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Emotions and reflexivity in feminised education action research

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The paper addresses contemporary relations between emotions, gender and feminist action research. Starting from analysis of the increasing emotionalisation of everyday life, it explores the quasi-feminist—or what the author calls 'feminised'—forms of incitement to reflexive confession that are increasingly gaining favour within professional and higher educational contexts and draws on literatures and sets of debates that inform education action research, including: childhood and governmentality; feminist research; and international development critiques. The author proposes that reflexivity as an educational and research practice has come to stand in for, and thereby limits, the contemporary focus on 'participation' to reduce its radical collaborative and action agenda and instead incite researchers to work on ourselves, and only on ourselves. The paper warns against underestimating the speed and flexibility by which neo-liberalism absorbs and co-opts creative strategies—such as reflexivity—for its subversion, and returns them to old-style individualism.

Keywords: *Development; Emotional Literacy; Gender; Neo-liberalism; Participation; Racialisation*

In this paper I attempt to characterise contemporary entanglements of emotions, gender and feminist action research, arguing that they belie contrary political tendencies. My principal target is the quasi-feminist—or what I will call 'feminised'—forms of incitement to reflexive confession that are increasingly gaining favour within professional and higher educational contexts. My primary address here is at a rather 'in-house' and mundane level of institutional activity, but, as I will show, the political stakes are higher, wider and deeper. Hence I am taking a rather broad understanding of action research that is neither purely action oriented nor methodological. Indeed it is a feature of 'reflexive' approaches to research that the topic vs. process and theory vs. practice polarities are seen as fluid and interconnected. It is—in part—through such an attention to questions of process and participation in research that emotions

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have emerged as a key feature of methodological discussions. However, as I will illustrate, this preoccupation itself reflects wider cultural-political currents whose ambiguities require re-evaluation.

I am dealing here with the politics of methodological framework and its wider cultural resonances, rather than technical features of method. By way of clarification, I take reflexivity to broadly identify research that refuses the scientistic positioning of the neutral observer, to instead highlight and explore the nature of researcher involvement as a relevant resource—extending to the broader claim that objectivity is a specific (culturally masculine) form of subjectivity, rather than the absence of subjectivity (e.g. Hollway, 1989).[1] Secondly, by feminisation I am referring to the ways conditions and characteristics associated with women are now being claimed by men. While the term was originally associated with debates on the feminisation of poverty, its applications have now generalised precisely through the ways shifts in the organisation of labour have come to value 'people-skills' within knowledge-based economies. While its subject status—as claimed or attributed—remains unclear (Burman, 2004), perhaps precisely because of this, its circulation proliferates. As will become clear, my argument rests upon the ways feminisation is not to be confused with feminism. Moreover, I will be highlighting other consequences of such engenderings—in particular for covert forms of racialisation. By racialisation I mean implicit or explicit ways that issues of racialised position are either deployed or alternatively ignored with the effect of perpetuating racial stereotypes and failing to challenge power hierarchies and inequalities organised around racism.

I understand feminist action research as a key site for the convergence of concerns relating emotions, action and research.[2] My case rests on five key, interrelated claims. First, feminist educational research and action research share a joint commitment to transformation that is in part understood as realised through conceptualising the nature of researcher intervention. Second, current cultural-political attention to emotions (whether in the form of 'emotional literacy' or 'reflexivity') have been hailed as progressive (and even 'feminist') to the extent that they have linked public and private, and warranted analysis of the intimacies and dilemmas of researcher experiential accounts. Yet, third, the emotional turn imports a fundamental ambiguity between care and control, which sometimes turns into abuse—and thus may be less cosy and friendly than is usually assumed. Fourth, like an attention to 'emotions', the 'reflexive' turn relies upon 'rights-based' agendas and discourses of 'participation' but, precisely through these, it is vulnerable to the charge of furthering structures of individualisation. Together these conditions, fifth, incite researchers to work upon themselves as the site of 'participation' in research—reducing and limiting the site of their interventions so as not only to include their subjectivity but even to confine themselves to this.

Obviously I am exaggerating such tendencies in order to draw attention to some hidden problems that may be masked by the generally positive hue reflexive approaches are acquiring. It might be argued that the critique I am putting forward is misplaced because I am both overestimating the acceptance of reflexive approaches at a moment when Randomised Controlled Trials and 'evidence-based practice' are

increasingly structuring social and, correspondingly, research policies, as a particular research variant of our fundamentalist times. Moreover my focus on feminist research in this could be seen as particularly misplaced, when this is only and only precariously now acquiring some credibility—reminiscent of how claims for the dissolution of the (modernist) subject coincided with the moment where women were just beginning to gain subject status (Jackson, 1992/93). Here I should make clear that I see feminist research as having early identified some of these issues, and that my argument here is rather with a feminisation that—as should become clear—has little to do with feminisms but is in danger of being associated with them. Indeed feminists, especially black and lesbian feminists, have pointed out how such moves threaten to reinstate the normalisations and corresponding marginalisations of the traditional liberal bourgeois subject, albeit now cross-dressed in more feminine/feminised garb (c.f. Carby, 1982; Amos & Parmar, 1984; see also Burman, 1998a). This paper draws on those debates to focus specifically on emotions.

In order to warrant these claims, this paper is structured into two parts. The first part analyses the conditions that give rise to the emotionalisation of public life, while the second explores how these themes have entered educational practices. Method-ologically, I am working across several literatures and sets of debates that inform education action research, including: childhood and governmentality; feminist research; and international development critiques. Precisely because the child–social relation has been the site of scrutiny for both national and international development projects, critical debates in both literatures to help inform each. My disciplinary back-ground in (developmental) psychology—as a discipline structured by methodological concerns—forms a particular vantage point for formulating this critique.

The analysis here could also be seen as an expression of the recently emerging discussions of 'emotional geographies', as a way of importing attention to the broader contexts that give rise to specific subjective forms and relationships.[3] Bondi *et al.* (2005) define the project of emotional geographies as 'attempts to understand emotion—experientially and conceptually—in terms of its socio-*spatial* mediation and articulation rather than as entirely interiorised subjective mental states' (p. 3). I am taking the discussion of reflexivity as an expression of the three themes they high-light: 'the location of emotion in both bodies and places, the emotional relationality of people and environments, and representations of emotional geographies' (p. 4).

Emotionalisation of public life

In an early treatment, Squire (2001) called for an attention to the increasing emotion-alisation of public life as indicative of the rise of a specular society, in the sense of the greater appetite for emotional display. While some critics claim that—far from validating or warranting emotional experience—such displays indicate a general banalisation and trivialisation of emotional experience, she points out that attempts to evaluate the authenticity of such emotional exhibitions misses the point, which is to investigate for whom these displays function and in what ways. While my focus in this paper is on the incitement to render public accounts of emotional experience

within 'middle level' institutional arenas of production and consumption (such as schools and universities), nevertheless these count as public renderings of the private. They even typically retain their stamp as individual. Yet these individual emotional accounts function for evaluation (especially assessment) purposes. In this context, issues of 'genuineness' (whether attributed or experienced) arise in the sense of the 'fit' between expressive and performance demands. As Foucault noted:

> the main characteristic of our political rationality is the fact that this integration of the individuals in a community or in a totality results from a constant correlation between an increasing individualization and the reinforcement of this totality. From this point of view we can understand why the modern political rationality is permitted by the antimony between law and order. (Foucault, 1988, p. 161–162)

Now I admit that I could be seen to be addressing a pseudo-problem. The—usually implicit—link between feminist and contemporary emotionalist discourses is therapy. For it is through a therapeutic discourse—of emotional expression, and emotions as expressive of (a usually individual) interiority—that feminist and humanist claims to the value of emotions (as a place to start an inquiry, but clearly not the endpoint) have gained much of their legitimacy. Indeed Rustin (2003) in his review of the Tavistock Clinic approach to emotional learning acknowledges the debt that the rise of such approaches owes to cultural transformations brought about by feminism. The reworking of the public–private divide has arisen in part through feminist activism, and in part through the permeation of psychoanalysis into culture—especially through practices around education. Yet, as Walkerdine's (1980) celebrated analysis of a primary school teacher's account of how and why she took up (or rather, failed to take up) her male pupils' challenge to her authority shows, a psychotherapeutic commitment to expression and release of emotions can serve to naturalise gendered aggression and proscribe intervention.

The feminism–therapy relation is a particularly vexed one, especially so in the context of the rise of psychotherapeutic culture generally as part of an ever-expanding 'psy complex' (Ingleby, 1985; Rose, 1985; Parker, 1997). Indeed, some may regard feminist influence as merely an epiphenomenon of such cultural developments, although my view is that this would be to rewrite history. As I have explored elsewhere, further difficulties arise in disentangling feminist educational and therapeutic agendas—although institutional demands of assessment and evaluation ultimately clarify these—in favour of more traditional agendas (Burman, 2001a, b). At any rate, we should note how the categories of 'feminist' and 'therapist' are not mutually exclusive.

So, while multiple philosophical models and approaches informed child-centred pedagogies (e.g. Singer, 1992), nevertheless their inscription within educational policies—as focused on the achievement of freedom through the development of autonomous reason—has paved the way for both the individualisation of both the 'back-to-basics' vocationalism of the 1980s (Avis, 1991) and the flexibility of the neo-liberal subject from the 1990s. The secular narrative of salvation structured into the child-centred approach performed that characteristically modern elision of society and individual to privilege the child as the unit of social improvement. There

is nothing new about a focus on the regulation of emotions since, in Popkewitz and Bloch's (2001) terms, the 'soul' has been the site of the 'administration of freedom' from the early twentieth century. Moreover the pedagogical subject of the twenty-first century has been widely heralded as being reworked via discourses of childhood and development to both collapse childhood into adulthood and at the same time to extend features of childhood across our lives. 'The whole child' of post-World War Two welfare and educational reforms has turned 'lifespan', as we are exhorted to become flexible, incomplete subjects committed to 'lifelong learning'. Indeed the 'postmodern condition' has long been associated with a subjectivity endowed with child-like qualities—of play, spontaneity and irrationality (Burman, 1992, 1998b): 'Today's cosmopolitan self is constructivist, active, entrepreneurial, and works for the self's capacity and potentialities through a perpetual intervention in one's life' (Popekwitz & Bloch, 2001, p. 109).

In accounting for this, Fendler (2001) draws on Deleuze's (1992) analysis to argue for a shift from Foucault's analysis of 'societies of discipline' to 'societies of control'. She points out how the three aspects Deleuze associates with 'control' societies tie in with developments in educational policy. Firstly, the increase in frequency and amount of monitoring he identified is reflected in the move towards greater continuous assessment in all three sectors of education. Secondly, heterogeneity of standards is played out in the myriad accountabilities now reported of schools and multiple 'stakeholders' in education (not only parents and local authorities, but also cultural, faith-based and—last but certainly not least—business 'communities'). Thirdly, the impossibility of completion is reflected within discourses not only of 'lifelong learning' but also 'continuing professional development'. Such analyses offer critical resources to understand contemporary incitements to interaction and process within educational and social research, through current exhortations to be participatory, reflexive and 'emotionally literate' (see also Tamboukou, 2003).

Is it good to talk?

In early December 2004 a child died in a Partington school (in Greater Manchester) after a 'lunchtime altercation' with two other children. Even before it was established that the death was not due to any inflicted injuries (indeed the two boys arrested were later released without charge), the press reported all children being gathered for a special school assembly and sent home with letters for their parents; while the radio commentary noted that all the pupils were offered counselling. This moment speaks to a fateful intertextuality with the murder of Abdul Iqbal Ullah at Burnage High School in September 1986, and the controversial inquiry which pointed not only to the ways staff antagonisms became played out over resistance to a dogmatic application of multiculturalism (in line with then prevalent models of Racism Awareness Training, see Sivanandan, 1985) that thereby supported a culture of racist and gendered violence, but also claimed that the failure of the school to respond to the crisis in a way that addressed the anxieties and fears of the pupils paved the way for subsequent disorder (MacDonald *et al*., 1989).[4]

Significantly, in proposals that (to my knowledge) have never been fully implemented, the report also called for the setting up of democratic consultation structures within the school, such as school–student representative councils.[5] What did attract focus was the criticism of failing to acknowledge and engage with the school community's shock and grief. Not doing this, it was suggested, fuelled perception of individual white culpability, thus inciting further racialised polarisation and conflict that broke out in the months following the murder. The main effect of the MacDonald Report was, perversely, to render explicit reference to antiracism and multiculturalism nearly impossible for the next 15 years (at least within the Manchester Education Authority). Arguably such concerns are being reasserted in de-politicised form through the current policy and media focus on 'bullying' and 'self esteem'. So it seems that the culture of therapeutic intervention as prophylactic remains. That is, political reform is passed over in favour of incitement for emotional expression as a way of dealing with collective mobilisation or upheaval. In this context such emotional warrants function as safety valves reminiscent of Marcuse's (1964) analysis of repressive desublimation to contain that which they foster expression of by virtue of the politically delimited character. Similar cautionary arguments have been put forward in relation to the rush to provide trauma counselling and other psychological interventions in the context of international humanitarian emergencies (Summerfield, 1998; Rodriguez Mora, 2003; Palmary, 2005). The paternalism structured through such aid interventions is bolstered by the imputation of psychological vulnerabilities in ways that work to discount survivors' assessments of their needs in favour of those of western experts that shift the focus from material provision to psychological care.

Currently suicides and abuse in prisons and other institutions of care/control/ correction are attracting increasing concern. For example, the failure of public institutions in their 'duty of care' formed a segue with the shocking photos of Iraqis tortured by US servicemen and women (see also *The Guardian*, 2005). The fragmentation of the state, with the subcontracting of services, produces both 'blind spots' of monitoring (in the name of business autonomy) and corresponding demands for increasing regulation. In the 1990s the system of 'control and restraint' was renamed 'care and responsibility' in the 'special' psychiatric hospital system[6] (but apparently has recently reverted back to its previous 'meaning'); it seems that we are beginning to see the responsibility as lying not only with the patient/inmate/'looked after' young person. Other disclosures that challenge the supposed care of state institutions are now extending to professional groups—doctors,[7] psychiatrists[8] and of course the possibilities that convicted sex offenders could be working in our schools.[9] [10] [11]

To summarise my argument so far, I have been taking a dual focus, firstly on feminisation—with the analogy with the feminisation of labour, in the sense that emotionality has now been extended from female bodies to be claimed as a property of contemporary culture. Secondly on racialisation—where there has been a shift from a concern with the subjectivity of the abused to the abuser—and in a post 9/11 context there has been a widespread claim to victimhood. All this invites the question—whose emotions are centralised by this? And whether such an attention reinscribes prevailing privilege by shifting emphasis from the emotional state of those

who suffer racism to its beneficiaries. Further, the intermediary term which links these two currents (of feminisation and racialisation) is a relentless individualisation.

Sacrificing ourselves for love?

Politicians too are taking up the 'emotional' mantle. The (double) demise of David Blunkett, first in November 2004 as Home Secretary, then in October 2005 as Minister for Work and Pensions, marked a new turning point in British politics. Reiterating the trajectory of New Labour, the former head of the 'socialist republic of Sheffield', once in power, turned into right-wing immigration hardliner (with one significant exception).[12] While media coverage obsessed over his private life as relevant or irrelevant to his political conduct, significantly his 'error'[13] left intact, rather than throwing into question, the apparatus of immigration control—thus highlighting how exposure of individual malpractice confirms rather than challenges exclusionary systems.[14] Instead popular narratives focused on how personal engagement had prevailed over abstract, public duty.

With his tabloid-style lament: 'what I was prepared to sacrifice, for that little boy' (quoted in *The Guardian*, 2004), Blunkett joined the ranks of other (male) cabinet ministers who resigned supposedly to devote 'quality time' to their families, only to return a few years later (albeit for a short time) to even greater power (as with his successor Charles Clarke). In this case, Blunkett's claim to 'family' resided in an offspring from an extra-marital affair, yet it didn't seem to matter that he was trying to revive or contest a finished love affair. Nor that he was contesting paternity in the most child-insensitive way by pursuing a legal case for compulsory genetic testing (which ironically subsequently proved that he was not the father). Or rather this did matter, and it was precisely because of this emotional aberration that indulgence seemed to be being called for. Even his visual disability became another affective personal attribute mobilised to mitigate his misdemeanours. Personal (albeit misplaced) commitment appeared to hold sway over dereliction of duty. But his appeal was compelling: 'what sort of human being, what sort of politician do people want? [Someone] who would actually put their career, put their public persona before actually doing what a decent human being would want to do?' (*The Guardian*, 2004).

Is this really the same as feminist claims for the partiality of politics? Or is it rather an example of the personalisation of politics and the spectacular emotionalisation of everyday life? For certain kinds of privileging of personal matters over public life attract covert public approval rather than reprehension. Androgynising the self-help image of the 'co-dependent' woman 'addicted' to her destructive male partner, it seems we are 'sacrificing ourselves for love'. The social policy agenda on the emotional vulnerabilities of (white) men, emphasising their vulnerability to depression, takes on new meanings. Indeed (now questionable) claims made by Number 10 in early February 2006 of a conspiracy by Fathers4Justice to abduct the son of the Prime Minister, Leo Blair, dramatise the victim status and feminised position assumed by the British premier—significantly at a political moment where he was otherwise positioned as aggressor in the Iraq war.[15]

Thus we appear to inhabit a political sphere where individual emotional responses are put forward as more humane than, and preferable to, abstract policy. More than this, it is men's proclivities that are now at (public) issue. Is patriarchy being removed or rather merely reconfigured by this emotional turn? The motif of the child has long been a signifier of need abstracted from social relations (think of the early Oxfam slogan: 'a hungry child has no politics', for example [Black, 1992]). Pupavac (2001, 2005) argues that the contemporary emergence of the child as ideal-typical political subject has arisen by virtue of the crisis in traditional patriarchal authority. We are now seeing the emergence of the model of the parent/family that is irrational and vulnerable, in need of professional experts and giving rise to the increased role of state and International Government Organisations. Pupavac highlights worrying political implications of this generalisation of childhood as a symptom of the evacuation of political agency under neo-liberalism. Alongside this we can add the uncoupling of emotions from children and women to attach now to a less securely masculine population that, in its claims to vulnerability, obscures the maintenance of broader systems of privilege (see also Gordo Lopez & Burman, 2004). Far from dissolving or disappearing, the culturally white and masculine liberal bourgeois subject of the western world continues in feminised form.

Reflexive accounting/reflexivity as emotions

Having described the wider context for such debates, I now move to intellectual arenas. The more parochial examples that inspired my investigations into this area concern bureaucratic manifestations of the institutionalisation of emotions in academic life. In particular, I am concerned with explicitly feminist debates about reflexivity. I am a protagonist here too. I have been an active supporter, if not instigator, of the move for our students to include 'reflexive sections' as part of their research reports (see Burman, 1995a, b). And I have seen them interpret this as an invitation to confess, whether in form of offering excuses for how hard they found it to perform their analysis (where it was their first venture into qualitative research), or to find sufficient participants, or of acknowledging issues that they failed to anticipate as being relevant that affected the success or otherwise of their investigation. Here the 'reflexive section' functions within a discourse of mitigation, and as such it clearly functions performatively within the assessment and evaluation process. Other useful functions include supplying extra information about the research process, structural characteristics and positionings that enables the author to disambiguate multiple interpretations and warrant her own readings of the material. Reminiscent of explicit emotional literacy agendas (e.g. Sharp, 2001), where the value of exploring the meaning of individual experience is claimed (as in Orbach's [2001, p. 18] 'our responses are a clue to the mess we're in'), such measures run close to a discourse of disclosure of feeling as an endpoint.

This move can be seen as a particular variety of the feminist litany of acknowledge-ments of complicity within structures of privilege noted, for example, within some of the discussions of whiteness (Ahmed, 2004). And of course such pedagogical

innovations blend humanist as well as discursive intellectual resources (feminists included here) which, by virtue of the classic narrative demands made of the accounting subject under modernist practices of examination, precisely conflate the telling with the self to re-signify the subjective account as prior and inner rather than performatively constituted (thus erasing the contextual demands that solicit it). Such issues are particularly noticeable in a discipline like psychology, where—released from the positivist discourse of behavioural science—students can interpret 'being reflexive' as a call to tell the 'whole story', and indeed typically seem to experience this as a relief from the erasure of subjectivity they have been schooled in, rather than a more insidious form of colonisation of their minds and bodies (Burman, 1996, 1998c). In particular the discourse of transparency to which researchers are invited to subject themselves, and to which most models of reflexivity (through the realist metaphor of 'reflection') subscribe, implies an untenable innocence and benevolence on the part of the scrutinising institution. The non-normative researcher whose standpoint—for significant structural reasons—may be less legible or comprehensible is thus open to further regulation. Clark's (2004) account of her interviews with rural South African women, for example, highlights the symbolic meanings of the tape-recorder as an expression of the inevitably colonial associations of supervision.

Here also we encounter the more familiar feminist methodological engagement with 'emotion', in terms of the contested status of 'experience', as both a necessary impetus and resource and as necessarily in need of (collective as well as individual) interrogation if it is not to acquire reified status, as in forms of identity politics (Spelman, 1989; Bondi, 1993). And while feminist classrooms (if we still have any) have far from resolved the interpersonal and political challenges arising from these commitments, there is at least a discourse that problematises where a theory of emotions as intuitive and spontaneous takes us. The further problem, of how the reflexive call covertly re-centres and re-inscribes a rational, integrated reflecting subject reminiscent of precisely the rational unitary subject of cultural (white, middle-class) masculinity and bourgeois individualism, is also now coming to be recognised. Elsewhere I have attempted to offer some alternatives (in Burman, 2003), but here I want to take up a more contemporary and seductive variant—'participation'.

Reflexivity as participation

So far I have been arguing that feminist and feminised agendas have converged to legitimise emotions as a form of action within research accounts. I now move to propose that reflexivity as an educational and research practice has come to stand in for, and thereby limit, the contemporary focus on 'participation'. By such means we are incited to work on ourselves, and only on ourselves. The radical collaborative and action agenda of participatory action research models is thus at risk of implosion.

Let me rehearse the steps in this argument. From arenas as diverse as education and development studies, 'participation' has assumed the status of a policy dogma. We now have burgeoning literatures promoting the 'reflective practitioner' (of educational, social and health services) as a route to improve quality of service delivery

(Schön, 1987), and to promote anti-discriminatory practices (Burns & Bulman, 2000), while from the 1970s international development interventions became 'participatory' in the sense that they are 'predominantly focused on using local knowledge in development projects rather than popular political participation' (Gready & Ensor, 2005, p. 18).

Recommendations to focus on process issues as well as topics and outcomes have become a central tenet of feminist and humanist research interventions. This arose partly because acknowledging the humanity of the practitioner/researcher was (via an implicitly therapeutic discourse) understood to promote a greater empathic understanding of the position of the client/service user/pupil/research participant, but also because knowledge of how one's own positions both generated and limited the research material was increasingly seen as an important tool for better research evaluation and accountability. In these ways the reflexive turn brought together education, action and research to emphasise that, since all interventions (or actions) require insight and reflection, its instigators would therefore benefit from training and self-evaluation. Indeed reflexivity is one of the key common principles guiding diverse accounts of feminist research (e.g. Bowles & Duelli Klein, 1983; Stanley & Wise, 1983; Fonow & Cook, 1991).

Yet, as I have argued, reflexivity is vulnerable to the charge of offering a new technology of subjectivity that educates the emotions, and normalises some subjective accounts while pathologising or silencing others. Similarly, the participatory move in action research, while it has been taken up with much enthusiasm especially in Latin America (and giving rise to a whole new discipline of community social psychology, see Jiminez, 1996), has been charged with producing a reified, homogenised and consensual model of 'communities' under investigation (in ways that reinforce colonial paternalism and privilege) and of reducing structural issues to personal ones.

Some current formulations would appear to support this. In a recent text promoting 'rights-based approaches' in relation to children's civil rights and empowerment, 'participation' is put forward 'as an instrument to realise other rights' (Theis & O'Kane, 2005, p. 163) in terms of how 'rights to information, expression, decision-making and association affirm children as rights holders. They are instruments for demanding and realising children's rights'. So far so good. But just a few pages further on, the authors evaluate one of the participatory initiatives (Child Clubs in Nepal) in economic terms, as 'reducing the cost of capacity building' (p. 168). Participation appears here as a tool as much as an ethic, while rights are less entitlements than economic tactics in development budgets. Indeed the concluding chapter to the same collection, discussing 'participation, transparency and accountability', comes up with the astounding claim that 'simply stimulating debate on these may be itself a measure of success' (Ball, 2005, p. 293). Quite apart from the self-congratulatory or self-confirming character of this assertion, in the same way that training has increasingly come to substitute for service delivery in development contexts, and in state welfare contexts 'referring on' is counted as a service intervention, it seems that the talk has become the walk: the researcher's reflection upon the action *is* the action.

Such problems have inspired discussion of the 'tyranny' of participation, as a way of inciting disclosure of local knowledge to extend surveillance and rendering marginalised groups open to further institutional gaze. In an early critique Parpart (1995, pp. 239–240) pointed out that participatory action research 'can underestimate difficulties in creating openness and listening to others' and impose bureaucracies that serve the interests of outsider agencies to make community structures more legible, visible and thus amenable to intervention. Subsequent critiques have emphasised how participatory action techniques, especially as practised in rural development contexts, tend to ignore power differentials and competing interests within communities under investigation, thus producing a consensual model. As Kothari (2001, p. 148) points out: 'Processes of participatory research can purify social interaction and social space by framing and ordering people's messy and varied experiences, needs and interests, but a further characteristic of this purification process is that difference will register as deviance'. She also highlights the paradox of participatory research which stresses the flexibility of tools and techniques, but still tries to fix people's lives through processes of identification and framing of social interaction and activities. Thus its methodological inflexibility is oblivious of its own productivity: 'it demands certain kinds of performances to be enacted' (Kothari, 2001, p. 142).

Similarly in his critique of participatory action research, Jiminez (1996) has argued that the researcher is incited to lose their critical distance, and that the logic of the approach is to dissolve oneself into the people. 'The different roles played by the active researcher as counsellor, animator, educator and concept-builder, also makes project evaluation difficult' (p. 226). In this sense the outcome is neither research, nor action, and participation threatens to resolve into mere subjectivist reflexivity.

Between solipsism and neo-imperialism: the new humanism

We are more and more invited/required to read emotions as texts and to write texts of emotions. Both aspects of emotional literacy are increasingly topicalised within the contemporary educational and political landscape. But in its explicit forms reflexivity, like emotional literacy, threatens to become a new technology of emotional regulation that normalises and circumscribes emotional expression in the very act of 'giving voice' to it. Like Assertiveness Training before it (Crawford, 1998), then emotional literacy and now reflexivity threaten to individualise privilege and pathologise the already oppressed for a supposed skills deficit while remaining unaware of how the very notion so abstracts and decontextualises emotions that not only can they scarcely be understood as emotions (but rather a variant of generalised cognitive functioning [Boler, 1999]) but also that they thereby reinstate the rational unitary subject.

Now let me emphasise that these are not necessary or immanent realisations of reflexivity, but rather an expression of what happens when an ethical-political commitment (of the kind that inspires much action research) becomes transformed into a technocratic intervention. It is also a far cry from the early call to reflexivity put forward by feminists such as Wilkinson (1988), emphasising its 'disciplinary' and

'structural' as well as 'personal' dimensions. So what is the alternative? Kothari (2001, p. 148) notes that 'there is no positive opposite or counter to participation—it is implicitly good, constructive and productive'. In the end Cooke and Kothari (2001) call for more, and a more rigorous reflexivity as a response to the tyranny of participation.

In his text subtitled 'introducing radical research', Parker (2005) reviews resources for reflexivity, moving through models of confession, of analysing positions, to approaches that theorise the construction of subjectivity (as with, for example, Haug's [1987] 'memory-work') and finally focuses on the crafting of the account. One interesting proposal is to use the different models of subjectivity elaborated by specific research approaches (e.g. ethnography, narrative, discursive or psychoanalytic approaches) against each other, so 'to reflect on the limits of their different assumptions about the role of reflexivity' (p. 34).

There are clear implications for forms of reflexivity we might want to elaborate—as performative in terms of constituting and addressing accountabilities rather than expressive of identities. Here it is important to distinguish a model of emotions as a source/origin point from emotions as an artefact of the current constellation of relations that, through analysing the theoretical resources they imply, can reveal something more of the politics of the intervention (c.f. the analysis of the performative character of the discourse of 'parallel process' in Burman and Chantler, 2004).

A further route that I have deliberately not engaged with here (since it would re-open the question of the relations between feminism and therapy) would be to take up a psychoanalytic discourse as an alternative to reflexivity as a technology of the self that naturalises and instrumentalises structures of privilege. This could extend and reframe existing feminist discussions of reflexivity, representation and accountability (e.g. Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1996). Possible fruitful elaborations of this could include analysis of the forms of address to real and fantasised others that are mobilised within our accounts, as well as analysing the shifts and varieties of discursive positioning adopted by the author(s) in relation to their analysis and their audience (as master, analyst or hysteric). Clearly such a move would introduce, rather than dispense with, alternative technologies of the self. Foucault suggests that we cannot avoid this, and it is rather a question of which one we use.[16]

Thus this is not to devalue, proscribe or otherwise challenge methodological developments that admit material not previously considered (e.g. dreams, fiction, poetry) (see, e.g. Denzin, 1990; Slobin, 2000; Stronach, 2002). Indeed such accounts—precisely by virtue of their non-rational and sometimes multivocal character—may escape some of the problems I have been highlighting with the more traditionally modernist reflexive accounts here, in terms of inviting a model of the subject that is static, bounded, whole and amenable to conscious scrutiny. Yet these too run the risk of distraction into mystique that implies such techniques represent more than they do, or warrant the claiming of an Other that rather has more to do with the effects of exclusionary research narrative imperatives on the researcher than the researched. For such fantasies are the material produced through practices that still only tell us about the researcher's responses—just as the unconscious is not a

domain that pre-exists its repression but is precisely produced through it—and is 'discovered' only through its disruptions to narrative accountability.

My point here is not that there is another Other, to which emotions offer access and so to which researchers should be 'giving voice',[17] nor even that we need to know that the 'others' we speak of and for are (also) ourselves (Burman, 1996). Hence this is no romance of the ineffability of knowledge, but rather to strike a cautionary note on the limits of knowledge claims, in terms of whose, and which, perspectives become centralised from such adventures in method. Moore's (1988) claim of the seductions and exploitations surrounding postmodernist gender blending surely now extend much further to their class and racialised objectifications.

Third, as an alternative to the ways 'reflexivity' implicitly and explicitly strips emotions from the theatre of action and relationship that produces them, there is a social theory of emotions that would indeed be worth developing—along the lines elaborated by the sociologist Elias, who explicitly extended Freud's analyses of the shifting forms of management of aggression and sexuality according to changing social structures. Indeed, Elias and Foucault elaborate quite similar approaches,[18] mapping the political-demographic conditions for historical shifts in subjectivity from antiquity to the modern period in Western Europe, and both theorists high-light—albeit in different ways—how this is an inevitably pedagogical, and perhaps necessary in some form, process. For Foucault (1988) the key question concerned the conditions underlying specific practices of the 'care of the self', with the incitement to verbalise at a crucial point having become prioritised over (only) renunciation. Elias (1994) tied his analysis of the civilising process to the rise of European nation states, but made it clear that socialised emotions are always also inevitably at odds with the political structures that produced them (Elias, 1991). Goffman (1990) on the other hand highlights the performative features of emotions—focusing on emotions as display, designed to be interpreted as such in the management of public response. Both the genealogical and performative perspectives offer generative resources for the evaluation of how we account for antiracist and feminist action research. 'Reflexivity should not be a self-indulgent and reductive enterprise that psychologizes phenomena and psychologizes your own part in producing them. Instead, the reflexive work is part of the action, and in action research much of that reflexive work undertaken alongside and in collaboration with co-researchers (and they then have some reflexive work to do with you as well)' (Parker, 2005, p. 35).

The critical arguments put forward in this paper are not a call to abandon efforts toward meaningful interaction and usher in endless solipsistic agonisings, but rather to locate reflexive analysis within institutional relationships that precisely interrogate and challenge the constitution of the narrative position of the accounter, rather than explore their identity. I suggest that this reflexivity involves returning from the micro-politics of the research encounter to instead analysing the political economy of its production. In particular this is a call to analyse new graphologies and geographies of emotions that are acquiring increasing political gravity. I have argued that contemporary discourses have detached emotions away from their traditionally feminised

domain and beyond even a discourse of gender-blended androgyny fashionable since the 1970s to thereby re-centre a new but just as culturally specific form of subjectivity. Thus this is a call not to underestimate the speed and flexibility by which neo-liberalism absorbs and co-opts creative strategies for its subversion; to be vigilant about its powers to capitalise upon and deradicalise action and return it to old-style individualism (albeit in new humanist clothes) (see also Bondi & Laurie, 2005). Haug (2000) aptly writes of experience as 'both the quicksand on which we cannot build and the material with which we do build' (p. 156). She argues for the need to theorise experience so that 'theories are being put back on their feet'. But to do this it is necessary to keep notions of reflexivity on their toes.

Notes

1. From this various debates in feminist and qualitative research open up—regarding claims of strong, or complex, subjectivity as replacing objectivity, for example (Rose, 1994; Parker, 1994).
2. I leave aside here the rather stale question of whether men can be feminist, or do feminist research (but c.f. Morgan, 1981; Levinson, 1998).
3. Here the socio-spatial implications of models such as feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 1991) and situated knowledges (Haraway, 1991) come to mind.
4. This inquiry was controversial because it was convened by the local authority (since the murder had taken place inside the school grounds), but when the report was presented it was suppressed and published by the authority only in very truncated form (Manchester Education Authority, n.d.). The full report was subsequently published independently by its authors (Macdonald *et al.*, 1989).
5. Although such recommendations may now take on new life within 'citizenship' curricula.
6. Inviting the question of whether more than the acronym—C&R—remained the same.
7. Harold Shipman, the apparently kindly Gorton doctor who in 2004 was found to have murdered at least 250 elderly women patients (the exact number remains unknown) over the course of his long professional life, graphically highlighted the proximity of care and abuse.
8. In late January 2006 the Kerr/Haslam Inquiry reported on two consultant psychiatrists who systematically abused dozens of their women patients over a 20-year period, unchallenged by other professionals, some of whom were aware of this.
9. The second half of January 2006 saw the United Kingdom (UK) gripped by the news that the then Education Secretary (Ruth Kelly) had permitted the appointment of some teachers found to be listed on a sex offenders register, thus giving rise to calls for increased regulation and coordination of records.
10. The Shipman case certainly highlights one limitation to the discourse of 'choice'—making euthanasia an even more distant possibility in the UK, and as current cases highlight, forcing desperate (sufficiently rich) people to go to Swiss clinics to be helped to die with dignity.
11. But Shipman, unlike the British soldiers on trial, and even unlike the genre of serial killers that has so animated cinema screens of late, remained impervious to (or perhaps he was not allowed?) an interiority subject to comprehension or interpretation in any way. An interiority arguably also denied to him by the discourses of 'monstrousness' surrounding accounts of his actions, thus making rather anomalous and mysterious why he subsequently hung himself in prison.
12. The scandal over revelations that Blunkett attempted to accelerate and manipulate the immigration visa process and procure a visa for his lover's nanny contributed to his forced resignation in December 2004.

13. This was over attempting to procure a visa (plus—heaven forbid!—misapplication of ministerial privilege over a first-class rail ticket).
14. Or rather how such individual cases fail to address how a state policy of 'social inclusion' disallows problematisation of who is included in its boundaries.
15. Child abduction is increasingly being recognised as a major tactic of abuse by which violent men attempt to manipulate their women partners into returning to the relationship.
16. On this it's worth noting Hutton's (1988, p. 121) point that 'Foucault's work is heavy with Freud's unstated presence', so that psychoanalysis would not be an incompatible resource.
17. This is what Lacanians would call the Big Other—which, crucially, does not exist.
18. Indeed Van Krieken (1998) highlights that Foucault was interested in Elias's writings and initiated some correspondence with him not long before he (Foucault) died.

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