Writing a New Story

Autoethnography is an emanicpatory narrative process engendering personal agency and relational transformation. My autoethnographic manuscript includes my letter to my birthmother. I make parallels between my letter, Caroline Short’s book written with facilitated communication[[1]](#footnote-1), the letter of a homosexual son to his father, and the Encyclical Letter Laudato SI’ Of The Holy Father Francis[[2]](#footnote-2). I refer to these ‘love letters’ as mediating artifacts that give rise to new relational worlds. The liminal space in my letter created a sacred space where my vulnerability took me to the threshold of relational transformation. Emacipatory narrative expressions create a form of liminal space or wiggle room where the individual and collective are entangled.

Andrew Solomon addresses the question of children that are different from their parents in “Far From The Tree”[[3]](#footnote-3). He tells stories of adopted children, handicapped children, and homosexual children. As an adopted child, I myself fell far from the tree. I was not like my adopted parents who learned to love me in spite of the fact that I would not carry their genetic heritage forward. Nor was I like my birth family. After our reunion, we all had to face the unlikeness that my upbringing had nurtured. But by truly listening to each other’s stories with heartfelt compassion, we transcended the differences that challenged us. Love does triumph.

The space we make in our heart to receive and care for the other transforms our mind-body and our family circle’s configuration, as we expand our circle of caring. As humanity integrates the fact that we are in the 6th phase of extinction, we are becoming aware of the vulnerability of many species. Dreaming, imagining and visioning are part of the integral transformative process, taking the minds eye to new places where new worlds can come into being. Will a new story allow us to survive? Thomas Berry’s book, “The Dream of the Earth”[[4]](#footnote-4), discusses how we are in between stories and the importance of learning a new story. Human and planetary survival may depend upon our ability to write a new guiding narrative.

Autoethnography is a self-transforming process that allows the penman to write into life an authored self. This authored self takes form on paper, in an encounter that is a kind of daily or weekly meeting point of self-discovery. When we write we are grounded in our cultural roots and languages. I dared to tell my story and face exposedness, taking the risk of being either rejected or embraced. My life is the poem that I am endeavoring to write. John Shotter[[5]](#footnote-5) speaks of social poetics, describing how language and storytelling create ‘shared understandings’. In French, the expression ‘entre nous’ is a grammatical metaphor describing that, which is shared between us. This relational space provides new ways of being in the world, opening wiggle room where new relational worlds can be engendered. The emancipatory power of narrative transfigures identity, revising the stories we live by.

1. Short, Caroline, (2012), *De Coeur à coeurs*, Editions Indigo, Montreux. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Francis, (2015) *Laudato SI’*, Our Sunday Visitor Pub, Huntington Indiana. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Solomon, A., (2012) Far From the Tree, Scribner, New York. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Berry, T. (2015) *The Dream of the Earth*, Open WorldCat. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. J. Shotter, J (1995). *Wittgenstein's World: Beyond 'The Way Of Theory' Toward A 'Social Poetics'*. Retrieved from <http://www.johnshotter.com>. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)