

Snapshots of Reflexivity

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This section has had a number of different titles over the period we have been working on this book, ranging from ‘Concluding’ to ‘Reflecting’ and now, finally, ‘Revisiting Reflexivity’. These changes reflect the ways in which its content has shifted, sometimes from month to month, and our own hesitations about what it means to close a volume like this one. In the end, the section is perhaps best understood not as offering a conclusion to the ideas and themes raised in the preceding sections (though [Chapter 30](#), ‘Whose Worlds Are More Liveable Now? Abandoning the Alienated “Blah”’, does make an effort to draw some of these together), but as centring contributions that exceed and spill over the temporalities and concerns of the rest of the volume. These contributions take us back in time, presenting texts and material from earlier Science and Technology Studies (STS) discussions of reflexivity, and point us forward, by introducing new ideas and expanding the languages of reflexivity on which we have been relying. This section *overflows* what has gone before.

Of course, this distinction (earlier coherence versus this section’s excess) is not entirely valid. The chapter that precedes this one – Malcolm Ashmore and Olga Restrepo Forero’s text ‘Why Bogotá?’ – has a similar prehistory to some of the material in this section, in that it has been circulating for some time in different forms (as a reviewer of the book wrote, ‘Malcolm and Olga’s chapter has circulated for a while as an [almost legendary] draft, so I’m very glad to see it finally published!’). In this section, Steve Woolgar’s exchange with Fredy Mora-Gómez (‘Dear Steve’, [Chapter 28](#)) and Sally Wyatt’s haikus (in ‘When Sally Met Steve’, [Chapter 29](#)) similarly contain material from particular moments in STS discussion of reflexivity: 2000, in the former case, and 2021 in the latter. The section therefore offers some snapshots of reflexivity, in the sense

of providing glimpses of what it was (how it was discussed in 2000, for instance) and what it might become (ontologized, for example, as Mike Michael and Alex Wilkie argue in [Chapter 27](#)).

What do these snapshots tell us about the trajectories of reflexivity, past, present and future? Steve Woolgar's contribution is in many ways a classic of STS engagement with reflexivity through experimentation with literary form: dense, playful and raising themes that continue to resonate today ('[some] reflexive performances seem not to provide any rules for how to respond to them', 'Brian Peabody' notes. Indeed, 'when all is said and done, I'm not at all sure that any of your fancy playfulness with presentational forms is going to be very illuminating either'). Similarly, Sally Wyatt offers a set of haikus and haibun that speak to Woolgar's work, adding further intertextuality in the shape of a set of explanatory notes. Both texts powerfully draw us into specific moments and communities: we hear about a conference in Vienna, sites of STS scholarship such as Brunel, and particular individuals (Trevor Pinch, Roger Silverstone, 'Jim Johnson'). That such references will be more or less legible to different readers is, of course, part of the game: as Woolgar notes, 'implicit assumptions about the identities for whom we perform reflexivity are deep seated ... a key requirement of reflexive practice must be to explore creative ways of confronting, challenging and disturbing our routine reliance upon assumptions of identity'.

Mike Michael and Alex Wilkie's and our own contributions engage with slightly different themes. Michael and Wilkie ([Chapter 27](#)) offer a further expansion of the notion of reflexivity, bringing it into dialogue with thinking on ontology and aesthetics. Their argument that reflexivity should be understood as 'something distributed across – or patterned within – a heterogeneous assemblage that spans human and nonhuman, including epistemic and, crucially, aesthetic processes' insists that the practice of reflexivity must incorporate attention to the nonhuman and affective. In common with others in this volume (see [Chapter 5](#)), they suggest that 'reflexive research involves sensitivity to, affective relations in, and becoming-with, the researched', and offer a rich conceptual language for considering how this might be instantiated in different sites (or, better, research events). Our own text ([Chapter 30](#)) is deliberately open-ended, but returns to preoccupations introduced at the very start of this collection: liveability, agency, the structural constraints around (particular) academics being able to realize reflexivity as 'transformative practice'. More than presenting theoretical reflections or grouping the chapters of this collection in apparently logical ways, the last chapter displays our suggestions for concrete actions and questions that can potentially materialize what 'making more liveable worlds in academia and beyond' is about.

Taken together, the contributions in this section can therefore be understood as pointing forward to how reflexivity might be continued to be thought and practised, whether that is through new languages and concepts or in the form of questions that have resonated from the earliest STS framings of the notion.