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Reflections on Portraiture: A Dialogue Between Art and Science

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In opening this issue of articles that use portraiture as a central method of documentation, analysis, and narrative development, I will tell three autobiographical stories, tracing the origins of this genre that seeks to bridge art and science.

- The first story recounts the roots of my preoccupation with portraiture: two autobiographical experiences that made a large imprint on my intellect, my psyche, and my aesthetic.
- The second story briefly examines the intersection of my research and my identity as a portraitist: the ways in which my efforts to develop tools of inquiry that would work for the settings I studied led to some powerful and poignant developmental challenges for me as a researcher and teacher.
- The third story embraces a wider context; it looks beyond my personal story to the ways in which we (including each of the authors in this issue) are all collectively engaged in redrawing the map of social science inquiry—portraiture being a prime example but definitely not the only one. This last story struggles with issues of legitimacy and authenticity in research and identifies some of the enticing and troubling paradoxes that make this work both colorful and controversial.

STORY I: ROOTS

My first story—about roots—centers on my experience as an artist's *subject*—two inspirational and provocative encounters: the first when I was a young woman in my mid-20s, the second when I was a child of 8. There are lessons here about the power of the medium, about the relationship between artist and subject, about the perspective of the person whose image and essence is being captured . . . as well as a subtext about the making of a portraitist.

When, at 25, an artist asked to paint my portrait, I was flattered and delighted. Twice a week, for several weeks, I posed for the portrait. I would arrive early in the morning, climb the three flights to her garret studio, change

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into my beautifully embroidered Afghani dress and shimmering golden earrings, and stand motionless for an hour. It was difficult, wearing work trying to hold my pose, with arms hanging long and loose and hands clasped softly. At first the stance would feel natural, then I would lose my ease. My arms would stiffen, my fingers would press each other until the red showed through my brown skin, and my jaw would grow tight. The painter would notice the slow stiffening of my body and she would offer a break, sometimes a cup of tea. But we would soon return to the task and she would encourage me to relax and think good thoughts. Finally, the artist discovered the words that would produce the expression she wanted. "Think of how you would like your children to remember you," she would say earnestly. Still not 30 and not yet a mother, I found the request overly sentimental and incomprehensible. I did, however, try to produce a look that conveyed goodness, nurturance, care, and understanding.

The portrait passed through several phases and my image was transformed in front of my eyes. The transformations were all unsettling, even when the emerging image offered a prettier, more likeable portrayal. With a sensitive eye, a meticulous brush, and enduring patience, the artist painted me "from the inside out"; the skeleton sketched in before the bulky frame; the body contours drawn before the layers of clothing. I did not see the final product until months after its completion when I quickly bought the piece fearing it would be sold and I would be hanging in someone else's living room.

When I saw it I was shocked, disappointed, and awed all in the same moment. I had the odd sensation that the portrait did not look like me and yet it captured my essence. I quibbled about the eyes looking empty, the mouth being tight and severe, the expression being overly serious. I had not thought of myself as high waisted, nor did I recognize the yellowish cast to my brown skin. The woman in the portrait looked more mature and static than I felt. "She's 30 years my senior," I complained to myself. I was relieved when friends saw the painting and commented on how much younger I looked in person and how the artist had not captured my vitality and spirit. Although many of the details of this representation seemed wrong, the whole was deeply familiar. She was not quite me as I saw myself, but she told me about parts of myself that I would have never noticed or admitted. More important, I had the eerie sensation that she anticipated my future and echoed my past. I could look at her and see my ancestors, and yes, see myself as my children would see me. In these troubling features there was an ageless quality. Time moved backward and forward through this still and silent woman.

The summer of my eighth birthday, my family was visited by a 70-year-old Black woman, a professor of sociology and an old and dear friend of my family. A woman of warmth and dignity, she always seemed to have secret treasures hidden under her smooth exterior. On this visit, she brought charcoals and a sketchpad. Mid-afternoon, with the sun high in the sky, she asked me to

sit for her in the rock garden behind our house. I chose a medium-sized boulder, perched myself on it in an awkward, presentable pose, and tried to keep absolutely still. This suddenly static image disturbed the artist who asked me to talk to her and feel comfortable about moving. She could never capture me, she explained, if I became statue like. Movement was part of my being.

Her well-worn, strong, and knowing hands moved quickly and confidently across the paper. She seemed totally relaxed and unselfconscious; her fingers a smooth extension of the charcoal. Her deep calm soothed me and made me feel relaxed. But what I remember most clearly was the wonderful, glowing sensation I got from being so fully attended to. There were no distractions. I was the only one in her gaze. My image filled her eyes, and the sound of the chalk stroking the paper was palpable. The audible senses translated to tactile ones. After the warmth of this human encounter, the artistic product was almost forgettable. I do not recall whether I liked the portrait or not. I do remember feeling that there were no lines, only fuzzy impressions, and that I was rendered in motion; Sara on the move.

From these two experiences of sitting for portraits, I learned my first methodological lessons. I learned, for example, that these portraits did not capture me as I saw myself, that they were not like looking in the mirror at my reflection. Instead, they seemed to capture my “essence”; qualities of character and history, some of which I was unaware, some of which I resisted mightily, some of which felt deeply familiar. But the translation of image was anything but literal. It was probing, layered, and interpretive. In addition to portraying my image, the piece expressed the perspective of the artist and was shaped by the evolving relationship between the artist and me. I also recognized that in searching for the essence, in moving beyond the surface image, the artist was both generous and tough, skeptical and receptive. I was never treated or seen as object but always as a person of strength and vulnerability, beauty and imperfection, mystery and openness. The artist needed to be vigilant in capturing the image but always watchful of my feelings, perspective, and experience. I learned, as well, that the portraits expressed a haunting paradox of a moment in time and of timelessness.

STORY II: IDENTITY AND METHODOLOGY

From 1980 to 1983, I visited six high schools across the country—urban, suburban, and elite preparatory schools—with the goal of capturing their institutional character and culture and documenting the mix of ingredients that made them good schools. Searching for a form of inquiry that might capture the complexity and aesthetic of human experience, I had the benefit of those early experiences as an artist’s subject from which to develop my methodological tools. In trying to create “life drawings” of high schools and trace

the connections between individual personality and organizational culture, I felt the echoes of being on the other side of the artist's palette. I wanted to develop a document, a text that came as close as possible to painting with words. I wanted to create a narrative that bridged the realms of science and art, merging the systematic and careful description of good ethnography with the evocative resonance of fine literature. I wanted the written pieces to convey the authority, wisdom, and perspective of the "subjects"; but I wanted them to feel as I had felt, that the portrait did not look like them but somehow managed to reveal their essence. I wanted them to experience the portraits as both familiar and exotic so that in reading them, they would be introduced to a perspective that they had not considered before. And finally, I wanted the subjects to feel "seen" like I had felt seen—fully attended to, recognized, appreciated, respected, and scrutinized. I wanted them to feel both the discovery and generosity of the process as well as the penetrating and careful investigation.

In the process of trying to portray these complex, dynamic, and amazingly theatrical high school environments, and seeking an authentic representation of what I was seeing, I found myself inventing a new methodology, one I eventually called "portraiture" as a way of reflecting its cross between art and science, its blend of aesthetic sensibilities and empirical rigor, and its humanistic and literary metaphors. To say I "invented" the form is a bit misleading. In fact, I had been greatly influenced—however subliminally—by a long arc of work, reaching back two centuries, that joined art and science. There is a long and rich history of dialogue and collaboration between novelists and philosophers, artists and scholars.

The intersection of fiction and social science has occurred since at least the 18th century when the two approaches to the study of life began to emerge from similar impulses and express common themes. Philosophers turned from closed systems of thought—where they sought the purity and elegance of rationality and logic—to discerning observations of the world around them, which often recorded the messy chaos and illogic of reality. Writers of fiction, as Samuel Johnson (Williams, 1970) remarked in 1750, turned to "that experience which can never be attained by solitary diligence but must arise from general converse and accurate observation of the living world" (p. 143).

Novelists and philosophers began to read each other; Rousseau and Diderot wrote both novels and treatises. Their motivations became intertwined; their purposes fused. Novelists and social scientists began to strive for a closeness to life, seeking to capture the texture and nuance of human experience. But both artists and scientists recognized the limits of their mediums, their inability to capture and present the total reality. Their purpose, then, became not complete and full representation but rather, the selection of some aspect of, or angle on, reality that would transform our vision of the whole. Both artists and scientists hoped that their choice of views, their

shaping of perspective, would allow their readers to experience the whole differently.

We hear echoes of this integration of art and science in the history of clinical work as well, in work whose purpose it has been to intervene, to help, and to heal. In his wonderful book *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Critical Tales*, Oliver Sacks (1985) extolled the combining of narrative and science in the “richly human clinical tales” that dominated neurological medicine, and reached their peak during the 19th century. This clinical storytelling—the “intersection of fact and fable”—declined as neurological science became increasingly routinized, codified, and impersonal. The efforts to increase the rigor and the “science” led to caricatures and distortions in seeing, hearing, and healing the patient; in defining the doctor-patient relationship; and in identifying points of intervention, and sources of strength, leading to the patient’s recovery. Sacks’s book, therefore, is an earnest and intelligent effort to recapture the marriage of science and art, “to harken back to an ancient tradition . . . of the first medical historian, Hippocrates; and to that universal and prehistorical tradition by which patients have always told their stories to doctors” (p. viii). Recognizing these ancient imprints, I speak about portraiture as a new and path-breaking *invention* in the sense that it has been a purposeful and serious attempt to push the boundaries of interpretive inquiry, navigating borders that typically separate disciplines, purposes, and audiences in the social sciences.

I published *The Good High School* in 1983, and portraiture took its place in the lexicon of qualitative inquiry as a new and creative methodological approach. And like all innovations, it was both welcomed and resisted, embraced and criticized by the scholarly community. Both the positive acclaim and the deep suspicions were delivered passionately. A decade and a half later, after years of practice and refinement, years of teaching graduate methodology seminars, years of doing research, and years of writing books using the various forms of portraiture, I produced a methodology volume titled *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) that describes the contours, scope, dimensions, and techniques of this genre, as well as the limits, causalities, and constraints of this work. My coauthor, Jessica Davis, a visual artist and human developmentalist, and I wrote a book about boundary crossing—about a methodology that hopes to bridge aesthetics and empiricism and appeal to intellect and emotion, and that seeks to inform and inspire and join the endeavors of documentation, interpretation, and intervention.

I hope you hear this story of my first venture into portraiture less as personal saga and more as a tale about the shifts in the landscape of educational research and the ways in which newly emerging modes are both praised and diminished, engendering both interest and skepticism. The fault lines of opportunity and risk feel deeply familiar and echo the words of William

James (1904) written at the turn of the century. James spoke about the younger generations' resistance to the reign of logic, rationality, and abstraction and their determination (and I think his) to discover forms of representation that might capture the fluidity and complexity of the living world:

It is difficult not to notice a curious unrest in the philosophic atmosphere of the time, a loosening of old landmarks, a softening of oppositions, a mutual borrowing from one another on the part of systems anciently closed, and an interest in new suggestions, however vague, as if the one thing sure were the inadequacy of the extant school-solutions. The dissatisfaction with these seems due for the most part to feeling that they are too abstract and academic. Life is confused and superabundant and what the younger generation appears to crave is more of the temperament of life in its philosophy, even tho it were at some cost of logical rigor, of formal purity. (p. 52)

Almost 100 years later, we are witnessing the restive risk taking and improvisation that James (1904) so admired *and* the causalities and excesses that always seem to accompany resistance to the dogma of tradition. What are some of the themes of the innovations that characterize educational research today? In what ways do these efforts to push the boundaries of tradition and discipline seem to have affected the landscape of inquiry? And what might we in the academy do to reduce the risk of excess and capitalize on the creativity? Let me very briefly identify four overlapping themes—among many—that I believe, characterize some of the changes in the scope, texture, and boundaries of the educational research landscape.

STORY III: AUTHENTICITY AND LEGITIMACY

My cataloguing of these themes begins my third narrative—actually a collective story that includes a growing group of scholars who are working to redefine the boundaries of social science inquiry and discourse. This is a broader, ongoing saga about the legitimacy and authenticity of our work. Here are my four assertions:

1. In recent years, I believe that there has been a shift away from research that reflects a single disciplinary lens toward inquiry that is purposefully interdisciplinary. . . . A shift away from questions that emerge out of perceived gaps in the academic literature to research seeking to respond to problems in the field. . . . A shift away from subjects of inquiry that have been exclusively defined by the researcher to issues and dilemmas that emerge from discourse with people working in the real world.
2. These shifts in the origin and naming of research questions, and in the mix of disciplines used, also signal a shift in the nature and character of relationships between researchers and their "subjects." Much of the new research has sought to become more participatory, collaborative, symmetric, dialectic . . . and these

newly emerging relationships not only have reshaped the design and practice of inquiry but also have raised complex and vexing interpersonal and ethical challenges. The efforts at greater symmetry between researchers and practitioners, for example, have also led to some vexing questions about the authorship of the work and the resonance and authority of the voices that get rendered in the text.

3. The newly emerging eclecticism is also related to changes in the audience for the researchers' work. Many of us are wanting to expand our audiences and welcome more voices into the public dialogues about education and schooling. If we want to broaden the audience for our work, then we must begin to speak in a language that is understandable, not exclusive and esoteric . . . a language that encourages identification, provokes debate, and invites reflection and action. But it is not only the language and idiom of our texts that will change, it is also that in anticipating different consumers of our work, we will begin to conceive of our research (the questions and design) differently from the very beginning.
4. In welcoming the "restive risk takers," we must anticipate that there will be those who misunderstand, misuse, and abuse the frontiers of innovation; those who make a mockery of the emerging forms of eclecticism; those who will use boundary crossing as a way to avoid the rigors and standards of both art and science . . . those who want to work in a kind of no-man's-land liberating them from the responsibilities, criteria, and ethics that are at the heart of good work in any field. Whenever there are attempts to push the frontiers of knowledge, our ways of seeing, or our modes of expression, there will always be those who engage the work recklessly or who accomplish it poorly. In fact, Davis and I wrote *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (1997) in an effort to articulate and make visible the rituals, methods, criteria, and ethics of good work in this genre: to emphasize the structures that permit the improvisation . . . and to help students of portraiture avoid what John Dewey (1934/1958)—quoting Bousanquet—referred to as "easy beauty"; the veneer of prettiness that hides the shortcuts, the laziness, and the superficiality.

THE POWER OF PARADOX

Like the ancient/new origins of portraiture, *paradox*—the joining of opposites—is a theme common to all four of my propositions. As a matter of fact, I think that one of the most powerful characteristics of portraiture is its ability to embrace contradictions, its ability to document the beautiful/ugly experiences that are so much a part of the texture of human development and social relationships. W. E. B. Du Bois has always been my mentor in his graceful synthesis of the contrary forces shaping our perspectives and our actions. His work and his life model ways of capturing the fundamental polarities, creating the convergence of opposites. In his wide-ranging eclecticism, Du Bois was the quintessential boundary crosser. More than any other social scientist I can think of, in his work and in his life, Du Bois captured the interdisciplinary as he moved from social philosophy to empirical sociology to autobiography to political essays to poetry and literature to social activism. He invented a way of being, a point of view, a style of work that quite naturally,

dynamically, and organically integrated science, art, history, and activism. One of his essays, "Of Beauty and Death" (1920), a favorite of mine, vividly captures the essence of paradox.

Du Bois told of an attempt by a Black man to buy an orchestra ticket to see a Charlie Chaplin movie. The salesperson tells him that only the cheapest seats in the smoking gallery are available. Suspicious, the man lingers by. A White man rushes up. He is sold three tickets to the orchestra. "Suddenly your heart chills. You turn yourself away from the golden twinkle of the purple night and hesitate again. What's the use?" (Rampersad, 1976, p. 63). Then rage comes. He confronts the seller, who contemptuously throws the demanded ticket at him. "Then you slink to your seat and crouch in the darkness before the film, with every tissue burning! . . . God! What a night of pleasure!" (p. 63).

Like Du Bois, the portraitist hopes to be able to capture the raw hurt and the pleasure of her or his protagonists *and* works to embroider paradoxical themes into the inquiry and narrative. As a matter of fact, I think paradox, so central to portraiture, needs to be unmasked and made explicit as part of our methodological and aesthetic discipline. Let me mention two of my favorite converging opposites. The first refers to the voice of the portraitist, which is both everywhere in the work *and* is judiciously placed; it is both central *and* peripheral. The second paradox focuses on the motivations and purposes of portraiture, work that hopes to produce both analytic rigor and human connection, both inquiry and intervention.

The process of creating narrative portraits requires a difficult (sometimes paradoxical) vigilance to empirical description *and* aesthetic expression and a careful scrutiny and modulation of voice. It is a discerning, deliberative process and a highly creative one. The data must be scrutinized carefully, searching for the story line that emerges from the material. However, there is never a single story; many could be told. So the portraitist is active in selecting the themes that will be used to tell the story, strategic in deciding on points of focus and emphasis, and creative in defining the sequence and rhythm of the narrative. What gets left out is often as important as what gets included—the blank spaces, the silences, also shape the form of the story. For the portraitist, then, there is a crucial dynamic between documenting and creating the narrative, between receiving *and* shaping, reflecting *and* imposing, mirroring *and* improvising . . . a string of paradoxes. The effort to reach coherence must both flow organically from the data *and* from the interpretive witness of the portraitist.

In her exquisite autobiographical account, *One Writer's Beginnings*, Eudora Welty (1983) made a subtle, but crucial, distinction between listening *to* a story and listening *for* a story. The former is a more passive, receptive stance in which the listener waits to absorb the information and does little to give it shape and form. The latter is a much more active, engaged position in which the narrator searches for the story, seeks it out, and is central in its creation. This does not mean that he or she directs the drama or constructs the scenes. It

does mean that the narrator participates in identifying and selecting the story and helps to shape the story's coherence and aesthetic. Welty's distinction identifies one of the key contrasts between ethnography and portraiture: ethnographers listen *to* a story whereas portraitists listen *for* a story.

The identity, character, and history of the researcher are obviously critical to how he or she listens, selects, interprets, and composes the story. Portraiture admits the central and creative role of the *self* of the portraitist. It is, of course, true that all researchers—whether working within the quantitative or qualitative methodological paradigm—are selective in defining and shaping the data they collect and the interpretations that flow from their findings. Even the most scrupulously “objective” investigations reveal the hand of the researcher in shaping the inquiry. From deciding what is important to study, to selecting the central questions, to defining the nature and size of the sample, to developing the methodological strategies, the predisposition and perspective of the researcher is crucial; and the researcher's perspective reflects not only his or her theoretical, disciplinary, and methodological stance but also personal values, tastes, and style. The shaping hand of the investigator is counterbalanced by the skepticism and scrutiny that is the signature of good research. Through rigorous procedures and methodological tools, the researcher tries to rid the work of personal bias that might distort or obscure the reality that he or she is recording. So at the center of *all* research, the investigator needs to manage the tension between personal predisposition (more or less explicitly recognized and expressed) and rigorous skepticism.

With portraiture, the *person* of the researcher—even when vigorously controlled—is more evident and more visible than in any other research form. The researcher is seen not only in defining the focus and field of the inquiry but also in navigating the relationships with her or his subjects, in witnessing and interpreting the action, in tracing the emergent themes, and in creating the narrative. At each one of these stages, the self of the portraitist emerges as an instrument of inquiry, an eye on perspective taking, an ear that discerns nuances, and a voice that speaks and offers insights. As a matter of fact, the voice of the portraitist often helps us identify her or his place in the inquiry. Even though the identity and voice of the portraitist is larger and more explicit in this form of inquiry, the efforts to balance personal predisposition with disciplined skepticism and critique are central to the portrait's success. One might even say that *because* the self of the portraitist is so essential to the development of the work, the portraitist must be that much more vigilant about identifying other sources of challenge to her or his perspective. The counterintuitive must always be present even as the portraitist takes full advantage of the intuitive.

The second paradox I want to address is beautifully expressed in a penetrating review of portraiture written by social historian Joseph Featherstone (1989). Featherstone linked the private, intimate storytelling, which is at the center of portraiture, with the public discourse that it hopes to affect. He con-

nected the voices of the storytellers, the narrator, and the audience and drew the continuum between "analysis and solidarity." The power of portraiture, he claimed, lies in its explicitly humanistic impulse. It embraces both analytic rigor (a perspective that is distant, discerning, and skeptical) and community building (acts of intimacy and connection). Featherstone called this "a people's scholarship"; a scholarship in which "scientific facts gathered in the field give voice to a people's experience" (p. 375):

The telling of stories can be a profound form of scholarship moving serious study close to the frontiers of art in the capacity to express complex truths and moral context in intelligible ways. . . . *The Good High School*, utilizes portraiture to argue against today's top-down reformers. It reminds us that the creation of a learning community is an essential feature of successful schools. Community, in this context, suggests the power of the local actors on the scene to create conversations and find shared meanings, the significance of the voices of teachers, and the crucial importance of local context, as well as the commitment of a scholar to truth and solidarity. The methodologies are inseparable from the vision. Historians have used narrative as a way in which to make sense of lives and institutions over time, but over the years they have grown abashed about its lack of scientific rigor. Now, as we look for ways to explore context and describe the thick textures of lives over time in institutions with a history, we want to reckon with the author's own stance and commitment to the people being written about. Storytelling takes on a fresh importance. (p. 377)

But deepening the conversation and broadening the audience are not only acts of analysis and solidarity. They are also, inevitably, acts of *intervention*. In the process of creating portraits, we enter people's lives, build relationships, engage in discourse, make an imprint . . . and leave. We engage in acts (implicit and explicit) of social transformation, we create opportunities for dialogue, we pursue the silences, and in the process, we face ethical dilemmas and a great moral responsibility. This is provocative work that can disturb the natural rhythms of social reality and encounter; this is exciting work that can instigate positive and productive change. We need to appreciate the benign, generous impact of portraiture, even as we recognize the huge, ethical responsibilities weighing on the portraitist.

There are other compelling paradoxes that shape the portraitist's work and are shaped by the portraitist. One last paradox brings us full circle to the impulse of the storyteller and the power of storytelling. The portraitist wants to document the specifics, the nuance, the detailed description of a thing, a gesture, a voice, an attitude as a way of illuminating more universal patterns. A persistent irony recognized and celebrated by novelists, poets, and playwrights is that as one moves closer to the unique characteristics of a person or a place, one discovers the universal. Again Eudora Welty (1983) offered a wonderful insight from her experience as a storyteller. Welty said forcefully, "What discoveries I have made in the process of writing stories, all begin with the particular, never the general" (p. 14). Clifford Geertz (1973) put it another way when he referred to the paradoxical experience of theory development—

the emergence of concepts from the gathering of specific detail. Geertz said, "Small facts are the grist for the social theory mill" (p. 23). The scientist and the artist are both claiming that "in the particular resides the general."

In this paradox, we discover a very different way of thinking about generalization. It is not the classical conception of "generalization" typically employed in social science, where the investigator uses codified methods for generalizing from specific findings to a universe and where there is little interest in findings that reflect only the characteristics of the sample. Before generalizing, the parameters of the universe are clearly articulated, as is the selection of the sample, in an effort to define the relationship between them and to be able to point to statistically significant differences. By contrast, the portraitist seeks to document and illuminate the complexity and detail of a unique experience or place, hoping that the audience will see themselves reflected in it, trusting that the readers will feel identified. The portraitist is very interested in the single case because she or he believes that embedded in it, the reader will discover resonant universal themes. The more specific, the more subtle the description, the more likely it is to evoke identification. And amazingly—another irony—if the portraitist is to speak to an eclectic and broad audience, living and working in *other* contexts, then the piece itself must be very specific and deeply contextual.

In closing, I want to blur the art/science contrasts that have dominated my analysis thus far. Two decades of practicing portraiture have also taught me that the boundaries that we draw between scientific and artistic representations of reality not only produce distorted caricatures of each realm but also blind us to the similarities and resonances between them. During the past several years, I have had many opportunities to talk with both scientists and artists about the roots, motivations, processes, and products of their work, and I am struck by their parallel and convergent accounts. This is certainly true of the most imaginative, confident, and skilled artists and scientists—those people at the top of their form, working at their most creative, grooving in their zones. I think of a theoretical physicist, with whom I had a recent conversation, who speaks about her science as "deeply intuitive and artful." She used her hands to show me what she sees, thinks, *and* feels. I am reminded of my sculpture friend whose pieces are in the Whitney, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Chicago Art Institute. He works on his pieces for 3 years, gathering evidence of ancient forms, documenting their historical and cultural origins, and finally producing a piece that in his mind is based on what he calls "scientific searching," but to my eyes does not even remotely resemble the studies of ancient forms. And I recall a wonderful letter I received a few years ago from a Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics who had just finished reading the portraits in my 1994 book *I've Known Rivers*. He expressed admiration for the book's "poetry and drama," for its "sophistication and empiricism"; and he closed by saying, "I realize that you and I are engaged in similar processes . . . full of musing, interpretation, and leaps of faith."

And as I close, one more bow to Du Bois, to the myriad ways he embraced life's dualities. Arnold Rampersad (1976), who has written one of the great biographies of Du Bois, claimed that Du Bois's uniqueness lay in the power of his imagination, a faculty different from inspiration or intelligence or learning or courage. In Rampersad's quote, we hear themes—both conceptual and aesthetic—that inspire and challenge the portraitist:

For DuBois, imagination meant above all the vision of Unity. Because he was born into a divided world, where Race was set apart from Race—be they Anglo-Saxon, African, Celtic—the vision of Racial Unity became the first tableau projected by Imagination. But racial unity was only an insistence of the will to harmony generated by his free mind. DuBois declined to see a separation between Science and Art, believing that such a distinction violated the integrity of intelligence, which could set no wall between one fundamental form of knowledge and another, since all belonged to the world of nature, of Truth. . . . He devoted himself to a knowledge of this world equal to the power of his mind to imagine a better one. Science—social science, historical science, the daily observation of persons, places, events—became the mast to which the sail of the imaginary was lashed. (pp. 65-66)

So—in the end—it is my hope that portraiture—this dialogue between science and art, this pursuit of truths, insight, and knowledge projected by the imagination, this “people's scholarship”—will spread to places where it will be challenging, illuminating, and useful. The essays in this issue are part of ongoing efforts to redefine the boundaries and redraw the map of social science inquiry and discourse.

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