

Chapter Three - Bringing the (Jewish) Body into it

'Be a fish, be a fish, be a fish', my Grandfather used to say. (It makes more sense in Yiddish, but basically it means, 'remember who you really are').

I experience being the generic person (white, male etc.) who often doesn't notice his own body as a thing in itself. The irony is, as I will show, that the Jewish position in Europe historically has *also* been to physically disappear. Exploring this shape-shifting between my Jewish and White male selves, and the discomfort between them, serves many purposes:

- It provides a new kind of research impetus that goes beyond the limitations of (male-biased) scientific 'reason', to include diverse subjectivities, bodies and reason(s)
- It explores the space between different 'selves' I inhabit, thus challenging the myth of the coherent, single, whole, reasonable, male 'self'
- It enables me to actively draw on my own Jewish subjectivity, as a useful source of liberatory ideas (such as *mentshlichkeit* – the 'art of being a good man'). In doing so, I am making more solid and present another view of the world, as a disruption of the white, male 'reason' that takes over from time to time
- It helps me develop my skills in my work as a 'process consultant', sensitive to *'both self-knowledge and technical expertise'* (Cheung-Judge 2001) p12
- It helps me to consider a very important question: how is it possible for a man who appears to be white, male, middle-class etc. to act in a *good way*?

My Jewish Body

My intention is to show how these practices have led me consistently towards considering my (Jewish) body as an inquiry ground itself. I also would like to show this body in its appreciation of a text. There is a perpetual irony here, in that my body will be (probably forever) for you trapped within a text. I hope to show that my body has played a part in this inquiry, and that, even in the engagement with text and the ideas within, although my attempts to surface my body are sporadic and ultimately frustrating, this was a dynamic that persisted, and staying with this discomfort came together in the stories including that in Chapter Four.

Living in both worlds of the white man and the Jew can be seen as a saving grace. Like an anchor, my Jewishness has seems to have provided me with some stability from beyond the white man's view of the world; an alternative 'reason', from my own background, that stops me from drifting too far down the stream with the 'pale stale male' current, to borrow a phrase from Roy Jacques. (Jacques 1997). For this reason, I am very grateful to my Jewish heritage. To extend the fish-in-water metaphor, my Jewishness helps me because through it I can be like a fish that can fly. I can occasionally see the water from both above and below the surface. I am not in the air for very long, and I only catch a glimpse of the water from outside, but at least this has given me a sense that there was another way of seeing. This research project has been about deliberating keeping myself in the air a bit longer.

I have become increasingly conscious of symmetry between explorations of Jewish subjectivities, with their use in the development of an inquiring, post-patriarchal masculinity, and that of 'queer theory', and its equally inherent challenge to mono-mythic dominant masculinity.

While there are no simple equations between Jewish and queer identities, Jewishness and queerness yet utilize and are bound up with one another in particularly resonant ways. (Boyarin, Itzkovitz et al. 2003) p1

This position is problematic yet useful. Whilst there is undoubted symmetry here, there are also strange interference patterns. My Jewishness has become a useful inquiry ground in the disestablishment and challenge of internalised patriarchy, yet I must also acknowledge that there is a healthy dose of patriarchy in my own Jewishness. So whilst this forms a useful edge of inquiry, it is one that must be held lightly, lest I generalise towards a position that infers Jewishness is *inherently* challenging of a dominant masculinity. It is in the active, internalised inquiry into the relationship between Jewishness and queerness, *in me*, that the generative challenge resides, rather than in positing of inherent challenge to patriarchy in Judaism *per se*.

I compare my own experience to that which Amanda Sinclair describes about indigenous Australians, and the:

stereotyping of Aboriginals as bodies without brains (athletes, runners, football players, boxers)... (Sinclair 2005)

The core of Sinclair's idea is of body possibilities; that bodies and embodiment might offer us:

powerful sites in the construction of subversive leadership and new leadership knowledge. (Sinclair 2005)

For me this sparked questions about my Jewish experience and how, to develop this train of thought, I think I grew up in a culture which in contrast had an embodied self-construct of Jews as the opposite, as 'brains without bodies'.

Founders of Zionism, such as A.D. Gordon viewed the return to Palestine/Israel as a chance to redeem the Jewish body, healing the distinction between 'guff and nefesh' (Hebrew for 'body and soul' respectively). It is as if I have inherited a Jewish experience of our own evolution as a marginalised people, since and through the Enlightenment as being about a kind of rampant assimilatory Cartesianism; internalised marginalisation that prompted a separation from our own bodies.

Jonathan Sacks (the Chief Rabbi of the orthodox Jewish communities in the UK) says this:

The seminal Jewish experience for the past two centuries has been a flight from particularity, and both the Israeli and American Jewish communities are its heirs. ... [their first goal] was to be less conspicuous as Jews. Hence Sidney Morganbesser's wonderful definition of Jewish identity as incognito ergo sum. ['In secret therefore I am']. (Sacks 1997)

Zionists considered that the Israeli/Zionist 're-connection with the land', as seen in the Israeli Kibbutz movement, would redeem us Jews. It is interesting that I find part of my inquiry edging into my own experience of discomfort with Zionist masculinities, as expressed by an archetype of the militarised Israeli male that I consider overly macho (see the reference to my own journal when living in Israel aged 19, at the beginning of Chapter One).

I have discussed with black friends how the key difference in my own marginalisation and theirs may be that I can choose whether to 'come out' or not, as a Jew. As I have said: *'But that wouldn't be true for my great grandparents' – you would have known*

they were Jewish to look at them'. I realise now that this might be my own family's contribution to the larger picture Sacks is painting here; has it been our aim to 'disappear ourselves, physically, as Jews'. It strikes me how many of my own family members walk and talk in a way that is very 'English'. As I journalled in 2005:

Recently I went to a family party, a 50th wedding anniversary, on a glorious English summer's afternoon in fact. We stood outside and chatted and drank our champagne. I joined in but with a part of my attention split into observer mode.

In some ways of course this is a very familiar environment, but at this time I had already been formulating this shape-shifting thesis in my mind, and therefore, had a new perspective to 'try out'. What struck me was the essential Englishness of this gathering. Both the content and the form of voices and bodies present. A causal observer might think they had entered any English, middle-class gathering. As the afternoon wore on however I noticed people's voices changing. Expressions became more pronounced. Content shifted. In fact I would simply say that people got more Jewish. The conversation passed from discussions of the cricket and weather to more familial and indeed even religious contexts."

Jonathan Boyarin demonstrates how there is something, a possibility at least, in the Jewish inheritance that directly challenges the mono-mythic and 'complete' nature of the self that is a core aspect of the hegemonic masculinity; that is that in Jewish culture there are embodied traditions, such as skull-cap wearing and circumcision, that define each Jewish male as inherently made by his community, rather than 'himself' alone:

The story of the self-made man, stripped down to its common features, starts from a zero point. It has no prehistory...On the contrary; we will claim that a "male Jewish self"...cannot be limited to such a unilinear, bounded, and progressive conception of time...they can be articulated as presenting quite rich contrasts to the rhetoric of the self-made man. (Boyarin 1996) p39

So circumcision, wearing a *kippa* (Skull cap), lighting the candles on Friday night at our own home, writing my own name in Hebrew, calling this inquiry about *mentshlichkeit*; all these actions, when linked to a wider conception of masculinity, serve to offer a possibility of disruption, and following Boyarin's idea, in how they open up temporal as well as spatial dimensions of relationship.

It suggest that an acceptance of the mark of circumcision and all of the involuntary connections that it implies place a Jewish male into a "dreamtime" or (Robert Paine's term, 1983) "totemic time" and outside the progressive time of modern self-making. (Boyarin 1996) p39

Such acceptance is an everyday act. In choosing to comply or not with the totems of Jewishness, with full awareness of what these symbols mean for the continued prescription of masculinity, there are possibilities for evolution. I am influenced here by Elizabeth Grosz's notion of the 'nick'. Grosz, a feminist who boldly ties Darwinian evolutionary theory to the politics of feminism (which has been historically antagonistic to 'great white dead males' such as Darwin) argues that it is only our exploration in the 'now', 'in the nick of time' of reflexive action that we can consider ourselves free to change the habits of inherited patterns such as patriarchy.

Events are ruptures, nicks, which flow from causal connections in the past but which, in their unique combinations and consequences, generate unpredictability and effect sometimes subtle but wide-ranging, unforeseeable transformations in the present and future. (Grosz 2004) p8

This closely relates to Judith Butler's 'performativity'. This allows us to consider our political engagement with generative change as usefully liminal, subject to but not forever locked into and therefore having erratic, unpredictability possibilities of escape from the heavy weight of (gendered/ Jewish) historical inheritance.

[A]gency lies in the work of performativity. Because subjects are constantly reproduced (through repetition), they are never fully constituted. There is always space for reworking and resisting. (Jackson 2004) p675

So there are possibilities, and they exist in both our attention to our own subjectivities and the inevitably though unpredictable action that follows. This is dangerous, discomforting ground in which to experiment with performativity. In my own life as a Jew in a non-Jewish culture, habits endure about what it is safe to do; about how far it is possible to proclaim or hide our difference, for example. In my submission for Diploma at CARPP, I told the following story of my own son leaving for synagogue with a skull-cap ('coppel' or 'kippa') on his head:

Max is leaving the house to go to synagogue that morning with my mother and father. He walks down the front path and then remembers that he doesn't have his 'coppel' (head covering) with him so he comes running back and I give him one (the brown one in fact that I wore for my Bar Mitzvah in 1978). He puts it on and runs happily back down the path into the street with it on. I find myself reaching towards his head - to take it off. My hand almost stretches out to take it off but it turns into a half-hearted pat which he doesn't notice thankfully. I have this urge to tell him not to put it on yet, to wait until he is the Synagogue and safe. I can feel my voice rising in my throat and I have to push it back down again, I know I shouldn't say anything and I feel glad for him running down the path and out onto the street with his coppel on. I feel so proud in a way and part of me wants to follow him and shout "Hey, this is a Jewish boy here!" Then the opposite - this urge comes from deep within me propelling my hand out before I catch myself and turn this into a pat or a wave. I feel momentarily cross with him but manage to stifle this, not revealing it to him. I notice my parent look as well, particularly my mother as if she is feeling exactly the same thing, a sort of "Why can't we do this? Shouldn't we just let him do what we were afraid to do all our lives?" I have a picture of myself as a small child being told by my big brother to take my coppel off now we were in the street having left the 'Shul' [synagogue] and I don't know why, he doesn't say but there is something, some feeling about how this might be dangerous or something and that people may do something to us if they see us wearing our coppels. So we blend in and walk passed my school which was on the way to the synagogue with our coppels in our pockets, almost as if we were walking past the police station having just committed a minor misdemeanour of some sort.

Victor Seidler talks about his own experience of this, an almost deliberate dis-identification with the Jewish body, heightened in the post-holocaust experience:

In my own learning I have been surprised to discover how fears emerge from a Second Generation post-Holocaust experience have taught me that safety lies in relative invisibility on the margins of organisations. (Seidler 2005)

I would like to inquire further into my own sense that I grew up thinking that although I did have a 'white male body' I didn't quite have THAT white male body. In some way my embodiment was lesser than that of, for example, my classmates at school. I (thought I) couldn't run, play football or fight like them. Indeed I succeeded in avoiding ever getting into a fight, at a rough all-boys comprehensive school, by effectively 'disappearing' myself, physically.

The built white body is not the body that white men are born with; it is the body made possible by their natural mental superiority...In short, the built body and the imperial enterprise are analogous. (Dyer 1997) p270

Amanda Sinclair's 'body possibilities' invite me to think about my own body experience as a 'possibility'. In particular it is the possibility afforded by marginalisation:

An individual capacity to experiment and subvert bodily conventions may have grown out of experiences of being an outsider. (Sinclair 2005) p19

This has prompted me to consider the work I do around gender as a possibility;

The body is personal and political; a reflection of individual and systemic characteristics; both active. (Sinclair 2005) p20

In this way I have an inkling of how I may use my own experience of Jewishness, of invisibility and presence, as a shape-shifting tool. This gives me a vital thread of inquiry, it inspires me to keep my body in the picture.

Bodies, in their own right as bodies, do matter. They age, get sick, enjoy, engender, give birth. There is an irreducible bodily dimension in experience and practice; the sweat cannot be excluded. (Connell 1995) p51

In June 2006, inspired by David Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous*, I wrote:

*We are all exiled and in exile we are at home.
We are all marginal and our marginality makes us safe
We are all queer and queer is normal
We have no centre but each other*

As David Abram says:

The Jewish sense of exile was never merely a state of separation from a specific locale, from a particular ground; it was (and is) also a sense of separation from the very possibility of being placed, and from the very possibility of being entirely at home. (Abram 1996) p196

This may inform how my experience of marginality surfaces itself. Not only do I experience coming from a marginal group in this culture; Jews and Jewishness has had a particular (useful) role in European society in that it has defined the margins of that society for two thousand years.

As Satre said:

The Jew is one whom other men [sic] consider a Jew. (Satre 1965) p69, quoted in (Hoberman 1995), p153

This enables me to justify a strongly socially-constructed sense of self. And this is further strengthened by what I read:

As a living field, in Rosch's terms, comes to "know itself", our identification with the "localized self" diminishes, and a broader and more generative sense of self begins to arise. It's not that personal awareness ceases, nor does this loss of identification with the localized self mean a loss of personal responsibility. But there is a shift in the locus of awareness...

Varela spoke of the "virtual" or "fragile self" as a way of helping us "get closer to understanding what it means to be a subject" to experience our personal, subjective point of view. A subject "is not a stable, solid entity", he said. In coping with continually changing circumstances, the self is constantly "updating itself or renewing itself... So virtuality is not just an absence of central self; it also has that kind of fragile flotation of coming and going." (Senge 2005) p100

Otto Weininger was a self-hating Jew who grew up in an inherently anti-Semitic environment, Vienna at the end of the 19th Century. He wrote the book, *Sex & Character*, for which he became infamous, in 1903. In it he compares what he sees as the parallel moral and physical inferiority of the Jew and the Woman. It could be argued that he internalised the oppression of this world to such an extent that he despised himself, in comparison to Siegfried, the Wagnerian hero who was twisted to form the archetype of dominant Aryan masculinity which was at the core of Nazism.

It is striking to compare Senge at al's description of the 'fragile, floating, virtual self' as a generative possibility to Weininger's self-hating definition of the lack of 'body' in the Jew as a distinct flaw.

"The corporeal and characterological rigidity of the idealized Germanic type has its counterpart in the shifting, flowing, protean, spineless, voluble, and all-too-visible personality of the Jew. (Hoberman 1995) p151

Here in my view you have a picture of the starkly contrasting stories around bodies: between the shape-shifting post-modern possibilities of the self/worlds I inhabit, set against the duality of visibility/invisibility that summarises the basic choices my grandparents and great grandparents faced as 'ostjuden' (Jews fleeing the persecutions of the East). For me the ability to 'change my shape' is a possibility; for them it was a necessity of survival.

As bell hooks says:

I am located in the margin. I make a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance – as location of radical openness and possibility. (hooks 1991) p153

In my own history, the marks on the body that were hidden and the disappearing and fleeing Jewish self, shameful to the generations involved at the time, are to me now a source of inspiration. My great grandfather, so we were told, was nearly killed by an anti-Semitic mob fleeing his home during the Russian revolution. To my grandfather this wasn't something of which to be proud. It was a humiliation. To my father it is a fascination. To me it is a wonder and opens up a possibility of disruptive shape shifting. To my son (I hope) it will be part of a fantastic adventure, one that differentiates his story from others. Such is the journey into storied lives. So

potentiality, once the demons are faced, this quality of shape-shifting becomes a boon, an elixir we bring to the now.

Interestingly, such 'bi-cultural competence', as Gloria Gordon calls it, (Gordon 2007) may support an interest in challenge to the status quo. Unger (1999) argues that it is more likely for people who construct their identity as both marginal and positive to engage in social activism:

It is not the 'fact' of being Jewish, or Black, gay or lesbian, or handicapped [sic] that is an important predictor of social activism; it is the ability to see positive value to that identity. As I said earlier in this talk, demography can predict marginality, but consciousness determines whether marginality becomes activism. (Unger 1999) p10

In the Nick [ouch!]

The interference patterns between gendered and raced subjectivities and the body possibilities for their subversion came to some kind of crux for me around the question of my son's circumcision.

This in itself has represented a further turn, the choice to disrupt the habits of my own culture 'in the nick', as a deliberate act of difference within difference that has had its own unpredictable consequences in evolutionary terms.

So you can take a story and show yourself in it as an intentional actor as the starting point. But then recognise that the consequences of it go beyond what you might consciously choose, like ripples across a pond, and indeed some that bounce back and may even amplify unintended causes, even against the flow of what you choose. Here is the story as I told it in my paper submitted for transfer between Post Graduate Diploma and MPhil:

Max had just been born. We are sitting, Gillie and I, on the sofa when the phone rings. It is Gillie's mother. The tone changes in Gillie's voice. She is talking less, her voice is tight and I can hear the tinny shriek of her mother and I realise she is working herself up. The phone call ends. 'What's up?' and Gillie tells me she is asking why we haven't sorted out the 'Briss' [circumcision]. Apparently people at her synagogue are asking her when it will be and she is embarrassed because she doesn't know. It was my decision, not to do this to Max. We've never discussed it. There's just no question of it happening; never has been.

I call her back. I say: 'This decision – it is my call.' She takes some familiar angles, about 'hygiene' etc. I explain my views rationally and with superficial patience.

She says, 'He'll feel different from all his friends and won't thank you later in life'. I say, 'Well, I felt different from all of my friends because I was circumcised!' But this gets to me, and I am half-aware of burying away a little nugget of shame and fear; that he will hate me for not doing this to him. 'This is a test.' I think to myself, 'It had to come from somewhere, just not expecting it to be from her!' She is somewhat but not entirely mollified. But when I think of the idea of someone approaching any part of my son with a knife, for whatever reason, I am just filled with rage and horror. I feel like a cat, snarling and hissing; I would just rip to pieces anyone who tried to hurt my boy. My chest

feels tight and I feel the need to be near him, protect him behind me and beat the world back from him.

An image came to me. I am standing in a court room. I am in the dock. My father's father's father's father...going all the way back through the generations, they are all there. They are asking me to account for myself about this decision. I stand and feel solid in myself. Absolutely rock solid. I say 'There is only one reason why we do this thing and that is because we have always done it. Well, not any more, never to my boy! Not a hair of his head will be touched!' A murmur goes around the room. Then someone says. 'Thank God someone stood up about this for a change.' I feel their relief and am a little uncomfortable about a whiff of shame blowing through the air. Theirs or mine, or both?

Later I meet my father, and he says to me, 'What you do is up to you, but just tell me 'why?'. I say, 'For no other reason than I think it is unnecessary and cruel'. 'Why cruel?' he says. I say: 'Would you think it was cruel if we cut the tip of his finger?' 'But that's different', he says. 'Why?' I ask. But I feel ashamed that I have accused my father of cruelty.

A few years later, and Max says to me: 'Why is your willy different from mine?' He was probably five. I try to explain: 'Because mine was cut when I was born because that is what is done to some Jewish little boys, but I decided that when you were born, God had made you perfect as you were and I chose not to have your willy cut.' He looks at me, in that way that reminds me so much of my brother. 'I'm glad!' he says, without hesitation. I feel a sense of relief that he wasn't angry with me, and then I realise how absurd it would have been for a five-year-old boy to have been angry with his father for not cutting his willy! This makes me laugh. So far so good.

In the light of Boyarin's notion of 'totemic time', we meet these interference patterns: between that of my heartfelt Jewishness and my intention to escape from a patriarchal pattern of repetition (following Butler's idea of performativity). This is an ironic story, an interruption *and* a performance of patriarchy, the 'nick' (after Grosz), if you pardon the pun (ouch!). It is an attempt to change gendered patterns and yet it is also a betrayal (after Boyarin) of the difference (the cut) that makes a self-made man unmade and subject to his community. I notice in this account a judgement of my own father, and perhaps a reification of my own fathering in relation to his. This is a theme that will recur.

And yet I acted (or was it easier to choose *not* to act?) for some change. This is the nature of our action turn, towards an inquiring masculinity; to act for difference yet recognising that such actions are constantly problematic; ambivalent and clear, consequent and blind to outcome, heartfelt and reasoned, unique and commonplace, intimate and universal, troubling and uncomfortable as a sign that they are worthwhile, always unfinished...and yet we act. Perhaps this is *mentshlichkeit*: to act in the face of such doubled and difficult dilemmas, knowing that there is no certain, heroic narrative here, but rather and uncertain, tentative acting in tension and *not* knowing?

What links my masculinity and Jewishness? It is as if there is a connection in terms of both of them being anti-teleological; that is, both current constructions of Jewishness (outside of Israel) and masculinity (beyond Patriarchy) don't necessary lead anywhere, they are active dissolutions of powerful identities. Judaism fears assimilation, and masculinity fears feminisation, as reflected in contemporary debates.

As I wrote at the time of my Post Graduate Diploma stage at CARPP:

I read in the *Sunday Times Magazine* about the work of an organisation called Aish Ha Torah (“Fire of the Torah”) which is dedicated to ensuring young Jewish people marry into orthodoxy and do not assimilate:

Up to 150, 200 years ago, you had no secular Jews [says Rabbi Shaul Rosenblatt, joint UK Executive Director] “I don’t know when the rot started, but the Enlightenment brought in this concept of humanism, telling Jews they could live secular lives. The floodgates opened. (Sunday Times Magazine ‘For Richer for Kosher’ 6/2/05, p 50)

And in the *Observer* magazine I read that:

The ongoing emasculation and feminisation of men is manifested through body-obsessive gym culture... and male make-up, as in this advertisement for Jean Paul Gautier cosmetics. (Observer Magazine 27/6/04 ‘Men Uncovered’ p 4)

Both of these represent dominant cultural framings of powerful identities in ‘crisis’ and I notice that much of my life seems to be about questioning the framing inherent in these debates.

I think this is what Roy Jacques is talking about when he talks of the possibilities of gender research moving from being about:

the dynamics of ‘gender as basic social identity’ to ‘society as a tapestry of identity dynamics’. (Jacques 1997)

My own teleology embraces the advantages of diverse and dissolving identities. But I carry guilt about a betrayal of a Jewish hero, Abraham, (who circumcised himself, aged 70, we are told) and this seems to point specifically to the energy in my dialogues with the male lineage in my family. Hence the courtroom scene.

I see both Jewish and masculine identities in parallel as ‘dissipative’, in the same way as Margaret Wheatley does when she describes the work of Ilya Prigogine, the chemist, and his notion of ‘dissipative structures’:

Prigogine discovered that the dissipative activity of loss was necessary to create new order. Dissipation didn’t lead to the death of a system. It was part of the process by which the system let go of its present form so that it could reorganize in a form better suited to the demands of its changed environment. (Wheatley 1999) p21

There are (and will continue to be I am sure) several unintended consequences to the unfolding of this story, in the system that is me/my-family/Jewish-community-masculinity. When put in those terms we can see how easy it might be for notions of agentic change (that is change where I can be the single, deliberate cause and effect) start to unravel. But there *have been* consequences. When we act, we are subject to what is both intended and unintended. Being a good man, a *mentsh*, may ultimately be about facing both of these.

Embodiment, Text and Inquiry

It is ironic in that yearning for an embodied inquiry, I can exhibit the (Jewish & male) characteristic of disappearing. In wanting to become more *embodied* in my writing, I have bombarded you with words. These are words I am enthusiastic about. I love these ideas.

But how can I start to show you how I came to *appear* more in this work? Perhaps I can do that in an ironic sense, by showing you how I engaged with a text.

Of course, text has been a faithful companion on my journey of inquiry, as inevitably I have read quite a lot and have been inspired, almost at a visceral level, from time to time by some of these friends I have encountered, through the voice in text.

Isn't it also traditional in a PhD process to do some kind of literature review? Well, here I review some more literature (just in case you weren't sure that I 'knew' enough of this stuff), but with a twist that reveals a little more of myself as the reader.

'Living life as inquiry' as Judi Marshall suggests, invites me into a shifting condition of being, of sitting with a set of questions over a long period of time, and holding them up against action in daily life (Marshall 1999). The research process becomes at once both more 'lived', as in the whole of one's life becomes a potential research ground, rather than an objectified, (falsely) separated part of it, (as in more traditional research projects). It is a challenging edge, leading to introspection so absorbing that one is in danger of disappearing into a well of questions, and thereby appearing aloof to the world.

The texts one reads are also part of this picture – reading IS research in these terms, not an abstraction from it, or merely 'background'. A journal article or book may resonate with me (and you won't necessarily hear about the ones that don't). Yet as a text, I often do not know the author, what they are like, who they are as a person, whether they live what they espouse, or whether it is written as part of some politically-orientated, careerist 'audit culture', as Andrew Sparkes describes it (Sparkes 2006). This is a culture that measures success through the sheer amount of published words. Often, all I have to go on is the text itself, so it is dangerous to attest that this author and I become kith and kin.

It is a seductive process though, and can be very visceral. I will read a text and it may well have scribbles and underlining afterwards (in pencil of course), and annotations, like 'yeah!' and 'absolutely!!!*****'. These are gut reactions, embodied, trembling responses of recognition and renewal, like finding fellow travellers who will walk with us for some miles. What is this saying though – simply that the writing supports our already held assumptions? How 'critically subjective' is that? On the other hand, when one is advocating change, one needs allies. Particularly in the world of gender, as John Rowan (who I have indeed met, many times) says:

This analysis also makes it clear as to why the women's feminist movement weakened over time. It turned out that to be a feminist was harder than anyone expected. The reason for that, if the above analysis is anywhere near right, is that the power of the patriarchy was underestimated. (Rowan 2005) p22

So whilst it may appear that I am just using John Rowan's words to support my own, in a relational context, where there is indeed a mandate for some kind of change (even tentatively and paradoxically held) then it is valid to build up a network of supportive voices. This doesn't mean I presume to know the author nor that I understand

everything they say, but it does help me to network; to validate my own voice through the power of a credible chorus.

There can be a physical, embodied element to this *reading* as inquiry. I would like to show more of myself through two examples.

The first is a story about reading a book in the library during my first degree in Psychology at the University of Sussex. Here is how I described it to a friend who acts as a sounding board, Denis Postle (more about him in the Conclusion):

I was sitting in the University of Sussex Library. I must have been about 20 or 21 years old and I was doing my undergraduate degree in Social Psychology. And, what I did was I sat and got this book that I was supposed to read. I cannot even remember what it was. But it was probably some text on some aspects of Social Psychology, probably something to do with cognitive theory or something. I remember trying to read this text and I just cannot take it in. I cannot get it in. It is just words on the page. It is black and white. And I just cannot see; I cannot hear it. But what I get is a sense of rage that the person who has written this is not there. And I became so angry. You know, just remembering the feeling of being so angry that I cannot talk to them and say: 'What the fuck are you talking about here?' Because this is just so completely abstract to me, and does not make any sense or whatsoever. And it is just words and it is just dead and dull. And I just remember, even all these years later, that sense of outrage of the absence of the author. (Denis session 27/02/08)

As students we are often alone, in the University environment. We wander between talks, in dry rooms on draughty, badly-built concrete campuses. This is an environment that reeks of the hegemonically masculine. Our fellow students are on parallel but not intertwined tracks – after all we cannot share a Degree; they are our own, isolated, 'heroic' achievements. We find ourselves directed to a particular text by a chance comment: "You *must* read...!!" They become like scraps of paper in a treasure hunt; or red herrings, as in the case above. We have to cherish the clues though, because the libraries, real and virtual are getting fatter at a faster rate than we can ever hope to read.

So it is not surprising really that we find ourselves so at home with certain texts – they are like nuggets in a crazy gold rush. One such nugget for me was by Philip Corrigan, a man I hope to meet one day. In stark contrast to the story above from my undergraduate days, when I was directed to and found his text in the University of Bath library, I felt so inspired, so at home and 'at one', in relationship with this man I have never met, that I literally did a jig.

The piece in question was from the *Sociological Review*, 1988, Vol. 36, No.2. (p368-380), entitled: *Viewpoint; The body of intellectuals/the intellectuals' body (remarks for Roland)*. I lugged the huge blue binder over to the photocopier and read the paper in one sitting. It was an enormous revelation. I penciled annotations all over it. By the title I wrote a big 'YEAH!'

What is a text? Sometimes it seems like a voice speaking directly to you. As if no-one else has ever read or written and this one paper on the desk in front of you *is it*. Nothing else needs to be said or done. I looked around me, at all of these other students beavering away on their own and I wanted to shout '*Stop! Give that up and come and look at this! This is the thing!*' Our work is often solitary. In the silent library we are de-voiced and disconnected from each other, deliberately or not we are isolated

bodies, performing the (di)embodiment of isolated, heroically self-contained (male – including the women) selves. Indeed we may even be *competing* bodies: As it is said: “*That book is out, someone else has it - you will have to reserve it*”. So academic knowledge is progressed in quiet, isolated cells, ‘corralls’, *within* but not *between*.

Music/Images Everything that follows should be read as if in the middle of music and images. You choose, You, too, are written. We - you and I – are trying to talk. But I am dancing. (Corrigan 1988)

Here I am sitting reading this text, and I want to jump up, make a link and be a body in connection with others. To dance! To Sing! I don’t always feel like this but I feel it *now*. But all I can do is scribble notes all over this photocopy. My underlining is so hard sometimes that it scores through the paper. A big circle around my own written word ‘phenomenology’, next to where Corrigan has written ‘experience’. His words: ‘*whose body, whose signs?*’, attracts special attention with furious underlining, as if it were political slogan from an angry rally.

It also resonates with another text I have read recently, so next to where he says:

As we know from the start alphabetization and numeration are systems of empowerment/disembodiment. (Corrigan 1988) p371

I have written ‘c.f. David Abram – The Spell of the Sensuous’ (Abram 1996).

Next to:

Foucault, of course, has done more than any other to cartographize these modes of projection, these ways of simultaneously realizing/denying human capacities within certain social forms. Which always, and here we are on to a different tracing, announce very loudly the bodies of les autres, the others: captives, slaves, women, children, possessions, but where increasingly such announcements are inscriptions, lists, registers, and which possessions are not bodily but documentary entitlements. (Corrigan 1988) p373

Les Autres. The lists...my own children as ‘possessions’....All I have done is underline it...a big pause...a big breath...and I have written ‘phew!’ and it is as if I can see my own Jewish tears roll down the page, leaving a slight crumple in the paper.

Of course, I look now at some of these manic scribblings and wonder what on earth was going on for me that solitary afternoon, notwithstanding the resonance with Corrigan’s clever attempt to bring the body into intellectual life. I was, my body was, in a time of its own then, as now. I do remember that some of Corrigan’s words literally took my breath away:

The masculinization of mind amidst these determining discourses also declares that what you see – what you can see – is what you are; what you are – what you can be – is what you see; what you see and are is, what you say, the worth of your saying. The cognitive calculating coherent I of the sentence is the Eye of perceptual normalcy. (Corrigan 1988)

I have underlined under the ‘*worth of your saying*’ and in the margin I have written: ‘*we have to do both – be worthy of saying AND live in our bodies in our texts*’. I think this me-in-the-past was trying to hold the horns of the dilemma in developing an inquiring masculinity in the ‘Academy’: our texts, our words have to be of a good enough quality to disrupt; we need articulation in the language we want to change.

(And isn't it interesting that I am, right here, attempting to pass another degree by a sly (or is it gauche – as in left handed?) demonstration of my skill in this game?!)

Reading Corrigan was an emotional experience, because it is 'what I can see' – the point he is making about the 'masculinization of mind' is a vital, heartfelt mission of my own mind and body (as problematic as this is). Yet to be able to argue cogently in a voice that is recognized, as 'worthy of saying' is a huge challenge, as it will inevitably require some deference to this very mind, especially if (as John Rowan maintains) the Patripsych runs so deep within us and our institutions. I wish I had the talent to write this as a play or musical, but I would need to dance it so much better than I could ever write it to avoid being dismissed as illegitimate. How acceptable is a dance as a submission to an academic board, no matter how good?

Or a story...?

So being present to my body and its timely and spatial singularity and at the same time writing comprehensively about it, is a challenge and one that Corrigan's passage above clearly demonstrates. And to engage in the necessary art of critique (for a moment): if you aren't on board with it, following Corrigan's polemical thread, his text might seem as abstruse and enraging to you as that book I was reading all those years ago in the Sussex University Library did to me.

How can we be present in our texts and at the same time say it in a way that simply makes sense, so we don't (or don't appear to) disappear up (or at least into) our own bodies?

But to me Corrigan's words spoke as if his 'I' was my 'eye', in a world where there are living inequalities not just of voice but of ways of seeing, of 'eyes'. This is one of the roots of my inspiration to use writing to my own children (who I can hear playing in the garden outside my window as I write this) because I wanted to recognize them as more than just part of my 'inventory' as a man; my list of goods, more than just a side show in my own heroic manstory, whereby I can (dis)embody the hegemonic as much as the next man. As he says:

*The manliness of mind is one dominant form of masculinity. (Corrigan 1988)
p376*

I don't know whether Corrigan meant what I took him to mean with the line:

Considered thus, in the broader sweep of asking all ways, 'The Body and Whose Signs?' might we not more properly consider much of writing, this writing the body, as pornography? It is not time, in timing our words, to see how the hegemonic depiction, description and design of 'difference(s)' as disadvantaged (or denied and deformed) results from the domination of this form of masculinist discourse? (Corrigan 1988) p376

But it has had a huge impact on me – possibly one of the most eye-opening moments. The idea, as I understood this, that the *lack* of presence of the body of the intellectual who writes much of the texts we read, particularly in the academic environment, as something almost *pornographic*, was stunning. And it makes so much sense to me. But these are ideas whose time may not have come and there may be only a certain level of toleration of them. This is a troubling idea, or as Corrigan puts it himself: 'Un/easy'. Again it points to the challenge of the inquiring masculinity, to choose his words very carefully. I wrote by this part of the text a big 'Phew! Yeah!', because it

does seem to me to be the essence of pornography to invoke the shell (the body) without the inconvenient truth of the person the sign of this body represents. Text can become as much of a depersonalized, disembodied shell as a glossy centrefold.

Corrigan himself begins to close by talking about “my own historical experience of differencing as domination, in which I frequently dominated and denied my domination”, in a register that I recognize very similar to the challenges and dilemmas of my own inquiry. I therefore identified with Corrigan and felt for him, particularly as he put this in the context of having taught on courses about ‘Masculinity’, which I clearly identified with my own experience of running the Navigator Men’s Development Programme.

Will I ever meet Philip Corrigan? Is he alive (in body) as he is to me (in text)? Perhaps, and maybe a meeting through a text is as real as any. Perhaps my letters to my own children will one day be as real to them as Corrigan’s words are for me. Where is the body that is me? As Corrigan puts it:

Much of the time, of course I neither know who I am, nor which body I should in/habit or haunt. That is to say, I know ‘I’ am Not Yet. These bodies of which I speak are, after all, also a Body of Is, of Eyes; the male gaze is not only on others, but of ourselves. These notes try to delineate and disrupt our way(s) of seeing, academically, artistically, intellectually. We (men) need to re-member our bodies. (Corrigan 1988) p377

So just because my body is there, in space and time, it doesn’t mean we are connected, and similarly in its absence it doesn’t mean we can’t be. But at least I am trying to reach out beyond theoretical ties, in my own heart, to yours and beyond.

I am trying to re-member my body in text.

By the end of the article, I wrote what I feel simply and aptly would like to express to my own children (for if not them, then who else?) through my actions and words, (knowing with full irony that they right now are down there in the garden and I am up here writing this): ‘Yes, yes, yes, yes!’

as a major resource along with many others, not least my mother who taught me how to talk. But third, I am continually encouraged and coerced to be and become a certain embodiment (as text, as discourse, as image, as practice, as rule, as norm) by that effective panoply of effectual powers that be. Refusing these negative inducements, where I can, has also been a complex learning procedure: there is no rule without its transgression. Much of the time, of course, I neither know who I am, nor which body I should in/habit or haunt. That is to say, I know ‘I’ am Not Yet. These bodies of which I speak are, after all, also a *Body of Is, of Eyes*: the male gaze is not only on others, but of ourselves. These notes try to delineate and disrupt our way(s) of seeing, academically, artistically, intellectually. We (men) need to re-member our bodies (Corrigan, 1984a).

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Toronto

Received 2 March 1987
Accepted 6 March 1987

→ trying
out of
self

yes yes
yes yes

Notes

1 See Clanchy, 1979, 1988; Smith, 1974, 1984, 1987; Foucault 1981, 1982; Rockhill, 1987a, 1987b.