Member since 2018
JM13714

Spotkania / dyskusje / polemiki

Lisa M. Tillmann*

Qualitative Inquiry into Art History: A Tribute to Arthur P. Bochner[1]

In 1988, an intense,
driven department chair,
respected scholar,
and prolific author
lost suddenly,
unexpectedly,
his aging but vital father,
and became, as never before,
a wounded storyteller.[2]

"It's About Time,"[3]
he came to believe,
to integrate fractured identities
divided by academic pursuit
and personal grief.

* Department of Critical Media & Cultural Studies Rollins College.

[1] This work was originally published as: L. M. Tillmann-Healy (2004) *Qualitative Inquiry into Art History: A Tribute to Arthur P. Bochner*, "American Communication Journal," 7. Reprinted by permission of the American Communication Association.

[2] Frank (1995).

[3] Bochner (1997).

http://dx.doi.org/10.18778/2450-4491.08.20

Self-transformation
became a social construction
when sociology's path
crossed that of communication.
Who was this vision,
on a mission,
firing a new canon
that would become *Final Negotiations*?[4]
Companion became partner
and sometime thereafter,
an impulse artfully paternal
sparked in the heart Art Bochner.

To be counted
among the adopted
is not without responsibility.
For me it meant assistantships
on family dynamics
and cinematic relationships,
and a five-course meal
of Interpretivism, Narrative Methodology,
Close Relationships, Writing Workshop,
and Communication Theory.

A class called Interpretivism,
Fall, 1993,
began with Mead's *Mind, Self, & Society*.[5]
M.A.s and Ph.D.s to be
emplotted our "I"s and tossed our "me"s
into a sea
of essential We.

In a hermeneutic circle
we engaged *Interaction Ritual*[6]
until teeming
with finite provinces[7]
and *Acts of Meaning*.[8]

[4] Ellis (1995).
[5] Mead (1967).
[6] Goffman (1982).
[7] Berger, Luckmann (1989).
[8] Bruner (1990).

For Narrative Inquiry,
we heard *The Call of Stories*.[9]
Through border-crossing life histories,
we faced abuse, divorce, cancer, AIDS,
their—and our—mortality,
at times unbearable reflexivity,
the "gift" lost
in the chaos of calamity.

And so we wrote.
We wrote of resilience born of fragility,
of stumbling toward imperfect mutuality.
These projects—these *life* projects—
moved through uncertainty
and ineffability,
toward epiphany,
not a recovery
of whom we had been
but of a rhetoric of possibility
of whom we might become.
Our narrative challenge: to co-author stories
that could be both told
and lived.

Communication in Close Relationships
offered homeostasis in Batesonian cybernetics,[10]
but tension in Rawlinsonian dialectics.[11]
Only 15 weeks, but several *Pathways to Madness*.[12]
We were a wreck through *Denial of Death,*[13]
gloom oozing into our attitudes
when Becker's terrors of finitude
wrought too much verisimilitude.
Lest other illusions
Cause confusion,
we saw the backward nature of *Betrayal*,[14]
and *Scenes from a Marriage*[15] we all hated.

[9] Coles (1989).
[10] Bateson (1972).
[11] Rawlins (1992).
[12] Henry (1973).
[13] Becker (1973).
[14] Spiegel, Jones (1983).
[15] Carlberg, Bergman (1973).

For Writing Workshop,
we learned to pen an Art-ful social science.
With self-consciousness and interhuman presence,
we dizzily spun webs of significance,[16]
moving from silence to utterance
to transcendence and performance.

In Communication Theory,
we gained many "Perspectives on Inquiry"[17],[18]
and forayed into
the interdisciplinary phenomenology
of Arthur ideology.
Students were infused
with systems and critical theories,
pragmatist ontologies,
constructivist epistemologies,
and interpretivist methodologies.

Enter intersubjectivity,
the selectivity of memory,
Shweder's "Divergent Rationalities,"[19]
language's exuberences and deficiencies,[20]
and *Roshomon*'*s*[21] multiple realities.
Said Doctor Bochner,
"Choose your conversation partners carefully;
some of them will drive you crazy."

In search of proof,
we went "Mucking Around Looking for Truth."[22]
"But how do you know?" we asked King Arthur.
"I'm not positivist," was his rejoinder,
"but I promise to tell a truth,
a local truth,
an evocative narrative truth,
so help me Coles.[23]

[16] Geertz (1973).
[17] Bochner (1985).
[18] Bochner (1994).
[19] Shweder (1986).
[20] Becker (1991).
[21] Jingo, Kurosawa (1950).
[22] Bochner, Ellis, Tillmann-Healy (1998).
[23] Coles (1989).

And let's forgo how I know.
Ask instead
the name and frame of this language game,
the subtext of this context,
the pattern of this symbolic interaction—
in other words: why I talk this way."

To explore this lead, we took in his writing.
Ethnographically Speaking,[24]
he connected "Telling and Living."[25]
Art sparked
"Representation, Conversation and Reflection,"[26]
offered a vulnerable observation
of institutional depression,[27]
helped us sense and feel
"The Constraints of Choice in Abortion."[28]
"*Theories and Stories*,"[29]
"*Relationships as Stories*,"[30]
"Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity,"[31]
and *Composing Ethnography*[32]
contested the politics of neutrality,
offering instead the certainty of contingency,
and clarity of irony,
enclosing us warmly
in a therapeutic double bind of hope and empathy.

"The author is dead,"
Michel Foucault had said.

But Arthur lives—and tells.

Arthur P. Bochner:
social science spinner,
literature weaver,

[24] Bochner, Ellis (2002).
[25] Bochner, Ellis (1995).
[26] Bochner (1985).
[27] Bochner (1997).
[28] Ellis, Bochner (1992).
[29] Bochner (1994).
[30] Bochner, Ellis, Tillmann-Healy (2000).
[31] Bochner, Ellis (2000).
[32] Bochner, Ellis (1996).

Kuhnian paradigm shifter,
dialogic facilitator,
co-parent and mentor,
recovering empiricist,
Rortian anti-foundationalist,
master narrative deconstructionist,
compassionate Art therapist—
and this:
a fellow traveler
through grief and strife,
a builder of collective consciousness
strong enough to endure full life.

Could any legacy
be more worthy
of Art history?

References

Bateson G. (1972) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*, New York, Ballantine Books.

Becker A. L. (1991) *A Short Essay on Languaging* in: *Research and Reflexivity*, F. Steier (Ed.), Newbury Park, CA, Sage: 226–234.

Becker E. (1973) *The Denial of Death*, New York, The Free Press.

Berger P. L., Luckmann T. (1989) *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, New York, Anchor Books.

Bochner A. P. (1985) *Perspectives on Inquiry: Representation, Conversation, and Reflection* in: *Handbook of Interpersonal Communication*, M. L. Knapp, G. R. Miller (Eds.), Newbury Park, CA, Sage: 27–58.

Bochner A. P. (1994) *Perspectives on Inquiry II: Theories and Stories* in: *Handbook of Interpersonal Communication (2nd ed.)*, M. L. Knapp, G. R. Miller (Eds.), Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage: 21–41.

Bochner A. P. (1997) *It's About Time: Narrative and the Divided Self*, "Qualitative Inquiry," 3. 418–438.

Bochner A. P., Ellis C. (1995) *Telling and Living: Narrative Co-construction and the Practices of Interpersonal Relationships* in: *Social Approaches to Communication*, W. Leeds-Hurwitz (Ed.), New York, Guilford Publications: 201–213.

Bochner A. P., Ellis C. (2000) *Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject* in: *Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd Ed.)*, N. K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage: 733–768.

Bochner A. P., Ellis C. (Eds.) (1996) *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing*, Walnut Creek, CA, AltaMira Press.

Bochner A. P., & Ellis C. (Eds.) (2002) *Ethnographically Speaking: Autoethnography, Literature, and Aesthetics*, Walnut Creek, CA, AltaMira Press.

Bochner A. P., Ellis C. Tillmann-Healy L. (1998) *Mucking Around Looking for Truth* in: *Dialectical Approaches to Studying Interpersonal Relationships*, B. M. Montgomery, L. A. Baxter (Eds.), Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum: 41–62.

Bochner A. P., Ellis C., Tillmann-Healy L. M. (2000) *Relationships as Stories: Accounts, Storied Lives, Evocative Narratives* in: *Communication and Personal Relationships*, K. Dindia, S. Duck (Eds.), Chichester, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.: 12–29.

Bruner J. (1990) *Acts of Meaning*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

Carlberg L. O. (producer), Bergman I. (director) (1973) *Scenes from a Marriage* [motion picture], Sweden, Cinema 5 Distribution.

Coles R. (1989) *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin.

Ellis C. (1995) *Final Negotiations: A Story of Love, Loss, and Chronic Illness*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press.

Ellis C., Bochner A. P. (1992) *Telling and Performing Personal Stories: The Constraints of Choice in Abortion* in: *Investigating Subjectivity: Research on Lived Experience*, C. Ellis, M. J. Flaherty (Eds.), Newbury Park, CA, Sage: 79–101.

Frank A. W. (1995) *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Geertz C. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, Basic Books.

Goffman E. (1982) *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*, New York, Pantheon Books.

Henry J. (1973) *Pathways to Madness*, New York, Vintage Books.

Jingo M. (producer), Kurosawa A. (director) (1950) *Roshomon* [motion picture], Japan, Daiei Film.

Mead G. H. (1967) *Mind, Self, & Society*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

Rawlins W. K. (1992). *Friendship Matters*: *Communication, Dialectics, and the Life Course*, New York, Aldine de Gruyter.

Shweder R. A. (1986) *Divergent Rationalities* in: *Metatheory in Social Science: Pluralisms and Subjectivities*, D. W. Fiske, R. A. Shweder (Eds.), Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 163–196.

Spiegel S. (producer), Jones D. (director) (1983) *Betrayal* [motion picture] United States, 20th Century Fox.