

Auto/biographical writing and Greek-Australian historiography

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This paper outlines a methodology for “auto/biographical” life-history writing and argues for its merits based on a particular case study. In the present context “auto/biographical life writing” refers to life writing that is produced *collaboratively* by the participants, the researchers and research subjects, who are respectively positioned as writers/editors and narrators. We will propose an account of the dialogical structure that informs this inter-subjective interaction as developed in our collaboration with one Greek-Australian political activist. In our collaboration with George Gotsis on his auto/biography we have been taking what we call an *ontological* approach, in the sense of addressing the *conditions of being* in a collaborative researcher–researched relationship. We present the main features of this approach and discuss its merits and connection with our Greek-Australian historiography more broadly.

Introduction

Auto/biographical writing — understood as life writing in which the participants, researchers and research subjects produce *collaboratively* — is a flourishing field of studies in Australia. Our contribution to this field and, in particular, the need to develop a distinct methodological approach to auto/biographical writing, takes place at the intersection with our multidimensional study of the history of Greek-Australian activism in the twentieth century. One dimension of this study concerns the production of auto/biographies, which are the product of interviews we have conducted with some of the main participants in Greek migrants’ political struggles, who resisted their social positioning in terms of what we have called “the perpetual foreigners-within” (Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos, 2003/2004; 2004c). In a second, philosophical dimension, we have argued that mainstream or dominant white Australian society designates certain migrant and ethnic groups as perpetual foreigners-within in doing so it creates inside-outsider groups who are in turn able to recognise the white occupier’s authority even though the dispossession of the Indigenous peoples’ continues.

In sum, the circumstances under which the white occupier claims ownership of Australian territory has given rise to an onto-pathological condition — a disturbance at the level of the being of the white nation — that implicates the foreigner communities in the white occupier's denial of Indigenous sovereignty rights (Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos, 2004b). In a third dimension of our study we trace the implications of this philosophical account of the triadic relationship between the occupier, the Indigene and the foreigner-within for Australia's migrant and ethnic communities, including the Greek-Australian, Muslim and refugee communities. Concerning our fourth dimension, we document the history of Greek migrants' struggles for social justice and their understandings of citizenship and multiculturalism from which the fundamental concepts, which inform our study as a whole, ultimately originate (Nicolacopoulos and Vassilacopoulos, 2004; 2004a; 2005). The fifth and final dimension of our study addresses our identity as researchers and interviewers of our research subjects. Overall our findings are based on more than 70 interviews that cover the period from the 1930s to the 1990s and of these we conducted 30 qualitative interviews, 20 with Greek-Australian Left activists and the remainder with activists of the Australian Left and labour movements, such as trade union officials who collaborated closely with Greek migrants, over the years, in various political campaigns. These ranged from asserting citizenship and migrant workers' rights to the mobilisation against the Greek Junta and the anti-Vietnam war campaign.

In general our approach as researchers belongs to the intellectual tradition that aspires to engage “the dialogical hope of speaking with” rather than “speaking for” one's research subjects (Lather, 2001:203). Indeed from the outset, as collectors of their rich histories, our research subjects positioned us as *ethnic insiders*. In other words, in making, reflecting upon and recording their history, our research subjects acknowledged us as co-contributors to their history-making activity because we share with them an identification with a cultural and political heritage that progressively made its way over from Greece to Australia and informs our respective ways of life as Australians. But what precisely is the significance of our “ethnic insider position”? In an earlier paper we have argued that although it plays some part in establishing the conditions necessary for an authentic representation of ethnic minority group members' life histories, shared ethnicity is not a sufficient supplier of authenticity (Nicolacopoulos, Vasilacopoulos and Kyrkilis, 2004:275–280). By analysing our positioning as insiders we have developed the view that collaborative auto/biographical writing, which aims at narrating the historical subject authentically, implicates the researcher(s) and their research subjects in a field of values that is defined by *the historical subjects' fundamental value orientations*. This in turn generates a certain ontological framework that gives rise to distinct forms of agency. Our earlier paper based our discussion of these claims on the interview setting. In what follows, we focus on auto/biographical writing for publication purposes.

In the first section we explain how an ontological framework functions within collaborative life-history writing and present an overview of the ontological framework

of solidarity that defines the terms of our interaction with our research subjects. The next section illustrates the operation of this framework by reference to our life-writing collaboration with George Gotsis, one of Sydney's best-known Greek-Australian activists. Gotsis was born in 1930, in Aitos, Trifilias, a village in the region of Messinia, but he grew up in Dorion, a small town half an hour away from Aitos. He arrived in Australia in 1961 and became a prominent member of the labour and communist movements. He has served as President of Sydney's Greek Atlas League and the New South Wales May Day Committee. He was also a member of the Central Committee of the Socialist Party of Australia. Throughout his life in Australia he has been a dedicated unionist and labour movement activist. One of the fundamental values that has framed our collaboration with Gotsis is his conviction that "Αγώνας χαμένος είναι αγώνας που δεν έγινε" (The only lost struggle is the one that hasn't been undertaken) (Atlas, 2000). The final section of our paper draws out the implications of our analysis for addressing the questions of authorial/editorial (re)presentation in published work by reference to Gotsis' forthcoming auto/biography.

Fundamental value orientations and ontological frameworks

When addressing the question of the significance of the researchers' insider position, we must turn to a consideration of the meaning-generating framework within which the researcher-researched relationship takes place. In our earlier work we argued that the dialogical structure that informs this mode of inter-subjective interaction functions as the source of analytical frameworks for the emergence and representation of authentic voices. This is because it is the form of interaction within a collaborative relationship that underpins and gives meaning to categories, like ethnicity, race, class, disability, sexuality and generational difference that are sometimes used to mark the insider/outsider binary. However, unlike approaches that focus on such markers of difference, ours is fundamentally an *ontological* approach in that it addresses *the conditions of being* in a collaborative researcher-researched relationship. Our position is not that the categories of ethnicity, race, class, disability, age or sexuality are meaningless or unimportant but that their meanings and importance derive from the ontological conditions of particular collaborative ventures. Generational differences, for example, can be a source of enrichment of the collaborative meanings surrounding the life-history writing process, but, as we will see below, they are framed by the more fundamental meanings underpinning the values upon which the research collaboration rests. Moreover, as we have demonstrated elsewhere, the absence of attention to the ontological conditions of a collaborative life-writing relationship can *undermine* recognition of the fundamental importance of the (historical, social and personal) complexities of the relationship on which the collaboration rests (Nicolacopoulos, Vassilacopoulos and Kyrkilis, 2004:278–280). With these general observations in mind, we turn now to providing a brief account of the ontological structure that

informs the collaborative/dialogical relationship we have formed with our research subjects.

To begin with, we enter the collaborative relationship in our capacity as *participants*, rather than in the asymmetrical position of researchers of our research subjects. As such we are able to function within the discursive field created by a certain substantive value, namely solidarity, which is a fundamental value orientation of twentieth century Greek-Australian political activists in general. The operation of reciprocal forms of solidarity gives rise to the situation in which all participants bring into the fullness of being their necessarily inter-subjective identities. Within this ontological framework, the interview participant is, first and foremost, defined by a dynamic mutually recognising individuality that locates powers of self-determination within the substantial framework generated by solidarity. It follows from this that it was never open for us in our researcher capacity to *give* voice; from the outset we are positioned as *sharing in* the processes by which the meaning generating conditions of our participant being take shape through our ability to recognise the operative discourse of solidarity.

What possibilities are open to us within the framework of substantial solidarity understood in the above ontological terms? As an objectively universal framework — in the sense of that which precedes and makes possible the activity and forms of agency of all concerned — being in substantial solidarity determines the particular shape of participants' subjective interactions. On our respective subjective sides we, the interview participants, are drawn together each for our own particularistic, even unique reasons. Some research subjects want to have their unique stories recorded whereas others see the process as more a matter of building a resource for future activists, and so on. The original decision and our ongoing commitment to the life-history writing process are grounded entirely in the sort of everyday life contingencies that variously affect people in their pursuits. To be determined as being in solidarity with co-participants is to bring something into a shared being but this still allows for what we might call the contingent excess of our concrete specific beings. What is brought into the framework of solidarity is therefore not predetermined or fixed. Both the initiation and the actualisation of the specific relationship — our life history-writing collaboration from the interviewee process to the production of publications — depend entirely on our specific differences and these differences exceed our being in solidarity. It follows that each of us may determine whether and how we might bring something into the collaborative relationship and the collaboration must be (re)created and maintained by *willing* participants throughout the process.

Moreover, if within the ontological framework of our substantial solidarity our differences as researchers and research subjects are understood in terms of the contingent excess that defines all aspects of our different specific beings, then in line with the open-endedness and fluidity of this contingent excess such differences are not only not fixed but they cannot be necessarily organised in some specific way. This is why we could not make unilateral decisions about how to write their lives

or take for granted any inevitable weight of our authorial power over our research subjects.

Nevertheless, the self-positioning of subjects within the ontological framework we have just described still calls for the adoption of some form(s) of distinctive researcher responsibility. As the researchers in the collaborative relationship our role is to contribute to the creation of a dialogical opening that permits the emergence of the speakers' authentic voices. In this context "authenticity" refers to the participants' active self-positioning in relation to the interplay of the universal and particular categories that structure our collectively framed discourse. Authenticity thus becomes a relationship, neither to a "real" past nor to an unavoidable illusion, but to the discursive reality that the collaboration has foregrounded.

Finally, to the extent that such voices articulate a *reflective relationship* to the interplay of universal categories such as solidarity, justice and democracy, and the specificities of their situation, the structure of the collaboration also gives rise to the possibility of internally generated analytic concepts. To explain briefly, because the practice of collaborating on life-history writing empowers the participants to relate reflectively to the specific aspects of their contingent beings, this in turn makes possible creative explorations of their chosen subject matter. Thus the collaborative relationship gives rise to a transformative power, a creative energy whose exercise can impact upon any aspect of the participants' determinate being. This was the case with our shared ethnicity. Whereas we, the researchers, came to the collaboration viewing our particular ethnicity as indispensable to our insider perspective, the collaborative relationship gave rise to a far more crucial concept that we have termed "reflective ethnicity". It drew our attention to the centrality of the fundamental values that are embedded in the everyday life practices of the research subjects' lives as Greek-Australian activists. Because their ethnicity is *reflective* in this sense, this concept has emerged as a key analytic tool from within the life-writing interaction.

George Gotsis and the ontological framework of solidarity

Amongst our many interviewees, George Gotsis stands out as one of the most capable initiators of the sort of reflective ethnicity we mentioned above. We conducted interviews with George Gotsis over a period of two years, which resulted in 24 hours of recorded material. We also interviewed his associates in the maritime unions of Greece and Australia and visited his hometown in Greece where we conducted interviews with his relatives. Interestingly, all our sources confirm that, for Gotsis, the rejection of his social positioning as a foreigner-within, and the corresponding activation of his identity as an engaged citizen of Australia, was immediate (in the sense of something not mediated by other conditions). As he puts it, "Δεν ένιωσα ποτέ ξένος γιατί δεν είδα ποτέ ξένο μπροστά μου" (I have never felt like a foreigner because I have never encountered others as foreigners) (Atlas, 2000). Conversely, his immediate or unreflective identification *with others* in potential solidarity serves as the precondition for

engaging reflectively with his and their ethnicity. Upon arrival in Australia Gotsis enacted his substantive identity as an Australian of Greek origins. In other words, he drew upon the universal value of citizenship to frame his specific ethnic difference in a way that gives rise to opportunities for relations *in solidarity*. In order to appreciate the life experience that makes possible Gotsis' enactment of this blending of universal and particular categories — Australian citizenship and Greek ethnicity — despite his status as a migrant, we should highlight some formative and decisive moments in his life.

Gotsis came from a relatively well off but socially conscious family whose members valued education, freedom, and social justice very highly. One of his great-grand fathers was a well-known freedom fighter who participated in the Revolution against Ottoman rule under the leadership of the legendary Papaphlessas. His paternal grandfather was a very popular man in the area because he was always willing to help the poverty stricken. Most of his siblings completed their secondary education and some went on to university studies. Gotsis' father was also a well-educated man for the times. He became a leading communist in the region and headed the local branch of EAM, the Greek Resistance organisation against the German occupation during World War Two. Immediately after the war, right wing forces captured and imprisoned him, during which time he was assassinated. Shortly after the tragic loss of his father, Gotsis' mother was condemned to death for her own activism. During the civil war, his oldest brother lost his life fighting in the Democratic Army while the German collaborators plundered and tore apart his home on two occasions.

Gotsis himself had become very active against the German occupiers as a member of the youth resistance movement. In these difficult times he managed to complete secondary school but after the war he fled to Athens to escape the threat of being killed by the same people who had assassinated his father. Before coming to Australia, in the 1950s he migrated first to Belgium to work in the mines and then to Germany. Upon arrival in Australia he immediately became politically active. He went to work in Wollongong's BHP smelters where he lived until 1964. There he joined the Communist Party of Australia ("CPA") and became a leading figure in the Left's campaign to unionise the Greek migrants. About this period, Gotsis reflects:

They used whatever means possible. In 1963 they brought along the Achbishop, Izakhil, the one who started the war with the Communities, they brought him to the refinery. He conspired with the union and the company and then gave us a talk on why we should be quiet about issues, he told us not to be disruptive and cause trouble at work. They had invited him along because they could see that the campaign was beginning to lean towards the Left, and this is how they would respond to such situations. So in his address, Izakhil urged us to be complaint, after all, they had given us jobs in this country. In other words, we should bow our heads in submission. They took him around to different sections of the factory. Wherever there was a large number of Greeks, they even stopped production so that the priest could speak. It was in their interests to have the priest swanning through with the bosses, giving them the message to bow their heads in submission. In other words, his visit sought to put a stop to the campaign that was building momentum there. The union was in on it too, because they could see that if the workers were to rise

up, their positions would also be at risk since they were serving the bosses' interests. I should also note that Archbishop Izakhil had close ties with Baldinos who was a founding member of the New Settlers Federation. This organisation aimed to discourage migrants from becoming unionised, to ensure that they would remain unprotected. Baldinos also collaborated with the Greek Consulate, with the reactionary forces operating within the Greek community and with the various secret services.

For the refinery bosses the migrants' mass marches were quite foreign and they were hostile to them. There were high levels of discrimination and the formen would give us dirty looks. They were against migrants and didn't want any of this. The Australians saw us as their enemy, they weren't interested in the meaning of the struggle, why we were doing what we did. All they could see was migrants, these dark people roaming their streets, and you're blocking traffic, they see you as their enemy, in other words, they want to do you in. (Gotsis, Forthcoming, our translation)

Together with his comrades, Gotsis was a founding member of Herakleitos, Wollongong's Greek migrants' workers league. With hindsight he maintains:

The workers' leagues were very significant because with their establishment, first in Melbourne with the Greek Democritus Workers' League in 1935 and in Sydney with the formation of the Greek Atlas League in 1939, and later in other cities, the question of migrants' *αξιοπρέπεια* (well-being) came to the fore. This was a question of struggles for rights, for education, for solidarity with the union movement, the Indigenous peoples and the other migrants. People were being intimidated by discriminatory practices, racism and by the Australian and Greek secret services files on them. Even within the communities the Greek Community organisations, the Church and the Press fuelled people's fears. They encouraged them not to voice their opinions, not to speak freely lest they be branded as communists. This was a culture of submissiveness, something that the Archbishop reinforced in Wollongong's refinery. The workers leagues, with the Greek members of the CPA at the forefront, were the ones who defied this culture. Atlas drew the progressive movement into the communities just as it extended the communities out into the country's wider society. In the 1960s especially with Atlas' mobilisation, people believed in their own worth and in their creative powers. (Gotsis, Forthcoming, our translation)

After losing his job with BHP as a result of his militancy, Gotsis moved to Sydney. There he became a maritime unionist after finding work on the wharf. When he arrived in Sydney he immediately joined the Greek Atlas League and the Greek branch of the CPA. In this dual capacity he recruited many Greek migrant wharfies into the maritime worker socialist activity groups, which regularly organised solidarity and labour movement campaigns. Since then Gotsis has been at the forefront of the social and political struggles for the rights of migrants and ethnic communities, the Greek anti-Junta campaign, the anti-Vietnam war movement, the campaign for the support of Cyprus, the struggles to maintain the Greek Community organisations' independence from the Greek Church and a range of solidarity campaigns ranging from Indigenous sovereignty and land rights to struggles for democracy in Latin America. During the Greek anti-Junta campaign, acting on behalf of the then Seaman's Union of Australia, Gotsis held up hundreds of Greek ships that reached Sydney's ports. By denying the Greek ships a timely departure, the Australian maritime unions repeatedly showed

their solidarity with the Greek maritime workers' struggles for better conditions and with Greek unionists to whom the Junta had denied their fundamental human and democratic rights. In this period Gotsis became a life-long friend of Greece's maritime unionists but as a result of his activism he was also denied formal Australian citizenship rights until after the change in Australia's political climate with the election of the Whitlam Labor Government.

So, it is through the internalisation of a hard won and deep conviction to a certain understanding of the universality of the fundamental values of freedom, justice and democracy for all, that Gotsis created opportunities for relations of solidarity that we mentioned above. Moreover, Gotsis was in a position to claim his substantive if not formal identity as an Australian citizen from the very moment of his arrival on Australian soil having learnt that “τα ιδανικά δεν περικλείονται σε ορισμένο χώρο και δεν χάνονται”, (ideals can't be fenced into a specific place and they don't get lost) (Gotsis: Forthcoming). This understanding allows him to appreciate what we might call the filtering power of solidarity in relation to the meanings of specificities — the particular ways in which one embodies particularities, like ethnicity and class. Solidarity is thus elevated to a site that enables specificities to emerge as aspects of a universal project of emancipation. Accordingly, for Gotsis, ethnicity does not define one's being. It is instead what appears *in one's being* and this is in turn determined through mindful engagement in solidarity with others. Within such a conceptual framework, Gotsis' understanding of the universal scope of fundamental ideals has enabled him to define his own ethnicity, Greekness, in terms of a historical tradition of struggle around such fundamentals. So from the outset, his enactment of Greekness in Australia has involved a creative blending of elements of this tradition with those of the Australian progressive movement resulting in an enrichment of the latter.

In the light of the above, let us consider how the opportunity for relations of solidarity, in the above sense, has arisen in the context of our life-history writing collaboration. In the previous section we made the point that we enter the collaborative relationship with our research subjects in our capacity as *participants*. From the outset, Gotsis did not address us as primarily *interviewers* or *researchers* of *his* life story. Instead, by insisting on such a non-hierarchical relationship, something new and unavoidably inter-subjective is born of the interaction. As Gotsis puts it, “taking part in a project of this kind, gives you *ontotita*” meaning the kind of substantial being that affirms and sets into play one's integrity, in the dual sense of becoming integrated and whole, *through one's relationships* (Atlas, 2000). Here, the “you” in question is not the one, the interviewee, to the exclusion of the other, the interviewer, but the participant, however differently located.

We also noted earlier that each participant determines what they bring into the collaborative relationship and that the collaboration must be (re)created and maintained by *willing* participants throughout the process. Here is where the concept of generational difference finds its place in our interactions. Like the other markers of our differences and commonalities, such as gender and ethnicity, the way(s) in which generational

differences inform the collaborative relationship depends entirely on the specifics of the latter. For example, our collaboration with Gotsis positions all participants in a certain framing of time. Gotsis speaks with us of his past which he understands, not in terms of a recollection of particular chronologised events, but in terms of something whose being is implicated in both the present — which the moments of the interview and of the text-production process — and the future understood as a form of society to come. Indeed, past, present and future come together within relations grounded in the ontological framework of solidarity. Speaking to us of his past is itself an enactment of substantive relations of solidarity in the present that also involve us, the interviewers, in a certain vision of the future. This is the future understood as a space in which relations of solidarity will take on a radically new, all-inclusive form. So, the narrative presents itself as an occasion for invoking a kind of collective life struggle in which the researchers are no less implicated. It is no accident that as an interviewee, Gotsis typically uses the first person plural when addressing the researchers and in doing so he gestures toward a shared vision of a radically transformed society.

Indeed, in general our research subjects have transformed our generational differences into a kind of collaborative strength that appeals to the greater reach of our collective historical experience. In situating us as historical agents in this way, Gotsis' history does not only become ours, but also the collaboration itself becomes a reflective moment of the life history in question. That is, the collaboration is itself an event in the life-history making process and what distinguishes this event from others is the foregrounding of the very framework of solidarity that has made our specific life histories possible. These in turn have led to the textual production to which we now turn.

George Gotsis: The struggle continues

Gotsis' auto/biography is entitled *The Struggle Continuous: A Personal Narrative of Memory and Vision*. The manuscript takes the form of a personal narrative in the Greek language. In order of presentation, the chapters cover the following themes: 1. "Οι δύσκολες μέρες στην Ελλάδα" (Difficult times in Greece); 2. "Τα πρώτα χρόνια στην Αυστραλία και οι πρώτοι αγώνες" (First years in Australia and first campaigns); 3. "Κομμουνιστής και λιμενεργάτης" (Communist and wharfie); 4. "Ο Άτλας, οι Έλληνες μετανάστες και το Συνδικαλιστικό κίνημα" (The Atlas League, Greek migrants and the union movement); 5. "Ο Αντιχουντικός αγώνας" (Campaign against the Junta); 6. "Να σώσουμε τον Κοινοτικό Θεσμό" (In defence of the Community organisation); 7. "Διασπάσεις και νέα ξεκινήματα" (Party splits and new beginnings); 8. "Αλληλεγγύη με την ΠΕΜΕΝ και την ΠΣΟ" (Solidarity with PEMEN and PSO); 9. "Η επιτροπή Πρωτομαγιάς" (May Day Committee); 10. "Ο αγώνας συνεχίζεται" (The struggle continues). Here is how Gotsis introduces his narrative (hereafter "the text"):

For a progressive person, one's best days are those given over to the class struggle. The struggle has to be daily, on-going. Sometimes you hear people say, 'I took part in the struggle. I was in the Resistance'. This is something to be proud of but one isn't called upon to

act only on one occasion. The Resistance is something to take pride in but the working class struggle for socialist ideals isn't over. So you need to be vigilant on an ongoing basis, for the whole duration of the struggle. This is the real test. (Gotsis, Forthcoming)

It is not so much the fact of making a contribution to struggles for democracy, freedom and social justice *as such* that defines Gotsis' way of relating to others but a deeper, more long-term dedication to this value, which is more appropriately described as *a way of being in the world*. This ontological grounding also informs the body of the text throughout, just as it has determined the substance and weight of our collaboration.

Moreover, unlike the impression that researchers often give in explicitly adopting an expert position within a text, the complexity and sophistication of our collaborative work is due, not to what the researchers bring to the collaboration, but to the weight of the collaboration itself. As we have suggested above, this stems from Gotsis and, in particular, from his understanding of *αξιοπρέπεια* and *οντότητα* (self-presence grounded in one's integrity) as the main value orientations within the field of solidarity.

With this in mind, we note that on the face of it Gotsis' text presents rather conventionally as the voice of one man. The editing process has resulted in the omission of all explicit traces of the researchers, including interview questions, prompts and the contribution of any background details. Other seemingly more ambitious options were available to us. For example, compare the horizontally split text format of *Troubling the Angels*, a book in which the research subjects' "words are on the top of the page in bigger font and researcher narratives are on the bottom in smaller font" (Lather, 2001:207). For Patti Lather, one of the researchers and co-authors, this textual format seeks to "both decenter and construct authorial 'presence' through a kind of temporal disturbance" that involves "forcing a reading in two directions [...] to break the realist frame" (Lather, 2001:207). Lather's hope is that in being "forced to deal with two stories at once" the text "puts the reader through a kind of 'reading workout', a troubling exercise of reading" (Lather, 2001:210). The top two-thirds of most pages "appears to be unmediated interview transcript that foregrounds insider stories" (Lather, 2001:209). Unfortunately, however, as we have demonstrated elsewhere (Nicolacopoulos, Vassilacopoulos and Kyrkilis, 2004:280), despite Lather's best intentions, the split format renders the desired foregrounding of the research subjects' stories as a mere *appearance*. Indeed "forcing" the reading in the intended way does not merely disturb the conventional reader; it also inadvertently transforms the subject position of the research subjects into *readers* at the expense of their aspirations as storytellers.

By comparison, the more conventional textual format has the effect of privileging the research subject's story-telling powers. In our case, the specific character of the different forms of agency that the onto-dynamics of the collaborative relationship made possible is lost amidst the researchers' overriding concerns for our own epistemological position and authorial power *as researchers*. Instead the connection that the autobiographical text makes with the other four dimensions of the collaborative project as mentioned at the outset, attests to the effective power of *attentive listening* on all sides.

Accordingly, despite the fact that Gotsis' text presents rather conventionally as the voice of one man, the space in which his word emerges has been framed as an outcome of processes of collective consensus. This collectively framed space, however, has not been imposed by the researchers. Unlike the research subjects of a work like *Troubling the Angels*, Gotsis remains the active agent who has been involved in the *framing* of the telling of his story just as much as he has been its maker.

So as not to effectively write out of the (re)presentation process the research subject's own agency, our approach displaces the privileged position of the researcher by dissolving it into that of the researched. What of our distinctive contribution as researchers? Even though our voice has dissolved into the authorial voice of Gotsis within the context of the auto/biographical text, it does so just as his voice merges with our own in our authored representations of our collective history. In this way, we address the layering of complexity along with the foregrounding of questions concerning the process of representation, by working with multiple writing formats to develop each of the five mutually informing dimensions of our collaborative research.

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