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Passionate writing

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Abstract

With care of writing as a method of inquiry, this paper engages in academic writing such as responsible knowledge development drawing on emotion, thought and reason. The aim of the paper is to better understand emancipatory knowledge development. Bodily experiences and responses shape academic writing and there are possibilities for responsible academic writing in that iterative process. I propose that academic writing can be seen as possibilities of passionate as well as passive writing.

Keywords: academic emancipatory writing, writing senses, aesthetic, ethic, political

I.

Emotions and passion are strangely enough seen as inferior to structured thought and reason in mainstream academic social and human science research. The tradition, inscribed in many handbooks on writing, saying that academic writing is an objective process of writing up results is troubled among others by Laurel Richardson and Elisabeth Adams St. Pierre (2005) argument: Writing is a method of inquiry. "Styles of writing are neither fixed nor neutral but rather reflect the historically shifting domination of particular schools or paradigms. Social scientific writing, like all other forms of writing, is a sociohistorical construction and, therefore, is mutable." (2005:960). Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) validate writing as a method of knowing. Knowing that is partial, historical and local, and locates that the research self and the research subject are intertwined knowledges. The research self with particular gifts and abilities might be seen as an instrument. We listen, question, participate, discuss and write in thought processes of knowing.

Hannah Arendt comments her writing in an interview by Gunter Gaus "The most important thing for me is to understand. Writing is part of this process of understanding. Writing is an integral part of the process of understanding. Writing establishes certain things. If I had a really good memory and I was able to retain all my thoughts, I doubt I'd have written at all." The interviewer asks about the influences she has had, and she responds that it is a rather masculine type of question. "Do I see myself as influential? No, I want to understand. If others understand in the same way I've understood that gives me a sense of satisfaction, like being among equals". It is imperative that emotions are integral to structured thought and reason in thinking and writing social and human research, because acts committed by *nobody*, by human beings that refuse to be persons that are able to fill up the phenomenon Arendt call *the banality of the evil*. The objective researcher seen as a nobody, not a human person but someone producing a universally generalizable result. Pullen and Rhodes (2015:88) make clear that theory does not exist without the text, not without the bodies that write and read it. There is a responsibility among writers to understand, and how can you understand without feelings? Feelings capable to tell right from wrong and beauty from ugly.

There is an interest in writing differently in social and human sciences (Czarniawska, 2008; Grey & Sinclair, 2006; Livholts, 2009; Livholts, Bränström Öhman, Rönnblom, & Koobak, 2010). Rhodes (2015) writes “What is received as a demand to write in the spirit of a cold, hard science, does not need to be followed on its own terms.” (2015:291). The rational and patriarchal forms of writing that have been dominating in social sciences are continuously challenged. Pullen and Rhodes (2015) are editors of a special issue intended to further interrupt and resist the privileged authorial style of writing of a research body that claims to be nobody. Livholts et al. are editors of another special issue in which the researcher takes responsibility for a sustainable theoretical approach that acts as a vehicle of political change. Styles of writing have subversive powers (Livholts et al., 2010). My assumption and starting point is that passionate writing is for non-disciplined academic that not necessarily identify with *one* discipline, filling academic work with political passion and substantive contributions to our understanding of social life. It is not a “turn” but an option with possibilities for the researcher and the theorizing texts. Academic writing has potential to create change and manifest resistance

There is a difference between writing as an authority, i.e. an academic nobody that delivers knowledge claims from above and writing in a traditional academic mode and writing in a passive mode. Passionate as well as passive texts might be productive for the research self as Mona Livholts experienced in an interview with Carol Lee Bacchi, based on her academic citizenship and the book *Fear of Food: A Diary of Mothering*. Carol Lee Bacchi wrote “I was an elderly primigravida (older first time mother). Or rather I was *called* an elderly primigravida. The distinction is important. The first description implies that this is how I saw myself; the second leaves my self-perception undetermined.” (2003:6). Lee Bacchi is putting content into what is happening when someone makes claims on having authorial knowledge on you because of your categorical belonging. The book was timely in that the issue was personal and political.

ML: [...], did writing the book change things in any unexpected ways? Because writing is a process of learning, discovering and change, perhaps writing in a more passionate way altered the way you looked upon the next thing you were about to write. So my question is: did writing the book change the way you look upon academic writing?

*CLB: I have to say – and you might be disappointed – that the most recent things I have written are back within the traditional academic mode. It’s almost as if the experience of writing *Fear of Food* was personally cathartic. It was something I needed to do. It had some good effects for me and for other people, but I am still comfortable – given my academic training – with a particular mode of writing. And that’s where I am.*

[...]

*– Do you remember in the interview when you asked me if writing *Fear of Food* changed the way I looked upon academic writing?*

– Yes.

– And how I answered it had not, but that I was back with the traditional mode of academic writing?

– Yes, I remember . . .

– I am actually reconsidering what I said. I am thinking about writing something different again when I have retired.

In this paper passionate denotes some anger and definitely emotions and writing denote work of emotions that takes off from the messiness of the experiential. Passive might be driven by the same emotions. Writing denotes timely and responsible knowledge development that develops the writer's and reader's understanding. The aim of the paper is to better understand emancipatory knowledge development. The one that is alive in and being created in writing processes in which thought and emotion are pair-horses. Potentially such writing practices are more important for those who feel awkward in the masculine discourse of writing (Biehl-Missal, 2015; Pullen, 2006) or who would like to open up for an ethical becoming. Related to this I want to give an answer to the question "what is academic writing?" under the assumption that one of the subversive powers of change is closely related to styles of writing (Livholts, Bränström Öhman, Rönnblom, & Koobak, 2010).

II.

"It is significant that the word "passion" and the word "passive" share the same root in the Latin word for "suffering" (passio). To be passive is to be enacted upon, as a negation that is already felt as suffering. The fear of passivity is tied to the fear of emotionality, in which weakness is defined in terms of a tendency to be shaped by others. Softness is narrated as a proneness to injury. The association between passion and passivity is instructive. It works as a reminder of how "emotion" has been viewed as "beneath" the faculties of thought and reason." (Ahmed, 2004:3).

All researchers are passionate writers in that sense that each paper takes so much focused time. We take time to withdraw from other responsibilities in order to formulate words, sentences, paragraphs, to do text work. We get training in writing article skills. Formulas that convey one message convincingly and hide the author. Texts are written by the academic anybody through disciplined thought and reason. There are however many bodies in academia that matters. Queer bodies formed by experiences of, for example, race, sex, and class. In traditional academic text work these bodies are passive, in order to fit into academic writing norms. They are being controlled by norms but might exercise writing as resistance. A writing in which their senses discipline an academic emancipatory writing. This text is based in my messy experience of authors of feminist theory that I feel emancipate writing. Not any writing, but engaged writing that performs engaged scholarship. Annelie Bränström Öhman (2008) says there are risks of taking on writing as a rational, ungendered and unemotional activity. Research develops knowledge, legitimatizes management and takes part in forming societies. Sara Ahmed (2004) explains that individual and collective bodies are shaped by cultural politics of emotions. Such bodily writing is to attend to what comes up. Learning to understand how the phenomenon "comes up" (Sara Ahmed's afterword in 2nd edition 2014:213) returns us with a difference that we need to recognize in conscious. Phenomena has a received "rational" history and by recording what is felt the bodily history comes forward. This is what, for example, Butler did in *Gender Trouble*. She made use of her bodily experiences of gay/lesbian and academic communities to question. Thus, writing has both a democratic and an emancipatory effect. It is personal, yet political. Passionate writing is expressing bodily experiences, thus, demanding more than being a passionate writer.

Writing is a body materialized in several ways. Writing is a political act (Grey & Sinclair, 2006). The publication hysteria has received excellent criticisms (Tienari, 2012; Lund, 2012; McKinnon, 2013; Mingers & Willmott, 2013), but is still doing very well. In Sweden many researchers have been waiting for and attributed force to journal list rankings and researcher evaluations that work e.g. in the UK but are not enforced in the same way in Sweden. Individual universities enforce the norms in a mimetic way. In quality and promotion evaluations writing becomes an object that harms researchers rather than acting as a liberating tool for expression. I am drawing on Butler's performativity: Our anticipation of an authoritative disclosure of meaning is how the authority takes form and comes to work. Our expectations of the authoritative evaluative norms end up producing the phenomenon we see in the UK. Performativity is in the ritualized recurrent acts that become natural to the writing body. In this text I try to understand what political agency might be under the conditions of academic writing. Performativity is a theory of agency based in the iterability. What is to be learnt from Butler is that there is agency in the very set of repeated acts that take place in the normative frame. There are opportunities in subverting the enforced identity of the academic writer and open up opportunities beyond the dominating masque of the noble academic.

Identities based on intersections of class, race and sex are often difficult to discern from scientific journal articles. Almost every article is masculine in its ambition to argue for a knowledge gap to be territorialized. This sea of articles is what the research society says are the most burning issues in knowledge production. It will continue because often reviewers take off from a father-knows-best version of knowledge that is ignoring or undermining others' knowledge development (van Maanen, 1995). And in order to intervene with gender norms that work to end racism, class elitism, imperialism Butler says the task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat. You cannot change the culture from outside. Thus, emancipatory knowledge development needs to repeat and to displace the very norms on writing that enable the repetition itself.

III.

The stepping stone to this paper is a chapter I wrote based on emotions of being a stranger in academia, based on class and sex. I wrote it in order to regain an authoring mind (Borgström, 2015). The vantage point was to understand me as a researcher in the academic corpus. To be the other is nothing but a pleasure as long as your otherness is seen as valuable to the collective you take part in and you don't need to be dominated in order to fit into patriarchal norms. But then?

What do emotions of pleasure or disgust for your writing of research? I decided that this is not my personal problem, but a problem of little diversity the further you come in the academic system. But it affected my scholarly work, and I needed to find a room in which texts could be produced. The process of remembering my emotions during that text work led me to the stranger concept inspired by life stories of the female and foreign professors Barbara Czarniawska and Guje Sevón (2008). Being a stranger is productive for energetic academic discussions, and risky in terms of being exposed to suffering from group pressure.

As a PhD I was happy and excited to have funding to continue to do research and write in a new sympathetic milieu. I became tense as I realized that my ontological founding irritated the father-figure in the milieu and also depressed as I realized that the overarching patriarchal vision was to fulfill knowledge gaps within given conceptual frames. This was in such a sharp contrast to the otherwise optimistic, kind and aroused in-between people feelings. Bodies matter as Butler (1993) forcefully told us. They are not givens. On the contrary, Bray and Colebrook (1998 that draws on drawing on Deleuze and Guattari (1984; 1994))

say that an ethical grammar of the body draws on a body concept, not as an image or re-presentation but as in differences: “The body is not a conceptualized body image, nor is it a meaning to be interpreted.” (1998:56). The bodily concept is in difference, but not as in a negation but as modes of events, responses and creations. How emotions and thought affirm bodies existence and becoming. Actually, we need to integrate experience in knowledge production, in order to contribute to the making of academic writing in one way rather than another (Butler, 2010).

IV.

Sarah Ahmed (2004/2014) took interest in exploring the stranger as the body out of place. In particular how racism works together with gender and sexuality. She describes emotions as doing things (the second edition 2014), we are taken on by emotions. In bodily responses to worlds we make judgments about worlds, these judgements are enacted. In this way emotions operate, they act. I understand Ahmed’s view on emotions as in line with Judith Butler’s view on gender (1990, 2010); the work is in iterative processes that establish an effect (the other, gender) in both regenerative and accumulative ways. Both Ahmed and Butler have political ambitions. In the preface to the 1999 edition of *Genus trouble* Butler says that her purpose with the text was to expand possible genus forms, to offer opportunities without saying which opportunities that should be lived, for those with experiences of living as others:

One might wonder what use “opening up possibilities” finally is, but no one who has understood what it is to live in the social world as what is “impossible,” illegible, unrealizable, unreal, and illegitimate is likely to pose that question. (Butler, 1999:viii).

Butler wrote this text from within the context of a lesbian and gay community, also within the academy. As a lesbian she was a stranger in the feminism field and *Gender trouble* acted to open up feminism. She has been accused and humiliated for writing utterly complex texts that are difficult to read and understand, still the text continues to be read outside the academy. She comments on that

“Both critics and friends of Gender Trouble have drawn attention to the difficulty of its style. It is no doubt strange, and maddening to some, to find a book that is not easily consumed to be “popular” according to academic standards. The surprise over this is perhaps attributable to the way we underestimate the reading public, its capacity and desire for reading complicated and challenging texts, when the complication is not gratuitous, when the challenge is in the service of calling taken-for-granted truths into question, when the taken for grantedness of those truths is, indeed, oppressive. I think that style is a complicated terrain, and not one that we unilaterally choose or control with the purposes we consciously intend.” (Butler, 1999/1990:xviii)

V.

In your academic writing – what is the paper? As a PhD student I wrote because I liked to explore, to come into grip with phenomena or with concepts. Colleagues, but above all my supervisor, were my allies. A paper was a plausible explanation to queries. The milieu was warm-hearted and writing was energetic and became a pleasure, based on clarification and learning. It was a milieu in which mutuality was shaping our interaction. The paper was an act, a tentative answer based on questions from my experiences. My working class experiences. bell hooks (2000) quotes Rita Mae Brown:

Class is much more than Marx's definition or relationship to the means of production. Class involved your behavior, your basic assumptions, how you are taught to behave, what you expect from yourself and from others, your concept of a future, how you understand problems and solve them, how you think, feel act. (bell hooks, 2000:39)

Class elitism means that you are set as a stranger among others in academia. You might even be a double stranger; Czarniawska and Sevón draw recognition to the first women to obtain chairs at European universities were foreigners. The female, foreign professors' life stories are connected with the concept stranger as a link. Czarniawska and Sevón draw on Simmel's conceptualization of the stranger as someone who has come and will stay for a good while, maybe forever. Each of the trajectories recited are unique but still characteristic of its time and place. While their illustrations were exemplary of first women at chairs at universities the most common and successful strategies of Swedish women PhDs are compliance. Is this the same as a passivity and obedience to dominating patriarchal norms? If I continue to think in the concept of the stranger, then there are many voices confirming that success in terms of high-ranked publication outlets includes such passivity because strangers need to make them understood and express themselves carefully based on existing norms. Class is a part of my basic assumptions but I object to put myself into categories of women and class. I am not writing in order to target a knowledge gap (although it is possible to express in such terminology for better understanding) but I am writing based on how I understand, think, feel and act. This is what Alison Pullen (2006) denotes as a corporeal multiplicity, the genuine research self that is fluid. The ambition is to do justice to the complex and unstable subject you are as a researcher and invest this in the research text for some stability along the way. There is a plurality of differences that matters, not in terms of being solved but put in production for emancipatory texts. Pullen cites Elisabeth Grosz (1994: 198) that the researcher self is flows, energies, and movements capable of being linked by creativity. The connective capability is needed in passive as well as passionate writing.

VI.

I believe all academic writers are passionate in that each paper takes weeks, months even years to write, re-write and publish. There are strong and mixed feelings at work. Ahmed presents the same root "passio", i.e. suffering for the word passion and the word passive. Emotions connects to some extent your history and thinking and reasoning in writing through the body. The masculine fear of passivity is tied to the fear of emotionality such as lack of objectivity based in thought and reason. A more general fear of passivity is tied to weakness and is defined in terms of a tendency to be shaped by others. But if we trust in possibilities of feminine writing this is not a dichotomy to fear, instead passive writing is reaching out, offering the objectivity of the stranger, an alien eye, in short a radical opening of a future horizon. Bray and Colebrook (1998) argue that a positive ethics of the writing body is not defined in opposition to masculine norms "but to refigure this necessary "outside" as a future horizon, one in which the violence of exclusion is perpetually in the process of being overcome" (Butler, 1993:53).

Academic writing is one of the most valued research practices in the contemporary research society. But most often texts are left unread, maybe because they are boring and mean little to the author beyond the status (the actual publication as a score). So strange, taking in that much research is actually influencing development to a greater degree than individual researchers may appreciate. For example, the performative turn illustrates how theories' performative effects in worlds of both financing and economics. If we know that research is influential for our common tomorrow, then maybe texts are becoming

important in terms of their potential for the future horizon. Texts that take part in emancipatory knowledge development. Academic writing that is alive in and being created in writing processes in which thought and emotion are pair-horses, in which ethics is inscribed. Martha C. Nussbaum says that this relates to the original Socratic question *How should one live?* “Thus spoke Zarathustra, of all that is written, I love only what a man has written with his blood.” (on Nietzsche in Nussbaum, 1990:171). Annelie Bränström Öhman and Mona Livholts (2007) propose a future horizon for academic writing not only as a sober, objective scientific activity but as a bodily activity, an emotional act, if you like, written in blood, seen as words and numbers in a document. They argue that such passion is not something you wear or a position you take on, but a demanding approach and epistemology. Nussbaum expresses it like “*she goes on thinking at all times. She won't simply cry, she will ask what crying consists in. One tear, one argument: that's how her life goes on.*” (1990:320). Potentially such writing practices are more important for those who feel awkward in the masculine discourse of writing (Biehl-Missal, 2015; Pullen, 2006). So, for me passion is one answer to the question “what is academic writing?”, while rigor and rational structure might be a more common answer. The ambition with this text is to open more doors for feminine writing and release academic writers from an unspoken norm of what academic writing is. I am inspired by hooks’ ambition in her book on feminism:

“Again and again men tell me they have no idea what it is feminists want. I believe them. I believe in their capacity to change and grow. And I believe that if they knew more about feminism they would no longer fear it, for they would find in feminist movement the hope of their own release from the bondage of patriarchy.” (hooks, 2000:xi)

Thus, in order to answer my question I would like to offer a concise, fairly easy to read and understand paper; not a paper with hard to understand jargon and academic language, but a straightforward, clear paper – easy to read without being simplistic. Two passionate writers are hooks and Butler. There are no doubts that hooks offers both good reading and an original theoretical analysis. Such a beautiful text invites the reader to dance, and the well-choreographed text creates a common understanding. Judith Butler offers also original theoretical ideas. Her texts are slowly read, they are open-ended in the sense that others respond and offer textual critique and she re-formulates some of the theoretical ideas in a next-coming text. Her academic writing offers challenging learning processes. Obviously, what turns out on paper comes in different styles and genres depending on discipline, publication format and fashion in regards to style. bell hooks passionate politics book on feminism was written in order to make feminism a mission for everybody. Also, the cheerful tone Grey and Sinclair use in their criticism poses a violent resistance “pompous, impenetrable writing; writing that seems driven by desires to demonstrate one's cleverness, or to accrue publications as ends in themselves” (2006:443). There are many examples of good academic writing styles. These easy-to-access authors have English as their mother-tongue, they access and may use the language in order to accomplish an understanding. The texts “invite to dance”, they might be challenging in the content while being a pleasure to read.

Feminine writing, passionate and passive, is a mission for every academic writer. Butler has English as her first language, but in contrast to dance-inviting texts, Butler trusts her readers to understand her intentions despite her style (Butler, 1999/1990). It seems as she learns as she writes, keeping her learning process upfront to the reader. The text is winding and abstract. She demonstrates her deeply grounded perspective and affects her readers’ to question the text and to generate new questions. Her passionate writing is of a “learn as we go” style that put words on dominating worlds and potentials for change (see e.g. Butler,

2010). She is located as a lesbian feminist that theorize bodily encounters. Most authors are not native speaking English, I am struggling to find a word rather than choosing what words that best fit the purpose. So in some sentences, paragraphs and sections the text escapes my easy-to-read ambitions. Is the English language oppressive in academic writing? At least, bodily encounters are difficult to put on paper in your own language and especially in a foreign language. Thus, there is a relationship between locations for thinking and writing. Livholt (2012) emphasizes the 'spaciousness' of the room where we write in which international publishing can be a challenge for non-native English speakers. The different locations for thinking and writing, might evoke passive writing, not by choice but by limitations in communication.

VII.

I believe in possibilities for productive and emancipatory writing, in texts that are developing the researcher self with the paper and readers. The text is supposed to do something, for example in bell hooks visions that feminism is for everybody - imagine living in a feminist academic milieu where we can all be who we are, a milieu of peace and possibility. Hooks actually are inviting us to take part in developing that milieu. In the Figure 1 I label it Invite to dance, i.e. knowledge in body, an equality in understanding between writer and reader. Judith Butler and Sara Ahmed might be more difficult to follow as a reader, but their texts are intensively engaged responsibilities in knowledge development in which they learn as they go. Texts are developed by responses and criticisms, such as unfinished products.

The academic writing matrix	Passionate writing Texts as responsible acts of researcher Czarniawska	Passive writing Texts that play along with the dominating, by being masked as the noble academic or just causing little trouble by its form
Invite to dance Hooks, Arendt	Beautiful texts Creating allies, e.g. opening up possibilities for common movement (stranger and home group)	Follow norm of discipline. Connect as a stranger to another group and use their interpretative schemes and expressive norms. This includes that writers may need "to try to play God, writing as disembodied omniscient narrators claiming universal and atemporal general knowledge. " (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005:961).
Learn as we go Butler, Ahmed	Texts as radical openings. Go beyond disciplinary theory and research tradition based on a sense that phenomenon have been structured of dominance. The reigning paradigm exercises power that sticks performance to it. This writing opens up to explore opportunities in the next act. Taking off from differences.	Academic in the sense convoluted texts in which the meaning is becoming and difficult to express. Explores emotion of being decentered and marginalized in thinking and writing, based on existing norms

Passionate writing implies that texts are responsible acts of researcher that shall be evaluated by how they move readers' understanding (i.e. as a narrative, see e.g. Czarniawska, 2004; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). First, there are texts that invite the reader, beautiful texts that are creating allies, e.g. opening up possibilities for common movement (stranger and home group). Second, there are interesting and relevant texts that challenge the writer and the reader. Texts that go beyond disciplinary theory and research tradition based on a sense that phenomenon have been structured of dominance and in which the text generates further ideas to be developed. The reigning paradigm exercises power that sticks performance to it. This writing opens up to explore opportunities in the next act. Differences are made. Even though the aesthetic merit is troublesome, the other merits counterbalance.

Passionate writing is not in opposition to passive writing. Passive is another mode of writing, which is needed for requirements of specific readers and purposes. It is a structured form of writing that uses a masculine argumentative voice in order to influence the reader's experience of the text's validity and reliability, i.e. ostensive criteria, (rather than caring about performative criteria that focus on responses of readers, i.e. whether the text is interesting, relevant, and beautiful (Czarniawska, 2004)). Passive writing often communicates that it is closing knowledge gaps. Such a text invites disciplined academics as readers, because it not only follows the norm of the discipline, it "drives the research frontier". The text connects to the mainstream group's understanding by using their interpretative schemes and expressive norms. It is central that all writing in social sciences and humanities is both a mode of communicating and a mode of knowing. You might be able to separate the two for the sake of being published and read. You might communicate an objective scientific activity while maintaining a passionate mode of knowing, because of a traditional academic training. Passive writing is in that sense challenging the norm that academia is reserved for those who feel that they belong. Strangers do passive writing. In some cases, as illustrated by Mona Livholts (2009) passionate writing is the only possibility, it is needed to do for the research self and have good effects for people. It is both a question of becoming and of belonging.

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