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Research Note

Fact, faction and fiction: fictional composition as tool for knowledge production in leisure research

Introduction

In their introduction to ‘Finding truth in fiction’, a recent special issue in ALR, the editors (Dunlap & Harmond, 2021) argue that fiction is a powerful but underused tool for investigating leisure experiences, and appeal to leisure scholars to be more “proactive in the adoption” of story telling (2021, p4). Their comprehensive special issue explores a range of the ways fiction has value for leisure scholars, including as a representational style, object of analysis, and mode of inquiry. Therefore, in this short piece, as is the central aim of a research note, we take a more focused approach, discussing what Dunlap and Harmond (2021, p8) term ‘fictional composition,’ that is fiction used by academics as a “mode of investigation.” As they highlight, fictional composition is particularly lacking in leisure studies, citing Bruce’s *Terra Ludus*, (2016a) a dystopian novel set in an imagined (near) future world which has women’s sport as the backdrop, as one of the few meaningful examples (Dunlap & Harmond, 2021). To further our understanding of fictional composition for exploring leisure, in this research note we explore *Terra Ludus*. Based on an interview with the author¹ about her aims and challenges in the production of this work (July 2020),

¹ A three-way conversation conduring via zoom during Covid-lockdowns. In the text we refer to all interview material as interview (2020).

and our readings of the novel, we consider how this novel works as a tool for knowledge production in leisure research, and the ongoing challenges of fictional composition.

Our research note is structured as follows. First, we briefly situate the emergence of fiction writing by academics within what Norman Denzin (1994) called the radical experimentations that emerged in qualitative research across the social sciences around the late 1980s, which explicitly disrupted and dissolved the traditional boundaries between academic and creative writing. Second, we discuss Bruce's intent to challenge dominant discourses about leisure and the sport-media complex. Third, we outline the challenges Bruce experienced writing fiction, and the impacts, both intended and unintended. We show how fiction writing challenged Bruce's sense of academic legitimacy, highlighting that despite the proliferation of ways of doing and representing research in the social sciences, the boundaries of legitimate academic research continue to be marked, resulting in challenges for academics who challenge orthodoxies, such as through writing fiction.

First, a brief introduction to the novel. Daniela Bartoli, the protagonist is a former professional basketball player working in Los Angeles as a freelance journalist; she is an avid basketball fan, and plays regular informal pick-up games with her four male friends. However, angered by the demise of women's pro basketball she writes a 'vlog' challenging a powerful media corporation to step up and broadcast the women's game. Her vlog goes viral, and drives a chain of events whereby women's basketball is re-invented, and Daniela is offered a corporate role as the media face of the new league. The novel is an engaging page-turner. The plot is complex and surprising; there is romance and death, the characters are interesting and it touched us emotionally at several moments in the text. The focus on sport is in many ways incidental; the plot, writing style, and imaginative detail about this dystopian imagined world, make the story compelling. Yet, as cultural commentator Lawrence Grossberg contends (in the novel's preface), as well as being "entertaining fiction" *Terra Ludus* "gets us thinking about the complicated and often disturbing relations of the commercialism of sports, the globalism of media and the persistence of gender bias and violence" (2016, n.p), making it tool for critical thought (Grossberg, 2016). In the following

discussion we illustrate some of the ways in which the narrative challenges dominant discourses about leisure and sport through giving a voice to those who are often marginalized or absent. While we cannot know the impact of this on audience, like Grossberg, we suggest that the novel format does this in ways that are accessible and powerful, which may therefore provoke readers to think differently, and therefore be a catalyst for change.

Creative writing in leisure research: Challenging orthodoxies and academic legitimization

Researchers across the social sciences have long wrestled with “how to construct research stories that can simultaneously make legitimate claims to truth” while also deeply engaging the readers (Bruce, 2019; p57). Critiques of some academic writing as unnecessarily exclusionary are long-standing, notably made by Wright Mills (1959; see also Richardson, 1994). However, from the 1980s, centred around the so-called ‘narrative turn’, a perceptible shift towards understanding and harnessing human stories in the social sciences (see Markula & Silk, 2011), cultural representation was increasingly problematised and traditional realist writing genres scrutinised (see for example Denzin 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Atkinson 1990; Richardson, 1994). Through this reassessment of the criteria used for evaluating qualitative research, researchers were increasingly inspired to dissolve the boundaries between academic and creative writing. They also considered the texts’ claims to ‘authority,’ believability and authenticity via theoretical, methodological and ethical rigor (Wheaton, 2002, p242; Denzin 1994a), raising questions about who is able to tell their story, and in what ways.

Early examples of these experimental creative texts within the broadly defined field of sport and leisure studies can be seen in the work of Bruce (1998), Bruce and Greendorfer (1994), Rinehart (1998), Kohn and Sydor (1998), Denison, and Rinehart (2000), Sang (2000) and Sparkes (1996,1997). These authors looked to literary and narrative models of writing, including producing drama, poetry and performed dialogue as alternative, and more engaging ways to present their research findings. Richardson (2000 a,b) subsequently introduced the idea of Creative Analytical Processes (CAP) to

describe this method of collecting and representing data that moves outside conventional social science writing (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Within leisure research CAP has inspired some researchers to produce creative research narratives that explore the meaning and lived complexity of leisure (see Parry & Johnson, 2007; Harmond & Dunlop, 2021); including as musical performance (e.g. Lashua, 2007; Lashua & Fox, 2007), poetry (e.g. Sjollemma & Yuen, 2017), experimental media (e.g. Durrant & Kennedy, 2007) and combinations of these forms (e.g. Havitz, 2007). Bruce (2014, 2019) has promoted the use of faction, a form of CAP, to centre those who were marginalised or absent from dominant sporting narratives (see discussion and examples in Bruce, 2019). Factional stories “are both creative and analytical” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p262); that is writing styles are used to provoke new ways of “seeing, thinking and acting” (2019, p59), yet based on in-depth rigorous empirical research “embedded in its research context” (Bruce, 2019, p58). However, as Andrew Sparkes (2000,2002) vividly illustrated, and we discuss further below, despite this important shift to embrace literary and narrative modes of writing, in fields including sport and leisure, the established empiricist models of knowledge production saw such creative approaches as challenging orthodoxies and assumptions about ‘proper’ academic work. Sparkes argued this was “intellectual imperialism”, which systematically denies “the legitimacy of other research forms” (Sparkes, 2000, p29) such as creative writing.

Examining fiction’s role in provoking critique and challenging social (in)justices

Recognition of the ability of the fiction genre to foster social critique is longstanding, particularly in the study of literature (see Dunlop & Harmon, 2021). Stories can effectively challenge dominant narratives, and show multiple truths and interpretations, revealing the voices and experiences of sociologically marginalised or absent groups (c.f. Richardson, 1997; Markula & Denison, 2005; Markula & Silk, 2011; hooks, 1990). Impacting inequality, and provoking cultural change and social justice is also a key concerns for many scholars of leisure, including conversations about how to impact social justice through research practices (Parry, Johnson & Stewart, 2013; Lewis, Maxwell &

Hawkins, 2019; Sjollema & Yuen, 2017). As Caudwell argues, “making a difference” through leisure scholarship can take different forms, including “a simple moment between an author and a reader within which the reader is moved to think, and act, differently” (in Silk, Caudwell & Gibson, 2017, p155). Similarly, Bruce (2019) argues that stories “bring critical perspectives into public consciousness” and are therefore “a powerful tool in our world-changing toolbox” (Bruce, 2019, p58). This was one of Bruce’s objectives in writing her novel *Terra Ludus*, stemming from her long-standing frustration about the (in)ability of academic research, including her own, to impact mainstream sports coverage of women’s sport (2016b, pxii). In our interview, this on-going frustration was clear:

I’d been banging on about media coverage of women’s sport for 20 odd years and I was just so frustrated that I was thinking I’m going to have to give up this field of research because nothing’s really changing. The quality’s getting better, but the quantity is still really bad. I thought, well maybe I can write my way into a different way of understanding what’s going on (interview, 2020).

Therefore, although when starting to write the novel Bruce did not have a clear agenda for social change, over time, and as the writing progressed, her personal motivation changed:

I guess my hope, maybe not my aim, was to challenge people to think differently. To kind of find a way to step outside the normal ways that we think or talk about it. [...] So, I thought what if I just open the door to my mind and see if somehow my subconscious and conscious can work together to create a new environment? I had no expectations, I had no plan, I had no plot. I was just like, I’m just going to start writing and see what happens (interview, 2020).

In the following discussion we offer two examples of the ways in which, through crafting multiple relatable meta-narratives, the novel challenged dominant sport media narratives. We show how these successfully engaged us in the process of thinking, and also affectively feeling differently about these issues.

First, the novel reveals many of the inequalities in the relationship between women’s professional sport and the media. As other academics who have read the novel have suggested, it does this in powerful ways. For example, Robert Rinehart described the protagonist Daniela as “a feminist social justice warrior who fights for equity and opportunity for women in a dystopian future

where sport opportunities for skilled female basketball players still are limited” (Rinehart 2016, n/p). Laurel Richardson called the book as “a sine qua non tale about Third Wave Feminism” (Richardson, 2016 n/p). Bruce concurred that the story line has a “kind of third wave feminist” angle; “like who cares what your dominant ideology is, let’s look at it differently. I wanted some of the characters to go, I don’t care what you think, you’re wrong. Or to turn our expected ways of thinking on their heads” (Interview, 2020). For example, in the story Daniela’s friend Adie found the idea that men’s basketball was better than women’s basketball incredulous (interview, 2020).

Yet Daniela is not in any sense an archetypal feminist warrior or activist; and there are also aspects of the narrative that could be seen as re-enforcing dominant tropes of heteronormativity and cis-gender femininity. For example, the development of Daniela’s heterosexual romantic relationship, her newfound interest in fashion, and the challenges of her required makeup routines, are given prominence. Similarly, the players’ excitement at having the opportunity to design their own sportswear might from a feminist perspective, seem surprising. In our interview we discussed the thinking behind these storylines. Bruce agreed with our assessment; she admitted that the fashion focus was something she personally found fun, but also argued it was a way of showing the complex negotiations that women have to make to take control of their bodies and identities in professional sports, while recognising that women being co-opted in some ways by the sport-media-business complex is inevitable (interview, 2020). Bruce argued that Daniela’s resistance to having to wear make-up and behave in certain kinds of ways, showed her constant negotiation of her co-optation by the sports industry (interview, 2020). Furthermore, while the fashion focus might seem frivolous, or as reproducing ideas of appropriate femininity, sportswomen have long opposed dress codes that are based on outdated (male) ideas of what women should look like or emphasise sexuality rather than function (Hargreaves, 2004). Sports uniforms remain a key site of contestation (Van Ingen & Kovacs, 2012); in contrast, in the novel the women fought to design their own uniforms, and in so-doing challenged the male-designed styles.

These, and many other examples, illustrate how this extended fiction genre can embrace nuances and contradictions in the story line in ways that the shorter academic articles often cannot. Through the ebbs and flows in Daniela's attempts to change the status quo, and negotiate her own personal relationships, the story reveals in evocative, relatable, and emotional ways the multiple conflicts, nuances, and contradictions of gendered power at the personal and societal level. While ultimately the story delivers a bleak future for women in sport, Bruce, argued that for her it also provided some hope in that despite these negotiations the women were ultimately successful in getting the professional women's league reinstated (interview, 2020):

I do feel that this articulation of sport and masculinity is so tight. Even like a little space in there, it has to be almost seen as a success. That's what I believe deeply. I'm not sure that I could have imagined something that tipped the whole thing completely (interview, 2020).

As readers, we also felt that a keyway in which this novel succeeded in challenging thinking was through the emotional connections developed between the reader and the characters, allowing the reader to find ways to associate with the characters and their struggles. Bruce agreed with our assessment; "I just think people connect with stories differently: It's that emotional level, I think, that allows people to accept or imagine things that they would find difficult to imagine otherwise" (interview, 2020). She pointed to the meta themes of "women's friendships and how women in the story "support people who are not in great situations or are trying to resist" inequalities (interview, 2020). For example, Bruce suggested that Daniela's struggles, particularly the on-line abuse she received from male sports fans, may not be relatable to all audiences. However, Bruce contended the story line may resonate with readers in understanding how "those who dare to pop their head above the parapet and speak out" not just in sport, "experience all kinds of abuse" (interview, 2020).

Our second example of the ways the narrative challenged social (in)justices is the use of a futuristic imagined world that is the novel's backdrop. All professional sport competitions take place in a single country – a fictional place Bruce calls Terra Ludus, "something like a permanent Olympic Games" (interview, 2020), a situation made possible through the technologically- enhanced speed of

international travel in this future world. However, through the vivid descriptions of *Terra Ludus* and its culture, as readers it was clear that the place was modelled on Aotearoa New Zealand. Bruce (2020) confirmed that this was her intent, furthermore that underpinning this was a desire to draw attention to New Zealand and to challenge the dominant focus on North America as the epicentre of professional sport. She explained; “We don’t have enough New Zealand literature. I wanted it to be really firmly based here, although it ended up being a bit more international than I planned” (interview, 2020).

As readers we were also struck by the ways in which indigenous Māori language, voices, and culture were given prominence in the story. Attempting to make Aotearoa’s settler colonial context visible to an international audience, and illuminating Māori language, voices, and culture in ways that are culturally appropriate was clearly important to Bruce. While these narratives educate the international reader about Aotearoa’s colonial context and Māori ways of knowing and being, as Bruce, a Pākehā (white European) acknowledged, it is important to continue to reflect on who get to tell these stories, and to be aware of the danger of appropriation. Within academic research in Aotearoa there is increasing recognition of the need for practices that centre Indigenous peoples and their worldviews, while also safeguarding Māori ownership and control including of their stories (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). For non-Māori, this requires cultural sensitivity, recognition of their privilege, and relational accountability, ensuring narratives do not appropriate or exoticize Māori culture, such as has been evident in some writings about the haka (see Jackson & Hokowhitu, 2002). As Bruce explained in her preface (2016b, pxii) “I attempt to honor my own and others’ cultural and linguistic heritage through acknowledging the first peoples of both lands and by including both the English and Māori language.” Bruce stated that she feels “very committed to New Zealand as a bicultural nation” and while this may not have “been conscious at the beginning,” once the story started to emerge it became increasingly important (interview, 2020). However, recognising that international readers were unlikely to understand the Māori cultural references, references to and about Māori culture are woven into the story, by Bruce, who created a context where the USA-based characters

“don’t know anything about it [Terra Ludus] so that liberated them to ask questions” which Daniella or other knowledgeable characters could fill in (interview, 2000). For Louise, who is British and unfamiliar with Aotearoa’s bicultural history and cultural practices, her reading of the book was drawn to these elements that were clearly focused on the cultural and linguistic heritage of Aotearoa. Louise commented that despite such a complex set of issues to narrate, Bruce seemed to do this with ease. For example, in the chapter *Going Home* Daniela’s friend Manu Paraone gives a short but intensely illuminating speech to the media which reveals, in just 10 short lines, the richness and diversity of New Zealand’s culture and yet the struggles, inequalities and power dynamics that prevail in this colonised nation. Manu’s commentary verbalised in te reo Māori (the Māori language) first, and then translated into English, provides even the most uninitiated reader with a clear sense of the importance of place, community and family in Māori cultural terms.

Also immensely revealing of these power dynamics is the way that Manu holds back on revealing his full genealogy - as he might normally be inclined to do - when introducing himself. The readers learns that he does so at the request of his whānau (extended family); that is, he has been asked to retain some privacy for his people. This narrative shows the importance of honouring cultural traditions and ways of life in a historical backdrop of upheaval, exploitation, protest, recovery and revival (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). In summary, like the narrative on gender, the reader is left wondering about the constant struggle for equity and justice and just a little hopelessness about the possibility for social transformation. *Terra Ludus*, in the end, remains a place and space of gender and racial/ethnic suffering and injustice.

The challenges of writing fiction and of academic legitimation

In the last section we discuss some of the challenges of writing fiction Bruce experienced, and the impacts, both intended and unintended.

While writing a novel had been a long- standing ambition, Bruce did not embark on writing *Terra Ludus* with “any expectations it would be published.” She also did not intend to produce a text

for academic consumption, nor have “a world-changing intention for it” (interview, 2020). The push came from signing up to National Writing Month along with a colleague in Canada, which provided a structured approach for the aspiring writer. While her first attempt was subsequently abandoned, she “had so much fun doing it” (interview, 2020), she continued, and *Terra Ludus* was the result of her second endeavour. Yet, as our interview revealed, despite seeing this book as a passion project, the different factors motivating Bruce to write this novel shifted over time.

As outlined, Bruce’s desire to challenge dominant discourses about sport-media and gender, emerge from frustrations in the ability of academic research, or activists, to enact change in the sport-media complex. Bruce reflected on the ways her personal motivation shifted as her novel progressed. In particular, rather than just wanting to write a novel, she also wanted to push herself to think differently, hoping this would lead to new and more productive ways to understanding why the sport media has been so resilient to change. As she explained:

There’s a quote in the book from Larry Grossberg that if you keep trying to do the same thing and things just don’t keep changing, it means you don’t understand the field of play well enough, you don’t understand the game, you don’t understand the rules or you’re not playing the right game. And I thought, unfortunately, I think he’s right. On trying to change media coverage of women’s sport, we’re not playing the right game (interview, 2020).

Over time, this developed into a broader desire - or hope - that it would also challenge others “to think differently”, “to kind of find a way to step outside the normal ways that we think or talk about it” (interview, 2020).

It is also informing to reflect on Bruce’s own shifting perception about the perceived value of creative fiction for academic audiences. The novel was not written with any intent to produce an academic output, or for it to be legitimated by academics. In part this was because Bruce was highly aware that within sport and leisure studies traditional academic scholarship with texts based on “factual writing” continued to hold the highest status in terms of what counts as valid research (cf. Sparkes, 2000; Richardson, 2000; Lincoln & Denzin, 1994) and is therefore “the form of representation that is most often required to legitimate ourselves as ‘real’ academics” (Bruce, 2019,

p60). She believed that academic writers of fiction are still dismissed in “pejorative terms”, such as “writing ‘fluff’” (Bruce, 2019, p60). As Richardson has outlined at length, “how we can write” about research “is tied to how a knowledge system disciplines itself and its members” and “its methods for claiming authority over both the subject matter and its members” (2000a, p16; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Furthermore, as Sparkes (2021) argues in his discussion of the intensification of the ‘audit culture’ within Universities, under processes of neoliberalisation, quantitative measures (e.g. citation numbers, h index, volume of outputs) are increasingly being adopted to define and measure the reputations of both individuals and institutions. As a consequence, academics are increasingly constrained in their scholarship, “via a suffocating array of metrics and technologies of governance” (Spooner, 2018, p895 cited in Sparkes, 2021, p1), with important implications for the types of research that is valued, or even possible.

However, after her novel was published, Bruce experienced a shift in how she could conceptualise her text as a valid form of academic writing. She explained how several factors contributed to this change. First, was the impact of where the novel was published. While her intention was to approach a fiction publisher, Bruce was encouraged (by academic Laurel Richardson) to publish it with *Sense* in their *Social Fictions* series. These are described by the publisher as “full length works of fiction written in a literary/artistic form, but that are informed by social research” with the objective of allowing “academics to use creative writing in a way that counts as academic research” (Sense, 2021).² These books do not use traditional academic conventions such as references, nor discuss methodology, or ethics, however as the series editor, Leavy outlines, the books have an academic preface that gives some context, explaining the research that informs the book as well as how the book can be used in teaching or pedagogy. In essence then, this Preface demonstrates that the work is “underscored with social science or other scholarly perspectives” (Leavy, 2021), which establishes the work’s academic legitimacy (cf. Sparkes, 2000).

² <https://brill.com/view/serial/SOCI>.

This legitimacy was further emphasised by the book's inclusion of accolades from academics (as noted above).

An unintended consequence of publishing with *Sense* was that Bruce was subsequently advised to consider *Terra Ludus* as a research output for both her university's and the NZ Government research audit (the PBRF). Bruce did not feel comfortable; the fiction label posed challenges to her sense of academic self. She explained that she felt fiction could only be considered legitimate for academic consumption if the author had already established their academic credibility in more traditional ways:

when presenting it as academic work, I often felt the need to construct a narrative around the novel that linked it to already-published factual and factionalised publications that demonstrated my research knowledge and expertise (Bruce, 2019, p62).

Bruce also reflected that while publishing with *Sense* clearly had benefits for her professionally she felt it had diminished the novel's ability to meet a wider audience. She recounted conversations with bookstores in New Zealand, that they felt that the book's "current form" "doesn't really fit" for the fiction-selling agents (interview, 2020). Specifically, the academic Preface, and the book's rather 'dull' subtitle ("A Novel about Media, Gender and Sport") were seen as off-putting to potential readers. Thus, despite the author's intent, as communication scholar Marshall McLuhan has famously argued, the Medium is the message (1964). In other words, the communication channel through which a message is transmitted, not just the meaning or content of the text, directs particular interpretation. The positioning of Bruce's novel in a publishing space that attempts to transgress the boundaries of traditional academic and literary texts, has led to (unintended) academic legitimisation. Conversely it has limited the book's appeal as a novel, and therefore potentially a wider readership and impact. This reminds us of the importance not only of what we write, and how, but where and for whom we write, recognising how different audiences access, interpret and act upon our written word. Despite the existence, and proliferation of new publishing opportunities for scholars such as offered by *Sense*, academics in interdisciplinary fields such as

leisure studies may still find that fiction, and other forms of creative writing or performance practices, continue to be considered less valued research within their increasingly audit-driven research cultures. The ‘intellectual imperialism’ Sparkes, discussed in 2000 appear to still hold strong.

Lastly, it is worth briefly highlighting Bruce’s (2019) re-assessment of the value of different writing genres across the continuum from realist texts (‘facts’) through CAP (i.e. faction) to fiction. First she suggests that while each embodies different standpoints towards truth claims, evidence, and types of writing, the boundaries between them are not clearly fixed (Bruce 2019). Each genre is underpinned by rigorous research; what differs is the ways the researcher uses this ‘evidence’, and the “language and genre expectations through which they convey it” (Bruce, 2019, p60). Therefore, whether the text is fiction or nonfiction matters less than “the *claim that the author makes for the text* [emphasis added]” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p961). Second, she suggests that because fiction is not constrained by the research context it gave her “more freedom.” Nonetheless, she argues that both fiction and faction allow the writer to engage multiple senses to evoke emotional engagement with the text (interview, 2020):

academic work– it works with your logic and your judgement and your logical mind. Then faction and fiction, it works more from the emotion, but it doesn’t mean that you’re not absorbing the big ideas just because you haven’t explicitly said what they are (interview, 2020).

This ability of creative practices to “connect our minds and our hearts” (Bruce, 2019, p70) appears to be an important way in which creative writing can have an impact on audiences (see also Sjollem, & Yuen 2017).

Conclusions

Our discussion of *Terra Ludus* contributes to the growing literature promoting creative writing as a useful tool for provoking readers to “address the complexity of life and leisure” (Parry & Johnson, 2007 p122), potentially provoking us to think differently about leisure practices (Hamond & Dunlap, 2021). As decades of literary texts have illustrated, fiction can be a powerful way to challenge

dominant discourses and provoke the critical thinking that is often required for social change. As a tool for critical thought *Terra Ludus* provokes us to re-examine the sport media complex and asks “what could happen if dominant ideas about women, sports, sexuality, ethnicity and the media left over from the Twentieth-Century are challenged head-on by women athletes?” (Richardson, 2016 n/p). The text’s extended fiction genre is effective in showing the nuances and contradictions in male sporting dominance, and in foregrounding the different forms of contestation and co-option of women’s sporting experiences in the sport-media complex. We have also highlighted the ways in which both the style and story line enabled emotional and affective connection, from joy and pleasure, to frustration and sadness (even provoking tears). In so doing they can “create the opportunity for deeper levels of understanding and empathy for others, for reflection on the entanglement of our own practices and beliefs in broader social and political processes” which for some may “act as spurs to action”(Bruce, 2019, p70; c.f. Denzin, 1997).

Our research note therefore brings into sharp relief not simply the contribution of stories to understanding leisure experiences but the significant contribution of and rigour in creative writing to advancing knowledge about the complex negotiations of power in leisure cultures and practices. Nonetheless, it is also evident that fiction writing continues to present challenges for academics across many social science (inter)disciplinary areas, including in leisure studies. Several decades have passed since critiques of the empiricist conventions of social science writing became widespread (e.g. Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Marcus & Fisher 1986; Denzin & Lincoln 1994); yet, in many academic ‘disciplines’ the criteria used for evaluating and legitimating qualitative research continue to be embedded in these webs of power and authority that privilege realist texts. Furthermore, as the debates around ‘representation’ and ‘legitimation’ in research (see Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) consider at length, questions about who get to tell their story, and in what ways, are also framed by the challenges - and tensions - around claims to authority, believability and authenticity (Denzin 1994a).

Despite these challenges, our closing comments encourage leisure scholars to continue to experiment with representational styles and boundaries, extending the empiricist strategies that still dominate knowledge production. As *Terra Ludus* illustrates, creative stories can open up the possibilities to “say what might be unsayable in other circumstances,” which may also provoke change beyond that which we can currently imagine (Richardson, 1994, p521).

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