

Focus Area Reflection:  
Writing & New Media

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I have been a writer my whole life. When I was younger, my writing was full of fantastical stories (with illustrations!) meant to take the reader into an imaginary world. As an adult, my writing is less fantastical (and with fewer illustrations), but still meant to take the reader into an imaginary world. When I'm not writing fiction, my writing is either journaling, reflections, or as a result of research and campaigning. As part of a recent anti-privatization campaign with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, I wrote persuasive emails, media releases, and research pieces. While doing this work, I realized that I needed more experience, more knowledge. I knew that a compelling narrative would help to convince my audience, but I also needed to know how to reach audiences on different platforms and in media beyond print.

Despite wanting to learn how to reach audiences on different platforms, I chose Lengelle's article *Writing the Self and Bereavement: Dialogical Means and Markers of Moving Through Grief*. The article interested me because I have been dealing with grief. Five years ago, almost to the day, my good friend Nina Shen died of esophageal cancer. Ever since then, I've been trying to make sense of it through my writing. Variations of her have appeared in two of my books, *City Kitty and Country Mouse* and *Betting on Second Chances*. Writing is how I process my thoughts, whether in fiction or non-fiction.

Writing and new media makes use of a variety of theories. Lengelle uses narrative theory, created by Fisher, in her article and uses its concept of people as storytellers of their lives to assist her to create "a coherent tale that comforts and makes sense" (2020) as she works through therapeutic methods of moving through grief. The theory is a backbone for personal writing, for writing the self, and for "cultivating agency as a response to disorienting dilemmas". (2020) Her work also relies upon dialogical self theory, developed by psychologist Hubert Hermans, where the mind can imagine the different ideas of participants and carry on an internal dialogue. In this article, she creates a dialogue between several selves and her deceased spouse as a means of processing her grief. This theory is one used often by writers, though most may not be able to name it even as they use it regularly.

The readings in the course that relate to the focus area of writing and new media are the ones which champion writing as a means of inquiry and communication, as well as the ones which use narrative to communicate. St. Pierre's article *Writing Post-Qualitative Inquiry* discusses writing as an empirical field of inquiry and a way to deconstruct formal texts, to "think-write". (2017) Puig de la Bellacasa's article on soils uses narrative to provoke an affective reaction to the concept of soils as a living world of many organisms. Ionescu's article on the book *Tales from Outer Suburbia* discusses the theory of posthumanism as it relates to children's literature and the book itself uses narrative to engage the audience and help them relate to non-human entities.

Writing and new media engage with an audience and can use various theories, including narrative theory and dialogical self theory, in order to do so. Narrative theory posits that people are storytellers and storytelling is a way for people to create their lives. If they wish to write, it

is a way for them to write the self. The articles that can bring an affective feeling to data and theory, placing them within a narrative, are often the ones that can intrigue and engage with the reader.

References:

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St. Pierre, E.A. (2017) Writing Post-qualitative Inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 24/9: 603-608.