

# “You’re A Positivist? That’s So Gay!” Episodes of Paradigm Talk and Abjection: A Personal “Re-search” Paper

Jazz C Williams<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Education, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, United Kingdom

Correspondence: Jazz C Williams, Faculty of Education, Manchester Metropolitan University, Birley Building, 53 Bonsall Street, Manchester, M15 6GX, United Kingdom. E-mail: jazz.williams@stu.mmu.ac.uk

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## Abstract

There is an abundance of literature offering critiques of paradigms and their implications for social and educational research. Within the literature, or paradigm talk, various researcher identities are constituted. In this “re-search paper”, I engage in critical self-reflection, considering *where* and *who* “I” am in relation to postpositivism and queer theory. Adopting Kristeva’s (1982) abjection theory in *Powers of Horror* as an analytical tool, I scrutinise my positioning and self-manufacturing as a postpositivistic “I” and *disorientation* in relation to queer theory as a self-identified gay male. I highlight the intersectionality between masculinity, encountering the abject at age six and postpositivism in constituting my researcher identity. Engaging with elements of paradigm talk in queer theory leads me to a personal, unresolved struggle with assimilationism and queerness where politicisation and epistemology meet. As “data”, I present material “brought up” in transference dialogues where unconscious, psychoactive material has been “thrown up” into consciousness. For example, storyboarding involving lived experience and personal research journal entries. The paper concludes with some commentary on the challenges involved in not just writing *about* abjection, but *writing* abjection into one’s own work.

**Keywords:** Abjection, Critical self-reflection, Discourse and identity, Language and positioning, Paradigm talk, Positivism, Postpositivism, Queer theory, Reflective inquiry, Reflective self-dialogue

## 1. Setting the Scene

An abundance of literature offers critiques of research paradigms and the implications for inquiry (e.g. Creswell, 2014; Kuhn, 1962/2012; Mirchandani, 2005; Morgan, 2007; Scheurich, 1997). The debate on the in/appropriateness of Kuhnian-inspired talk in educational research and differing views on paradigm proliferation also features in the literature (Donmoyer, 1999, 2006; Lather, 2006; McNamara, 1979). My “re-search paper” is set against this background, but my primary concern is with elements of paradigm talk that constitute “I” – or aspects of *me* – as a researcher. I deliberately use “re-search” throughout this paper to denote the self-reflective and autoethnographic elements of the work (Denzin, 2014; Romanyshyn, 2007/2013; Todres, 2011). The term *paradigm talk* is broadly defined as discourse(s) associated with modes of inquiry. My focus involves aspects of paradigm talk related to *postpositivism* and postmodernist/poststructuralist inflected *queer theory*. In general, postmodernism and poststructuralism, represent a departure from modernism. The former closely related paradigms promote scepticism, embracing multiplicities of interpretation and identity as well as drawing attention to and problematising our taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world (Brown & Jones, 2001; Filax et al., 2011; Mirchandani, 2005; Scheurich, 1997; Stronach & MacLure, 1997).

At this point, it is also necessary to define and explain the concept of abjection used in this paper. Quite literally, abjection is to throw *away* or cast *down* what is *unacceptable*, *unsettling* and *disturbing* to one’s sense of self and place in the social world (Linstead, 1997). In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva (1982, p. 4) offers the following definition:

Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us.

(Kristeva, 1982, p. 4)

Psychologically, a *subject* (the “I”) recognises what is considered to be an *abomination* as the *abject* – that which must be *thrown away* to maintain boundaries and borders between the “I” and an *undesirable otherness*. An (overly) simple example is a straight male confronted with a gay male. For the straight male, to maintain the heterosexual “I”

and his masculinity, he might *abject* – casts *away* – the “feminised” male as an *aberration* of *what* (or *who*) a man *is* and *should be* (Buchbinder, 2013). The gay man is strangely familiar to the straight man. The gay man is biologically male, but *unfamiliar* at the same time because of his same-sex attraction (i.e. the ‘uncanniness and real threat’).

Abjection is not an act that brings permanent relief from the threat of an otherness. The very ‘existence of the abject continually questions the adequacy of [a] subject’ (Linstead, 1997, p. 1121). What we ‘suppress, deny or reject [as] complex [...] uncomfortable experiences by casting them out of consciousness’ remains, in part, *within us* (Kristeva, 1982; Linstead, 1997, p. 1122) – so, the straight male in our example here is always ‘driven by the need to separate the unacceptable part of [himself]’, i.e. the *potential* of being identified as gay if he shows signs of traits socially-designated as feminine (Linstead, 1997, p. 1122). I must stress here that abjection is not just about ‘lack of cleanliness or health’ in a literal sense although actual bodily waste, material dirt and filth *can* fill us with a sense of horror and disgust (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). For instance, our hypothetical straight male may feel nauseated by the idea of two men engaging in penetrative anal sex as *dirty* and *unclean*, but the process of abjection involves ‘what disturbs *identity, system, order*. What does not respect borders, positions, rules’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4, my emphasis). In other words, the abject *troubles* conventions. In the example used here, a gay male may complicate heteronormative expectations of masculine and feminine sex roles, blurring the line between dominance and submissiveness.

Abjection therefore involves the ‘in-between, the ambiguous, the composite’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). It is ‘the place where meaning collapses’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2) – the indeterminate, the undecidable, the ‘neither one nor the other’ (Buchbinder, 2013; Harrison, 2013; Henderson, 2014; Linstead, 1997, p. 1121). To further illustrate this, I offer an from my lived experience of being abjected. Born and raised in a rural area of England, the son of a white English father and black South African mother, in junior school “I” was abjected by *some* peers as the *nigger* or *chocolate drop* (Note 1). Using Kristeva’s abjection theory, I can now understand this experience of being cast *away*: undecidability – my skin as *neither* white *nor* black, a native English figure (i.e. the familiar) yet somehow a foreigner (i.e. the *unfamiliar*). The “I” of mixed parentage was ‘what disturb[ed] [the] system, order’ of “whiteness”, a problematic identity that could not be readily determined in terms of a native-foreigner binary (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). To impose order, establish ‘borders, positions, rules’ I was abjected, cast *away* by *some* as the *nigger*, the *chocolate drop*, and an *otherness* in an attempt to resolve the disturbance experienced when confronted by ‘the ambiguous, the composite’ or a hybridised ethnicity (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4).

To summarise, abjection involves the process of turning a part, or potential part, of us – the *subject* into what we *reject* as not “I” and therefore *other* – what must be cast *away* to maintain a comfortable sense of *who* and *what* the “I” *is* and *is not* (Linstead, 1997; Thurlow, 2001). The abject is ambiguous, does not fit into an established order of normalcy and acceptability. It may be thrown *away*, but continuously haunts us – challenges our sense of “I” and, as result, abjection is an on-going process to maintain our sense of stability as “I” against the familiar/*unfamiliar* “other” from which we cannot completely, once and for all, separate from ourselves. The subject who internalise the norms of the social world(s) he or she inhabits. Between such order (i.e. the normative, its associated categorisations and classifications) and the abject ‘our sense of self is manufactured and positioned’ (Buchbinder, 2013; Harrison, 2013; Linstead, 1997, p. 1121). In effect, what is ‘abject has only quality of the object [the other *within* and *outside* of us] – that of being opposed to I’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1).

### 1.1 Approaching Paradigm Talk and the Abject

In presenting encounters with paradigm talk and issues “brought up” concerning my positioning and self-manufacturing of *who* and *where* “I” am as a researcher, I contribute to the wide application of Kristeva’s abjection theory in social and educational research. This has ranged from film and literature (Creed, 1993; Edward & Graulund, 2013) to issues in healthcare (Rudge & Holmes, 2010), historical events (Chare, 2011) and analysis of sexuality (Harrison, 2013; Henderson, 2014; Richardson et al., 2013).

I aim to avoid ‘conceptual neatness that is derive from [a] single definition’ taken from one of the many proliferating *Powers of Horror* (Henderson, 2014, p. 27). Instead, I seek to not only write *about* abjection, paradigm talk and identity but also *write* abjection into this paper. How do I intend to *write* abjection? Firstly, by resisting ‘a separation between the researcher(s’ text) and the state of abjection’ (Henderson, 2014, p. 27). In other words, using my lived experience of *abjection* and recognising my own “I” is an agent guilty of *abjecting* what *unsettles me*. Secondly, I dovetail meanings of “to bring up” and how its connotations are used figuratively in this paper to articulate a sense of *discomfort*, recognising the presence of the abject as unwelcome, an irritant to the system disturbing the way in which our social worlds “should” be organised (cf. Henderson, 2014). Before I define and explain how lived experience and “data” is used in this article, I outline meanings of “to bring up” that are merged in this paper.

In one sense, “to bring up” involves raising an (unwelcome) issue. For example, in the gaze of many, my “I” has typically been the *male teacher*. But what if I was “to bring up” that “I” am the *gay male teacher*? Am I obliged by professional ethics to a gay role model in a predominantly heteronormative working environment of a primary school? Am I obliged to do so even though I *know* it will make me abject to some stakeholders, where I am positioned as one of ‘the victims of the abject [one of] its fascinated victims – [a] willing [one]’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 9)? And so I engage in “passing”, which is defined as ‘a successful self-presentation in line with a socially favoured identity at the expense of an “authentic” one’ (Harrison, 2013, p. 1): “I” *am the male teacher*. I do not “bring up” my sexuality. This is not an inaction: ‘both intervening [introducing my same-sex attraction] and remaining silent [gendered, but not necessarily sexualised] are actions’ (Henderson, 2014, p. 22). My choice of action is, more than likely, policed and regulated by past experience of abjection (see 1.3). So, I do not “bring up” the (unwelcome) issue; I swallow it – I choose “passing”. The second sense of “to bring up” is vomiting as forcefully expelling. For instance, I often feel the urge to “throw up” in the university classroom, spew about how something *might* have ‘gone awry in the linguistic turn [that] seemed *de rigueur* to take’ with postpositivism as social scientific method marginalised – equated with positivism and therefore all empirical inquiry is futile and misguided (Phillips and Burbules, 2000; Sayer, 2000; Zammito, 2004, p. 271) (Note 2). But, the postpositivist “I” can only “bring up” frustration to a point – it could never truly remain *cast out* because, to subscribe to postpositivism, one must concede that meaning is contestable (i.e. has some instability). I have, if you like, already digested some of the linguistic turn’s influence on social science that cannot be separated from the postpositivist “I”. In essence, “to bring up” is populated with raising, swallowing or the more violent urge, “to throw up” – vomit – spew about ‘what disturbs [established] identity, system, order’ within us and in our perceptions of others (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4).

### 1.2 Data “Brought Up”

The “data” presented in this paper is lived experience and observation. This is captured in written and pictorial recordings of unconscious material “thrown up” and (re-) interpreted, i.e. memories, reflective notes. This is not by any means “fresh data”, but “brought up” and ‘always already been [...] vomited in the form that I have chosen’ (Henderson, 2014, p. 24). By this, I mean the “data” has not been collected – rather it has been *constructed* and *re-constructed* as part of my attempt to understand my positioning in paradigm talk; the formative experiences underlying *being* a researcher and my *becoming* as a researcher. Some of the “data” involves the influence of popular culture, such as films, that have become part of developing my self-understanding in written form (e.g. journal entries, “reading” films, such as Krueckeberg’s (2013) *Getting Go: The Go Doc Project*) or through pictorial representation (e.g. *The Silence of the Lambs*, both the film (Demme, 1991) and Harris’ (1989/2009) novel).

My approach to capturing relevant “data”, recalling and reshaping it in light of my preoccupations with researcher identities and paradigm talk is based on Romanynshyn’s (2007/2013) re-searching. In short, “data” from “re-search” is assumed to have resonances at the personal level (i.e. for the “I”) situated in cultural-historical conditions and, through analysis, may reveal deeper (i.e. less conscious) human concerns. The latter is referred to as the collective-archetypal level, see Note 3 for further details.

The first issue I “bring up” involves establishing my legitimacy as a voice that can speak, or write, *about* abjection and seek to *write* abjection. This leads into an analysis of how a particular encounter with abjection set in motion the manufacturing of “I” as a postpositivist (Section 2).

### 1.3 “Bringing Up” Two Abject Identities and “Passing” as an Authorised Voice

Queer theory inflected with postmodernism/poststructuralism ‘raises questions about the nature of the author’ (Tierney and Dilley, 1998, p. 62). It is a question without a single answer. Rather, it “brings up” a multiplicity of responses related to identity, complicity and what is presented in, or lies beneath the surface of, a narrative (Filax et al. 2011; Tierney and Dilley, 1998). Here I make my personal claim to being a credible agent attempting to write *about* abjection and *write* abjection into this paper.

“I” am self-identified gay male, *abhorrence*, the *abject* ‘represent[ing] for masculinity perhaps the extreme condition of abjection’ (Richardson et al. 2013, p. 102). If masculinity is constituted by abjecting the feminine and feminised male, then “I” am the abject. I might be perceived as an agent who induces *homohysteria* where homophobia polices acceptable masculinities and homosocialities, those identities ‘respect[ing] borders, positions and rules’ – accepted conventions of *what* a man *is* and *how* a man *should* be (Haywood and Mac an Ghail, 2013; Kristeva, 1982, p. 4; McCormack and Anderson, 2014a, 2014b). In my adolescence and early twenties, I was constituted, by *some* peers, through language drawn from the genre of derogation: *faggot*, *queer*, *gay-boy*, *bender*, *shit-stabber*, *bum-bandit* and *knob-jockey* – a violation of the normative and dominant heterosexuality where abusive naming practices cast me out, made clear same-sex orientation was disgusting, an *aberration*. “I” was the stranger – the one placed at the margins –

a known (i.e. gendered male), but also an *unknown* (i.e. a male sexually attracted to other males). And in these moments, the “truth” of me as a human subject – “I” – was given by (or reduced to) sexual practices, i.e. an assumption that being gay equates to anal sex (Foucault, 1990; Honeychurch, 1998). Undoubtedly, the “I” in the here-and-now remains for some that *abhorrence*, the *abject* – the *faggot*, *bender*; choose whatever pejorative you wish. But I also carry another abject identity: the neurotic.

As the neurotic, “I” am between object (i.e. a site of biological intervention) and subject (i.e. the “I” who sits on the psychotherapist’s couch): ‘in-between [...] the composite’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). It is from that place – the outsider within the social world as well as a sense of being a stranger to myself at times – where this paper stems. It is in Kristeva’s (1982) *Powers of Horror* that I find an author who understands me and enables my own self-understanding of “I”, past and present. Within the versions of “I”, gay and neurotic identities oscillating across the normalcy/abnormality borderline (Foucault, 1990, 2002), there is an “I” who ‘understands why [...] victims of the abject are its fascinated victims’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 9). I begin my engagement with paradigm talk in this “re-search” by recalling an encounter with Kristeva’s abjection *par excellence*, which appears to have set in motion the self-manufacturing of my postpositivistic “I”. It is, one could say, a further claim to being an author who has *experienced* abjection and is therefore an authorised voice.

## 2. January 27, 1988 “Brought Up”

An episode recounted during one of my early psychotherapy sessions.

*Evening. Nine-thirty. He goes downstairs. Standing in the empty living room, in front of the television. BBC One. A documentary: near death experiences. The last spasms of the human mind? A momentary view of an afterlife? The six-year-old boy screams. Cries. Mum rushes in. He speaks: “I don’t want to die!”*

The “I” then-and-there encountered death-talk for the first time; unable to recognise what the “I” here-and-now does –*abjection*. To use Kristeva’s (1982, p. 3) words: ‘corpses *show me [us]* what I [we] permanently thrust aside in order to live’. In my childhood recollection, neither the scientific nor religious worldview – paradigms in the broadest sense – offered any certainties about the post-mortem future. The “I” writing now understands what the “I” aged six could not: a ‘corpse seen without God and outside of science is the utmost of abjection’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). The corpse traumatically reminds us of own materiality and vulnerability – a primal fear belonging to the collective-archetypal level of the human condition (Jung, 1991a; Kristeva, 1982; Romanyshyn, 2007/2013). There is quite literally a breakdown in the distinction between object and subject when confronted by a dead body. It is through *jouissance* we are fascinated – drawn to the corpse – to reinforce of our existence as the living. However, the ‘corpse (or cadaver: *cadere*, to fall)’ for me was not the *actual* body, the materiality of skin, flesh, blood and bone (Kristeva, 1982, p. 3). It was the *fall* of human consciousness. The subject and accumulated life experience irreversibly deleted. And still, in my adult life, this threat of ceasing “to be” haunts me – thanatophobic episodes (death anxiety) and generalised anxiety and panic disorder “thrown up” from encountering abjection as a child: a seemingly autonomous complex (Jung, 1991a, 1991b, 1993; Romanyshyn, 2007/2013, see Note 4). This appears to underlie the “I” as neurotic, an identity introduced in subsection 1.3.

“Brought up” in the moment recounted from childhood is a ‘place where meaning collapses’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2), erasure of “I” as a conscious mind. It is the inevitable: objectively, human beings die. Subjectively, “I” rendered to nothingness is an incomprehensibility. Objectivity-subjectivity is a border violated when the corpse of human consciousness is considered. Death as part of living is biographical fact, one shaped by both objective events and subjectivities. The post-mortem future offers no chance for the autobiographical: a place where there is neither object nor subject (or abject) that horrified and still horrifies me. For me, death of “I” brings the failure of language into view, a return to *less than the pre-linguistic*, obliterating ‘the fundamental situation of a human being as a being-of-language [and self-awareness]’ (Ramsey, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; Žižek, 1989/2008, p. 125). The frequent return of thanatophobia in adult life, a repetition compulsion beyond my conscious control involving *jouissance* and its connection to the abject. The term *jouissance* refers to a drive to revisit what induces fear, revulsion, the experience of being *unsettled* and *disorientated* by the breakdown of borderlines. Within me, there is a perverse pleasure in my episodes of death anxiety because it *re-establishes* and *re-affirms* boundaries against which I constitute and manufacture the *conscious* “I”, in opposition to unimaginable nothingness. It is in this *jouissance* where ‘one [“I”] does [do] not desire it, one [“I”] joys [joy] in it [*on enjouit*] [,v]iolently and painfully [as a] passion’ that I am reminded of my own human consciousness, even when it is altered by depersonalisation and derealisation (Kristeva, 1982, p. 9). To protect myself from the notion of ‘death [ceasing “to be”] infecting life’, I sought stability – my academic experiences leading me to the *postpositivist paradigm* (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). The traits-of-identification found in this paradigm distancing me from ‘the fragility of the law [of the human condition]’

shown to me in thanatophobic episodes, depersonalisation and derealisation (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4).

Having “brought up” the origins of my desire for the preservation of a unitary “I”, it is now time to show how postpositivistic paradigm talk offered *parlêtre*, ‘the subject [“I”] as want-to-be’ (Soler, 2014, p. 61). A space in which I could be protected (or distracted) from the fragmentation of identity, offering a place where “I” could experience coherence, being *acutely conscious* and in *conscious control*.

### 2.1 “Bringing Up” the Postpositivistic “I”

Postpositivism involves a rational and controlled approach to conducting empirical inquiry (Phillips & Burbules, 2000; Sayer, 2000). The paradigm involves identification of a problem or issue and seeks a solution or knowledge about the situation (Sayer, 2000). In theory and practice, researcher agency is typically perceived as a ‘free singularity, capable of [...] independent thought and action’ (Scheurich, 1997, p. 160). This paradigmatic trait enables the affective to be “contained” as an *object* in me (the *subject*), to be *rejected* as an *undesirable* part of “I” – an *abject* that might compromise the internal values of inquiry, i.e. research governed by objectivism as regulative ideal, eliminating bias and ensuring a focus on the epistemically relevant (Phillips & Burbules, 2000).

The postpositivist researcher is an “I” ‘capable of having a mind or consciousness that can be systematic [...] reasonable’ (Scheurich, 1997, p. 161) who can acknowledge human knowledge is *conjectural* (therefore revisable) but *some* sense of certainty and stability can be experienced (Phillips & Burbules, 2000; Sayer, 2000). For instance, conceding the social world is *construed* through available human frames of reference that have been humanly *constructed* in language. Contrary to what strong social constructionists – ‘a defeatist strain of postmodernism’ (Sayer, 2000, p. 3) – may argue, meaning can be contested but the preoccupation with the undecidability of meaning – a *destabilisation* of consciousness – distracts from research as *practical*. Rooted in the here-and-now; a moment in which one is acutely aware of living in (Phillips & Burbules, 2000; Moore, 2013; Sayer, 2000; Zammito, 2004).

Briefly, I want to “bring up” how the postpositivist “I” intersects with my inherited view of the paradigm as masculine – an “abstract masculinity” characterised by instrumentation, control of variables and an authorised male psychological identity (Gherardi and Turner, 1987): ‘emotion as an abject phenomenon, denied, but present, ever potentially resurgent, never addressed in reality’ (Linstead, 1997, p. 1115), or “man of reason” (Zammito, 2004). I do wonder if, apart from experiencing abjection at age six, the “I” in the here-and-now has turned to the paradigm to “pass” by abjecting more qualitative approaches as feminine...distancing “I” as *male researcher* from “I” as a potential *gay male researcher* or *queer theorist* (addressed in subsection 4.2, see also Note 5).

### 2.2 The Postpositivist Person “Brought Up”

The postpositivistic identity outlined previously, indicates the inseparability of the personal and academic spheres – shifting away from that which threatens to fragment “I”, seeking a paradigm where “I” can find a stable self. As a *paradigmatic persona* –my postpositivist ‘mask, i.e., the *ad hoc* adopted attitude’ (Jung, 1991b, p. 465) – involves one of my major defence mechanisms: *intellectualisation*. Intellectualisation is in the mild neurotic range: the means by which I “bring up” myself, nurturing the ego-consciousness –‘the subject as want-to-be’ (Mayes, 1999, 2005; Soler, 2014, p. 61). The moment(s) I began to perceive the intersectionality between postpositivism and intellectualism as defences against *emotional reality* are depicted in Figure 1.

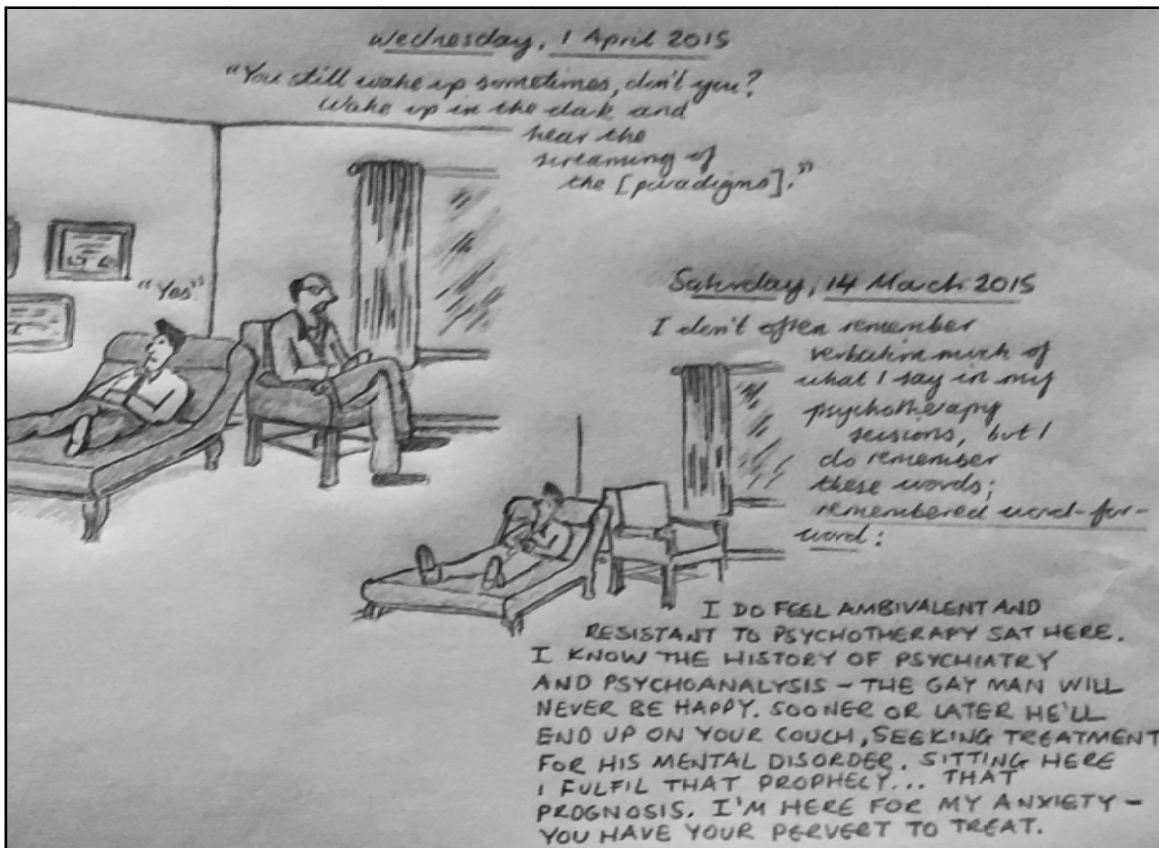


Figure 1. The product of a transference dialogue which highlights intellectualisation as a defence mechanism

Description: On the *left-hand side*, I am engaged in self-dialogue as analyst *and* analysand. The text, echoes a conversation between Clarice Starling and Dr. Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* (Demme, 1991; Harris, 1989/2009). It “contains” my feeling of being “troubled” by paradigm talk in my “re-search”. On the *right-hand side*, I “throw up” the complicity of psychoanalysis and psychiatry in medicalising homosexuality (Carlson, 2012; Foucault, 1990; Tierney and Dilley, 1998). My resistance to engaging in psychotherapy involved reasoning (i.e. intellectualisation) where thinking, “bringing up” the cultural-historical served as an act of avoidance. I was avoiding – in effect, removing myself – from the affective. Intellectualisation has functioned as a safeguard against the unfamiliar or ‘emotion as an abject phenomenon’ (Jung, 1964, 1991b, 1993; Linstead, 1997, p. 1115; Semetsky, 2011). The history of psychoanalysis and its complicity in medicalising homosexuality “thrown up” – a manifestation of intellectualisation (the thinking and feeling psychological functions). Also, it shows my difficulty in managing *unfamiliar states*, i.e. in spaces where emotion is not abject, irrationalities encouraged – sensation and intuition as ways of functioning (Jung, 1964, 1991b, 1993; Semetsky, 2011).

The ego-invented and ego-protecting postpositivistic “I” has served *me* well and *I* have served *it* well: successfully “passing” as (I hope) a serious scholar and researcher. For example, the postpositivist “I” is inscribed in my published works. In Williams (2015a), I *operationalised* inference as a non-unitary construct by producing a taxonomic scheme to analyse inferential abilities assessed in two reading tests: a concern with *construct validity* and *inter-rater reliability*. With the implementation of ‘what has become commonly referred to as “assessing without levels”’ in England’s schools, my small-scale study of educators’ assessment literacy involved devising *instrumentation* for the *measurement* of self-perceived skills and frequency of practices, i.e. *constructs*, generating *descriptive and inferential statistics* (Williams, 2015b, p. 2). Outlining previous research, “brings up” key aspects of postpositivist practice (italicised in the preceding text), *shows me* that “I” have ‘incorporated the immanent structures of [...] a particular sector of [inquiry]’ with my paradigmatic persona ‘the fact of [my] habitus as a feel for the [postpositivistic] game [...] under the skin’ (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 80). A successful “passing” one might say. But postpositivism is not necessarily a comfortable label. It is haunted by positivism, a paradigm often “brought up” and ab/used – an issue I address in the next section.

### 3. Two Questions, Two Identities and Pejoratives “Thrown Up”

In an act of automatic writing, I scrawled down two questions:

“Would you say you’re a positivist?”

“Are you gay?”

(Research Journal, 27 March 2015: 19:30)

These interrogatives, directed at me in separate times and places, were “brought up” *together*. What significance, if any, did the words have in my “re-search” – understanding the ‘unfinished stories that weigh down on [me]’ (Romanyshyn, 2007/2013, p. 113) now *vomited onto the page*? How were the labels ‘positivist’ and ‘gay’ relevant to my constitution in paradigm talk? Abjections. Questions demanding a disclosure, implying a label or name was already assigned to me – stemming from, constituted by ‘the ambiguous opposition I/Other, Inside/Outside’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 7). A latent or explicit threat of marginalisation and stigmatisation—‘[n]aming *others* [as] an indispensable contrastive resource for proclaiming identity – establishing who one *is* and who one *is not*’ (Thurlow, 2001, p. 26, emphasis added). Here, I shall concentrate on positivism and positivist ‘used pejoratively to signify whatever is *distasteful* about an opponent’s position’ (Zammito, 2004, p. 6, my emphasis). In the fourth section of the paper, I address <the gay question>.

At my doctoral interview, I outlined my quantitative research experience, expressing hopes that the professional doctorate would develop my proficiency in using descriptive and inferential statistics. Then came <the positivist question> and the implied charge of not taking the linguistic turn as *de rigueur*: ‘Mr Objective Researcher’ (aka Jeff in Hitchcock’s *Rear Window*) to use Brown and Jones’ (2001, p. 73) analogy of the modernist inquirer’s identity. My postpositivist persona had failed “to pass” or (in hindsight) was the oblivious “victim” of ‘a favourite term of abuse in the educational research community [...] a form of abuse that has itself become much abused’ (Phillips & Burbules, 2000, p. 11). Returning to <the positivist question> in my “re-search”, the “data” in Figure 2 was constructed.

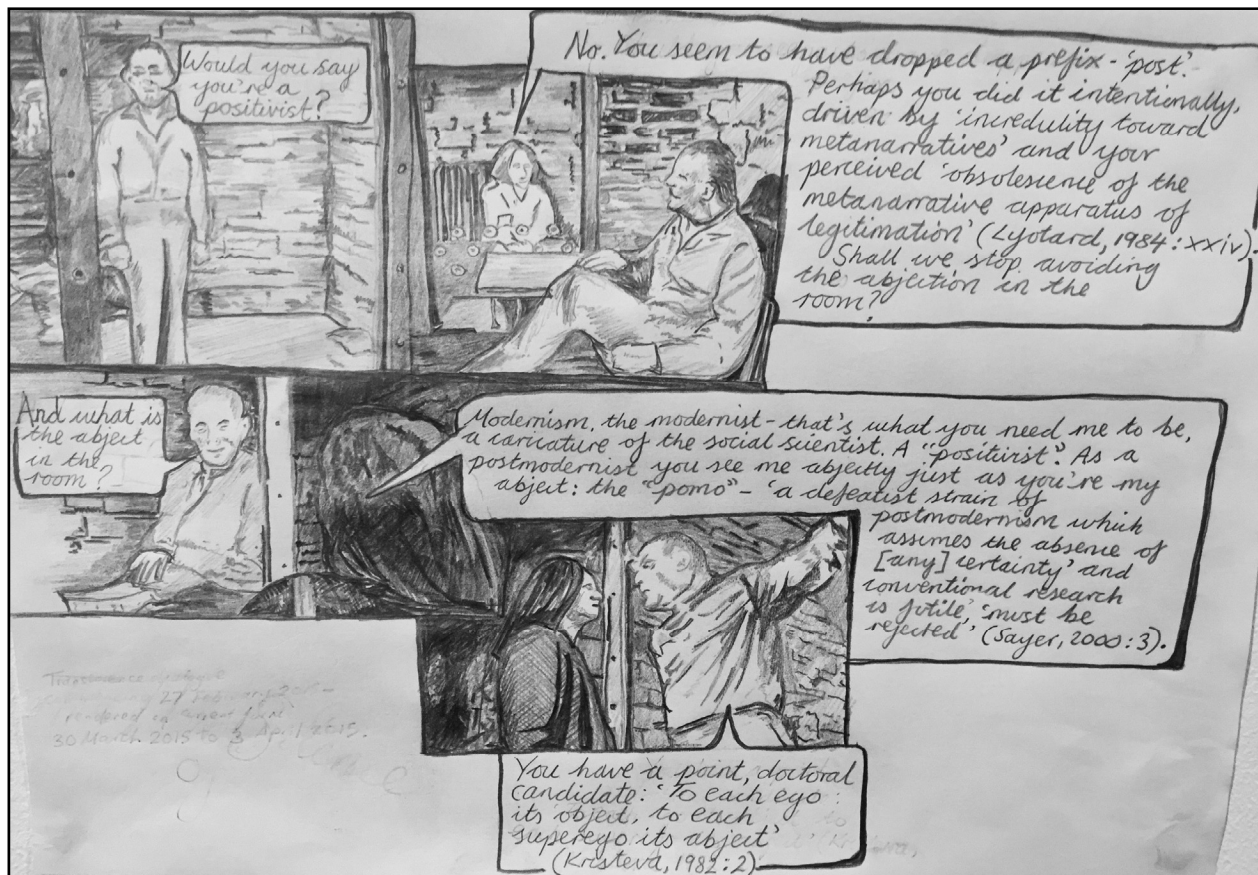


Figure 2. A transference dialogue revisiting <the positivist question>

Description: This transference dialogue began as a script, but it did “bring up” my own sense of being the *fledging academic* (as it does now in storyboard form with my “I” represented by Clarice Starling) who was meeting *proficient academics* – those with brilliant minds (signified by Dr. Lecter in the storyboard). For me, this transference dialogue not only captures the past inflected with meaning from popular culture, but also an act of trying to *re-write* the event by working through <the positivist question>.

The dialogue in Figure 2 centres on the modernist-postmodernist conflict, but I wish to focus on the issue of positivism “thrown up” in my doctoral interview and my re-imagining of the experience. To “bring up” positivism as part of the historical development of inquiry in the natural and social sciences is, in my view, quite proper. It enables us to understand how contemporary research practice has emerged, become more sophisticated in terms of ontology and epistemology. For example, critical realist ontology is stratified rather than naïve (Moore, 2013; Sayer, 2000). However, positivism “thrown up” as an academic pejorative – the positivist as an abject identity – is a ‘rhetorical misuse’ lacking in ‘intellectual justification’ (Zammito, 2004, p. 6). It can be argued that positivism offers strong social constructionists their ‘postmodernist caricature [of social science] far removed from the reality of contemporary [empirical inquiry]’ (Moore, 2013, p. 342). The corpse of positivism “brought up” (vomited)—‘the utmost of abjection’ for some postmodernists (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4; Sayer, 2000) – even though ‘positivism has long since ceased to be accepted as a viable model in the philosophy of science or epistemology’ (Moore, 2013, p. 342; see also Phillips & Burbules, 2000; Sayer 2000). In short, positivism “thrown up” as the position against which strong social constructionists forms a paradigmatic identity. As “I” suggest in Figure 2, there is a convenient dropping of ‘the prefix –post’.

Positivism as ‘whatever is distasteful’ can lead to misplaced charges aimed at postpositivists (Phillips and Burbules, 2000; Zammito, 2004, p. 6;). For example, *all* empirical inquiry – epistemologically and methodologically – cannot and should not be reduced to or equated with positivism (Moore, 2013; Zammito, 2004). My “I” in Figure 2 highlights this by referring to ‘obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation’ (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv). Inappropriate elisions can emerge, such as quantification=scientism=positivism=naïve ontological realism (Jones, 2011; Phillips and Burbules, 2000). Another elision is the objective (interested yet detached) researcher, i.e. ‘Mr Objective Researcher’, *must* be a positivist rather than an agent carefully negotiating what is epistemically relevant and irrelevant to an inquiry (Brown & Jones, 2001, p. 73; Phillips and Burbules, 2000).

Revisiting <the positivist question> “thrown up” in an act of automatic writing, recalling and *re-imagining* its origins, has been therapeutic. In other words, I have – through engaging with paradigm talk – come to diffuse positivism as an abusive naming practice that has the potential to trouble me, to make me ‘the abject in the room’ (see third and fourth frames of Figure 2). However, self-identifying with postpositivism is inherently challenging by virtue of what the paradigmatic label “contains”.

Postpositivism retains in its name ‘positivism’ as a defunct and defective paradigm with foundationalist epistemologies – empiricism and rationalism – which few contemporary researchers now subscribe to in contemporary research (Creswell, 2014; Donmoyer, 2006; Moore, 2013). Personally, I take the following discourse as a reminder that postpositivism is built on unhappy ground.

What, then, is postpositivism? Clearly, as the prefix “post” suggests, it is a position that *arose historically after positivism* and *replaced it* [...] it marks out the fact that out of *the ruins of the collapsed positivistic approach*, a *new* (if diverse and less unified) approach has developed.

(Phillips & Burbules, 2000, p. 4, my emphasis)

In terms of my own manufacturing of a postpositivist “I”, the prefix ‘post’ is a fragile yet strongly defended border where the presence of ‘positivism’, that ‘existence of the abject’ in the paradigmatic label ‘continually questions the adequacy of [“I” as a postpositivistic] subject’ (Linstead, 1997, p. 1122). Positivism must remain *within* my postpositivist consciousness, rejected as defective and defunct, in order to maintain postpositivism as distinct from ‘the collapsed positivistic approach’ (Phillips and Burbules, 2000, p. 4). Postpositivism is not the archetypal phoenix rising from fire and ashes – it is more akin to the archetypal city built ‘out of ruins’ (Phillips and Burbules, 2000, p. 4). Paradigmatic history is buried yet the original architecture is not entirely erased, can quite easily be ‘brought up’ – and mis/used (Jung, 1991a, *The Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism*, ARAS, 2010).

#### 4. “Are You Gay?” Being “Gay” (Not Quite) “Queer” in Paradigm Talk

In my mid- to late-adolescence and into my early twenties, <the gay question> was frequently posed. Alongside the sense of imminent threat (physical or psychological) also came *arousal*; the possibility that a male asking <the gay question> might bring me into an encounter with “sameness” – another male with a same-sex orientation. This



“re-search” paper is, in a way, a “coming out” – as if <the gay question> is almost *asking me*: *Why*, as a self-identified gay male, have you *not* examined queer theory? And, if you do, what could it *mean* for *who* you are and *where* you are as a researcher?

#### 4.1 “Bringing Up” the Gay and Queer Archaeologically

Queer theory insists ‘sexuality is not a case of either/or, but rather a spectrum’ where individuals can occupy different positions, at different times and under different circumstances (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 115, Harrison, 2013; Richardson et al., 2013). Sexuality is therefore difficult to essentialise, existing in a dialectical relationship between the social world and discourse (Buchbinder, 2013; Foucault, 1990; Richardson et al., 2013). However, I feel that I can relate to aspects of queer theory without completely dissolving the notion of having *some essence* as the self-identified gay male or ignoring that this “I” has also been socially constructed, constituted and manufactured. For me, the essentialist aspect of my “I” as the gay male is androphilia and androcentricism; a *constancy* in my attraction to straight/bisexual/gay men and a tendency to foreground the male human being and their masculinities. My positionality here is essentially constructed *in opposition* to the feminine, i.e. it is abjected *by me* and *for me* to situate the gay male “I” as a form of masculinity – distancing the “I” from a sense of the feminised. In Figure 3a and 3b, I present my attempt at writing some of my archaeology as a self-identified gay male, i.e. recording past lived experienced “brought up”, mingling with and influenced by my reading of literature in the present.

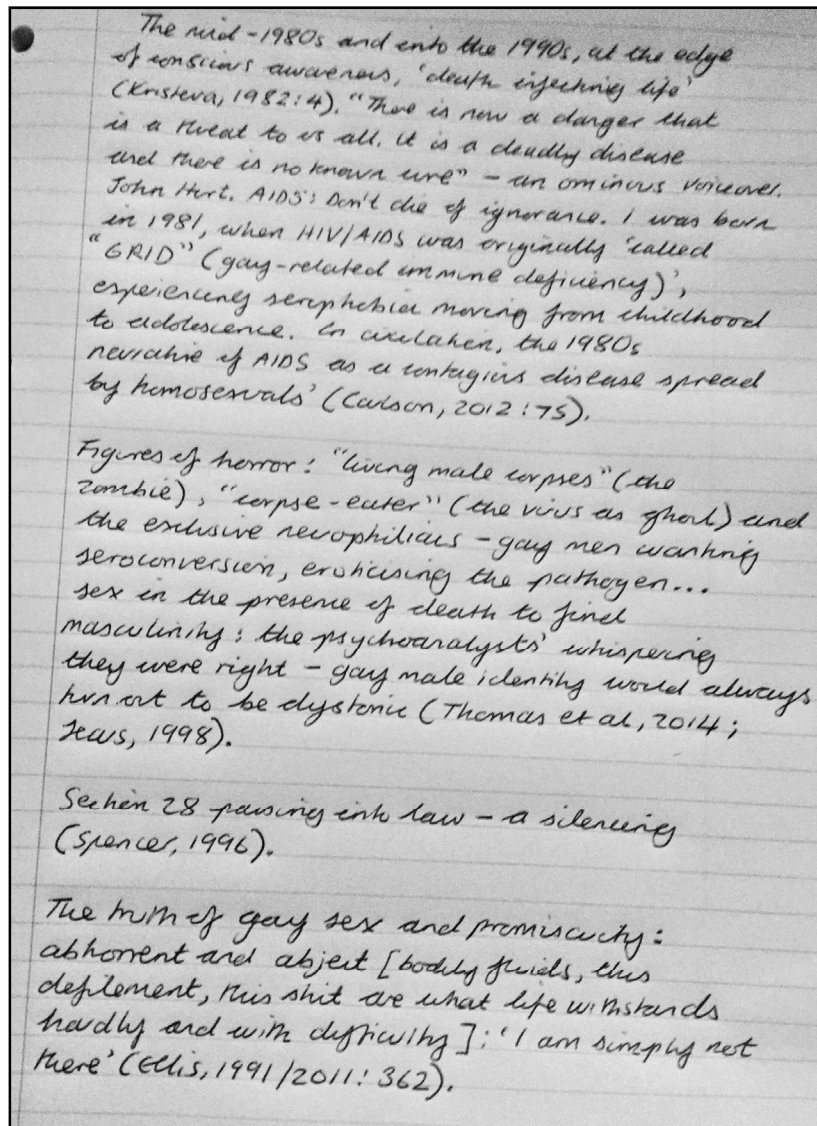


Figure 3a. Extract from my research journal (first page)

Description: This page recalls my memories of HIV/AIDS and the circulation of serophobia. The text is decidedly preoccupied with ‘a contagious disease spread by homosexuals’ (Carlson, 2012, p. 75), bodily breakdown and recollections (mediated by literature) where the “truth” of being gay was populated by *abjections*: ‘Figures of horror’ and the pleasure of gay sex or male-male relations overshadowed by the prospect of death.

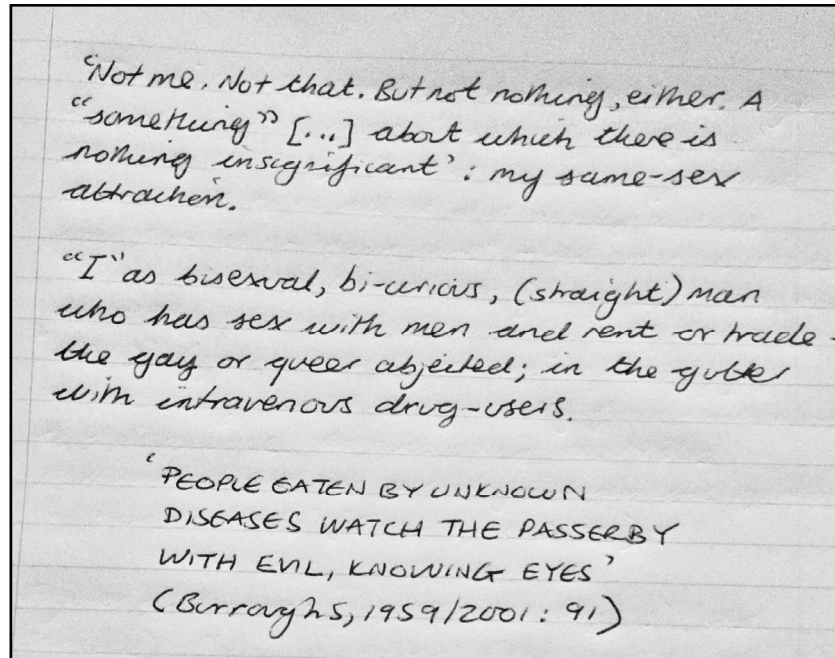


Figure 3b. Extract from my research journal (second page)

Description: This section highlights ‘the gay or queer abjected’ by me in the past. Taking self-identifications other than the latter, such as a ‘a man who has sex with men’, appears to me – in the here-and-now – as protection against being “brought up” in the 1980s and 1990s where I was frequently exposed to notions of: (i) being gay equates to disease, (ii) homosexual carries a death sentence, and (iii) the gay or queer as predatory. The quote from Burroughs’ *Naked Lunch* (1959/2001, p. 91) seems to crystallise this.

Archaeologically, my “I” was a gay male haunted by serophobia with ‘the gay or queer abjected’ (Figure 3b). With the emergence of HIV/AIDS, the ‘ominous voiceover’ of the *AIDS. Don’t Die of Ignorance* adverts broadcast in the UK during the mid-1980s (Figure 3a), the younger “I” was drawn to self-identifications placing social and psychological distance between “I” and ‘the gay or queer abjected’ (Figure 3b). A glimpse of an internalised homophobia – a dystonic gay male identity, perhaps symptomatic of my same-sex attraction as I moved through adolescence and the discourse(s) circulating in the background during those formative years (Thomas et al., 2014). A glimpse of what Kristeva (1982, p. 2) articulates for me: ‘Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A “something” that I do not recognise as a thing [...] that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me’.

To work archaeologically is a mode of inquiry that can be used in queer theory. It can examine ‘production of discourses that have turned sexual acts into sexual identities’ (Harrison, 2013, p. 103), which is a feature of my attempt to probe some of my own archaeology in Figure 3a and 3b. To scrutinise one’s own archaeology can also highlight where a ‘researcher does not [necessarily] speak the archaeology, but the archaeology speaks the researcher’ (Scheurich, 1997, p. 171). In other words, “bring up” taken-for-granted assumptions – the past “I” that may influence *what* is seen in the present and *how* it is seen. In my case, the “I” of the here-and-now is no longer the “I” where ‘the gay [is to be] abjected’ (Figure 3b). But I do remain less than comfortable with the queer, which I will address further in subsection 4.2 and Section 5. Before that, I wish to offer an instance of rhetoric in queer theory where the paradigm risks making heterosexuality an abject, something to be radically separated from (Kristeva, 1982).

#### 4.1.2 A Moment of Discomfort with Strong Queer Paradigm Talk

Although some paradigm talk in queer theory maintains ‘one may be (a) straight or (a) gay, one *does* queer, or one queers, by interrogating assumptions about sexual identity’ (i.e. queer functioning as a verb and inclusive of straight,

gay and other identifications), stronger rhetoric can exclude or marginalise heterosexuality (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 116). Arguing for a queer researcher's manifesto, de Castell and Bryson (1998, p. 247) "bring up" several issues, such as 'given the dialogical character of much [...] educational research, whether researchers who are not themselves gay [...] are not privy to [such] information about their subjects – they don't have the "radar" so they don't see it'. The authors continue: 'heterosexual sexual people are either unable or unwilling to see or report the presence of gay [...] subjects in their research population' (de Castell & Bryson, 1998, p. 247). Apart from implying 'that queer theory is only for certain people' (Richardson et al., p. 52), there is also a rather uncomfortable simplification and generalisation in this paradigm talk: heterosexuals occupy the dominant position and all queers are marginalised, silenced and denied visibility (Buchbinder, 2013; Richardson et al., 2013). Power and its circulation is far more complicated as are the reasons why some individuals choose "to pass" or disclose their sexuality (see Harrison, 2013 on "passing"; see Scheurich, 1997 on circulation of power).

Speaking as the "I" who has been a gay male as abjection, the "I" who has abjected the gay and queer in the past, my unease with strong queer paradigm talk is that heterosexuality becomes inappropriately demonised. Granted heteronormativity can produce traumatic experiences of stigmatisation and marginalisation, but not necessarily so. In making this assertion, here I must acknowledge that my "I" is biased towards assimilationism. This is an appropriate point to move on and present "data" from my research journal that "brings up" sexuality and politicisation in paradigms. It is also a thread that continues into Section 5.

#### 4.2 "Bringing Up" the 'Gay/Queer Theorist' and the Significance of the "Slash"

The following entry from my research journal (Figure 4) provides a summarisation of my thoughts on sexuality as a substantive area of study in response to engaging with queer theory literature.

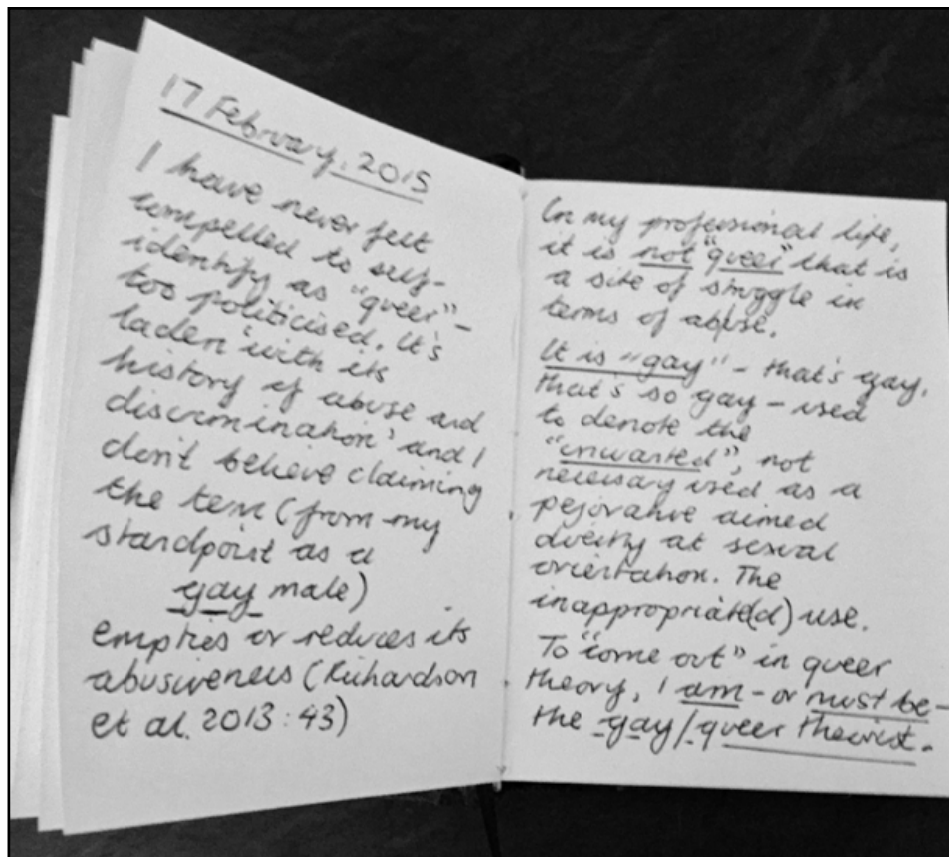


Figure 4. Research journal extract reflecting on "gay" and "queer" as identity markers

Description: On the *left-hand side*, I assert my self-identification as 'a gay male' and, on the *right-hand side*, I "bring up" phrases such as 'that's gay, that's so gay' as one of my concerns – a label for same-sex attraction used pejoratively, inappropriately – a contemporary site for reclamation (see Guasp et al., 2012).

Regarding Figure 4, I concentrate on the ‘gay/queer theorist’ and the ‘obscure slash or scar’ signified by what appeared to be, at first glance, an innocuous punctuation mark (Stronach & MacLure, 1997, p. 77). Readings of the “slash” will be offered, considering the intersectionality between personal, cultural-historical and collective-archetypal resonances (Romanyshyn, 2007/2013, see Note 3.). In doing so, I try to draw out *who* and *where* “I” am in queer theory (i.e. how I can “come out” in queer theory’ as noted in Figure 4).

I focus on interpreting the “slash” as (i) a *boundary*, and (ii) as a *wound* although I accept there may be other possible readings. To take the “slash” as signifying a boundary, it is tempting to offer a binary – *either gay or queer*; a neat division between assimilationist research and a queer approach. On one side, ‘gay/’, the assimilationist label, implies a focus on the visibility of same-sex attraction, its normalisation and the ways in which visibility and normalisation can be facilitated (Croce, 2015; Ng, 2013; Tierney and Dilley, 1998). On the other side of the “slash” is ‘/queer’, a paradigm with the overarching aims of: (i) problematising normalisation and giving voice to marginalised sexualities, (ii) troubling heteronormative categories, and (iii) “bringing up” the researcher’s ‘own non-innocent forms of knowledge’ (Buchbinder, 2013; Croce, 2015; Filax et al., 2011, p. 88; Harrison, 2013, Richardson et al., 2013). Both paradigms agree that homosexuality is not abnormal. However, they can be understood as separating from one another on political grounds: assimilationism as non-confrontational and queer theory as more confrontational. This surfaces in Figure 4: ‘as “queer” – too politicised’. Yet I also express my own desire to resist the use of gay ‘to denote the “unwanted”’, which one could say involves the politicisation found in the queer. So, it is perhaps inappropriate to take the “slash” as a fixed boundary. Rather it is a *permeable boundary* where one can oscillate between assimilationism and queer theory. The “slash” then becomes a joining *and* separation, a *brisure*, where the aforementioned paradigms can fold *onto* and *into* each other. It is worth noting a connection with the modernist-postmodernist tension highlighted in Section 3 and Figure 2. In terms of *being and becoming* ‘the gay/queer theorist’, “I” find myself in a place where I must consider ‘not [necessarily] bridg[ing] modernist-postmodernist perspectives, [but] at least allow[ing] them to ‘speak’ to each other’ (Jennings and Graham, 1996, p. 268). Taking the “slash” as a *permeable boundary* rather than a call for strict (and false) dichotomisation, “I” constitute myself as ‘in-between, the ambiguous, the composite’. A possible abjection in sexuality studies, one who ‘flaunts its disrespect for the law’, i.e. paradigmatic boundaries (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). In thinking *where* “I” am, *who* “I” am, “I” found myself where “I” did not think “I” was – closer to the queer than I realised (Parker et al., 1995). Having considered the “slash” as boundary, I now examine it as signifying a wound.

To interpret the “slash” as a wound still implies joining *and* separation – like skin once injured and ripped apart but whose edges come together as the tear heals. What is significant here is that a wound, whether fresh or a scar, points towards undecidability, abjection: an uncertainty of what is ‘above and below [my] skin, in the skin and on [my] skin’ as a gay male, mind and body (ARAS, 2010; Chare, 2011, p. 99; Kristeva, 1982;). Certainly, I recognise experiencing abjection in adolescence (subsections 1.3 and 4.1) and the emotional charge associated with <the gay question> is a scar (Section 3) – a psychological lesion. But, encountering queer theory, its paradigm talk *shows me* that the wound is neither fresh nor healed: I am still in the process of answering myself: *Why*, as a self-identified gay male, have you *not* examined queer theory? And, if you do, what could it *mean* for *who* you are and *where* you are as a researcher? Whether the “slash” is a wound – neither fresh nor healed into a scar – or even a crack where I fall between assimilationism and queerness, the symbols (slash/wound/scar/crack) “bring up”, at the collective-archetypal level, connotations of *darkness* and *black*.

Darkness, as an absence of light, ‘attracts human projections of moral or mental deficiency, often translated in terms of sin or evil’ (ARAS, 2010, p. 100); a connection to language Kristeva (1982, p. 4) associates with abjection: ‘immoral, sinister, scheming and shady’. Undeniably, this aspect of my “I” became evident in Figure 3a and 3b. Perhaps the “slash”, that darkness, reflects ‘the ego confronted [...] with the weight of its earthliness’ (or *nigredo*) in this “re-search” (ARAS, 2010, p. 100) – my own fallibilism: I have experienced abjection, but remain guilty of ‘gay or queer abjecting’ (Figure 3b). The enemy that is *within* and *of* the gay community, but through this “re-search”, the “slash” as a permeable boundary represents a wish for reconciliation between ‘gay’ and ‘queer’. The black of the “slash” is symbolically associated with ‘*metanoia*: a turning away or inward [...] the luminous darkness of self-understanding’ (ARAS, 2010, p. 658). Linking the collective-archetypal to the personal level, I *have* started to seek out *who* and *where* “I” am in the queer paradigm. Together, *nigredo* and *metanoia* highlight *new possibilities*; an embryonic self that is emerging into queer theory with the assistance of Kristeva’s abjection theory. No doubt, in the darkness, there is much that remains, at present, unresolved and hidden (see Note 7). Continuing with this thread of an assimilationist “I” and queer “I”, the next section deals with issues “brought up” by an example of queer cinema.

## 5. Getting Go: A Moment of Queer Cinema “Bringing Up” Research Issues

For me, viewing Krueckeberg’s (2013) film *Getting Go: The Go Doc Project* was an unsettling experience. The film seemed to offer “data” – an analogy – to be “read” in terms of the implications for inquiry and becoming (or *settling into* the role of) ‘the gay/queer theorist’.

*Getting Go* is set in a postmodern world that I recognise: a sexualised society, commodification of the body and men’s physicalities under the male “gay-ze”. A parade of second-order simulacrum on Doc’s computer – online and downloaded images incapable of encapsulating an actuality, the “real”: individuals reduced to bodies rather than a body *and* soul (Baudrillard, 1983, 1984; Schussler, 2013). Doc (the “researcher”) decides to make a documentary film about New York City’s nightlife, choosing a go-go dancer, named Go, as the subject (the “researched”). The researched is sexualised; an “ideal” male physicality, unashamed of flaunting his physique, taking pride in his status as a *gold star gay* (Note 6). The researcher, Doc, is also sexualised – openly gay – and Go is his *object of desire*. For me, this “brought up” the notion of not just sexualised subjects, but *sexualised researchers*: a challenge to the sexually neutral and corporeally detached ‘Mr. Objective Researcher’ (Brown & Jones, 2001, p. 73). The latter is what ‘might well be considered optimal in the tomes of methodology’ and the former identity (i.e. sexualised researcher) as abject, but queer theory acknowledges inquiry as ‘the sites where bodies actually come together to construct or test knowledge’ (Honeychurch, 1998, p. 251). In effect, what is likely to be considered abject in social scientific research – ‘what disturbs identity, [...] order [...] positions, rules’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4) – is not transgressive in queer theory. In the latter, ‘the body may not always, easily or reasonably, be disregarded’ (Honeychurch, 1998, p. 252).

My postpositivist “I” experienced *discomfort*, an urge to *cast out* this notion – but in this *disordering* experience, paradigm talk “brought up” a sense of a personal lacking *and* an arousal, a feeling of excitement. Perhaps a glimpse of ‘subject as want-to-be’ (Soler, 2014, p. 65) and a moment of *jouissance*: seeing the ‘brutish suffering [...] “I” puts up with’ to be part of the postpositivistic social order – sexually neutral, intellectually interested but corporeally detached – and *an impulse towards queerness*, giving presence to “I” as a gay male and erotophilia as a legitimate way of knowing. In other words, suspended between embodied experience – the sensual, responses (positive or negative) to sexual cues (Honeychurch, 1998) – and a postpositivistic “I” who has abjected emotion, that “I” with a ‘persona of cold professionalism’ (Dobson, 2009, p. 154). Beneath this, the passive shadow of *Eros* as the archetypal Absent Lover; socially disconnected and remaining distanced (Dobson, 2009; Mayes, 1999, 2005). But, in that moment of arousal, I felt the Addicted Lover in its potentiality – an aspect of “I” that has “brought up” a need to connect my research, lived experience and corporeal sexuality.

With the collapse of researcher/researched border “brought up” (raised, introduced) in *Getting Go*, my fear and fascination with *becoming* a ‘gay/queer theorist’ was magnified. *Who* is researching *who* in the queer paradigm as the line between filmmaker/subject blur, which I have mapped onto researcher/researched relations? *How* might my own worldview be disrupted, *unsettled* and challenged? During the film, this was “brought up” when Go assumes control of the camera, turning it on Doc and utilises the same methods of data collection/construction as the original “researcher”: interview, life history and narrative, autoethnography. The male “gay-ze” is not unidirectional. In short, this moment encapsulated the importance of self-reflexivity – being one’s own analyst and analysand *during* a research study, i.e. prepared to “bring up” and examine one’s own attractions to another, its implications for *what* is seen and *how* it is seen; conscious of one’s own capacity for accepting or abjecting others (see subsection 4.2).

*Getting Go* led me back to epistemologies and their politicisation (see Figure 4), a predicament that ‘the researcher cannot be removed from’ according to Scheurich, 1997, p. 49). The notion of a situated researcher, as shown in the film, and social relativism appears to me as what I shall tentatively call “common ground” between postpositivism and postmodernism/poststructuralism (Bourdieu, 1998; Foucault, 1990; Harrison, 2013; Kuhn, 1962/2012; Moore, 2013; Morgan, 2007; Phillips & Burbules, 2000). I wish to briefly consider how *Getting Go* alerted me to the socially situated researcher where wider historical, social and political circumstances intersect with inquiry.

In the course of making his documentary, Doc is considering writing a thesis arguing that assimilationism should be the goal of the LGBT community in order to achieve true equality. Herein lies the trait-of-identification between Doc and “I”, i.e. common political ground. On the other hand, Go reveals a more confrontational – or queer – political position after the researcher/researcher and filmmaker/subject sleep together. Mapping this onto re-search/research, assimilationism (the “conventional”) and queer (the “unconventional”) paradigmatic positions are joined *and* separated in terms of historical development (Tierney and Dilley, 1998; Sears, 1998), coexisting in our contemporary world as reflected in *Getting Go*. Just as my present feeling of tension between assimilationism and queer involves coexistence.

My comfort in assimilationism and *discomfort* with queer theory perhaps lies in how ‘I abject *myself* within the same moment through which “I” claim to establish *myself*’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 3) and existing in the “slash” discussed in subsection 4.2. Like Doc, I have a fascination with the queer, but I become somewhat *unsettled* where I perceive others to be ‘the subversive model of promiscuous, flaunting, militant queer’ (Croce, 2015, p. 4). “I” engage in abjecting, casting away from me, an *alter ego* – a potential part of “I” – that threatens the assimilationist “I” residing in the safety, socially acceptable categories of ‘the good homosexual’ and ‘respectable homosexuality’ (Croce, 2014, p. 4; Seidman, 1994, p. 170). And the “I” in the here-and-now experiences that lacking often associated with abjecting – closer to assimilationism than queerness, “passing” in the social world as an acceptable gayness, yet *desiring* and *wanting* the queer. My “I”, self-manufactured and constituted by gaystreaming (i.e. specific “versions” of the gay male that are “permissible”, circulating in film and media) recognises my “passing” involves accepting heterosexual categories that have (a) infiltrated homosexual culture and (b) involved normalisation (e.g. same-sex marriage or civil partnerships in England) (Bryant, 2008; Croce, 2015; Harrison, 2013; Ng, 2013). This “passing” – only “bringing up” the gay male authorised in the body politic – has served *me* well and I serve *it* well. Choosing “to pass”, abjecting the queer, has quite simply been driven by my own will to power. “Passing” and refusing queerness has, I feel, enabled me ‘access to greater levels of opportunity or power in the social system that privileges certain [...] self-presentations’ (Harrison, 2013, p. 1). Of course, the mix of social, psychological and ethical pressures and commitments involved in “passing” and taking care in terms of what is or is not “brought up” is complex and multifaceted (see Harrison, 2013). But, I do accept the charge that my own “passing” (an exploitation of assimilationism) makes my “I” *complicitous* in the marginalisation, possible silencing and invisibility of other minority sexualities (Filax et al., 2011; Croce, 2015).

## 6. Final Thoughts

I wish to draw together some threads running through this “re-search” paper. In doing so, Kristeva’s (1982, p. 10) writing on the multiplicity of identity, our positioning and manufacturing of the self in and through abjection are particularly relevant: ‘But when I *seek* (myself), *lose* (myself), or experience *jouissance* – then “I” is *heterogenous*’. In other words, my sense of “I” as a researcher has been simultaneously established and challenged (i.e. *destabilised*, placed in a state of flux) by encounters with specific instances of paradigm talk throughout this work.

For instance, my postpositivist persona – traced back to facing abjection at age six (Section 2) – has intersected with a perceived masculinity associated with social scientific research and a quantitative approach to inquiry. Postpositivistic paradigm talk where the researcher (or “I”) can take ‘emotion as an abject phenomenon’ (Linstead, 1997, p. 1115) has offered particular boundaries whereby I can “pass” as the *male researcher*. Adopting “abstract masculinity” (rationality, reason and the defence mechanism of intellectualisation) has contribute to my self-manufacturing as a unified “I” (subsection 2.1 and 2.2). Consequently, that which is perceived as feminine has been abjected (e.g. the qualitative approach to inquiry and avoiding the “irrationalities” of sensation and intuition as psychological functions). Ironically, this paper – a qualitative work – has involved me crossing into a ‘place where meaning collapses’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 2). For instance, working against my personal archaeology equating quantitative inquiry with masculinity and giving presence to my gay male self-identification. As a gay male and a researcher, my “I” is perhaps best understood as embryonic and in a state of flux – this was considered in my analysis of the “slash” in subsection 4.2. Considering the politicisation of epistemologies, assimilationist and queer approaches to sexuality, I arrived at a sense of the ‘in-between [...] the composite’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4) and my own process of abjecting ‘*the subversive* model of [...] queer’ (Croce, 2015, p. 4, emphasis added) to “pass” as a *respectable* gay male (Seidman, 1994). Yet in this *casting out* I have caught a glimpse of “I” as ‘the subject as want-to-be’ (Soler, 2014, p. 61). This became particularly apparent when I viewed Krueckeberg’s *Getting Go*, a film “bringing up” blurred boundaries between researcher/researched – *desiring* to accept a view of “I” as a sexualised researcher, but experiencing *discomfort* because it disrupts the borders of acceptability recognised by my postpositivistic “I”. Furthermore, it involves a shift from the protective space of assimilationism into the less known – queerness.

So, how can I summarise *who* and *where* “I” am following my “re-search”, this examination of paradigm talk and the constitution of identities? Am I reducible to a single paradigmatic label, a pure postpositivist, assimilationist or queer theorist? The simple answer – no, because in trying to ‘seek (*myself*)’ I found that “I” ‘think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think’ (Lacan, 1977, in Parker et al., 1995, p. 28). For example, I had never thought “I” possessed a sense of internalised homophobia – abjected other gay males – but this “re-search” *shows me* that “I” am, in part, where I have never thought “I” was (see subsections 4.1, 4.2 and Section 5).

Overall, the experience of producing this “re-search” has led me to view ‘paradigm talk as a ‘good thing to think

with' in terms of demands for practices of knowing' (Lather, 2006, pp. 35-36). For example, stepping outside postpositivism and engaging with queer theory has "brought up" that paradigmatic identities and boundaries can blur, coexist and form part of the complexities and nuances (and even the contradictions) of an "I" that cannot be simply contained in neat humanly constructed categories, i.e. modernism-postmodernism, assimilationist-queer theorist. To return to the words of Kristeva (1982, p. 10): "'I' is *heterogenous*' – aspects of paradigm talk, discourse(s) offering a sense of *who* and *where* one is as a researcher involves fluidity *if* one is *open* to the prospect. Following on from this, social and educational inquiry 'characterised by paradigm proliferation and the balkanisation of the field [...] is [not] an inevitable by-product of such proliferation' (Donmoyer, 2006, p. 25) *if* one is *willing* to interrogate, "bring up" paradigm talk and embrace an unexamined personal archaeology influenced by and reflecting cultural-historical influences and, on a deeper level, collective-archetypal resonances (Romanyshyn, 2007/2013).

In opening this paper, I stated my aim was to not only write *about* abjection, but *write* abjection. As part of this, I drew on the dovetailing of meaning associated with "to bring up" – its use in raising or not introducing (unwelcome) issues and the urge to "throw up" or swallow that which might disrupt a particular social order. My intention was to avoid 'a separation between the researcher(s) text) and the state of abjection' (Henderson, 2014, p. 27). It has been a struggle. First and foremost, I have been conscious of the need to produce an *accessible, readable* and *comprehensible* paper that articulates my "re-search" with clarity. Put differently, the typical or conventional expectations of academic writing have served as a boundary – a social order – that I have *desired* to cross, but felt a need to *restrain* the urge. Why? I tentatively suggest this is rooted in the need to be *accepted*, pushing a boundary without violating it – unwilling (at present) to be an academic abjection (Henderson, 2014). An avoidance of rejection, one could say, *and* an act of self-preservation or "passing" (Harrison, 2013). Apart from these constraints on *writing* abjection, a further challenge has been trying to communicate '[the] "not yet a place", [the] no-grounds' of the abject and suspending 'the assurance mechanical use of speech ordinarily gives us' (Kristeva, 1982, p. 38). I recognise that to move closer to *writing* abjection, it may be necessary for me to recognise 'an over-mastery of the linguistic and rhetorical code' and compose texts that oscillate between theory, lived experience, the poetic and greater literary use of language (Kristeva, 1982, p. 38; cf. Kristeva, 1989, p. 22).

This paper has come to represent a cautious first step towards doing so. I have touched on *writing* abjection in this work, but cannot firmly claim to have *written* abjection. I have, however, resisted the urge to separate myself from the state of abjection, "bringing up" my sexuality and offering a glimpse of a moment from childhood that contributed to seeking refuge in postpositivism. I "threw up" rather than swallowed my *discomfort* in queer theory and recognised that, as a self-identified gay male, this version of "I" is constituted by abjecting queerness and its politicisation. I have gained insight into the means by which "I" establish myself as the respectable homosexual with internalised homophobia "brought up" – an *uncomfortable* moment in my "re-search", yet an issue now in consciousness (and haunting it). One that I can begin to unpick, interrogate and (hopefully) overcome, *undo*.

Essentially, this "re-search" paper has captured something of 'the one [me] haunted by [paradigm talk and *who* and *where* "I" am] literally [placed] beside himself' (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1). And by situating myself between the third and first person here, I end with the sense of being *disorganised* and *disorientated*. An individual who has become more familiar with *who* and *where* "I" am in the here-and-now, but in this act my "I", aspects of *me* "brought up" in this work, feel *unknown* and *unfamiliar*. It is these *strangers within* or the *outsiders within* that I now seek to know, understand and interrogate further. And 'when I *seek* (myself), *lose* (myself)', I am now prepared to accept that 'I [might] think where I am not, therefore I am [possibly] where I do not think' (Kristeva, 1982, p. 10; Lacan, 1977, cited in Parker et al., 1995, p. 28). It is for this reason, perhaps, that my answer to the question in Figure 5 is this: *No, not yet...*

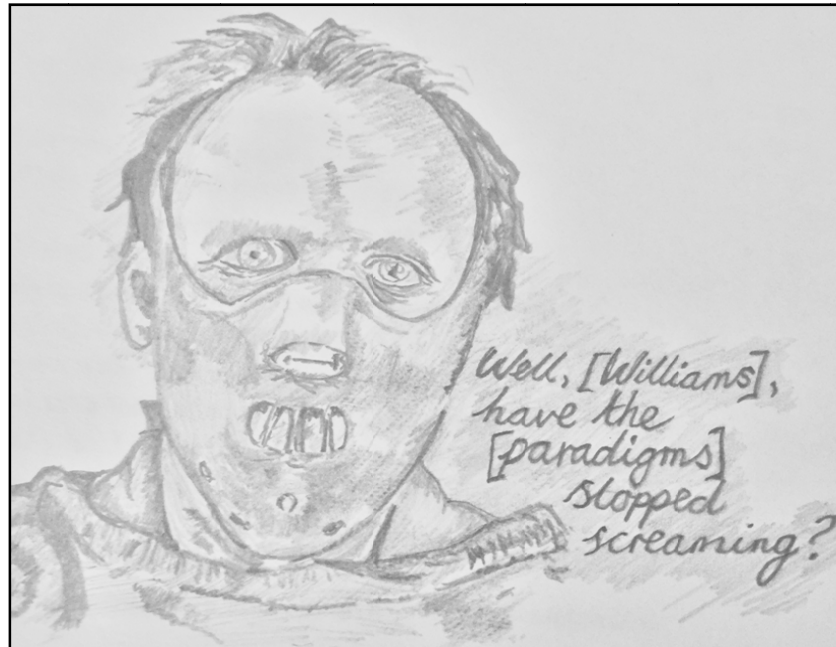


Figure 5. Contemplating my sense of security after encountering paradigm talk.

Description: The question is based on one posed by Dr. Lecter to Clarice Starling in *The Silence of the Lambs*, alluding to whether her stopping Buffalo Bill has resolved a childhood memory (or trauma); her failure to save a lamb from slaughter (Demme, 1991; Harris, 1989/2009). In modifying the question with ‘paradigms’ and their ‘screaming’, I established my sense of paradigm talk flooding me, rooted in my past and “brought up” in the here-and-now (cf. Figure 1, left-hand side). In giving shape to my thoughts, the half-mask is suggestive of having worked on and through my postpositivist persona, “bringing up” (revealing) my attraction to and caution about accepting queer theory’s embrace.

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## Notes

Note 1. I stress ‘some peers’ to avoid misrepresenting this childhood experience. Certainly, racism was present, but it would be inappropriate to claim (or imply) *all* peers were involved. It is also interesting to note that, when in urban and cosmopolitan areas, I was considered European – typically Spanish, occasionally Italian. This example serves to highlight that abjection can occur relative to social, cultural-historical conditions. In other words, there is an element of social relativism (Scheurich, 1997). Likewise, in the example of the straight and gay male in Section 1, shifting social and cultural conditions can accentuate the homosexual as abject or bring the gay man from outside and into certain forms of homosocialities (see McCormack and Anderson, 2014a, 2014b on homophobia).

Note 2. Here, I am offering a *perception* that may not match actuality because the issue “brought up” is attached to my own internal emotional state of frustration that has influenced *what* I see and *how* I see it.

Note 3. “Re-search” as a practice is concerned with reflexivity. It is an act and work of *anamnesis*, allowing ‘those unfinished stories that weigh down on us’ to surface (Romanyshyn, 2007/2013, p. 113). One moves back and forth between the past and present, drawing together material that has become associated, connected to one another (Denzin, 2014; Todres, 2011). Engaging in “re-search” as outlined in Romanyshyn’s (2007/2013) *The Wounded Researcher*, the method is intended to support: (i) gaining self-understanding of one’s own fundamental assumptions (their acquisition hitherto undetected and lodged in the unconscious), (ii) identifying psychological complexes helping or hindering a research study or self-development, and (iii) locating personal concerns in their wider cultural-historical and collective-archetypal contexts.

In “re-search”, there are two overlapping phases. The first is allowing content to surface without censorship and, the second stage, involves transference dialogues: engaging with ‘the others in the work, the “strangers” who carry the unfinished business [...] of the work’ (Romanyshyn, 2007/2013, p. 146). After a period of time, the material is analysed, interpreted and *re-interpreted* – given ‘some concrete shape or form [...] between the researcher and the “strangers” in the work’ (Romanyshyn, 2007/2013, p. 157). This can include language, works of art, symbols or whatever means the researcher chooses to make sense of the psychoactive material and relate it to their current preoccupations. In my work, I chose storyboarding and research journal entries as the means of recording and *re-working* the material to facilitate my understanding of how I relate to aspects of paradigm talk. Material is examined at three levels, guided by particular questions. I offer some illustrative examples here (see Romanyshyn, 2007/2013, p. 152). *At the personal level*: Who is there in my own history that has something to say? What significant people in my life have a voice? *At the cultural-historical level*: Who, from another time or place, is communicating through the work? What is their voice and how does it relate to mine? *At the collective-archetypal level*: For whom is the work being done, what need or purpose is the work serving? What elements of the collective unconscious are manifest and how might these be interpreted to gain self-understanding, to identify what is helping or hindering a study?

Note 4. Thanatophobia should not be confused with necrophobia, which involves irrational fear of dead things and artefacts associated with death. To be thanatophobic, an individual is specifically concerned with ceasing “to be”.

Note 5. Feminist theorists raised issues with androcentricism during the 1980s, drawing attention to the notion of an “abstract masculinity” related to an image of the “man of reason” (Zammito, 2004).

Note 6. To claim the label of *gold star gay*, a man must never have had a sexual encounter with a woman (Krueckeberg, 2013).

Note 7. It was only when revising and finalising this paper that I was struck by the locations depicted in Figure 1 (the attic) and Figure 2 (the basement and prison). I realised that, even though I had *looked* at these images many times, there was something I had never really *seen*. An attic ‘suggests the idea of things removed but not discarded, nor, perhaps, resolved’ (ARAS, 2010, p. 572). It is a space that ‘contains things known and unknown, but available for discovery’ (ARAS, 2010, p. 572). The attic is an abject space – it ‘fascinates, repels and invites’, a site of *jouissance*: ‘one does not desire it [a return to the hidden or stored], one joys in it [finding what has been removed] [*on enjouit*]’ (ARAS, 2010, p. 572; Kristeva, 1982, p. 9). In terms of this article, the archetypal symbolism of the attic – aside from it being a literal place where I attend my psychotherapy sessions – has resonated throughout. For instance, the figurative use of “to bring up” could, at times, be understood as a “bringing out” of my “I” from postpositivism and into queer theory (the attic as an analogy for the mind). In Figure 2, a spatial counterpart to the attic is depicted: the basement of a prison. Both the basement and prison act as ‘a container’ (ARAS, p. 574). In particular, the merging of basement and prison in Figure 2 suggests the following at the collective-archetypal level: (i) ‘an outside may feel constrained by [a] withering scrutiny’ (ARAS, p. 634), (ii) how ‘[w]e imprison ourselves by choices embedded, unwittingly, in coercive fears and inhibitions’ (ARAS, 2010, p. 634), and (iii) a place housing ‘the evidence of stored up impulses’ (ARAS, 2010, p. 574). In considering my positionality in relation to ‘the gay/queer theorist’ as part of my “re-search” (see subsection 4.2), the collective-archetypal resonances of not just the basement and prison but also the attic underscore my preoccupation with *who* and *where* “I” am, manufacturing of the self within and against paradigm talk. The settings in Figure 1 and Figure 2, their darkness (*nigredo*) and the black (*metanoia*), coincide with the “slash” (see subsection 4.2). The settings, along with the “slash”, *nigredo* and *metanoia* reinforce the opening of new possibilities as I consider accepting the queer embrace.