artist, teacher and researcher are relational. A/r/tography focuses on the connected spaces in-between these roles and the communities of practice in which they emerge (Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Irwin, 2008; Springgay, Irwin, Kind, 2008; Wenger, 2006). Knowledge is understood as unfolding in a participatory discovery process. The teacher is not separate from their students. The artist is not separate from their audience or their work, and the researcher is not separate from the epistemological context for the knowing and the field of accumulated knowledge.

Much of my theoretical thinking about a/r/tography is influenced by hermeneutics. Hermeneutics calls us to be acutely aware of the role of interpretation in the subject/object relationship. The concept of hermeneutic, originating in biblical studies and expanded into philosophical thought by Gadamer, entwines text and reader in a circular relationship (Gallagher, 1992). The text informs the reader, who transforms the text with reflection, and this new meaning is then brought back to the reader. The use of the hermeneutic circle, in which knowledge continues to develop nuance and meaning as it is revisited, is a method to account for the interpretation in our representations. Hermeneutics pays attention to the silences and the spaces in between the known and the knower. We become the subject of our own discovery.

The use of art and poetic language celebrates the unique one-of-a-kind knowledge that arises from interpretation. Each glimmer of understanding is unique to the particulars of the “fecundity of the individual case” (Jardine, 1998). It is in the specifics of the instance that we begin to surmise the universals embodied in the particular. *There’s interpretation in what we know and see says the lyrics of my song, and this informs my methodology.*”

I am also theoretically supported by understandings of poetic and lyric inquiry. Prendergast articulates poetic inquiry as “... an artistic practice carried out within a research framework that cannot and must not diminish the critical/aesthetic qualities of these poems as poetry” (Prendergast, 2009, p. xxv). “The Beauty of Song” straddles, in true interstitial fashion, Prendergast’s (2009, p. xxii) categories of “Vox Theoria” (poems in response to literature/theory in a given field) and “Vox Autobiographia/ autoethnographia” (researcher voiced poems that are written from field notes, autobiographical, or reflexive writing). It is both a song about theory, and an autoethnographical exploration of my identity as an artist and researcher. Lyric inquiry (Neilsen, 2008) articulates a methodology for the use of alternative forms of language for the documentation of knowledge. Lyric inquiry is “informed by aesthetic and philosophical principles of writing; it is based on a conviction that using expressive and poetic functions in language creates the possibility of a resonant, ethical, and engaged relationship between the knower and the known” (Neilsen, 2008, p. 94). As a methodology, lyric inquiry celebrates the expressive, poetic, and aesthetic as a means of communicating the process and results of inquiry. “It is a phenomenological process and practice that embraces ambiguity, metaphor, recursiveness, silence, sensory immersion, and resonance ...”(Neilsen, 2008, p.96). Neilsen invokes the Greek god Hermes to find the origins of the word lyric. Hermes, the winged-foot messenger who carries communications from place to place and person to person, birthed music by creating a lyre, a stringed instrument from a shell of tortoise and gut. This suggests an intimacy between music, lyric, interpretation, poetic language, and divine communication. The sharing of deeply personal and imaginative lyrical expression facilitates a way of knowing each other. It makes us move, laugh, cry, think, and wonder. Lyrical language is personal and imaginative. It “allows us to hear the music of the other” (Neilsen, 2008, p. 95). Lyric inquiry enables possibilities for the use of alternative forms of language for the explorations of knowledge. This is not a new approach to knowledge, as poets, songwriters and lyricists have long used this form. What is new is the challenge to the privilege of expository discourse as the primary means of learning, research and documentation of discoveries in social science. Lyric inquiry allows for the possibility that music with sung text, such as exemplified in “The Beauty of Song,” can be seen as a unique way of expressing knowledge. The resonance of song is discovered in the combination of words with music as a practice-based method. The words of a song only reveal their resonant meanings when they are lifted from the page into voice in the context of music. A song must be sung to be a song and only a song is a song.

PART SIX: A REFLECTIVE REPETITION AND EMBELLISHMENT

My practice is informed by years of doing, by praxis (Gouzouasis, 2006). I have released and toured two CDs of original songs, written music and words for numerous artistic projects (theatre and dance), played in several professional bands, and sung on hundreds of stages. I have self-identified as an artist since I was about 18 years old. Song—the interweaving of lyric and music—has been my primary mode of creative expression and public discourse. As I say in the lyric to “The Beauty of Song:” *the medium holds the meaning of the praxis of the hand*. In less poetic terms, the performance and writing of this song itself reveals the practical knowing that is done through the musicing. I bring to my playing years of effort towards the performance of music in action. I have, as we musicians say, “chops.” I am fluent in song.

Throughout my early years of doctoral studies, I struggled with mastering the expository form of writing. As one fluent in lyrical forms of expression, I found my expression under siege by the dominant expository argumentative prose of academic study. More than once I contemplated abandoning scholarship; uncomfortable with having my words and ideas colonized into essay format. The scholarly form felt like an abandonment of my aesthetic sensibilities to embrace the normalizing types of text found in academics. It forced me to ask about the requirements of scholarship. Must knowing and theory be expressed in expository prose? Where do I, and my form of artistic and lyrical expression, fit? By writing and singing a song about the theory that supports singing a PhD, I sought to embrace the connected roles of artist/researcher. The song is imbued with my musical skills, aesthetic and scholarly understandings, and poetics through praxis. It exemplifies how research can be artistic, and how an artist can be scholarly. *It feels like a clash of identities* I sing. “The Beauty of Song” is a “song of persuasion” that serves as an example to prove that identities can merge—that my songwriting practice is scholarship. It stands to celebrate interconnected ways of being enabled and acknowledged by a/r/tography. More importantly this creative inquiry has enabled me to see myself become whole. Gouzouasis calls on us to remove the slashes, to be an *artistresearchteacher* (2007, 2012). Artography is articulated not to define our work into new categories and delineations, but to be whole—to celebrate the being-ness of knowing through artistic phenomenological and interpretive process. My inquiry revealed to me that I have always been artist and a scholar. As art-making takes its rightful place as a valid form of embodiment of knowledge, I am able to bring my years of artistic practice to the scholarly project and enhance and contribute to its development. By recognizing the subjective and community aspects of research, and by extending its realm into creative expression, the scholarly project can resonate with greater clarity, truth, and a sense of play. I can sing my way to a Ph.D. because this form can now find a place at the academy.

As an *artistresearchteacher* I also engage my community in this learning. As shown in the attached video, this project is musically as well as theoretically pedagogical. The final section of the video is a participatory sequence. I stop the performance to teach/facilitate the repeated lines to/with the audience/participants/learners. The parts sung by the audience form a base on which the lead voice can melodically improvise while chanting the “hook” or chorus of the song. It is a musical, linguistic text that carries meaning not only for the singer as an artist, but also for a community of practice (Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Wenger, 2006).

PART SEVEN: CODA.

In this inquiry a complex and multi-dimensional bricolage has formed/informed an emerging theory of song as artographical inquiry. I have begun to frame, in prose and song, the methodological and philosophical stance for further exploration into art making, songwriting, music education, curriculum, and pedagogy. “The Beauty of Song” arises out of qualitative arts-based research theory and combines it with the artistic practice of songwriting. It demonstrates the unique potential of song to render meaning and enhance knowledge-communities. The result is an attempt to embody research through practice, and integrate music, lyric, story, and exposition to display the theory in action. This methodological stance weaves autobiographical as well as theoretical narratives in lyric and song. The artistic and scholarly practices that have emerged have provided a musical and lyrical tool for exploration, research, and dissemination of research. I stand supported by my maternal, musical, theoretical, and personal mentors. I have centered my discussion on a songmaking practice documenting the transitional, and yet ultimately integrated, identity of artistresearchteacher. I hope that this contribution might aid in the conceptualization of music, and particularly song, as artographical creating, knowing, and teaching. I have found the theory, and it would seem that one can sing all the way to a Ph.d. For many reasons, this is a good thing—a celebratory moment. Or, as my mother would say: “oh happy day!”

And this is the beauty of song it resonates so...

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