

The Dennis Potter Heritage Project: Auto/Ethnography as Process and Product

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Introduction

The Dennis Potter Heritage Project (henceforth DPHP) provides a unique opportunity for complex empirical research. It offers the researcher a chance to study the organisational and cultural processes involved in the evolution of a heritage project, created to celebrate a locally important and culturally significant media icon. It promotes the exploration of memory within the locally specific heritage environment of the Forest of Dean and the Dean Heritage Centre's (henceforth DHC) exhibition space, and it offers the opportunity to study emergent ideas of affect and emotion (Clough 2007; Thrift 2008). Research on the DPHP therefore necessitates a new, complex and innovative approach to methods and methodology. In the following paper, autoethnography will be explored as both a process (a methodology) which can be combined with other qualitative methods, and as a final product (as a mode of writing adopted in the finished research).

The mediated nature of Dennis Potter as TV playwright is self-evident in the span of his television and film career and is well documented (Cook 1995; 2000; Carpenter 1998; Creeber 1998; Fuller 1994). Potter *himself* (or the public memory of Potter) can, however, also be seen as a mediated artefact given the highly mediated nature of the DPHPs approach to memorialising his legacy,

through community media projects, digital storytelling projects, and audio recording projects. Therefore, whilst the DPHP facilitates traditional academic work on Potter's TV legacy through the availability of the Potter Archive, it also invites the media scholar to explore a deeply layered process of mediation at a heritage project. By exploring the mediated tools used by the DHC to engage the Forest of Dean community in the preservation of Potter's history, and to secure outside (tourist) footfall, the DPHP's content also advocates the study of the nexus between tourism and everyday life. (Noy 2007)

I am conducting this multifaceted research on the DPHP from a perspective afforded to me, in part, by the virtue of good-timing. I was aware of the DPHP before this research began both through my engagement as a volunteer at the DHC and because I live in the Forest of Dean, where the media interest in the Potter Archive 'Coming Home' had already begun to mount. I officially started this research whilst the DHC drew up plans for the Potter Exhibition Room, when the Centre had just taken possession of the Potter Archive, and whilst community media projects funded by the DPHP were still taking place. My proximity to the DPHP, the intimacy I have with the Forest of Dean as a resident, and my position as a member of the cultural group that my research explores, means that the timeliness of this research is not just an interesting aside, rather it has also facilitated the particular methodological approach I will adopt for this study.

First, this paper will explore uses and definitions of autoethnography and propose how concepts and methods found in other definitions of (auto) ethnography can be used to meet the complex needs of this research. Next, this paper will examine the

pairing of autoethnography with other qualitative methods and will explore the concepts of voice and narrative style as analytical categories. As autoethnography is intrinsically bound up with notions of the self and of emotion (Ellis 2004) this paper will then offer a discussion of the role of the 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in research, and explore different styles of autoethnography specifically connected to the emotions. To conclude, this paper will establish the new horizon for the methodology, by bringing together the argument that autoethnography can be both a valued qualitative methodological tool and a legitimate and defensible mode of writing research.

Behar has suggested that the emergence of autoethnography can be seen as a result of efforts by scholars to:

...Map an intermediate space we can't quite define yet, a borderland between passion and intellect, analysis and subjectivity, ethnography and autobiography, art and life,... (1996, p.174)

This interdisciplinary research falls within the fields of media, heritage and memory studies synonymously and so Behar's concept of a 'borderland' is quite fitting in terms of where this research will sit upon completion. This research will occupy the 'intermediate space' of which Behar speaks, as no academic study to date has employed an autoethnographic methodology as a base from which to explore the mediated heritage environment.

Autoethnography: Uses and Definitions

Autoethnography has been used in a number of disciplines with a number of purposes. From studies of nursing (Muncey 2005) and narratives of illness (Tillmann-Healey 1996; Frank 1995; Ellis 1995a; Couser 1997; Smith 2005) to psychology (Maydell 2010) and to the use of hypermedia in computer programming (Duncan 2004) autoethnography has been adopted by a growing number of scholars

from disparate disciplines. Recently autoethnography has prominently found employment as a methodology in the study of education and teacher training (Cunningham & Jones 2005; Pennington 2007; Trahar 2009; Duarte 2007; Banks & Banks 2000) and in experiences of higher education (Keefer 2010) as an alternative approach to more traditional empirical fieldwork.

With its varied usage, autoethnography therefore has no one strict definition. It is a hotly debated and contested methodology, and when one considers the 'postmodern notion that a unified, grand narrative for knowing the world does not exist (Lyotard 1984, p.4),' many scholars find that 'autoethnography is not for everyone,' (Keefer 2010, p.208). When autoethnography *is* adopted, it is often mutated or adapted to best suit varied research purposes (as indeed, many research methodologies are).

Haewon Chang makes explicit that which is implicit within autoethnography's very name by drawing our attention to the ethnographical character of this method (2008, p.2). Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner suggest autoethnography is best understood as 'an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural,' (2000, p.739). Deborah Reed-Danahay defines autoethnography as '...an ethnography of one's own group,' or a genre of 'autobiographical writing that has ethnographic interest,' (1997, p.2). To understand autoethnography, then, we need to understand ethnography as a methodological practice. It is beyond the scope of this essay to offer a complete detailed history of

ethnography and the range of its uses¹. It is however necessary to broadly chart the evolution of ethnography as a heuristic device with which to frame or pinpoint concepts that contributed to the development of *autoethnography*, in all its definitions.

To understand autoethnography, we also need to unpack the secondary concept implicit within the definitions offered by Chang, Danahay, Ellis and Bochner: its dual purpose as both a methodology and as a form of writing, or in other words, as both process and product. Van Maanen (1988) holds that there are three kinds of ethnographic writing: realist tales, confessional tales, and impressionist tales. Realist tales are generally written by a single author, in a third-party authoritarian voice, and these types of ethnography ‘push most firmly for the authenticity of the cultural representations conveyed by the text,’ (Van Maanen 1988, p.45.) The confessional tale is often cited as a form of narrative rejoinder to the rigidity and impassiveness of the realist tale. They are an ‘attempt to explicitly demystify fieldwork or participant observation by showing how the technique is practiced in the field,’ (1988, p.73). The third style of ethnographic writing is ‘impressionistic’ and van Maanen holds that the impressionist ethnographer’s aim is to ‘startle their audience,’ (1988, p.101.) This style of ethnographic writing utilises the imagination – the first person voice is employed with colourful use of adjectives, sometimes written in the form of a prose narrative in an attempt to ‘reconstruct in dramatic form those periods [of fieldwork] the author regards as especially notable,’ (1988, p.102). The impressionist tale ‘comprises a series of remembered events in

¹ See instead Hammersley & Atkinson (2007); Atkinson et al. (eds.) (2001); van Maanen (2011); and Brewer (2000).

the field in which the author was usually a participant,' (1988, p.102).

I would add a fourth to van Maanen's styles or modes of ethnographic writing by highlighting that as Danahay, Chang and others have implied, autoethnography is a style or form of writing in its own right. By utilising many of Van Maanen's forms of ethnographic writing often synonymously, autoethnographic writing has a unique character of its own. This paper will go on to explore in more detail the different forms of autoethnography and autoethnographic texts that have emerged over the last thirty years or so, and will explore the different styles of writing that each form of autoethnography employs. As the evolution of ethnography as a methodology and the successive development of autoethnography are charted, this paper will trace these different styles of ethnographic writing, and offer some idea of which style (or combination of styles) I will utilise in my autoethnographic research on the DPHP.

To return to our original agenda - what is ethnography? During the course of the twentieth century ethnography has become a pervasive research methodology within the social sciences. As ethnography has enjoyed such wide usage within many different fields and 'has always contained within it a variety of different perspectives,' (Atkinson 2001, p.4) it defies simplistic definition. Broadly then, Atkinson et al suggest most ethnographic traditions are grounded by a shared 'commitment to the first-hand experience and exploration of a particular social or cultural setting on the basis of (though not exclusively by) participant observation,' (2001, p.4).

With broad strokes we can cover the earliest history of ethnography. Ethnographic enquiry has been used for the study of the 'other' or of different cultures since the time of the Greeks.

Herodotus's *Histories* ([440BC] 2006) are often cited as one of the earliest examples of ethnographic research. Most ethnographic research that was conducted during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century was carried out by anthropologists. The work of German born Franz Boas (1858-1942) on Native American culture; the writings of the American Margaret Mead (1901-1976) on Samoan and New Guinean tribal life; and the seminal work of Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) to name but a few, represent a selection of late nineteenth century/early twentieth century traditional anthropological approaches to ethnographic research. These early scholars concentrated on documenting the unknown 'Other' through a process of participant observation, living in close contact with indigenous peoples and by immersing themselves in the daily performance of customs, languages and acts unfamiliar to the 'civilised' world. These ethnographic studies were seen as legitimate and authoritative representations of the 'Other' that they documented. Clair suggests that these later ethnographies can be seen as an attempt to 'save' those cultures on the brink of annihilation (2003, p.2). Though this was not physically possible, the cultures of indigenous people documented by anthropologists like Mead and Boas could be preserved ephemerally through realist ethnographic writing.

Moving forwards temporally, ethnographic enquiry over the first four decades of the twentieth century was typified by the study of groups and cultures closer to home. This signalled the move away from the well-established anthropological ethnographic study which focussed on the representation (and often attempted 'salvation') of native cultures; an endeavour intricately bound up with discourses of colonialism (Clair 2003). Clair suggests that during this 'third' wave

of colonialism cultural commentators and scholars alike began to take new sociological interest in studying their own culture. James Joyce's *The Dubliners* (1914) and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) ruminated on themes of poverty, control and imperialism in British occupied Ireland, as he had experienced them (Wolcott 1995; Denzin 1997). Similarly, George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933/1961) captured 'the sordid conditions of poverty as a cultural phenomenon,' (Clair 2010, p.10). The narrative style employed in what I term *literary ethnographies*, is akin to van Maanen's impressionistic style of ethnographic writing. I would suggest that Joyce and Orwell, by examining their own 'backyard' (Glesne & Peshkin 1992), by documenting their experiences and those of their contemporaries, and consequently by creating a text imbued with their emotional responses to cultural phenomena, can be seen as having created the first semblance of autoethnography.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to explore the 'serious disciplinary territoriality,' (Nugent & Shore 1997, p.183) present in the relationship between cultural studies, sociology and anthropology, especially in the use of ethnography. It is, however, worth briefly exploring this nexus as the tripartite of disciplines my research embraces has important implications for the particular style of autoethnography I will employ in my research. By engaging with theories found in media studies, heritage studies, and memory studies - this research on the DPHP sits roundly within the remit of British cultural studies.

British Cultural Studies as a discipline distinct from anthropology has its origins in the work of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies (or the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies - CCCS) and is exemplified in work by scholars such as

Stuart Hall. The Birmingham school reconceptualised popular culture (Carnie 2003) and utilised ethnographic fieldwork, textual and discourse analysis, and interviewing as methods to ‘investigate a wide variety of communication-related issues,’ (Schulman 1993). Nugent and Shore suggest that the work of cultural theorist Paul Willis, a graduate of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, from the late 1970s onwards did much to demarcate ethnography as a distinct methodology for the discipline (1997) . Through his books *Profane Culture* (1978) and *Learning to Labour* (1977) and by engaging in theoretical debates, Willis championed the idea of a critical, comparative ethnographic practice known as ‘Theoretically Informed Ethnographic Study (TIES),’ (Willis 1996, cited in Nugent & Shore 1997, p.186). By pairing ethnographic study with other methods such as interviewing, textual and discourse analysis, and by being more critically self-reflexive and present in finished texts, British Cultural studies offers a flexible route through complicated methodological terrain.

The Birmingham Media Group (an offshoot of the CCCS) ‘challenged the notions of media texts as “transparent” bearers of meaning,’ (Schulman 1993) and examined the semiotics of mass media and its affect on audiences. Bertrand and Hughes (2005, p.53) suggest that the semiotic model of communication proposed by the BMG sat within a ‘grey area between the social sciences and the humanities,’ where cultural studies began to carve out a niche. Based initially on the work of Stuart Hall, David Morley (1978) created one of the first ‘audience ethnographies,’ on viewers of the programme *Nationwide*. In this pioneering research for which he combined qualitative and quantitative research methods, Morley discovered that audiences read the media through ‘socially produced

discourses, within limits imposed by texts,' (in Bertrand & Hughes 2005, p.55). This style of media ethnography has been adapted and adopted by media scholars across the globe. Though Morley did not observe his participants directly and his research questions vary massively from my own, his is a basic methodology I can poach from when conducting research on audience reception to the DPHP exhibition and mediated products of the DPHP, such as the Rural Media Company and community media film *Buried Heart* (2012).

In exploring the origins, uses and definitions of autoethnography this paper has so far asserted that autoethnography has no singular definition and that as a methodology or as a process, different scholars from different backgrounds have employed the tool differently. The early work of Joyce and Orwell went far in establishing the importance of examining social and cultural environments closer to home, and the more contemporary strides made by the Birmingham School in British Cultural Studies, have established autoethnography as methodological terrain suitable for research such as this, especially when paired with other methods of qualitative analysis.

Pairing Methods: Autoethnography and Qualitative Analyses

The idea of pairing an ethnographic study with other methods including some level of quantitative analysis, and more qualitative methods such as interviewing and textual and discourse analyses made popular by the proponents of the Birmingham School, is one I will adopt for my research. Though my research will be autoethnographic in its baseline methodological orientation, rather than ethnographic, I will also make use of narrative, textual and production analyses. I will use these research methods to explore

strategic institutional documents associated with the DPHP; I will use production analysis to explore the community media film *Buried Heart* (2012); I will analyse the transcripts of interviews I conduct with other volunteers, staff and visitors to the DPHP; and I will conduct a similar process to deconstruct my research diary. By using these methods in tandem with an autoethnographic approach, I will be able to explore more fully the experiences of my participants, *my own* experiences and the institutional or organisational principles and practices present within the DPHP.

The use of narrative analysis in ethnography has been cogently explored by Martin Cortazzi (2001) who posits that narratives can be seen as both texts and processes (2001, p.384). This concept is akin to the idea that autoethnography can also be seen as a methodology (process) and a finished text. Cortazzi holds that using narrative analysis with/in ethnographic research can help explore more fully the ‘meaning of experience, voice, human qualities on personal or professional dimensions, and research as a story,’ (2001, p.385). Not only does pairing narrative analysis with autoethnography have a nice symmetry in terms of their double usages, combining the two is therefore not without a clear rationale.

The remodelling of ethnography as a tool for sociological or cultural studies rather than anthropological study in the first few decades of the twentieth century was also a key occupation of the Chicago School of Scholars, which produced a great deal of theoretical literature and practice based research from c.1917 until c.1942. Under the direction of Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, several generations of doctoral students again combined other methods with ethnographic research. By combining quantitative research methods with qualitative ones and by deploying detailed

epistemological assumptions, these scholars produced rich ethnographies which studied ‘face-to-face everyday interactions in specific [generally urban] locations,’ (Deegan 2001, p.11). These scholars produced analytic descriptive narratives of the social worlds closest to home, including studies of the plantation (Johnson 1932), the gang (Thrasher, 1936), the ghetto (Wirth 1928) and the ‘Negro’ family (Frazier 1932, 1939). Though the works of the Chicago school, scholars were based on lived experiences and were often very detailed and descriptive, these writers made no explicit use of self-narrative or self-reflexivity within their finished texts, preferring a realist narrative style (Van Maanen 1988, p.45).

Leon Anderson, in his search for the origins of autoethnography, suggests that although these early ethnographic projects conducted by the Chicago school show the promise of the study of the self in relation to others, the lack of self-narrative present within their finished texts means they cannot be classified as autoethnography (2006, p.375). Only very occasionally did this generation of Chicago scholars engage in any kind of self-reflexive process, usually in the form of notes-to-self written in the field. Anderson suggests these notes can be best understood using van Maanen’s (1988) concept of ‘confessional tales’ (2006, p.375). So perhaps, then, the basic notion of studying a local place and a generally familiar culture is where my affinity with the Chicago school ends, mainly because the school’s style of realist ethnographic writing is not the style I wish to emulate in my research.

On a basic level, though my research interests are very different to these select scholars and my disciplinary remit is threefold, by isolating the concept of the study of everyday local social worlds present within the output of the Chicago school of

ethnography, my own ontological desire to study the DPHP becomes visible. The DPHP is in itself a social world, the social world close to me both physically (geographically/locally) and metaphorically. It seems the scholars of the Chicago School may have seen the various social worlds under their study as amorphous ones (Kotarba, 1980), worlds in which they were experientially engaged and yet largely unconnected to. This is, in part, evidenced again by the realist style of writing employed in many Chicago school ethnographies, (van Maanen 1988, p.45).

In contrast, the social world of the DPHP is one which is marked by a detailed level of connectivity or connected-ness between groups of people and myself as researcher; as opposed to an amorphous world made up of disconnected individuals and studied by an equally detached researcher. I am a part of the DPHP as a volunteer and as an academic, and as such I am bound up in the relationship between people, physical places and mediated objects created for, through and by the DPHP. In this way, the ethnography practiced by the Chicago school would not suit my research needs, as the detachment of my own voice from my study will not be possible.

Where van Maanen investigates styles of ethnographic writing he also explores the role of authorial voice and its impact on reader reception (1988). This is a hugely important point that contributed to the development of autoethnography as a separate methodological practice. Lincoln and Denzin (2003) suggest that challenges to discourses dominated by Western masculine voices offered 'indigenous, feminist, and border voices,' a chance to engage in 'multiple discourses,' (Gruppetta 2004). As a result, the 'emerging discourse surrounding the self-as-researcher and the researcher-as-

self,' can be seen to have created a new genre of ethnography - autoethnography, (Denzin and Lincoln 2003, p.3).

It seems that in this way, steps taken to make the concepts of voice and narrative style analytical categories actually went some way to the legitimisation of the researcher's tale or autoethnography as a methodology for sociological and cultural research. Reed-Danahay's statement that 'an auto-ethnography is more authentic than straight ethnography and that the voice of the insider can be assumed to be more true than that of the outsider,' highlights an area in which the proximity and intimacy I share with the DPHP is important, and also provides a clear rationale for adopting this research methodology. (1997, p.3) To Reed-Danahay, the fact that I am a member of the institution I am studying and a member of the group I am researching, and my intent to write up my research in the first person with extracts from my personal research diary (a principle method in the autoethnographer's toolbox) legitimises my study and makes my voice authentic.

As I have demonstrated above, when autoethnography is paired with methods such as production, textual and narrative analyses and when one remains acutely aware of the role of the researchers' voice within written research texts; we are presented with the possibility of using autoethnography as both *process* or a tool and as a *product* - a piece of research written in a very particular and self-reflexive way.

Insiders and Outsiders: Emotion in Research

Reed-Danahay's statement that 'an auto-ethnography is more authentic than straight ethnography and that the voice of the insider can be assumed to be more true than that of the outsider,' also raises ideas about the role of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in (auto)ethnographic

research. (1997, p.3)The concept of insider and outsider is all the more pertinent in the Forest of Dean, as although this might sound like a weak caricature of a ‘backward’ or ‘introverted’ Forest people, in my experience Foresters are people who do not trust ‘outsiders’ easily. The traditional nature of many older Forest people is evidenced by the fact that it is still held that a ‘true’ Forester, must be born within the ‘Hundred of St. Briavels,’ an administrative structure for the Forest of Dean created in the eleventh century (Currie 1996). I moved to the Forest when I was ten-years-old and will always remember my parents struggling to ‘get to know the neighbours,’ and how their attempts to easily understand heavily accented colloquialisms took a great deal of time. As much as I feel like a Forester, I can never truly be inside this cultural group.² Struggling with being at once inside and outside a cultural group was a struggle Dennis Potter himself admitted to, as he straddled the social line between insider and outsider upon his return from university – something I struggled with myself when I returned from my studies in Nottingham. Again symmetry can be drawn between myself as researcher and the object of study. As my personal experience of the insider-outsider debate directly affects my research, it also adds weight to my choice of autoethnography as a methodology for this research.

Researcher, volunteer, contributor, Forester (albeit with non-traditional roots), Potter fan, media consumer, insider and outsider: my myriad identities mean I occupy a unique position in

² Or can I? It is likely that this research will create a new concept or contribute to a new understanding of what it means to be a Forester in the twenty-first century. Besides homebirths, the number of children born within the Hundred is quickly diminishing with the closure of local maternity units and funding to local hospitals decreasing. It will be interesting to explore what other Forest residents around my own age feel it means to be a ‘Forester’ today.

and towards the DPHP. I am conducting participant observation on other volunteers, members of staff and visitors to the DPHP in order to research active and on-going processes associated with the management of a heritage project, processes that I myself am engaged in. These processes include observing spontaneous affective responses to the DPHP in all its contexts – affective responses displayed by visitors, staff, volunteers, and myself alike. I observe decision making processes as they are engaged in by the DPHP partners, and detail the triumphs and tribulations along the way. I collect, collate and observe mediated responses to the work of the DPHP as they arise. It is therefore precisely the proximity I have to my object of study that has really necessitated an autoethnographic approach to my research on the DPHP – I am both part of the process, and will have contributed to the creation of many products produced by the DPHP. Moreover, my research on the DPHP will culminate in a thesis – an academic product of the DPHP.

As I will be researching emotional or affective responses to a local heritage project utilising an autoethnographic approach, it follows that I could adopt Carolyn Ellis' style of 'evocative' autoethnography. Ellis suggests that the finished autoethnographic narrative text should be 'evocative, often disclosing hidden details of private life and highlighting emotional experience,' (2004, p.30). Ellis posits that she sees the methodology as, 'action research for the individual. Though therapy might not be the major objective in our research, it often is a useful result of good writing,' (1999, p.677). Again, the idea of autoethnography as process and product is highlighted here: this style of autoethnography is a process that allows the researcher to work through their own feelings toward a research topic, whilst the finished autoethnography or narrative text

(the product) is structured by details of private life and emotional experiences.

Evocative autoethnography has been criticised by many scholars who have since adopted and adapted the methodology. Autoethnographers in Ellis' tradition are often criticised for becoming narcissistic, self-indulgent and for lacking critical self-reflexivity. Nicholas Holt for example suggests that 'the use of self as the only data source in auto-ethnography has been questioned,' (2003, p.3) and, perhaps more ruthlessly, Sarah Delamont suggested that 'introspection is not an appropriate substitute for data collection,' (2007, p.1). I will not be relying solely on 'introspection' or 'myself' as the only data source for this study, though I will closely examine my own affective responses to the DPHP as a whole social world, and to its many individual mediated parts. As I have already suggested, I will conduct interviews with participants, and carry out textual and production analyses on mediated products of the DPHP. As evocative autoethnography is most usually adopted by researchers interested in understanding individual responses to illness or disability (though not exclusively) it seems that this research would not really benefit by utilising Ellis' particular style of evocative autoethnography.

New Horizons: Autoethnography as Process and Product

Almost diametrically opposed to Ellis' interpretation of the methodology, Leon Anderson posits a vision of autoethnography where it sits paradigmatically within the 'analytic ethnographic paradigm,' rescued from the 'personal' and the 'evocative' (2006, p.374), and contributing to theoretical understandings. This seminal piece took steps to overcome criticisms of overly emotionalised

autoethnographic narratives. He defines his revised methodology as: 'ethnographic work in which the researcher is (1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such a member in the researcher's published texts, and (3) committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena,' 2006, p.374). Chang echoes Anderson in her suggestion that autoethnography should be 'ethnographic in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretive orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation,' (2008, p.48). My research seeks to use Anderson's principles of analytical autoethnography. I am a full member in the research setting, and will be visible as such in my thesis. I am committed to improving our understanding of the intersections between memory and the media within the heritage environment, and to explaining broader social phenomena associated with the cultural world of the Forest of Dean.

Mediated autoethnographies are becoming more common in Britain. Based on the work of Sarah Pink (2006, 2007, 2009) and Caroline Scarles (2010) the methodology of 'visual' autoethnography is one that may be of use in my own research. Based within the remit of tourist studies the link between Scarles' work and my own is clear. The postmodern call for researchers to address the 'embodied, performative nature of social practice,' (2010, p.2) was paralleled in tourism research as the previous view of tourist experiences as linear or static occurring in dislocated spaces was abandoned. In keeping with the way I understand the DPHP, the wider heritage environment in Britain is now viewed as a changeable, malleable, almost ephemeral experiential process engaged in and created by both tourists, staff and volunteers alike. Scarles advocates the use of images within the interview space. By using photographs of the

archive, of the exhibition, of the Forest of Dean, of Potter even, to stimulate memories and affective responses to the subject matter in interviews, and thus by conducting research as creatively and dynamically as the environment in which it takes place, one can create a mediated autoethnographic experience (and finished text) that is ‘reconstructed and *relived* through conversation *with* respondents *through* the visuals presented within the space of the interview,’ (Scarles 2010, p.909, original emphasis). In this way visual autoethnography can again be seen as a process and a product, and presents itself as suitable yet adaptable methodology for this research.

Autoethnography has also been used as a methodology in tourism studies by scholar Chaim Noy who argues that exploring tourists’ experiences autoethnographically ‘illuminates the fuzzy and liminal space that lies between tourism experiences and everyday experiences,’ (2007, p.351). Noy also suggests that ‘emotions emerge as a result of the construction of tourist activities,’ activities which ‘transcend the order of the everyday,’ (2007, p.352). By seeing the tourist experience as a unique experiential phenomenon related to but somehow disconnected from the everyday, Noy locates the concept affect within the heritage environment. By pairing this with Ben Highmore’s suggestion that the study of everyday life is situated between subjective experience and the institutional frames of cultural life the use of autoethnography in heritage based research such as this is supported, (2002, p.17).

In conclusion, this paper has presented the way a unique autoethnographic approach to the exploration of the memory infused, mediated heritage environment of the DPHP will be constructed. By fusing analytic autoethnography with visual

autoethnography and qualitative research methods such as participant observation, textual analyses and interviews characteristic of modern media ethnographies, the methodology employed in this research will be complex. Seen as both a product and a process, this unique type of autoethnography paired with other research methods will help map that intermediate space, that ‘borderland between passion and intellect, analysis and subjectivity, ethnography and autobiography, art and life,’ (Behar 1996, p.174) that was alluded to at the beginning of this piece. The analytic approach to this methodology will enable a detailed defensible understanding of cultural phenomena born of the Dennis Potter Heritage Project, phenomena specific to the unique cultural heritage of the Forest of Dean.

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