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## A REVIEW OF LAUREL RICHARDSON'S "LONE TWIN: A TRUE STORY OF LOSS AND FOUND"

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**Catherine Thiele** is an educator, lecturer, professional experience coordinator and researcher at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Through her various academic roles and research interests, Catherine's work contributes to deeper understandings about the affective experiences of data interactions in primary schools, transformative and socially responsible practices driving teacher professional development, preservice teacher preparation (particularly for rural and remote education) and mathematics education.

**Abstract:** This is a review of Laurel Richardson's book, *Lone Twin: A True Story of Loss and Found*. The book is powerful – a must-read. Laurel's stories, questions, knowings, and unknowings offer an insightful narrative around her personal and significant relationships, eliciting an evocative opportunity for self-reflection. It will leave you feeling a strong sense of connectedness; possibly to something missing or perhaps something found?

**Keywords:** social fiction; creative non-fiction; life writing; social fiction series; creative writing; qualitative research

*Lone Twin: A True Story of Loss and Found* is a personal story written by well-known qualitative arts-based researcher and sociologist, Laurel Richardson. Based in New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles and contextualised within social and historical issues of the mid-to-late 20th Century, Laurel searches to understand her own life and identity by delving into “interior places” (p. xv) that frighten, and at times, comfort her. This life-writing provides a literary glimpse into Laurel’s personal experiences as she explores family connections, friendships, secrets, truths, pain, and loss – seeking wholeness.

Consistent to Laurel’s invitation and encouragement for academics to write personal life stories as a method of discovery (Richardson, 2001), this exquisitely written account unearths Laurel’s childhood and adult years as she discovers the webs binding her life and work. What transpires through the textual “doubling, dialogue, and imagery” (p. xiii) is redolent of her experiences; her truth.

The connections draw us close, then gently release us to contemplate how we know and relate in our own lives – how personal and professional narratives (co)exist in a space of connectedness. The depths to which this story will evoke personal reflection may vary; however, as you are reading you will drift semantically between the story and your own life. You may be left questioning if there are any unsurfaced secrets, connections, or things missing in your own life.

Is there something missing in my life?  
How do I justify my existence?  
(Richardson, 2019, backcover)

Triggered by the loss of a family member and a secret that surfaces, Laurel’s storytelling leads the reader on a captivating journey of looking back in order to search, remember and recognise truth and deeply seated intuition. Artistically woven themes of names, friendships, secrecy and inequalities emerge throughout the book, eliciting you to explore their complexities.

*Names.* We learn of Laurel’s other names – Laura, Princess-and-the-pea, and Little Miss Perfect – while also discovering the names of those significant to her life-story; whether they are twins, liars, blood sisters, murderers or Laurel’s family members such as her cousin Katie or siblings Jessica and Barrie. The names within the story lead

you to think about the social, cultural, and personal dimensions pertaining to a name and how those dimensions are created.

*Friendships.* As friends come in and out of Laurel's life, the games, connections, and discoveries help shape her. It seems they all have a place. The friendships will have you question what lures you to (voluntary) friendships in the first (second and final) instance. What attracts you to your friends? What keeps you there, particularly when you are a child, or permits you to leave when the friendship is nestled in your family.

*Secrecy.* Inconspicuous secrets intermingle with many of Laurel's relationships. How or when do secrets morph into, or reveal, truth? What secrets lay in our own lives?

*Inequalities.* What inequalities surround us as children? How are inequalities enabled, especially as children when we don't always realise and know?

The reader dances between the life-story narrative and making sense through personal reflection and discovery, making it difficult to put this book down. *Lone Twin: A True Story of Loss and Found* blurs between fiction and non-fiction and would suit anyone who likes to consider how they come to understand knowledge, friendships, and family through personal storytelling. It would also appeal to readers and authors, who like Laurel, "write for *discovery*, to find out what [they] feel and think" (Richardson, 2019, p. xv).

As I was reading the book, I found myself feeling the emotional effects, writing down phrases and powerful words. This led me to write a poem. While it is with trepidation that I share this, Richardson (2000) herself reminds us that "poetry... is a practical and powerful method for analysing social worlds" (p. 12). This poetic offering is not a social analysis, however it was through the experience of writing this villanelle that I found myself practically and powerfully "connected to others" (Richardson, 2001, p. 37) in my own life, the co-existence of my work and life, and to Laurel, someone I have never met. For that I am grateful. Thank you, Laurel.

## Connectedness

Laurel Richardson, reflections of thee.  
Surface matching, twinning, too, two: Lone Twin.  
Frustrations foil, finding yourself free.

Coming of age, secrets rest politely.  
Left-handed wishes with truths akin,  
Laurel and friendships, reflections of thee.

That name so clear now, my family.  
Justify existence —connect within,  
all in a name, finding yourself free?

Loss and found webbed by secrecy.  
Unfolding this life: life unfolds the twin.  
Laurel Richardson, reflections of thee.

Knowledge with inequalities.  
Hearing, when it has you hedged in.  
Reflect and accept, breaking yourself free.

Thank you for allowing us to see,  
cancerous tears felt in my skin.  
Reader and author reflections of thee.  
Through loss, discovery. Found, now free.

## REFERENCES

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