

Research as Poetic Rumination: Twenty-Six Ways of Listening to Light

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I search for a poetics of research in long walks on the dike where I listen to light, smell the line of a heron startled into slow motion by my presence, taste the screeches of eagles and hawks, poke with the roots of alders and aspens into the black earth, see the scent of the seasons. In my walking and researching, I hear ducks laughing in the slough along the dike, and my research question laughs with the ducks: What are the ducks laughing about? I do not ask the question in order to answer the question; I ask the question, again and again, in order to know the question. My research is really about opening my ears and eyes and tongue and skin and nose and lungs and heart and spirit, to learn to laugh with the ducks.

Je cherche pour une poétique de la recherche quand je me promène le long du dyke où j'entends la lumière, je sens la ligne d'un héron qui, affarouché par ma présence, s'est mis en mouvement lentement, je goûte le cris stridents des aigles et de faucons, j'enfonce les racines des aulnes ou des trembles dans la sol noire, je vois la parfum des saisons. Quand je promène et recherche, j'entends les canards riant dans le boubier tout près du dyke, et la question de ma recherche rit avec les canards: de quoi rient-ils les canards? Je ne pose pas la question pour que je sache la réponse. Je pose la question à plusieurs reprises, pour que je sache la question. Ma véritable recherche est d'ouvrir les oreilles et les yeux et la langue et le peau et le nez et les poumons et le coeur et l'esprit, d'apprendre à rire avec les canards.

*Where does that singing start, you know,
that thin sound – almost pure light?
(Crozier, 1995, p. 3)*

*Whenever wherever whatever has happened
is written on waters of Babel.
(Szyborska, 1995, p. 29)*

*They go on spinning out of eyeshot, snapshot, beyond
the reach of evidence. The stories we invent and refuse
to invent ourselves by, all unfinished.
(Marlatt, 1996, p. 130)*

*It's just the light
falling so far into itself
it hasn't reached the bottom yet.
(Crozier, 1995, p. 25)*

a

There are many ways to know the world, and the world can only be known in many ways, and, even then, only ever known a little. I am learning to listen to light. While on sabbatical leave last year, my first sabbatical, I walked the dike that writes a broad line between Lulu Island and the Fraser River, and while I walked the dike daily, I listened to the light. Once upon a time I saw light, counted the colours, coined adjectives to name the colours on paper, a kind of record of what I saw for remembering and sharing, images and phrases for new poems. But I always knew that the light I saw was the visible light, its visibility rendering invisible the places the light comes from, the places the light goes. The whole wild sensual experience of seeing seems to stop with the abundance of the solid, expansive, created world.

Like the narrator in Lorna Crozier's poem (1995), "Photograph, Not of Me or Little Billie, Circa 1953," who confesses,

*"I, too young to be at home
alone, am already obsessed
with the invisible" (p. 21),*

I, too, am obsessed with the invisible which cannot be seen, but can be heard.

And I am reminded that I do not know how to listen to light. Do I listen with my ears, my heart, my spirit, my blood, my bones? I have trained my eyes fairly well to see light, and can tell the difference

between light caught in Arctic smoke, and the light whipped by a sturdy easterly wind, and the light lined by eagles and herons and ducks and geese. But I am still only seeing. Now I am learning to listen to light.

b

In her poetry Crozier (1995) reminds me to listen to rhythms that are more internal than external, rhythms that play outside the bands of my ordinary auditory consciousness:

"Where does the singing start?
Here, where you are, there's room
between your heartbeats,
as if everything you have ever been
begins, inside, to sing." (p. 3)

I have listened to the systole and diastole of my heart, the rhythm of coming and going, going and coming, humming, intimately known, intimately unknown, but I have never listened to the singing between the heartbeats, assumed only empty dark places, easily ignored and dismissed. Now I want to listen to the light that pulses between the beats in my heart, this heart long seen as a beast, uncontrolled, fickle, dangerous. I seek to learn the language of my heart.

c

I grew up in a part of the world born out of the North Atlantic where winter nights were afire with snow and stars and moon, singularly different from the part of the world where I now live, the gray sky one with wet asphalt and concrete. Many people dismiss my memories of light in Newfoundland as nostalgia-riddled imagination, might even show me meteorological records and statistics to prove that Newfoundland winters are overcast and relentlessly written in snow, rain, hail, sleet. And I know I need to listen to the light in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, an arc of the Pacific Rim, need to learn to hear the language of day and night in a gray world. But how can I learn to listen to the light around me when in middle age, I am finally beginning to listen to the light that beats in my heart? With more confusion than I can hold. I am not comfortable with connecting the word "heart" to my scholarly writing because my sense of scholarly

writing has been shaped by teachers and academics intent on filling the world with five-paragraph theme papers that prattle with predictable and pedantic persuasiveness, teachers who fear poetry with its subversive search for the strange. But I contend that this essay on research as poetic rumination is scholarly writing, even though it might not always look or sound like the scholarly writing that fills academic journals beyond counting.

In fact this writing might be closer to the meaning of *scholar* than much writing that claims the label "scholarly writing." *Scholar* is derived from the Greek *schole* which signifies "leisure employed in learning." In much scholarly writing, "learning" is defined as research, explication, logic, reason, argument, and persuasion. The emphasis is on conclusions, implications, and recommendations. There is frequently a tone of world-weary urgency, akin to a military operation or corporate venture or political strategy convention. In most scholarly writing, learning is not born out of leisure.

d

A while ago, I walked to a community wharf, and sat for a long time looking at the light in the alders and aspens, in the clouds, and in the river. I closed my eyes and listened to the light, and for a long time all I could hear were transport trucks, low airplanes, fast cars, relentless construction, air brakes puffing, horns blowing, metal clanging, ship engines rumbling. My ears were also rattling with strident tensions and conflicts, personal and professional, including university politics, ubiquitous with e-mail tentacles. How could I listen to light in a cacophony of noise? Light's lilting lyrical voice was lost. Or so it seemed for a long time, until I knew the song of the light this day was not lost, only quiet, and I learned again the lesson, many times learned: I must listen carefully with my ears, as well as my heart, so I can hear the light, even when it makes no sound.

My research is the fruit of leisure, and it bears the sun-washed, moon-drawn, shadow-written lines of light where it has lingered. Like the familiar traditions of scholarly writing, my writing includes research, explication, logic, reason, argument, and persuasion, but the ingredients are mixed in unfamiliar ways, in a ruminant, poetic brew of learning sought and gained in the employment of leisure.

e

I have been encouraged by Frederick Franck (1993) who refers to his book, *A Little Compendium on That Which Matters*, as "the organic extract of long and intense, mostly non-discursive rumination" (p. 5). This is a clear and concise description of the kind of writing that I most want to pursue and promote. There are long-standing traditions of writing as non-discursive rumination: Augustine, Pascal, Stein, Weathers. Rumination reminds me of the cows I see in the pastures protected by the dike. There are many lessons I can learn from cows and the ways of cows. Rumination reminds me of the ways that poets live and write. Why is "discursive writing" so highly valorized? What is "organic extract"? In what ways do words live? In what ways is writing organic? Perhaps I try to think about these notions too literally. Perhaps I need to speak about *organic* without tying the word to conceptions of high school biology. Perhaps I need to acknowledge the existence of spirits and angels and embodied winds and waters and light. I resonate with Franck's adjectives, "long and intense," because I fear that most education research is about doing things quickly. There is no time for lingering, no time for waiting on words, no time for listening.

f

As Wislawa Szymborska (1995), the Polish poet and winner of the 1996 Nobel Prize for Literature, writes in *View with a Grain of Sand: Selected Poems*, the human

"sees only with his eyes;
hears only with his ears," (p. 60)

and, therefore, hardly knows the world at all. So, I search for a poetics of research in long walks on the dike where I listen to light, smell the line of a heron startled into slow motion by my presence, taste the screeches of eagles and hawks, poke with the roots of alders and aspens into the black earth, see the scent of the seasons. In my walking and researching, I hear ducks laughing in the slough along the dike, and my research question laughs with the ducks: What are the ducks laughing about? I do not ask the question in order to answer the question; I ask the question, again and again, in order to know the

question. My research is really about opening my ears and eyes and tongue and skin and nose and lungs and heart and spirit, to learn to laugh with the ducks.

In my research I am a skeptic, ceaselessly susceptible to surprises. I believe nothing, and yet I believe almost everything. I am a skeptical optimist, an agnostic believer, faith/full and faith/less at the same time, never still and still always seeking to be still.

g

WINTER ALPHABET

returning in March after seven years
of November to January rain

I know only I have forgotten
the winters I grew up with

for a few days I walk in Corner Brook
as if I am fighting winter

head down, going somewhere fast
except I move slowly

almost pantomime, pushing myself
through winter like walking under water

I must learn to lean with winter
seek its erratic rhythms

like a dory sliding up and down
the smooth sides of a rough sea

I taste winter, winter savours
my body with a lustful lover's appetite

snow bites pinches pokes stabs
slices like a set of sharp knives

in a TV infomercial
neatly skinning a tomato

snow acts with verb exuberance,
a veritable thesaurus of action words

winter reduces the world
people stay home more

huddle in their cars more
hide in shopping malls more

deep snow, hard-packed snow,
plowed snow, powder snow

no hint of spring anywhere
except spring always comes

sunglasses essential, blind colour,
light and shadow tear the retina

snow in mountain creases
and cracks, a monochrome world

like the alphabet on paper,
a text I am learning to read again

reminded how quickly I grew
illiterate, lost my language

h

Frederick Franck (1993) refers to his book, *A Little Compendium on That Which Matters*, as “the *organic* extract of long and intense, mostly non-discursive rumination” (p. 5).

The word *organic* means: derived from living organisms; or having an organization similar in its complexity to that of living things. The word *organic* is related to the living, ecology, the mystical and spiritual, the world of interconnectedness. Franck writes about “the organic unity of what is as infinitely diversified as it is interdependent” (p. 16). Even a lump of coal has a history. The wood that washes up on the shore of the Fraser River is remembered in our bones. We are connected. So much research seeks to pass around that connectedness, seeks to line out the individual parts in easily digestible diagrams. As Franck suggests, “The Oneness of the Many,

the Manyness of the One, the total interdependence of all that lives on earth, far from being an eschatological pipe dream, is the fundamental fact we disregard at the price of inevitable extinction" (p. 16).

I want research that knows its humility, its futility, its volatility, that seeks its validity and reliability in places other than statistics. The organic cannot be reduced. Like organ music, the whole exceeds the parts. There is something ineffable that holds the parts together. This ineffability is not possible without the parts, but the parts only become organic in the instance that they sing out this ineffability.

The word *organic* means characterized by the systematic arrangement of parts which can be understood in the ways of a factory assembly line where an automobile is put together, piece by piece. Or the systematic arrangement of parts can be understood in the ways of aesthetic production where the system is inherent in the artist's vision and hence inherited from the artist's efforts to represent his or her vision. Therefore, the systematic arrangement of parts can be prescribed and formulaic, or inscribed as part of the process of dreaming and forming. I want research that begins in a place of unknowing, with a leap of faith, a courageous willingness to embark on a journey. I want research that seeks out mysteries and acknowledges even the muddled, mad, mesmerizing miasma that rises up as a kind of breath and breathing, connected with the pulsing and compelling rhythms of the heart.

i

Whatever directions the research journey takes, Szyborska (1995) invites me to return, always, all ways, to questions about what is important, and what is not, even to question the questions about what is important and what is not:

Above me a white butterfly is fluttering through the air
on wings that are its alone,
and a shadow skims through my hands
that is none other than itself, no one else's but its own.
When I see such things, I'm no longer sure
that what's important
is more important than what's not. (pp. 176-177)

In my research, I am like the narrator of Daphne Marlatt's (1996)

novel, *Taken*, who seeks to know her mother:

There was the story and there was the real presence of her body which I knew elementally, apart from its history. Only now do i search out the traces, eager to know what shaped her, how she became who she was, Esme, the woman of a photographed reality i never knew. The world they lived in then. (p. 6)

Research is akin to Sherlock Holmes' concocting a story out of a few traces, but instead of Holmes' deductive logic, I want to read the traces with the heart. I want to evoke or conjure a wholeness from the traces. As Marlatt writes, "Perhaps we've forgotten how to tell the secret, hesitant ones, the ones that verge on the very rim of silence" (p. 22).

j

SOS

I have stories
to tell
and language

for telling them
but still not enough
I need others

who know
the language
otherwise why

tell the stories
at all
when I can

live them
except in telling stories
I hope to weave

my stories
with the stories
of others lining

a text together
a textile sufficiently
close woven

to warm reality
to let real light
through/in/out

my writing is
always an SOS
fear of desertion

alone frantic
for rescue
connection human

foot prints in the sand
wanting the search(ers)
to return

k

I want research that hangs out in the spaces between a poetics of possibility and a poetics of impossibility. I want research fired in the spirit of a hermeneutics riddled with riddles, a hermeneutics that conceals, as well as reveals, a hermeneutics that obfuscates, even as it clarifies. I want research that pokes into the cracks where light can find release. I want research like Newfoundland yard art, shaped out of the flotsam of the ocean – driftwood, shipwrecks, lobster traps, glass and plastic and iron – washed up on the beach and scavenged, shaped, and organized into colourful and bizarre creations of the imagination, beyond the imagination. I want research that forms “a zigzag over essence” (Szyborska, 1995, p. 59) without naming essence or even admitting that essence is essential, a zigzagging research, always going, always returning.

l

Frederick Franck (1993) refers to his book, *A Little Compendium on That Which Matters*, as “the organic *extract* of long and intense, mostly non-discursive rumination” (p. 5).

Extract refers to the essence of something, what's left over, the

intense and concentrated product squeezed out – a tall glass of cold pineapple juice savoured on a hot summer afternoon. But *extract* has many meanings, and each of them is useful for understanding the kind of research approaches that I pursue and promote. As a noun, *extract* can be an excerpt from a book, such as a quotation. As a verb, *extract* can mean: to get, pull, or draw out, usually with special effort or force; to deduce (a doctrine, principle, interpretation, etc.); to derive or obtain (pleasure, comfort, etc.) from a particular source; to extort (information, money, etc.). Synonyms for *extract* include: pry out, evoke, educe, draw out, elicit, to remove something, exact, extort, wrest, withdraw, distill, citation, selection, decoction, distillation. The root of *extract* (*tract*) is derived from the Latin *tractus*, stretch (of space or time) and a drawing out. Also, the prefix “ex” means out of, from, utterly, and thoroughly. Therefore, *extract* means: to draw out a stretch of space and time utterly and thoroughly from the limitless possibilities.

In my research, I am not seeking the root of a quantity, nor am I seeking the essence of an experience, nor do I pine to savour the extracted juice of an expansive story. Instead I hope to draw out and in and around and over a stretch of space and time, infinite and eternal, always available for grasping, always beyond grasping. I want an extract that bears the traces of light emanating from stars that long ago expired; I want an extract that can no more be held than I can hold the moonlight that burns cold in the river; I want an extract that instills, not just distills, exhorts, not just extorts; I want an extract that evokes and provokes and invokes; I want an extract that elicits the illicit, the unauthorized, the unauthored, the unknown, the unacknowledged, the unspeakable, the unwritten; I want an extract that educes instead of reduces, as in the heart of education, to draw forth or bring out, as something potential or latent, to lead, to develop.

m

What do I hope to know, to learn in my research? I do not think I am trying to understand my experiences as a teacher. I am not trying to explain the story of schooling. I can't even explain my own pedagogy – now more than 17 years of practice, and I still don't know what I do; I can't explain it to anyone. If I stop and try to understand what I do, I grow more confused, and do not know what I knew when I was not

trying so hard to know it. So, my research is an invitation to listen to the light, to savour it on the tongue, to rub it in the hands, to roll naked in the light, to smell the light, to know the light is a language, revealing and concealing more than I can ever know in a lifetime, a thousand lifetimes. I cannot hold the light anymore than I can swallow sunlight or scoop the moon from the river, the moon which reflects the sun reflected in the river reflecting me wanting to swallow the sun when I need to be a swallow that writes wantonly its intriguing stories, intermingled with stories without end.

n

Like Franck (1993) who seeks "to reestablish some balance between thinking and feeling, between the activities of the right and left hemispheres (was perhaps the right one formerly known as 'the heart'?) after a few centuries of that heartless cerebrality which culminated in the perfect technological know-how to prepare our demise" (p. 7), I want heart-full research and writing. I want emotion and spirit and moon-struck, sun-struck, sun-warmed, moon-tugged writing. I find most standard academic writing boring, but I write and read it out of a sense of responsibility. I feel I ought to write and read it. I don't much care for it, but it is supposedly good for me, or will perhaps be good for me, will at least give me credibility in the academy, tenure and promotion even. I will never gain enough fame to warrant my picture on the cover of *People*, but perhaps somebody in Jakarta or Auckland or Kuala Lumpur or St. John's might actually cite me. Standard academic discourse is a Siren's seductive song.

We can never keep the heart out of our writing. The heart is always there. I want to seek and fire and grow the heart in my writing. Knowing it is always there, I want to reveal it as there, pumping and bloody and life-giving. We can pretend that we are keeping the heart out of our writing, but we are only pretending, and pretense is a tense way to live.

O

THE TEACHER'S WAY

*lingering in the spaces of the sentence
(for Ted Aoki)*

on the edge of morning
a heron stands still
in the slough near the dike
where I walk daily.
gulls hang in the sky.
a sea lion rests with the river.
an eagle watches from the tallest alder.
the whole world lingers.

this is the teacher's way

I too wait and watch,
my image upside down
in the smooth river,
all the world
topsy turvy but
still in balance,
learning to be still, even
in a vertiginous world.

this is the teacher's way

I meet an old woman
who asks, can you tell me
where to find the slough
with chocolate lilies?
they only flower in April, she says.
I have never seen chocolate lilies,
I confess. I look for them.
I am glad she invited me to look.

this is the teacher's way

on the edge of the day I
 dance and laugh all the ducks
 in the slough in the air.
 our wild line scribbling
 writes the earth, writes us
 in the prepositions
 which connect all
 the parts of the sentence.

this is the teacher's way

spring light fills the aspens alders apples
 along the dike where I loiter,
 the world conjured in ancient stories,
 a space for play where
 the past is remembered
 for wisdom in the present
 and hope for the future, knowing
 always the possibilities of verbs.

this is the teacher's way

P

Frederick Franck (1993) refers to his book, *A Little Compendium on That Which Matters*, as “the organic extract of long and intense, mostly non-discursive rumination” (p. 5).

Long means: having considerable extent in space: a long distance; having considerable duration: a long conversation. I am particularly delighted to see the emphasis on both space and time, since Franck's use of the word *extract* also has those same two connotations in the root *tractus*.

My concern with much education research is that it is not long. Too much of the research is undertaken in order to publish, the tin carrots of tenure and promotion, always dangling and clanging. So, the research is quick. But I want research that is like my experience of writing poetry. I have grown up in a world of busyness, always running from one thing to another. The only time I know the experience of *long* is when I am writing a poem, when time and space seem boundless. I recently spent the morning revising a poem, only to revisit it in the afternoon, and realize that the morning's work had

taken the poem in directions that were not useful. So, I returned to the place I had been before the morning's revisions began. The day was wasted, in the sense, that I had nothing to show for the day, except a wastebasket of paper. But of course the day wasn't really wasted because the finished poem was reached only after taking twists and turns on the journey.

In an age of speed and fast food and instant mashed potatoes and computers like Formula One race cars and jet planes and cell phones and couriers and faxes, we now worship our mastery of time and space, and hence have lost the mystery of time and space. We have become a hyperactive people who seek to do multiple things at once and take little pleasure in doing any of them.

So, how can our research be *long*? We all know the experience of time creeping and time flying, of distance taking forever to traverse and distance being gobbled up. How does this work? *Long* as a verb means: to have an earnest or strong desire or to yearn, as in to long for spring or to long to return home. This is the kind of *long* that I want in my research, a longing for listening to the light, a longing for the lines, a longing for the lines of connection, a longing to embrace the long, a longing for space and time to embrace me.

q

I want to hear
 the light in a stone
 when the April sun
 has seeped
 into winter cracks.

Like Szyborska (1995) who writes, "I won't retain one blade of grass/as it's truly seen" (p. 19), my way of looking and listening is not trying to memorize what I see, to capture what I hear, to pin what I know. Instead what I want is to revel in the inexhaustible and the unembraceable, in the particularity of a drop of water, a ray of light, to know with my whole body, so that my body is rendered alive or lively.

I

Frederick Franck (1993) refers to his book, *A Little Compendium on That Which Matters*, as “the organic extract of long and *intense*, mostly non-discursive rumination” (p. 5).

Intense means: existing or occurring in a high or extreme degree: intense heat or light; acute, strong, or vehement, as sensations, feelings, or emotions. Derived from the Latin *intendere*, *intense* means: to stretch towards, or stretched out. Like the words *extract* and *long*, *intendere* includes the connotations of space and stretching.

I want my research to be intense, filled with emotion, caught up in the body. I want my blood to boil, my hands to sweat, my heart to pound and resound. I want research that is important, that speaks to how we live in the world, that sings in the language of manifesto. I want my research to come out of an intense life, but not a tense life as in a life that is “stretched, tight, as a cord or fiber; drawn taut; rigid.” Instead I seek tensile research which is “capable of being stretched or drawn out, ductile.”

S

CHANT

I listen to light
 but
 I hear shadows
 not lurking like
 disreputable cousins
 I hope will not visit
 but wailing
 a Gregorian chant
 in mouths filled
 with homemade bread
 butter and molasses,
 one more language
 I don't know
 like Latin or Sanskrit,
 a language of confession,
 contemplation even,
 for calling clouds
 into the lungs,

the breath of dark moist
 rum-soaked fruit cake,
 a poet's language
 I am trying always
 to hear, to learn:
 no light without shadows
 no shadows without light
 one

t

I want research that dwells with mystery, that doesn't know the answers, does not leap or skulk from a position of knowing and confidence. Too much research is bloodless, written in the sterility of the monastic sanctum and the academic study. Of course, there comes a time when it is necessary to retreat, to hide away even, in order to shape the words that seek understanding, that seek to stand under the lyrical explosion of events and emotions and experiences like the Northern Lights dancing in the Labrador night sky. But the study must not be a place of escape from the bigger chaotic world. The study is the place where the researcher returns when overwhelmed with the riches of the infinite world, searching for sense by scribing sentences in the sensual sea swirling under the skin.

u

Frederick Franck (1993) refers to his book, *A Little Compendium on That Which Matters*, as "the organic extract of long and intense, mostly *non-discursive* rumination" (p. 5).

What does *non-discursive* mean? First, *discursive* means: passing aimlessly from one subject to another, digressive, rambling, but *discursive* also means: proceeding by reasoning or argument, not intuitive. It seems to me that these two meanings are diametrically opposed. I infer that Franck uses the word *non-discursive* to mean the first meaning. Also, note the related word *discursion* which, on the one hand, means a wandering or logically unconnected statement, the quality or characteristic of ranging from topic to topic, or irrelevance, but, on the other hand, also means the process or procedure of rigorous formal analysis or demonstration, as distinguished from immediate or intuitive formulation. The late Latin derivation of the word *discursion* actually includes: a running to and fro. So, when I

first read Franck's *non-discursive*, I understood that he meant a kind of writing that was not formal and linear and logical. But now I realize that the word *discursive* is a divided word that does not know itself. It is not possible to write discursively about the word *discursive* because the word refuses to stay in place. So, the definition of *discursive* is written discursively.

Discursive thinking promises the way to a transcendent reality and truth. If a person simply thinks long and hard and precisely enough, he or she will eventually know reality and truth. But what if reality and truth can only be known by non-discursive thinking, a logic that twists and turns in many contradictory directions, a logic fuelled by the heart and imagination and dreams and hunches and feelings and indigestion, a writing and speaking and representing and reading and reflecting and researching that runs to and fro?

v

As I learn to listen to light, I also learn there are many languages I do not hear, rendered deaf by too strict reliance on only one or two or three languages, rendered deaf by my eagerness to master a few languages in order to fend off the mystery of languages without end. But I am learning other languages. I want to be open like a rock that is cracked by the summer sun; I want to roll naked in a meadow with wildflowers; I want to feel the world beating in my heart, and my heart beating in the world.

w

Franck (1993) calls himself part of "The New Order" which he describes as "the anonymous, unorganized, organic network of awareness beyond all ideological labels, born under the lash of anxiety on the threshold of our collective suicide" (p. 23). I too recognize my own connection to Franck's New Order:

It is a network of loners, encompassing those who reflect on the meaning of being Human in our technotronic rat trap, who dare to fathom the depths of life, of death, in order to attain a life-praxis, an ethos suitable for this end-time: a religious orientation to existence. Without badge, without watchword, they recognize, hearten one another. (pp. 23-24)

I want to conduct research that is part of "a network of loners." I do not want to be identified with a particular school or approach. I want

to be a loner in a network. I am a loner, but I am not alone. I do not speak as part of a collective voice. My voice echoes other voices, but it does not seek to mimic or impersonate other voices, or to silence other voices, or to harmonize with other voices. Instead, I seek to make sounds that are like trumpet calls to listen to the light, to wake up, to know the world differently, outside the typical parameters and predictions. I am part of a network of loners who seek to give heart to one another, speaking to the heart of the other, hearing the heart of the other in our hearts.

x

What does it mean to be human? I want my research to ask this question, and even seek to answer it, especially to search again how "to live in radical openness to pure experiencing in kitchen, bedroom, subway, newspaper, that is: to everyday life, inside as well as around oneself" (Franck, 1993, p. 10), to live, as my friend, Celeste Schroeder, reminds me, in "the erotics of the everyday." I especially seek the "radical openness to pure experiencing." This is what I seek. But my search is tough because in growing up, I learned to wind limits and boundaries around most sensual explorations, most spiritual expectations, most sensational engagements, most serendipitous experiences. Now I seek to be open sensuously to the sensate world around me. This is the beginning of a poetics of research.

y

Frederick Franck (1993) refers to his book, *A Little Compendium on That Which Matters*, as "the organic extract of long and intense, mostly non-discursive *rumination*" (p. 5).

Rumination means: to chew the cud, as a ruminant; to meditate or muse; ponder; to chew again or over and over. I began my research for the rhythms of light by walking on the dike where cows grazed and ruminated in the pastures. My rumination is the stuff of poetry, the stuff of this writing even, always returning to the beginning where I am learning to listen to light, some of the ways, at least, all of the ways beyond counting. My research is rumination, an amused contemplation in the letters of the alphabet, where I listen for the lyrical lunacy of light.

Z

BLACKBERRY BRAMBLE

always the earth
 moves all ways:
 seasons like arms
 of a windmill,
 moon-tugged tides,
 morning never far
 from evening light,
 shadows in a tangle

with the sun,
 the weather at least
 as chaotic as life
 itself, the wind
 bearing earth's breath
 always familiar,
 always unfamiliar,
 no two days the same

I must learn by heart
 the earth's rhythms,
 eager to write the light
 in blackberry brambles
 like a sparrow
 lines light in its flight,
 hears the wor(l)d
 calling lightly.

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