Chapter Two – Developing an Inquiring Masculinity

And the wicked son asked: 'what's the point of knowing where we came from'?

I'd like to show the place of thinking that this inquiry process, towards 'being a good man', (towards mentshlichkeit) emerged. In doing so it will be useful to show how I've worked with some of the ideas, the thinking, the 'head stuff'; around the areas that impact this inquiry; such as masculinities, fatherhood and Jewishness, and tentatively developing an 'inquiring masculinity'. I'd also like to show you some of the practices that lie behind this inquiring masculinity. It is these practices, whose quality is evidenced in the stories I tell, that enable the disruption and evolution of gender performances inherent in mentshlichkeit, being a 'good man'.

Even if you are not a father, a Jew or a man, you my still find this useful; I offer this as an example of inquiring into my locality, not to exclude yours, but to invite a parallel.

Interestingly, at Passover, the Jewish Spring Festival, we are offered a clue about what the 'bad' might be in relation to being a 'good man'. During the Passover meal, we are told a story of four sons. One of them is the 'bad son' (or 'wicked son'). What is his wickedness? It is a rejection of where he comes from. Each son asks a question, and basically the wicked son asks: 'What's the point of knowing who we are, of re-telling this stupid story every year about where we come from?' Now there may be many interpretations of this story, and the beauty of Judaism (at its best) is that it invites multiple interpretations. So I make my own one here, as a justification of this stage in the inquiry process: it was vital to explore 'where I come from', in order to fully locate myself in a place from where it is possible to know anything else. Without it, we float in a meaningless place, dislocated, ready to grasp some new regime of truth. So this standpoint chapter is really about what anchors me in work as an inquirer.

Of course, we can answer the question 'where we come from' in many ways. I could have explored myself as a Londoner, a football fan, a Psychologist, as my standpoint. It may even be argued that would have been just as useful. Again, we are presented with choices as inquirers. I chose Judaism, Fatherhood and Masculinity because I felt them to be the most profound roots, the questions I kept returning to, where I was *moved* to go. Being moved is vital in this sense. Sometimes I even use the welling of tears as a sign I am on the right track. In a sense, when I started this process, these aspects of my identity *chose me*.

Perhaps this is what Post Structuralist Patti Lather calls 'Rhizomatic validity', [rooted validity], this is validity around new knowledge that:
- *unsettles from within, taps underground*
- *generates new locally determined norms of understanding; proliferates open-ended and context-sensitive criteria; works against reinscription of some new regime, some new systematicity (Lather 1993) p686*

Responding to an emotional key, whilst considering (as a critique) some of the thinking around masculinity is an attempt at such an unsettling, not to try and 're-inscribe a new regime', but to shake the branches of the tree a little, and see what fruit falls off. In doing so, I am considering some of my own roots, within a Jewish tradition, and how this yields an alternative, perhaps surprising (or even odd) perspective, the idea of a dominant masculinity as a type of 'haunting'. Then, in the quality of *practices* of inquiry as a way to face of this haunting, we might be able to measure of the validity of this approach to action research.

Masculinities - A Personal and Political Polarity

Perhaps my pre-occupation with discomfort flows from being a Jew? As Vic Seidler says:

> *Jewish men, like black men, could never take their masculinity for granted but constantly had to prove themselves. This might explain the number of Jewish men who have been involved internationally in the men's movement since they have been positioned, somewhat paradoxically, both inside and outside traditional Western masculinities. As they could never take their 'whiteness' for granted, so they also had to affirm their masculinities. (Seidler 2006) p10.*

It is a possibility that it may be more likely for a young Jewish man to question masculinity in this way. In Chapter Three, I will show how we can juxtapose this particularly masculine embodiment (of both men and women) against the disembodied, disappearing masculinity of the ghettoised European Jewry of my origin. It also offers a view on the Israeli reaction to this, which was to literally militarise the (Jewish) body.

But it is interesting that the first diary entry I mention at the beginning of Chapter One was made when I was living in Israel. Looking back, I see myself surrounded there by a particularly militarised embodiment of masculinity. In Israel, one is surrounded by militarised bodies, men and women in uniform, carrying weapons. My own discomfort as a teenager suggests that this was more than a Jewish issue; it may be a more general phenomenon that many (most?) young men secretly worry over. It may be advantageous to imagine that such inquiry is the condition of many (most?) young men. Encouraging them to 'come out' with this set of questions is an important part of our mission. If, as Seidler maintains:

> *Helping men to name their experience as men – itself a complex task that they often resist – becomes a matter of teaching them to recognise the power they take for granted in relation to women.(Seidler 2006) p93*

Then it is no wonder that these private, tentative, awkward inquiries remain private. It is as if we are handed as young men with the dual burden of a man's body with all it feels like, and the historic guilt and shame of the power relationship that this body represents, the guilt and shame that the lecturer describes at the beginning of this thesis. I know I felt it, as my teenage diaries attest: *'freed from thousands of years of needing to be superior…'*

This is coupled with the fact that:

> *an Enlightenment vision of modernity has been shaped by a distinction between public and private spheres. Traditionally within modernity the public sphere was defined as a masculine space of reason and power…(Seidler 2006) p93*

Therefore the emotional, embodied space becomes private sphere; a feminised space, and it is not surprising that young men are encouraged to protect their own private castles with a high wall of reason and a yearning for power. So the embodied, longed-for inquiry remains hidden. If you take a post modern, or social-constructionist view of this, if 'words make worlds', and there is *no* discourse, no words, or 'languaging' of these questions, then the social reality closes in around them and they are almost snuffed out entirely. But not quite; perhaps they persist in the vernaculars of substance misuse, pornography, and violence to self and others. Perhaps they are also seen in

the everyday, chaotic 'queerness' of organisational life that I see in my work, where the private dynamics leak out in many different ways (as I illustrate in Chapter Four).

Masculinity is often defined in terms of power relations with women, and therefore suggests we face the historic legacy of the inherent privilege that comes with being born in a man's body. One of the most popular contemporary framings of this is within Bob Connell's notion of a 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell 1995): a dominant masculinity amongst masculinit*ies.* In this view, there are a range of types of being male, of masculinities, all of which orbit around a fundamental structural inequality most typified and embodied by the privilege of a certain type of white, male, middle class masculinity, which is 'hegemonic'. It exerts its authority over everyday institutions, such as the workplace.

> *The concept of 'hegemony', deriving from Antonio Gramsci's analysis of class relations, refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life. At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted. Hegemonic Masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (Connell 1995) p77*

In practical terms, what might this hegemonic masculinity look like? Michael Kimmel quotes the anthropologist Erving Goffman on this subject:

> *In an important sense there is only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant father, of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports…Any male who fails to qualify in any one of these ways is likely to view himself – during moments at least- as unworthy, incomplete, and inferior. (Goffman quoted in (Kimmel 2006)) p4*

Connell's view is very useful, (albeit put in the very language that tends to flatter a hegemonic, academic masculinity, I would maintain) in that it serves to separate all men from an inherent association with this privilege, and opens up, in Connell's view, the possibility of other masculinities, which can be reflective of other power positions across the categories of class, race, education, wealth and so on, all of which are subject to the hegemonic. It offers me personally the possibility to compare and contrast at least two masculinities I can embody. Being a middle class man, I must accept at some level I can exemplify the instruments of the hegemonic, particularly in the consciousness of others if not necessarily of my own intention. But as a Jew, I am also enabled to consider my own shape-shifting and disappearing masculinity as a Jew, only recently escaped from the ghetto.

It is however from the same Enlightenment that encouraged the demolition of the ghetto, Vic Seidler argues, that we inherit the modernist, universalist rationality which privileges not just a 'hegemonic masculinity', but the very idea of it.

> *Thinking about masculinities in terms of a hegemonic model has itself become hegemonic since its very universalism has appealed to international agencies wanting a model that can be translated across cultural differences. (Seidler 2007) p11*

Seidler maintains that Connell's view is useful yet flawed because it still places the hegemonic style at the centre of our analysis:

Within Connell's conception of power that he later developed in Masculinities*, consciousness-raising for men could only mean developing an awareness of their power within gender relations of power (Connell 1995). This was part of a distinction that Connell draws between the "therapeutic" practices of the 1970s and what he identifies as "real politics" that emerged in the 1980s. But this distinction between the therapeutic and the political not only served to disavow the histories of men's relationships with feminism, such as the explorations developed in the journal* Achilles Heel *in Britain, but it served to block reflections upon the relationship between the personal and the political in men's lives. (Seidler 2007) p10*

So placing the body and its associated therapeutics as a 'lesser than' to the 'real' politics of power relationships is part of an ongoing tension that has persisted *"since Reich argued with Freud about that status of the body within psychoanalysis."* (Seidler 2007) p15.

This analysis works along an axis, then, between the more personal, body-and-feelings focussed work and discourse on the one hand and the rationalist, power analysis on the other (which is more at home in the heavyweight, disembodied atmosphere of 'the Academy'). If you take into account the feminist-inspired research of Sandra Bem, who showed that 'feminine' traits, (like 'emotional', and 'understanding') are universally valued (by men and women) less highly than the 'masculine' traits, (like 'rational', and 'analytical'), it isn't surprising that the body-oriented, therapeutic camp (because it dealt with things like feelings and experience), seems to have been associated with a more 'feminised' analysis and is therefore less credible and 'weighty' (Bem 1974).

This is supported by the work of people like Joyce Fletcher, who suggests that the 'relational' aspects of labour in organisations, like building relationships and managing the personal experience of employees, is persistently 'disappeared' as useful work within the organisational conversation, in favour of work that looks more 'male' and 'transactional' (Fletcher 1999). Calás and Smircich take this one step further, suggesting that this 'relational' work is mostly done by women in organisations who are recruited for these tasks, *because* it can be devalued, both politically and economically (Calás and Smircich 1993).

An unintended consequence of this feminist discourse is in how the phenomena it is describing have crept into (or come back to 'haunt'?) the discourse around masculinities itself, creating two 'camps; broadly describable as the political and the personal/therapeutic. As if the feminist notion of the 'personal is political' never really happened for men working to change men, this analysis, as Seidler maintains, is an unnecessary distinction, yet one that still seems to persist in practice and in the literature. There are people like Jeff Hearn, Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (who I quote at the beginning of Chapter One) and of course Bob Connell on the one hand, for whom the 'heavy-weight' analytical and political dimension of masculinities is key (and are more at home with words like 'hegemonic'), and then the many 'light-weight' therapeutic, 'feminised', person-centred approaches on the other, exemplified in more populist literature, by people such as Steve Biddulph, Robert Bly and others. (Bly 1990; Biddulph 1995,; Collinson and Hearn 1996).

Although this is a broad characterisation, and there are people, like Vic Seidler, who deliberately position themselves across both these worldviews, it is a mapping of the territory that I recognise from my first forays into men's development work in the early 1990s. The territory seemed to be aligned along left wing/political versus a right

wing/personal/therapeutic axis. I found the personal, therapeutic approaches of some of the mensgroups I encountered attractive, but was sometimes struck by a lack of critical thinking, especially when they strayed too far from the critique of male power. When I encountered the approach of Robert Bly, through his famous book, *Iron John*, and in various groups and events I attended, the attention to the therapeutic and embodied attracted me, but I was uncomfortable when it leant towards holding women, rather than (male-dominated) society responsible for men's current dilemmas. Susan Faludi's own experience of Robert Bly's work is something I recognise:

> *A woman in the audience asks if [Robert Bly]'s saying that the women's movement is to blame. 'The men's movement is not a response to the women's movement,' he says. A few moments later, though, he is back to warning men in the audience to beware of 'the forcefield of women'. (Faludi 1992)* p345.

I think Faludi sees Bly at his worst here, and I know great admirers of Bly who suggest that he moderated his position later on, (as did Faludi). However, I personally resisted the subtle misogyny that this approach could infect.

On the political side, I also encountered men like Jeff Hearn, whose work I admire, but in whose critique I found an unnerving lack of attention to individual male subjectivities:

> *In a gender, hierarchical and class sense, however, it is men in management, especially those in accounting, engineering and strategic functions, who often most closely represent 'hegemonic' masculinity/ies in the workplace. While their attempts to control employees, colleagues and self may produce contradictory effects, men's organizational dominance both as managers and as men needs further detailed analysis.* (Collinson and Hearn 1996) *p11*

Oh so *those* are the *bad* men, then, are they…? But what about their inner lives, struggles, their private, quaking selves? The danger here is that it becomes easier to dismiss what might be going on for these men, within their own worlds, and therefore easier to dismiss them, *en masse*. Another kind of prejudice seems to creep in, like a ghost. Indeed, in my experience with *Navigator*, I met many men, including accountants and engineers, for whom the therapeutic wasn't a territory they wanted to get into necessarily (especially if they were working class or 'suburban' rather than metropolitan) and yet who sometimes were represented as 'the problem' in the left wing, metropolitan and academic centres of study into men and masculinities. Usually, these 'ordinary blokes', uncomfortable in either the political or the therapeutic camp, were left completely outside the debate altogether. And this was the vast majority of men.

But for me, the inquiring approach suggested through the action research school of places like CARPP, at the University of Bath, provided a generative space for a transcendent approach. Herein, one can do business with *both* the power-centred, critical analysis *and* the embodied, person-centred as well as phenomenological/post modern/body-centred approach. I would like to call this approach an 'inquiring masculinity'. I offer it tentatively, wanting to avoid the 'reinscription of some new regime', as Lather says. (Lather 1993). I see it more as a glimpse into a world of possibilities, a world that can be both personally and politically engaging and one that enables action, even if it is in the midst of irony and paradox. It also is a world which holds to the possibility that even managers, engineers and accountants have a story, and that in telling this story, we encourage their participation in inquiring how we may shed some light on this spectre of maleness.

In developing this thesis about an 'inquiring masculinity', I was drawn to wonder what this hegemonic masculinity really is. How does it have the power to affect me? And what then can be done about it? One explanation is that:

> *Hegemonic masculinity is a multilevel concept operating at local, regional and global levels that also simultaneously engages cultural, individual and structural factors. Furthermore, these cultural, individual and structural factors are interdependent. (Lusher and Robins 2009) p389.*

A problem with this view of a type of all-pervading man-ishness, to which all men (whether or not they are born into this ideal type) are subject, is that it describes a very complex phenomenon. So it is interesting in theory but in practice, what can we do about it, to borrow Sarah Jones' vital question? If it is all about the relationship between the cultures we come from, the local situations we find ourselves in, the power relationships and structures that abound around us, it is all very tricky to sort out how we can do anything about it, let alone anything *good*.

I think this view breeds a kind of defensiveness at best and helplessness at worst. We find ourselves in conversations, with women for example, where we can argue that 'it isn't our fault, it's just the culture we come from', or 'it's inevitable because of the power relationships we find ourselves in'. We slap our foreheads and laugh: *'Here we are again! Caught in the same old patterns!'*

But how can we develop another, more helpful perspective about this 'hegemonic masculinity'; one that allows us to consider another way of researching it, escaping from it (even momentarily, like a flying fish escapes from the sea) and then at least act as a guide to others to do more of the same?

Developing an Inquiring Masculinity – Challenging the 'Hegemonic Haunting'

One view that I play with here is that this hegemonic masculinity is a kind of spectre, a ghost that haunts us all from time to time. To use a viral metaphor, it catches all of us, or maybe we catch it, like a cold or flu. It may be hard for us to see how this may work. But sometimes it is easier for others to spot it. Notice for example how in the definition that Goffman gives, (quoted by Kimmel, above), we can detect the ghost of an equivalent hegemony: of a North American worldview. In his language, and its seeming blindness to the assumptions that all of us may share his framing (e.g. hegemonic masculine may not be 'Protestant' in a Catholic or Communist country, for example), he seems to have caught a kind of cold, and although he may not notice it, it may be may be more obvious to non-Americans.

A fashionable metaphor that might fit this analysis is that of the mind virus, or 'meme'. This is an idea or thought-form, caring only for its own propagation, which can take hold in a (human) biological system. We could see the spectre of the hegemonic masculinity as a kind of 'meme' that overtakes our body system from time to time. This suggests that men and women aren't 'good' or 'bad', but that we can all be subject to constellations of archetypal behaviour that take us over, like mind viruses, or 'memes', if we allow them to. (Blackmore 2000).

I return to my own question I asked when I was 20 years old. Male or human; which first? These questions might be about recognising our need to be more fully human. In the story *Metamorphosis*, Franz Kafka describes the life and death of Gregor, a man who wakes up one morning to find he has turned into a beetle.

Gregor's eyes turned next to the window, and the overcast sky – one could hear raindrops beating on the window gutter – made him quite melancholy. What about sleeping a little longer and forgetting all this nonsense, he thought, but it could not be done, for he was accustomed to sleep on his right side and in his present condition he could not turn himself over. (Kafka 1916) p9

What I find so moving about Kafka's story is Gregor's attempts to live with it; to just get on with this awful, ridiculous situation. In a sense I see Gregor's story in my own and in that of many men. Embodying the traditional masculinity can feel like inhabiting a beetle-like shell. How can we stay fully human and yet failing that, when the shell descends on us in the morning, how can we live and work with that too, and not simply turn over go back to sleep?

Our bodies become a kind of possible breeding ground for this kind of 'virus'. If hegemonic masculinity is this kind of 'spirit' that can take over my body from time to time, then we may have a clue about what to do next. We can see ourselves as in the process of developing some kind of awareness of this, with the help of others, as a possible 'antidote'. Jeffrey Eugenides also supports this idea, in his novel Middlesex, about an intersex person:

I've lived more than half my life as a male, and by now everything comes naturally. When Calliope [my former female identity] surfaces, she does so like a childhood speech impediment. Suddenly there she is again, doing a hair flip, or checking her nails. It is a little like being possessed. (Eugenides 2002) p41.

A Jewish subjectivity is also informative here. Yiddish, the language spoken by my ancestors in Eastern Europe, offers an insight into a different model for this spectre of hegemonic masculinity:

Compared with contemporary English, Yiddish is a regular haunted house where demons frolic and sinister forces rage nearly unchecked. (Wex 2005) p93

Drawing on this Yiddish inheritance may serve our purpose of both defining mentshlichkeit and providing us with insight into this hegemonic haunting. According to Wex:

These Sheydim *(singular 'sheyd') [bad spirits] are generally thought of as being Jewish - they believe in the Torah, observe all the* mitsves *[commandments of Jewish ritual practice] incumbent on Jewish demons… and exist, with God's blessing and active cooperation,* aftselakhis *– just to spite - the rest of the world. They're us, but invisible. (Wex 2005)* p93

This Yiddish subjectivity might give us a subtle alternative to the Rationalist (post-Enlightenment) view of good (reasonable) and bad (unreasonable). The *Sheydim* are *part* of the system, approved of in their work of havoc because this gives us our everyday challenge to overcome. Mentshlichkeit is an everyday process of living *with* them. Indeed, according to a Yiddish proverb:

A mentsh heyst a mentsh veyl er mentsht zikr, which means literally: *"a person is called a person when they struggle with their person-ness."* (Wex 2005)

I notice that in Yiddish, to be a mentsh, is by definition, to work, in the moment, with these *sheydim.* This is the essence of good-person-ness. I find the resonance with Judith Butler's idea of performativity here compelling. Rather than settling in a

comfortable (hegemonic) masculinity, to be a mentsh, a good man in this context is *always* to be working with, *striving with* the demons, the haunting of good person-ness, working out new performances 'in the nick of time' (Grosz 2004).

In this way, we can see that this work is about the everyday struggle to escape from the clutches of the spectre of hegemonic masculinity. Rather than banishing these demons to the margin, in pursuit of a utopian, colourless, (white, male) reason, we can use this Jewish subjectivity, hold it up against the contemporary view of 'mind viruses', and see if it helps us to recognise this haunting of hegemonic masculinity, and more importantly, recognise the practices that may help us in the political purpose of overcoming it.

Again, it serves the mentshlichkeit agenda to see this 'spectre' as part of our own internal colour as (white) men. It is noticing when we are 'possessed' by this spectre that may be good work here, rather than suggesting that this spectre exists only in those ('bad') others (like accountants and engineers), or with others who may be less associated with our white, male reason; all of those who have been traditionally marginalised. Indeed liberation may even be about exposing those parts of ourselves that don't normally warrant airtime in the public domain.

How do we explore, research and deal with this kind of 'haunting'? One device I use is a story-telling process, because in the stories I tell, and the subjectivities that narratives invite, I can catch myself where I have caught the cold of hegemonic masculinity and find ways, practices to 'immunise' myself from it. But this practice of storytelling emerged from other practices, and I'd now like to document some of them, so you can see how they lead to the story-telling.

Quality Inquiry Practices

What I have learned and intend to show is that with long-term commitment to a set of questions, we can develop inquiry *practices* that enable us to catch ourselves in the midst of these systems and reveal the choices we may have, developing possibilities for action that enable our escape from them.

Such practices are made in the context of the 'many ways of knowing' that Reason et al offers. For example, it is in the possibilities of storytelling, as a form of presentational knowledge, that we can develop action practices, or 'practical knowing':

> *Practical knowing, knowing-in-action, is of quite a different nature to knowing-about-action; action research is not the same as applied research. I can tell you how to ride a bicycle, and can describe bicycle riding in terms of its dynamic mechanics, but this is not the same as riding a bicycle, as any child and parent knows...*
>
> *At the heart of practical knowing is an awareness of the excellence of the skill of doing it, which is "beyond language and conceptual formulation"; we can, however, ask whether the practice is executed "with appropriate economy of means and elegance of form" and whether the action "does in fact have the effects claimed for it" (Heron, 1996b:43-44). (Reason 2003)*

In my work, the reference to the child riding the bicycle is particularly relevant. I have returned repeatedly to my relationship with my children, to consider my own knowing-in-action. They become the vital arbiters of my 'economy of means and elegance of form', in being a good man.

The complexity of the questions I am exploring suggests that developing a grand design for change in this area would be challenging not to say unhelpful. Indeed it may be part of the problem of a particular kind of dominant masculinity to seek such instrumentally 'grand' change. In this research process, where I am looking for a more variegated, subtle, perhaps paradoxical ways through difficult and often doubled questions, the notion of developing practices of inquiry is helpful. The distinction of practices is that they are everyday, lived, repeated and life-congruent habits, 'living life as inquiry' (Marshall 1999).

In his book, the 'Leadership Dojo', Richard Strozzi-Heckler suggest a way to see these living practices:

> *Zen Roshi Richard Baker said it in the simplest of terms when he commented, 'Enlightenment [in an Eastern, Buddhist sense] is an accident, but practice makes you accident-prone".*

Strozzi-Heckler goes on to say:

> *Humans will engage in a practice if they're passionate about what they are practicing. We are passionate about what we practice if it's relevant to the life we want to create. (Strozzi-Heckler 2007) p59*

Peter Reason extends this idea of practice into the world of action research, considering how our work as new paradigm researchers is to consider our participation in (or with) the world as the territory of our inquiry:

> *In participatory practice, you no longer know where you will are going to end up; in a sense the very point is to end up with the unexpected. One moves from the security of what is known to radical uncertainty. There is almost a feeling of vertigo in stepping away from well-trodden paths of expression.*
> (Reason 2001) *p47*

So there was no 'grand plan', but rather *persistence* with the questions of inquiry and with a set of inquiring *practices*. It is in the quality of living these practices, and the evidence we show of this, that we can judge the validity of this kind of practical knowledge. I document six of the main practices I have been developing below during this work, and show some of the quality of living them.

Practice 1 – Challenging the myth of 'whole' male self

> *I am concerned especially with that group of premises upon which the Occidental concepts of the "self" are built…(Bateson 1972) p315*

Taking the idea of the inquiring masculinity forward has meant holding a creative tension at the level of self, inquiring into 'who I really am?' Is the myth of the dominant masculinity based on a view of the self that holds it to be more fixed and unchanging than how we may consider and configure it, when we pay attention to our more phenomenological, embodied experience? Where does this proposition of the fixed self come from? Would it be useful to develop a practice of disruption, for the sake of developing attention to a more shifting, pliable shape-shifting self? How would this help the cause of an inquiring masculinity, and demonstrating mentshlichkeit?

> *I am a boy. No-one will play with me. They're all too busy. Will you play with me?*

I am a young woman. I don't have much time to talk, there's washing up to be done, the boy needs getting to school, the house needs sorting. One day I'd like to travel, but right now I have to sort out the house, so excuse me.

I am an old duke, living in the attic. I lie dying, wanting to die. I cannot die until I know if he will come back. She sent him to war, long ago.

My name is Ron, a bloke who tries to keep cheerful. I like football. It's silly round 'ere. What we need is someone to come and sort this place out. It's a joke.

I am old rabbi. I am refugee. I don't speak English good. I pray. Baruch hashem I still alive. I wait. I wait for Moshiach. Messiah.

I am an old duchess. I wait to be served. My life is tragic. I haven't spoken to my husband in over twenty years. My son went away to war. I wait for them both.

I body. Where head?

The above story comes from a piece of inquiry in a workshop on 'sub-personalities' in which I was a participant. During this workshop we were led by the facilitator into a relaxed, meditative state and invited to tour a 'house' and encounter characters who in some way represented aspects of ourselves.
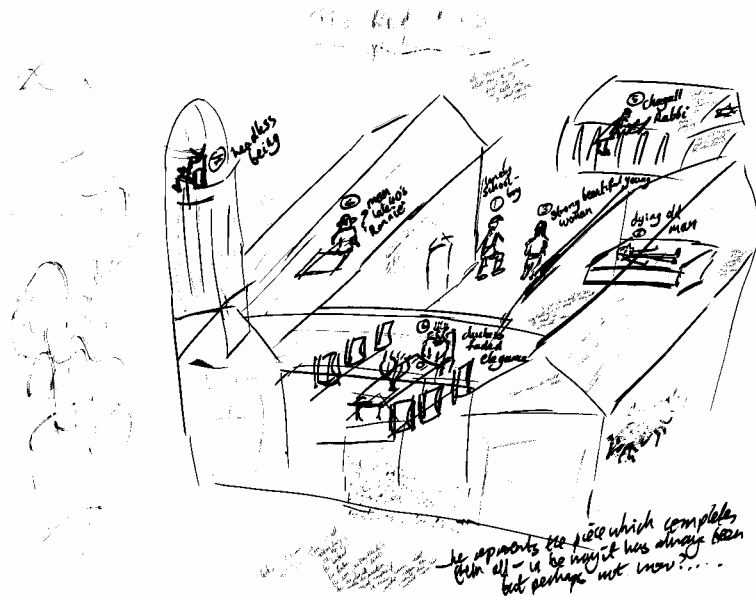
Having surfaced these characters, and drawn them out in the form of a picture (see above), I had a profound realisation, as I journalled at the time:

"It occurs to me suddenly that they are all waiting for the same person. The person missing is a man. He represents the piece of them that is missing. It is a slightly different piece for all of them but it can be provided by the same man:

- *He will father the boy*
- *He is the lost son that completes the dying old man's story*
- *He is the man who will marry the young woman*
- *He will lead Ron, give him orders, give him an object for his loyalty, work out how to fix the hole in roof, which he would have done had his back not ached*
- *For the rabbi, he is the 'Moshiach', the messiah, who will come through the door and put meaning in the world to match the words of Talmud*
- *For the faded duchess, he will be her long lost son, missing in action, who returned from the war; the same son that the dying old man waits for*
- *For the headless being, he will know how to bring him down from his tower and give him a connection to this world*
- *He'll also walk the dog, and fix the roof, be the master of the house"*

I found in this practice powerfully symbolic of the dilemma of masculinities as presented by contemporary experience and expectations. It is as if we are expected to be the 'whole man' that completes the picture, as the missing character did above in my own inquiry. And yet what I was left with, what we are left with as men, is a fragmented series of subconscious characters, male and female, straight and queer, old and young, who in some way may be as present to us, if not more so, as the complete man we present to the world in the public sphere.

It is important to note that I choose such a seemingly fragmented, constructed approach because it fits my challenge to the patriarchal monoculture, which tends to frame a normative, 'whole' universalistic (male) self at the centre of things and therefore a research process challenging this, by foregrounding diverse personal experience, is in some way 'self indulgent'.

> *Likewise Gergen's (1999) social constructionist view of the self as relational challenges the dominant ideology of the self-contained individual that underpins notions of self-indulgence. (Sparkes 2002) p216*

If the heroic figure in my own inquiry above represents the mono-mythic 'manstory' as Mary Gergen calls it (Gergen 1992), that I (am expected to) present to the world, in the course of my work, for example, then perhaps in the shadows for us 'self-made men' lurk all of these other characters, or their equivalents. So what opens up is an interesting inquiry ground, the phenomenon of outer persona (the male hero) played out in tension with the inner fragments. Our body provides the stage for these characters in our own inner/outer performances.

I make a choice here, moving towards the discomfort, to show you some of my fragmented self, and how this inquiry process has unfolded for me, in inquiry, drawing, and personal reflection, and to illustrate a tension that may be usefully explored and 'lived with' in men's lives, as an active process of disintegrating the mono-mythic masculinist project. Clearly we need to consider how action may follow from this awareness to complete the 'action turn', but to offer this tentatively so not to fall into expectation of grand transformations, which in themselves may be a component of the very psychology we are hoping to disrupt.

Perhaps by exploring this fragmented inner landscape, and coming to terms with it, we are undermining what Rowan calls the 'Patripsych' (Rowan 2005):

> *…some writers have been using the notion of the Patripsych – an internal constellation of patriarchal patterns. This is a structure inside, which*

> *corresponds to oppressive structures outside, each supporting eachother. (Rowan 2005)*

To accept one's self as having components symbolised by inner boys, old duchesses, young vibrant women, headless bodies, old rabbis etc… is to accept an alternative internal landscape to the oppressive mono-mythic coherent self on which this 'Patripsych' rests.

As Bob Pease says:

> *If men's subjective experiences are left unexplored, they could be seen as being naturally inclined towards domination. So it is important to research their experiences as 'oppressors' to understand how patterns of internalized domination become part of men's subjectivities. (Pease 2000) p14*

and

> *I propose that the formation of male subjectivities that challenge patriarchal masculinities constitutes the first step in the development of pro-feminist activism amongst men. (Pease 2000) p136*

So our engagement as men in an active process of inquiry to challenge our own hero-myth, plays a formative role in such activism. It is a political process, and it may have an impact. How far are we prepared to go in the development of these male subjectivities? Could it be as far as challenging the ontology of the self, not just at a theoretical or propositional level but in terms of the choices we make at the level of how we configure ourselves and how we act as men?

This could mean developing an ontological basis of self that is fundamentally fragmented, at odds with the 'self-made man' who in some way is whole and 'of a piece' and replacing it with a tentative, socially constructed and even 'queer' set of subjectivities; those that embrace a complete reconfiguration of hetero-normative male selves.

An investigation (and perhaps a blurring) of the nature of the self, and knowledge about the self, are essential to a more inquiring masculinity. This is inherent in the epistemological basis of a feminist and post-modern critique; questioning masculinity and developing an inquiring epistemology (as well as considering the discomfort of my own academic status in this very project) converge on a disruption of (my)self as an individualised, atomised 'knower' and 'actor', separate and agentically isolated from what can be known. This suggests we look towards a wider, systemic, relational kind of knowing as central to an inquiring masculinity. I relate it to the deep wisdom that Gregory Bateson, and his description of the unit of mind as 'mind-in-environment', a disruption of

> *all sorts of false reifications of the "self" and separations between the "self" and "experience" (Bateson 1972) p469*

So developing an inquiring masculinity may invoke an active, flowing system between body, mind and environment. It means opening up subtle definitions of mission, agency, relationship and choice, seeking the '*difference that makes a difference*', as Bateson calls it (Bateson 1972) (p 459).

So in presenting these stories, such as in Chapter Four, I want to go beyond the simple idea of my 'agency' in it, to see how there may have been interplay of dynamics of which I was a small conscious part, in a wider 'mind', as Bateson says:

> *it is important to notice that there are* multiple *differences between the thinking system and the "self" as popularly conceived. (Bateson 1972) p319*

This lays down a challenge to this project, which is to show how 'I' may 'act' for 'change'; and yet it does not stop me doing so, when recognising as an inquirer that I am doing so as part of a wider system.

It becomes a matter of following 'form', as Gregory Bateson would have it:

> *[it all adds] up to a rather simple accusation of many of my colleagues, that they have tried to build a bridge to the wrong half of the ancient dichotomy between form and substance. The conservative laws for energy and matter concern substance rather than form. But mental processes, ideas, communication, organization, differentiation, pattern, and so on, are matters of form rather than substance.* (Bateson 1972) pxxxii

This grasping towards form (rather than capturing, isolating, *dissecting* 'substance') is an important opportunity; to open up the possibilities of a more nuanced, systemic, relational self which is essential in a process of disruption towards which an inquiring masculinity must aspire. We can view the self in traditional terms as a distinct product of the individual, as a 'self–made' entity characteristic of hegemonic masculinity. Indeed our narratives of self are often couched in heroic terms.

As Kate Mulholland argues in her research of entrepreneurialism in Australia:

> *I was amazed by the consistency with which men took all the credit for their success…Invariably the men told their stories as if they were the centre of the universe. (Mulholland 1996) p124*

This then isn't just a feature of the male entrepreneur perhaps but of this kind of 'public patriarchy' (Hearn 1992).

As Mary Gergen adds:

> *Myths have carried the form and content of narratives throughout the centuries. They tell us how great events occur as well as how stories are made. Joseph Campbell (1956) has analysed these ancient myths. He proposes that there is one fundamental myth – the "monomyth". This myth begins as the hero, having been dedicated to a quest, ventures forth from the everyday world. He goes into the region of the supernatural, where he encounters strange, dangerous and powerful forces, which he must vanquish. Then the victorious hero returns and is rewarded for his great deeds. The monomyth is the hero's myth and the major manstory. (Where is the woman in this story? She is only to be found as a snare, an obstacle, a magic power, or a prize.)…*
>
> *This monomyth is not just a historical curiosity. It is the basic model for the stories of achievement in everyday lives. Life stories are often about quests; they, like the monomyth, are stories of achievement. The story hangs on the end point – will the goal be achieved or not? In such stories all is subsumed by the goal. The heroic character must not allow anything to interfere with the quest. (Gergen 1992) p130-131*

For our inquiring masculinity, researched through narrative, this does pose a problem. How do we address Gergen's proposition of the seamless 'manstory'? Our accounts, grounded in our experiential epistemology, must be honest enough to deal with the

fragmented, tentative nature of this experience and the micro-political choices we make whilst at the same time not disappearing into a deconstructed, literally 'senseless' narration. We must be mindful that we are, in Gergen's terms 'mired in convention':

> *If I write in acceptable ways, I shall only recapitulate the patriarchal forms. Yet if I violate expectations too grievously, my words will begin to become nonsense. (Gergen 1992) p127*

The fact remains that Campbell's 'heroic manstory' is a convention I am mired in, for example, take my own C.V.:

> **James Traeger** *BA (Hons), PGDipSenior Consultant*
> *James has 18 years experience in human and organisational development. His varied career includes winning a fringe-first award as a theatre producer at the Edinburgh Festival, as general manager of one of Europe's leading commercial photo agencies, and as the co-developer of the Navigator Programme, the only international men's development programme to be run in the public, private and voluntary sectors. He won acclaim for his work on the Metropolitan Police's 'gender agenda', and is a member of the prestigious Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice at the University of Bath. He specialises in leadership with due attention and sensitivity to organisational and global diversity. James is the Course Director for the Art of Facilitation programme.*
>
> *James Traeger CV on Roffey Park Institute website:*
> *http://www.roffeypark.com/people/consultants.php*

Compare this with:

> *He laughs inside again then turns to a young man on the next table and says to him.*
> *"Guess who I'm not?"*
> *Somewhat taken aback, the young man looks up from his coffee.*
> *"I'm sorry I didn't catch what you said."*
> *"Guess who I'm not?" Jim repeated.*
> *"Guess who you're not?"*
> *"Yes, guess who I'm not?"*
> *"I don't really get what you're after," says the bemused young man.*
> *"It's simple," says Jim, "Just guess who I'm not."*
> *"I don't know," came the defensive reply with a touch of worry in the voice.*
> *"I'm not Bob Geldof that's who I'm not," blurts Jim.*
> *"I'm not Bob Geldof, that's for sure."*
> *"Right," says the young man as he thinks about how to exit the situation.*
> *"Right. So you're not Bob Geldof."*
> *"And I'll tell you something else, says Jim, "I'm not my CV either."*
> *(Sparkes 2006) p21*

I heard Andrew Sparkes read this extract from his paper (about the 'audit culture' of the Academy) at a Conference at Hawkwood College, Stroud, in the autumn of 2006. It is a personal story; we are to assume that the character of Jim is modelled on Andrew himself and is a device to explain both the power of experiential accounts and the resistance of traditional (including academic) discourse to them. It spoke to me of the double-edged nature of the challenge we have when attempting to break down the coherent storied accounts of self, expected in organisations, the Academy and society in general. I might myself (wouldn't you?) be as discomforted as Jim's neighbour in the

café was, if I was confronted in this way by a slightly unravelling academic. And yet I can also relate to his mission to challenge and confront the requirement for a coherent, 'self-made self'. We meet such a requirement day to day, moment to moment. For an inquiring masculinity this is at the heart of a double bind – to enter this world of coherent (male) self is to embrace what we aim to disrupt, and yet to deny that we do so is dishonest. We enter into this world still intending to find ways to disrupt it. Sparkes has to make the paper 'safe enough', through his explanation in the abstract:

> *In response to the plea by Pelias (2004) for a* methodology of the heart *this article presents a story about the embodied struggles of an academic at a university that is permeated by an audit culture. (Sparkes 2006) p2*

Therefore, there is, to a degree, a playing the game in order change, transform or transmute the rules, finding a difference that makes a difference, a way of describing the 'world of form' as Bateson would have it, without falling into the trap of recreating an all-too-coherent, heroic 'manstory'.

The *practice* here is contained in the process of story-telling. It suggests that the subjectivities expressed in the multiple voices of the story are not 'just' fictional characters but an expression of my multiple selves.

Practice 2 – Surfacing 'Hidden Transcripts'

Recently I heard Grayson Perry, the Turner Prize Winning artist, being interviewed on the radio and he was asked (probably for the umpteenth time) why he chose to often present himself, notionally a heterosexual man, in women's clothing much of the time, as his alter ego, 'Claire'. The answer he gave really struck me:

> *"Because of the emotional range it offers me."*

I recognise this yearning for the emotional expression and 'range' as Perry puts it as an important motive force, and potentially a good reason for men to engage in this kind of project. Perhaps we can reconstruct another kind of masculinity which is diverse, body-centred, more honest and open about our persistent private turmoil and vacillations, not as a therapeutic side-show but as a purpose inherent to the mission of challenging and changing masculinities in an honest response to feminism and the political injustices it has legitimately flagged.

One of the arguments in classic feminist texts is scepticism with men's interest in challenging the basis of their power, yet some of these feminists have also started to realise that men may well have some interest in deconstructing the box of patriarchy for their own sake:

> *Men feel the contours of a box too, but they are told that the box is of their own manufacture, designed to their specifications. Who are they to complain? The box is there to showcase the man, not to confine him. After all, didn't he build it – and he can destroy it if he pleases, if he is **a man?** For men to say they feel boxed in is regarded not as laudable political protest but as childish and indecent whining. How dare the kings complain about their castles? (Faludi 1999) p13*

As a man, finding personal reasons, connecting with the emotional range that the Patripsych may deny them, is important, and part of the feminist cause. I wrote about this in the second of my portfolio of papers for my transfer process to MPhil in December 2006:

To Conclude: The Cost of Dominance

In the audience at the closing plenary of the Gender, Work and Organisations Conference, June 2005…

I was sitting in the audience of this closing plenary, feeling an uncomfortable sense that the reasons why I do what I do, that is, work with men and for 'gender change' had once again escaped me. In the heady, analytical world of the conference, I felt I had somehow become disconnected from some very important, body-felt purposes for my work. This happens, I notice, from time to time. I felt the need to re-connect with the question, why is it necessary to try and make some change around men, masculinity, patriarchy and gender?

In particular, I was feeling once again slightly stung by a discussion that had taken place that day, along the lines of 'Well, if men have all the power, why should they want to change?' My uneasiness was heightened by the realisation that part of me was sympathetic to this position.

But I felt like I knew, 'in my bones', that this wasn't the whole truth, that there was some reason for doing this, that was more than my being 'different' to other men, the exception that proves the rule. It is as if the light that patriarchy can tend to shine is so bright that everything in the shadow just disappears. In particular, what is the cost of this dominance *to* men, to which we become inured?

Determined to grope once again in that darkness for the objects of proof that this is more than 'just me', I decided to embark on a piece of 'free-fall writing' (Turner-Vesselago nd):

What has the cost to me been of my 'advantage'? Unawareness, emotional castration, blindness, bluntness, numbness, nothingness, lack of satisfaction, eating and drinking too much, not living in the now, worrying about stuff, worrying about people, aching shoulders, painful shins, pretending, pretending, pretending, living lies, lack of sense of status, having everything to worry about, turning into my father, losing touch with friends, having a mask on with friends, not being liked, not liking, being grumpy all the time, never, ever, ever, ever being satisfied, not having enough, never being right, never feeling like I've got enough respect, not being loved, not loving, being obsessed with sex, being bored by sex, losing sight of why I loved, not being able to laugh like I used to, being ill, dying young, contemplating suicide, turning everything into an object, having a fear of everything, being embattled, dying in wars, cannon fodder etc. etc. etc. It took me a while but I managed to think of something...

So what is the practice here? The essence of it is in the work of reconnection I was doing at the Conference. It is, as Bob Pease suggests, asking:

To what extent can we separate the psychologies of men from the social structures and ideologies of male dominance? (Pease 2000) p14

An incitement to consider the emotional cost of our role as Patriarchs suggests of course that we can be conscious of it. Many might argue that people are bound by systems which may impact at such a profound level that we cannot be thus conscious. It could be argued that patterns of power and habit sit very strongly with us around gender; indeed it is one of the earliest complexes of social identity we inherit.

But, in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance,* James Scott aims to show that these habits are not insurmountable. Resistance is possible, in the 'hidden transcript' (Scott 1990) p16. But Scott maintains, such resistance is hard, or at least we need to find ingenious, creative, subtle ways to undermine and disrupt the way things usually flow. One of the examples he gives of a hidden transcript is in how the black slaves in the United States adopted the language and symbolism of biblical slavery in which to express their intellectual and emotional resistance. The power of narrative, in this case biblical narrative, is to open up questions that, in other forms of discourse, are more brittle and potentially likely to provoke resistance and backlash.

So the practice here is about surfacing, to ourselves, and to the wider world, the hidden transcript of the cost of hegemonic dominance *to* men. This is challenging work because we ourselves, as men, may need to develop practices (like the example I give of being at the Gender Conference) where we surface these hidden transcripts to ourselves, first. Our own 'Patripsych' may hide it, even from ourselves, as I found out in the excerpt above. It is potentially uncomfortable work. But then, through story, we elaborate this subjectivity and it becomes an art of resistance.

Although the 'public transcript' or indeed how we embody it as men, may not be directly defied (and in doing so we may well risk recreating them anyway), we can with subtlety show more and see more of our 'queer' side, as Grayson Perry for one invites us, through the choiceful, moment-to-moment work of inquiring masculinity.

We thereby contradict the temptation to place all men in two categories; those (like ourselves of course) that 'get it', are pro-feminist and on the 'right side' in the gender 'war', and those who do not, and therefore persistently embody some kind of patriarchal evil-doing. Nor are we able to control or precisely influence how the hidden transcript starts to roam free. I found this out when I started to share the story in Chapter Four. As Scott says:

> *We are not able to tell easily under what precise circumstances the hidden transcript will storm the stage. But if we wish to move beyond apparent consent [to the public transcript] and to grasp potential acts, intentions as yet blocked, and possible futures that a shift in the balance of power or a crisis might bring to view, we have little choice but to explore the realm of the hidden transcript. (Scott 1990) p16*

We use can use the 'public transcripts' of gender as a vehicle for their disruption, in the same way that the black slaves of the Americas used Christianity, and in particular the story of exodus, as a way of publicly expressing the private discourses of resistance. The art of articulating and proliferating the hidden transcripts, both to ourselves and to the wider community, is central to an inquiring approach to masculinities, fully in accord with emergent phenomenological, systemic, feminist and even transpersonal epistemologies.

Practice 3 – Developing Critical Subjectivity

In the 1960s and 70s, the feminist challenge was presented in the slogan: 'the personal is political'. As Richardson says, in qualitative research, the 'personal is the grounding for theory'. (Richardson 2005) p927.

As a hidden transcript in itself, Heron and Reason's model of the 'Four Ways of Knowing' or 'extended epistemology', has been useful in enabling me to track this

emergent inquiring masculinity. In itself I see this framework as inherently challenging of the patriarchal 'hegemonic (academic) masculinity'. (Heron and Reason 1997)

Figure 1
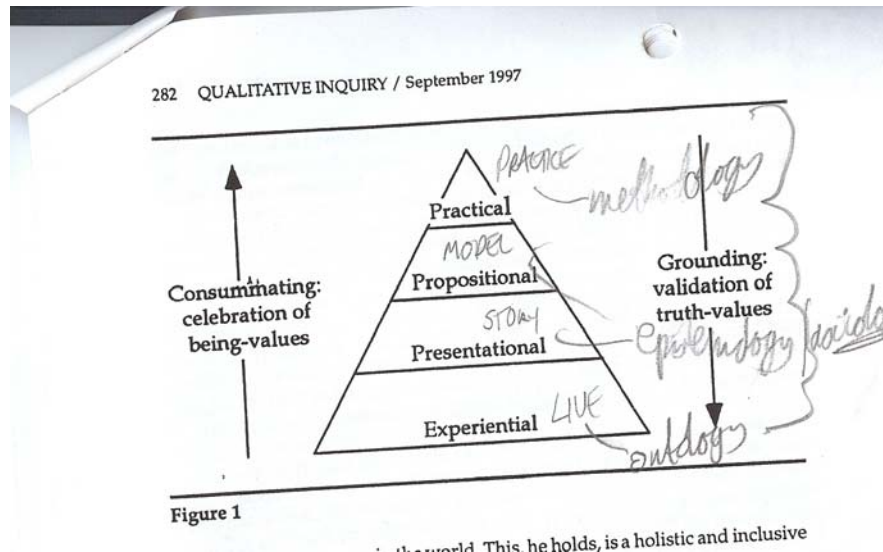
(I offer a version of it with my annotations, as a glimpse of my body/my hand-writing, surfacing another hidden transcript.)

By placing the 'experiential' at the root of knowing, we derive knowledge from our embodied, phenomenological experience, which can then be represented (through story for example) towards proposition and action (the 'practical' level). This potentially disrupts a hegemonic masculine tendency to disconnect propositional knowledge from our experience and indeed to value it *above* our experience; hence the tendency (my tendency) to enjoy the language the head over that of the heart. In my unfolding inquiring awareness, this has been one of my patterns to notice and to make choices about; indeed I am noticing it now, as I write this on a hot, sweaty (enjoyable) Saturday afternoon. It causes me to wonder how well I am appearing to you, the reader, how human and present, and therefore choosing to articulate my current, local, timely position and state? This is the 'critical subjectivity' to which Heron and Reason refer:

> *Thus, [critical subjectivity] is a close relative of Torbert's (1991) "consciousness in the midst of action"…It means we do not suppress our primary subjective experience but accept that it is our experiential articulation of being in the world, and as such is the ground of our knowing.* (Heron and Reason 1997) p282

So to bring my embodied experience as a man to this project, right here and right now, is itself to do some of this project's generative work. This is especially if I can show you some of the choices I make as a result.

In textual terms, one of the devices I developed to encourage my 'consciousness in the midst of action', and which evolved into the first drafts of the stories I use in this thesis, was dialogue. I found it to be a useful tool to maintain the inquiring intention to stay on the 'edge', keeping 'other voices' in the picture, and with regard to mentshlichkeit, (being a good man), maintaining an internal voice (from the source of my multiple selves – see practice 1) of challenge to the (potentially dominant, male?) voice that creeps in and takes over my own. In short, it becomes my own critical consciousness in action.

Here's an excerpt, one of the earliest examples of this practice. The context of this piece was to deconstruct a sense of discomfort I felt when challenged by a man who was a participant in a group I was facilitating at Roffey Park. You will see how the second (critical) voice doesn't wait to let me off the hook. It also shows you some more of the context for my work at Roffey Park. The first voice is 'mine'; the second voice is the critical 'foil'.

8/2/07
Framing: My intention in this practice: 'Audiencing' this piece explicitly to slow me down, provide a foil to write against, so that I can consider my motives and the sticky angles…the nooks and crannies, and 'hear' my own voice.

1: I want to talk about something that happened yesterday, it rocked me, and I think it also explores some of the ontological givens I have taken on board at Bath/CARPP.
2. Phew…! Ontological *whats*?!
1. Sorry, yes, I mean, is there a way of seeing, about inquiry, that I have turned into a bit of pedantry. Actually I am confused. Something I took for granted has been challenged and this has rocked me. Can you help?
2. Of course! Tell, me, what was the scene?
1. I was facilitating a mixed inquiry group, of clients and Roffey staff. The morning had gone really well. I felt on a high, after a good couple of weeks. Two good days with SB Council on leadership, then an 'advanced facilitation course', - I felt, you know, on top of my game.
2. So I notice a sense of performance there, of being at home, in your element – a touch of hubris perhaps?
1. Perhaps, a little. But it was nice to think I knew what I was talking about.
2. Dangerous!
1. Well, yes, it proved to be.
2. So this challenge – what happened? How did it disrupt this cosy scene of the morning?
1. I had prepared a couple of slides, you know, the 'four ways of knowing', that triangle of Heron and Reason
2. Their 'Extended Epistemology', yes, I've never been entirely sold on it.
1. Yes, well, as you know I love it. I really like the pyramid bit, how everything is based on the experiential. I showed this slide, as part of a discussion about 'tools of inquiry' and a kind of argument ensued.
2. I see, so this 'argument', it was bothering you
1. Yes, I found it frustrating. It didn't seem to be getting anywhere, and if I'm honest there was a man who was really pissing me off.
2. Ah – now we're getting somewhere!
1. He just exuded negativity
2. How so?
1. His body language, his voice, very aggressive. I wasn't the only one who thought it.
2. Does that make it true?!
1. No, of course, Fair point. But he was using language like, 'practical outputs' and 'measurables'
2. So you thought you were offering him a much 'better' paradigm!? Isn't 'practical outputs', also part of the triangle, at the top? You're sounding a little arrogant
1. That's a bit strong, but I did believe it would be better for the group if we were less 'in our heads' and more basing our inquiry on 'experience'
2. By offering them a *model*?

1. Ah. Yes. Fair comment.

2. So, that was the challenge?

1. No, the challenge was that he asked a question?

2. How awful!? Which was?

1. 'Why is it a hierarchy?'

2. Sorry?

1. That's what he asked: 'Why is it a hierarchy?'

2. That's it? It doesn't sound that bad! It's a good question.

1. Yes, but *how* he asked it. He went on about how I was privileging experience over theory and practice and this was just an age old argument of metaphysics over empiricism…blah, blah, blah.

2. He has a point.

1. Yes, I know. That's what's bothering me. But I also felt there was a 'man's game' going on, as if he wanted to show how clever he was…

2. Well, maybe he did, but maybe you did too…I mean, *you* are the one standing up, showing off the powerpoint slides. In that sort of situation, you should expect push back. You are the bloke with the big voice, the authority as a 'tutor'. He has a right to push against that.

1. Yes, that's true. And he does have a point, and I didn't know what to say. I mean, I couldn't explain why it was a hierarchy! The only thing I could think of saying is that experience is more 'real' than models…

2. But maybe not for him…

1. Yes, exactly. I think I've found out some of my own dogma. It becomes a political perspective. Like David Abram saying, we have 'lost' something because abstract language takes us away from imminent experience, but yet abstract language could equally be viewed as *adding* something. (Abram 1996). It is a question of balance.

2. So you agree with the man who challenged you?

1. Well, no, not entirely. But I have been struck by his challenge. I feel rattled. But I feel that if I believe in participation, real participation, I should be more open to this viewpoint. I want to challenge the bias towards privileging the theory, because it is key to the post modern critique of (white, male) 'reason', but I also want to learn, to be less of that very thing same (white male) bully *back*, and that's what I can see I was, a bit, as well. Part of me feels he just doesn't 'get it' but maybe, holding the other end of that rope, neither do I. But the thing that really caught me is how I felt when he challenged me: disorientated, shaky, like everything started to wobble, like Satre's 'nausea'

2. Excellent, you had 'ontology vertigo'!

1. Now you're being funny!

2. No, it's true, you had vertigo; a feeling of disorientation, like everything in your world that you thought was solid suddenly feels shaky and negotiable.

1. Anyway, I was left really reflecting on my own sense of certainty. Let's just suppose he wasn't having a go at me. Let's suppose he was genuinely expressing his own take on it? In his world, if he starts with the 'maps and models', maybe he wasn't trying to be difficult, but trying to make sense of it all? And if he was genuinely trying to participate, who was being the 'difficult' one? Perhaps the dogma is mine?

2. So what did you do?

1. Well, I went back to Heron and Reason, and re-read their paper, and I found this bit:

2. Do you *have* to?!

1. Yes! Look:

> *"Our work with cooperative inquiry, in mindfulness practices and ceremony, and our attempts at aware everyday living, all convince us that experiential encounter with the presence of the world is the ground*

of our being and knowing. This encounter is prior to language and art, although it can be symbolized in language and art."
(Heron and Reason 1997)
2. Right, well, let's move on then…
1. Wait! There's more:
"This, we argue, is not a dissociated metaphysical statement, rather it is an expression of a radical empiricism, that can be tested through experiential inquiry, and we invite others, both sceptical and sympathetic, to inquire with us as to the validity of our perspective."
(Heron and Reason 1997) p276
2. What strikes me about that is the fact that you didn't seem to really *invite* him.
1. Exactly! I realize it isn't a *given,* it is strongly held vector, if you like, and although I hold it deeply (as Heron and Reason do) it may be useful to see it as a personal plea, indeed an invitation, as they say. How do I get better at *inviting* participation?

The full dialogue was six pages long, and I have chosen a relevant extract. As well as the developing practice of critical subjectivity, through dialogue, it shows my deepening understanding of Heron and Reasons' perspective. It also shows how learning about my impact, as an 'authority figure', bound up with my own masculinity, was an essential practice in the development of mentshlichkeit. Later I also talk about how story was an answer to that question about how I can invite participation.

I remember that writing the dialogue felt like opening a door – as if it provided me, as a practice, with a consciousness that directly challenges my own blind spots, vital in the practice of inquiry towards mentshlichkeit. It was also fun. Weaving this practice into stories opened up new possibilities for this critical consciousness, allowing these 'other voices' to speak directly to/through me. In these early dialogues, I didn't ponder who these critical voices were. They just seemed like another voice of my own, flexing a muscle of internal critique. Later, however, drawing on a Jewish subjectivity, I talk more about other sources of these voices, and their link with mentshlichkeit.

This practice reminds me of what Gregory Bateson says about metalogues:

A metalogue is a conversation about some problematic subject. This conversation should be such that not only do the participants discuss the problem but the structure of the conversation as a whole is also relevant to the same subject. Only some of the conversations here presented achieve that double format.
Notably, the history of evolutionary theory is inevitably a metalogue between man [sic] *and nature, in which the creation and interaction of ideas must necessarily exemplify evolutionary process. (Bateson 1972)* p2

Using such practices in research, we side-step the claims of traditional research towards foundationalist, universal knowledge. This doesn't de-value the subjective research process – it merely opens up a different space of knowledge, one that is grounded in the relationship between the writer, the reader, and their experiences. This is what Reason and Heron call 'practical knowing': simply 'knowing how to do things' (Heron and Reason 1997). It is about the reader's reflection, choices and action (in the midst of their ironies and discomfort), as they are in informed by the critical subjectivity, the presented choices and action of the writer (struggling with their own parallel 'edge'). Therefore, I am inviting you to judge the quality of my own choices and action, and see if these inform your own. The extent to which they do is a measure of the quality of this practice and the writing it inspires.

Like Bateson, I hope that the metalogues I develop in the course of this inquiry have that double format. I also suspect that they don't always quite achieve it, this is my aspiration. It is congruent with another aspiration: that what I present here is part of a wider, transpersonal conversation. This leads me onto the next practice.

Practice 4 - Reflection *with* the World

Learning to observe, reflect and write have been intrinsic practices in developing a more inquiring masculinity.

In our inquiry seminars at the University of Bath, the distinction was often made between 'show' and 'tell' – the former being the need to describe with rich detail before interpretation, the latter being the interpretation in relation to the 'show'. This relates to what is sometimes described as the 'ladder of inference' (Senge, Kleiner et al. 1994): the idea that we end up noticing what we want to see and ignoring data that doesn't fit with our worldview. It is important for the participatory inquirer to understand their biases, as part of developing this critical subjectivity, and learning to write in a way that prevents the author getting too much in the way.

I see this as about developing a kind of a journalistic, participatory sensitivity. It is a necessary practice in this type of inquiry – where one is present *enough* in the story for it to have hold the reader, and yet not too present that it becomes only *about the author's* story. I think it relates to the idea that Bateson was expressing above, that what we can engage in is a metalogue, a conversation between us and nature. We can therefore see the stories we tell as reports of a kind of conversation with the world, as part of a participatory consciousness.

Rather than just 'telling' you about this, I can 'show' you an example. In this piece, written as part of developing this critical subjectivity, I am exploring the experience of arriving in my job at Roffey Park, to take up my role as a consultant there in the summer of 2006:

> *24/8/06*
> *I was walking through the forest, more on my mind that in it as Bill Bryson once said. Bothered by coming here, wondering if I'd made the right decision. I felt a bit kicked about, not by anything other than the pace of things, the seeming attachment to busy-ness that I felt drawn to join in with. I will have to watch that. I suppose I am a bit scared about how easy it would be for me to jump into that fast flowing stream, and I wonder about that, for me, for those I care about and even for the people we work with – how much capacity will we have for them if we are so full of us and our own energy? I mumbled and grumbled to myself as I walked on through the trees.*
>
> *I knew there was a lake along the main path somewhere, as I had seen it on the map. The path was quite wide, more like a track, with the occasional pot-hole filled by the recent rains. It was also light-coloured, with a bright chalk shining though wet clay, so it gave quite a good impression of the yellow brick road as it wound down the hill. The trees on each side were a mixture of newish pines and older forest creatures; gnarled oaks and beeches that make an English forest. The wind hushed through their limbs. I began to breathe.*
>
> *All at once the lake appeared; an amazingly sudden sighting – green and lush, with vibrant lily pads flowering with the brightest of yellows. It was quite*

stunning. A few trees had been cleared (I noticed only later, for some telephone poles), and I could walk right to the waters edge, where an oak, growing out of the bank, had sometime past collapsed over the water, so it appeared now to grow straight out from the depths.

I walked around the edge to where a small dam held the lake back from a gully. I wondered what I should do to take it all in; the usual head talk. 'Should I do my tai chi form, should I try a yoga sun stretch, or perhaps the four-fold way salute…?' And then it occurred to me just stop, watch, look, see, take it all in. That's what I did. I saw the colour of the water, a lime-green in places dropping to a dark, almost blackness in others. The clouds and small patches of blue sky cut diagonally across the scene. A small disturbance in the water nearby turned out to be the wake of a large fish, whose shadow lurked a purple-brown, skimming just beneath the surface like a ghost. Further off a loud splash of spray marked where something might have been suddenly snapped up whilst dozing on the surface. Through the trees, a small disturbance turned out to be two young deer following their path. I gasped it all in, drank and it drank me and I wondered where I began and it ended and I got to the edge of the beginning of the point where the distinction didn't make sense anymore. 'Just be yourself', they say and yet who am I really? Where do I begin and everything else ends?'

This must have been a minute or two and then I was aware of myself again, needing to go back for normal ego states and lunch. I turned perhaps a bit too fast, back towards the path and there was a flash at the corner of my eye, a sort of whooshing noise and I started. I stopped in my tracks and felt something come to me; an impulse to speak some words, not entirely my own, and they came and said, out loud through my own lips, slowly, as if struggling to speak through some alien device they hadn't yet mastered: 'don't…go.'

This quality of noticing, of engaging with the immanent world is an important skill in an inquiry project. It suggests our attention to a phenomenological awareness that opens us up to different perspectives and possibilities. In my thinking here, I have been influenced by the writing of David Abram, in his book the *Spell of the Sensuous:*

By bouncing from one to the other-form scientific determinism to spiritual idealism and back again – contemporary discourse easily avoids the possibility that both the perceiving being and the perceived are of the same stuff, that the perceiver and the perceived are interdependent and in some sense even the reversible aspects of a common animate element, or Flesh, that is at once both sensible and sensitive. (Abram 1996) p67

In this sense, Abram's work is very reminiscent of Bateson's:

The total self-corrective unit which processes information, or, as I say, "thinks" and "acts" and "decides", is a system whose boundaries do not at all coincide with the boundaries either of the body or what is popularly called the "self" or "consciousness". "(Bateson 1972) p319

In practice terms, we pay attention to the quality of our seeing, as I put it in the passage above, to stop, watch, look, see. The flow of this passage contains within it how this becomes a skill of attention, from watching, which still has the flavours of the watcher in it, to look, which is less so, to see, which is more about what is being seen than the seer.

(Another example of this in Appendix Two: *Praise Song for the Day*. This story has another significance which re-emerges in the Conclusion.)

I would argue that learning to reflect in this way, *with* the World, rather than as a dispassionate observer of it, is not only a useful skill in the development of good storytelling. It is also helpful in post-modern mentshlichkeit, undermining the separation of an atomised self and a (dead) world that is the signature of an enlightenment-derived, 'reasonable' hegemonic masculinity.

Practice 5 – Practice of Persistence

Judi Marshall talks about learning to live life as inquiry is amongst other things about knowing when to 'persist and desist' *(Marshall 1999).* I take this to be an active practice in writing of persisting until the story-making process becomes too 'personal' i.e. where it loses the possibility of empathy and connection with others. At that point, we can choose to desist. Following from this, I once heard Peter Reason say during as lecture at the University of Bath that he felt there was little difference between learning to be an inquirer and learning to live a good life.

This is echoed by Fisher, Torbert et al, who discuss 'seeking the good life':

> *We propose that a good way to approach the good life is to see it as composed of four primary goods – namely, good money, good work, good friends, and good questions. (Fisher and Torbert 1995) p150*

The two that really chime with me in relation to the quality of my inquiry work here are Good work and Good Questions. Good work is about *'the development of craft-like skills and aesthetic judgement (whether in the realm of materials, of relationships, or language). (Fisher and Torbert 1995) p153*

I see this as in a similar vein to what Reason talks about in his participatory worldview, and it draws on Bateson (and others) in its search of the criteria of feeling, connection and relationship in the judgement of quality. This has been at the essential level of my inquiry work, not in the least because it enables my hoped for transgression of the rule of hegemonic masculinity to privilege the transaction over the relationship. So how well one feels drawn in, related to, co-created with is an important mark of quality in the development of an inquiring masculinity.

Essential to this process is the framing of good questions:

> *What are the questions guiding your life (or that you are trying to evade)? What is the single question that integrates those different questions? Are you asking it every day? Every moment? Are you fully alive – let alone living the good life when you are not tasting your experience? Are you embalmed within your thoughts right now or are you tasting your thinking along with your embodiment, outcomes, and your changing quality of attending?(Fisher and Torbert 1995) p159*

In my inquiry, quality is measured not just in what you see here but in terms of the everyday impact, the slow melting of these questions into my life. Carl Rogers (quoted by *(Moustakas 1981)*) suggested that it was disciplined attention to good questions that we needed more that the teaching of particular methodologies – that this *was* the methodology required in challenging times, replete with 'wicked' questions– those complex, systemic problems that can't be answered by a logical, or critical approach. (Grint 2005)

It isn't always easy to show how these questions have become so ingrained in me that it is difficult to know what it was like beforehand, without them, but the telling of the story of Jim Porter in Chapter 4, drawing heavily on my own life experience, should go some way to show the challenges, doubled-ness and complexity in this work whilst maintaining this determined stance.

In the end, I wouldn't want to argue that my cleverness has been the most outstanding feature of all of this work – rather its quality may be best measured in terms of the determination and persistence with these questions of masculinity and gender that it demonstrates.

Practice 6 - Practice of Biculturalism

Gloria Gordon introduces the concept of bi-cultural competence, one that involves an exploration of the historical legacies one faces and the tensions this can provide in one's own subjectivity, especially when identifying with a marginalised culture. 'Bi-cultural' refers to the tension (and possibility of action) between the private, historical culture one inherits and the public, dominant culture that pervades:

> *The oppositional relationship that exists between Africa and Britain had existed in my psyche. The denial, the blocking out of the inhumane treatment of enslaved Africans in the Caribbean and of the DoEAs [Descendants of enslaved Africans] in the white British psyche had also taken place in my own mind-world. The critical task in terms of becoming consciously bi-culturally competent is in the understanding and combining of these three cultural components into an integrated whole in my own psychological world. (Gordon 2007) p136*

Using this notion of bicultural competence, looking into my Jewish heritage and considering its impact on my action, has became important practice. The inquiry into my own private story meant taking in a wider sweep, towards my historical culture, a necessary practice of increasing bicultural awareness. (Gordon 2007). This landed with me during the early period of my developing inquiry, which coincided in a timely way, in the winter or 2005, with the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Such timely occurrences are in the nature of this type of knowledge, and not mere 'coincidences' (Toulmin 1990). I have documented the relationship between familial, Jewish and masculinity questions and the story-telling practice I used to interweave them, in my previous submissions at Diploma and MPhil Transfer level.

I am informed in my inquiry into being a 'good man' by my own private/historical self, the self that is 'community made', and as Jonathan Boyarin points out, there is something quintessentially communal about the Jewish identity which challenges the dominance of an individualistic, hegemonic masculinity. In Boyarin's view, the marks on the body of the Jewish man (such as wearing the head covering or *kippa*, and circumcision) bear witness to the fact that a Jewish man is always part of a community, and can never be 'self-made'. (Boyarin 1996)

Bringing that private, bi-cultural self into the public light is a matter of language as much as action. Hence the deliberate, bi-cultural titling of this thesis: putting mentshlichkeit, the 'art of the mentsh', into the title. I am practicing the art of bringing the private into the mainstream, surfacing a 'hidden transcript', and allowing the scrutiny of the hegemonic and hopefully acting to challenge and disrupt its smooth surface.

Other Voices – Mystery, Danger, Opportunity

But I also invoke my Yiddish inheritance because it offers me another counterpoint to the singular goodness of (male) reason and another worldview which is more nuanced in its search for progress. In this work, the *sheydim*, (demons), do not get in our way; they occasionally possess us, trick us, test us, and maybe even help us.

You will notice then, in the storytelling, I have been drawing on different voices as useful friends in the text as we go. There are generally compassionate voices, which, Zaddik-like (a Zaddik is a 'righteous' one) help us spot the practices that help in our political purpose of developing an inquiring masculinity. There are others, which like *Sheydim* try to disrupt and trip up the

> **My Grandmother's Voice**
> If she were still alive, at this point, my grandmother, on hearing the word *sheydim,* would mutter three spits (*'Peh! Peh! Peh!'*) and the Yiddish word '*keynehore*!' (literally: 'to ward off the evil eye'). In other words, to invoke the *sheydim* is to invite trouble - in Yiddish, to name something is potentially to invoke its presence. She would say:
> - "*Peh Peh Peh! - Don't call them by their name! If you have to, call them 'sitre akhre', 'The other side'! Keynehore!"*
> - "*Ok Grandma!"*
> So to avoid trouble, I invoke only those that can really help our purpose. You cannot respectfully draw on a subjectivity without accepting some of its rules of play.

smooth reason (of the white, male voice), which may creep in and haunt us. For my grandmother's sake (see an example, from her, opposite), I call this commentary 'other voices', which, like post-it notes on a document, serve to offer another view. To judge whether these voices are 'good' or 'bad' may play into the hands of the very hegemonic masculine '*dybbuk*' they are presented to unmask. A *dybbuk* is a particularly powerful spirit, which *'has left one body or being in order to settle in another.'* (Wex 2005) p95). (OK, Grandma, I'll say nothing more for now).

As part of the process of critical subjectivity, sometimes they speak, inviting dialogue, surfacing a hidden transcript, or just, like my grandma above, expect me be a good boy and do what I am told. These 'other voices', then, are just another 'colour'; a touch of queerness in the text, that suggests the moment to moment struggle for mentshlichkeit:

> *Far from perfect, a* mentsh *is a flawed fighter. And that's' exactly what we as queer Jews are: flawed fighters in a world that can be rather discouraging but which also grants us gifts of beauty, light, and discover each and every moment. (Brown 2004) pxix*

You may have noticed that '*mentsh*', like the word '*mensch*' in German, can also mean 'person', rather than man. This is a sign of the patriarchal nature of my Yiddish/Jewish inheritance, where to be a person was to be measured alongside a kind of hegemonic masculine standard. My own background is not immune from the spectre and I don't wish to reify Judaism, (and the inherent patriarchy of its father-like God). Indeed, if I am searching for a new type of inquiring masculinity here, I am simultaneously searching for an evolving expression of Jewishness as well. At times, this journey is about both.

If there are 'disciplines' of masculinity (where we take on in our bodies the haunting of the hegemonic spectre), there are also disciplines of Judaism (for example, where we are commanded to live according to the 613 *Mitzvot*, 'commandments' or 'acts of observance'). Both disciplines may need some resisting, if we are to be allowed to flourish in our own autonomy. Bringing my private self into the public discourse, I have

to hold both the inspirational (generative) qualities of my background along with the patriarchal, conservative (mentsh = man/not woman) roots. The art of *action* research is to seek intentional action towards the change we want to see/be in the world in all our/its messiness. In the next chapter I explore my performativity in the arena of Jewishness too.

These other voices, then, serve in this parallel purpose. It is a Talmudic principle. The Talmud evolved before and during the 1ˢᵗ Millennium after Jesus, as an active commentary (partly as a response to emerging Christianity), like a series of 'post-it' notes on the original five books of Moses, or '*Torah*'.

All of these practices, then (and others which I show in the course of the stories that unfold) suggest that inquiring into mentshlichkeit is a model for a type of work which may have the power to challenge, upset and disrupt the spectre of hegemonic masculinity that may come to haunt us, more often than not. It is not *the* way by *my* way, and as such may serve as an encouragement for others to find their own way. To return to the debate about the personal vs the political, this is work all men can do, with attention to both the critique of male power, and sensitivity to the subjectivity of ordinary men's lives.

But it is work that has unintended as well as unintended consequences, dangers as well as opportunities. In inviting the *sitre akhre,* other voices, in to play, we have to deal with their unknown intentions, and things may emerge that we cannot know about, until we stumble upon them. As I was writing about those 'other voices', unexpected things happened. For example, I lost a whole day's work by not saving the document on my computer. Normally I am scrupulous about this practice. Somehow this spoke to me as a warning. It seemed that these *sheydim* (gulp) might be playing out their game, once again. But I persisted, and in hope of the work of mentshlichkeit stumbled my way through, perhaps turning this setback into another opportunity; to wonder about the mystery in this work, reminding me of my unknowing as well as continuing to prompt me towards the clarity of knowing.

It seems fitting then, to finish here with another voice, to *ask permission* to stay in this territory. As I pondered this, my grandfather's voice seemed to speak, and so I offer him the last word, for now.

My grandfather's voice:

"But what is gender? Why does it matter so much? Surely men are men and women are women and that's just it? Be a fish be a fish be a fish…"
"Well just look how many fish there are!"
"What nonsense is this?"
"Do we ever really look at people, look at them, their bodies, how they hold themselves, talk, walk?"
"Look at bodies! What kind of meshuganah?!" [meshuganah = crazy person]
"All I'm saying is that there's such a range within, as much as between, what men and women are. It is a performance, like a stage. We think we know the lines, and the moves, and the songs and dances. We are supposed to know them. We mustn't change the play. People don't like it. But it is just a play. I just want to know how far I can sing a different song."
"It never bothered me."
"Were you a happy man, grandfather?"
"What's to be happy, feh!?"
"I just wondered what else you would like to have done, you know, on the stage?"
"Listen, where I came from, you were lucky just to have part, without some mamzer putting one on you.[mamzer = bastard] My papa was nearly shot by the Russians, you know."
"I know. This may all seem a bit crazy. But were you happy. Would you have liked a different role?"
"I loved to sing, you know as a boy. And dance. But when I got older, there wasn't much chance. We just got on with it."
"For me, you just got on with it."
"Yes, for you, for the next generations. So you can go off and do your meshuganah things. Like looking at bodies! Ach! Hob a zorick! Geh Gesund! [I should worry! Go in health!] It's not my world."