

REVIEWS

Nina Mariette, *Painting Myself In*

(Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1997)

Review by Bridie Lonie

"Only your body remembers."

Painting Myself In is an account in words and images of the writer's history as a sexually abused child and her mediation of that history through painting. The writer was encouraged to work in images by an art therapist, though the works were produced outside the contexts of the psychoanalytic encounter. Seventy-nine pages of explanatory text accompany forty full-page paintings produced over the period 1988-1994. The writer/artist argues that

being in constant physical pain, and being an abuse survivor have many parallels, especially in the way you are treated. You are pretty much invisible, for a start. What you are or have doesn't show; you have something that won't clear up or go away or get better. Most people find that very difficult to accept. So mostly they ignore it or pretend you/it don't exist. (p. 78)

The images in this book are active representations of a state of mind and its causes.

Classical psychoanalytic techniques with their notions of fantasy, displaced imagery and repression have been recognised as counter-productive for sexual abuse survivors. Because these people are used to a climate of secrecy, techniques of mirroring and the suggestion that

descriptions of events are metaphoric in nature, further discredit the experience. Instead, acts of witnessing are required to validate the experience, by therapists and others alike.

Painting Myself In is a relevant title. These representations insist on the self as characterised by the events described. Painting, like any other cultural system, is not simply unmediated expression. It reflects the image-base built up in the painter's mind; it articulates these as a common language. While this book does not represent a therapeutic encounter within the structures of art therapy, its work overlaps with that discourse. Within art therapy, there are many debates about the way the image works. Some writers suggest it can become talismanic, can hold affect, in a Jungian, almost mystical sense, and process it. Poststructural thinking suggests that the act of creating imagery within a shared image base draws the subject into the symbolic order, and allows her to position herself within the collectivity of humanity, therefore taking a stand against the isolation and silencing that is created by enforced secrecy. Because the social discourse of art suggests that art is about integration, it has become an active agent in the creation of a sense of internal coherence.

While the book does not present itself as a therapeutic engagement, it presents a movement towards integration. The sequence of images is dated and begins with a vision of hands over unrepresented eyes. It moves through the opening of those eyes, and the positioning of the child in a social context. The child grows older and the social contexts are elaborated, even to the parallel depiction of a crucifix and a Star of David. Groups of little girls are shown; weatherboard and brick houses contain and absorb the repre-

sented bodies of children and young women. Words occur in the images as vocalisations of positions or as comments on the images; in one instance the writer/artist writes of the silence of images, which repeats the silence of the child, and ends “only your body remembers”. (*September 1992*, p. 66).

Many images deal with eyes which will not see and mouths which must remain closed. The body becomes a turkey trussed on a table between hungry family members, a child at the bottom of the chasm, a torn and bleeding rag doll, a small child at play between disappearing images of reality which remind one of René Magritte’s *The Human Condition*. The viewer is asked to move between the viewing positions of predator and hunted.

In this instance, two strategies are adopted and used in different ways. The words depend upon the images, while the images present the evidence of affect and articulation. Specific images, such as a curved hand over small bodies, a cot with a cowering child, bifurcated bodies and hearts, occur in different case studies of child abuse and as the work of survivors. The images grow in representational information, but do not lose their emotional coherence. They also reflect an understanding of works by artists such as Magritte and Colin McCahon.

In the image facing the text cited above, *October 1993*, (p. 79) the artist has constructed a column of five naked women figures. The lowest lies face down, the fourth has divided blue, white and red bleeding hearts covering her arms and breasts, the highest is a bird/woman with the heart’s two sides opening up and becoming wings. The sequence rises against a blood/red background of slightly opened black doors. This is perhaps one of the most positive images, despite its problematic solution in a winged, but armless, figure.

Writing Myself In is problematic as a text in several ways. It has irritated therapists; indeed it sets out to do this. It appears to both use therapeutic techniques and deny their effectiveness. However when Mariette writes

The point of abuse is that whenever you have held on to some vision of yourself you’re not sure of it, it doesn’t seem real (p. 58)

the function of this act of visual projection becomes most apparent. For Mariette, the most coherent image of herself is one that includes the history of her abuse. Images in the text clearly indicate the importance to her of what have been called the “religions of the book”. The projection of that image into the form of a book inserts that image into what Lacan calls the symbolic order through the juridical function of the act of publishing and the witness of the published text. For her readers, these images and her discussion of them articulate the significance of self-imagining in the processes of self-awareness.

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M Hargreaves & J Hawley, *Physiological Bases of Sports Performance.*

(Sydney: McGraw-Hill, 2002)

Review by Adain Summerfield

Physiological Bases of Sports Performance purports to be a “valuable reference book [that] is essential reading for students, sci-

entists and clinicians with an interest in understanding and optimising sports performance”, yet falls well short of offering specific evidence-based strategies to guide those interested in enhancing sport performance. As is often the case with exercise physiology texts, this publication attempts to explain performance changes – specifically in endurance activities – as a result of different interventions, but fails to translate the physiological explanations into practical guidelines.

The contents cover the physiological bases of sports performance and are appropriately divided into two sections: the first section offering a brief overview of recent research on physiological bases of sports performance, and the second examining factors that exert a major influence on sports performance.

Perhaps unique in its approach to exercise physiology is Hawley’s statement that “physical training in preparation for competitive sport is not, and likely never will be a purely scientific pursuit. Our contemporary knowledge of the optimal training practices for enhancing performance in a wide variety of sports has evolved during the past century from the trial-and-error methods and field-based observations of a few innovative and risk taking coaches working with a limited number of athletes and teams, rather than innovation arising from modern-day, laboratory-based studies.”

This positioning is of interest given the importance typically claimed of the contribution of the sports sciences in advancing sports performance in many publications, but also in the way it frames the relationship between scientists, coaches and athletes in the pursuit of optimal performance. This is perhaps a perfect example of what Stearns refers to in this journal issue as the

benefit of interdisciplinarity. Elliot accurately identifies the “complex challenge that confronts the coach and athlete that want to be the best of the elite” and the current climate where “the successful athlete almost certainly [needs] a coach and a scientist working in harmony to ensure that the athlete is not disadvantaged by a competitor who is using new methods that have emerged from scientific investigation.” In Hawley’s chapter, and indeed throughout this publication, research is presented to guide the development of training methods, but the need for field practitioners to implement, monitor and modify according to individual athletes’ requirements in order to optimise performance is clearly stated. Unfortunately, Hawley does not provide any of the practical applications that he suggests are vital.

While *Physiological Bases of Sports Performance* derives much of its value from the extensive list of resources and bibliographies supporting each subject, this is simultaneously, the greatest weakness of the book. Recent findings, undertaken by recognised Australian and New Zealand scientists are presented within each chapter and then referenced clearly to direct the reader to information to fill any knowledge gaps highlighted when journeying through the pages. However, the reader is too often called upon to refer to these many references in order for the authors to bypass much of the foundation information required to derive value from the research presented in order to preserve “small book” (334 pages) appeal.

Another significant limitation is the absence of information on intermittent team sports or those sports with stop-and-start action. While Hawley correctly identifies the scarcity of scientific investigation into this type of activity, his book not only fails to offer specific intervention guidance, but also is

unable to explain performance changes with specific interventions.

On the other hand, research on endurance activities (cycling, running) is abundant and well presented in *Physiological Bases of Sports Performance*. However, is this endurance activity emphasis the result of the relative ease of investigation into endurance activities or, perhaps more significantly, the inability of science to adequately investigate dynamic intermittent activities? Perhaps the greatest value of this publication is the challenge presented to sports scientists to produce meaningful methods of investigation and literature relating to intermittent activities.

This publication certainly presents an exceptional compilation of contemporary research but the need for prior exercise physiology knowledge and/or a large budget to build the library necessary to extract useful information from this text restricts its use to those studying the exercise sciences or those with the time and the means to acquire the required foundation knowledge. Furthermore, the contents do little to add to the information that one might garner from existing exercise physiology texts (e.g. MacArdle, Katch and Katch, *Exercise Physiology: Energy, Nutrition, and Human Performance*, Philadelphia: Lea & Febiger, 1991) that also cover the necessary foundation knowledge albeit in a larger volume. This limits the value of this publication for coaches, athletes, to students or scientists seeking to develop effective strategies to enhance performance.

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Jørn Hansen & Niels Kayser Nielsen, (eds), *Sports, Body and Health*

(Odense, DK: Odense University Press, 2000)

Review by Annemarie Jutel

In 1995, the Institute of Sports Science of Odense University in Southern Denmark staged a seminar focusing on cultural scholarship. This conference sought to cast a historical and sociological light on the relation between sports, body culture and humanistic science. While not precisely an interdisciplinary project, it was certainly a staged convergence of disciplines and an opportunity for otherwise infrequent exchanges: a positive step towards what Peter Stearns describes in his contribution to this issue of *Junctures* as a "better understanding of the human condition."

In *Sports, Body and Health*, editors Jørn Hansen and Niels Kayser Nielsen have produced an anthology of short writings from this seminar. They enunciate the desire to capture a range of cultural meanings and discourses surrounding sports, the body and health and to explicate the relationship between sports and health. They focus on how health has been used as a legitimising discourse in the promotion of sport, and uncover the manifold cultural meanings surrounding the sporting body.

They face major challenges in attempting to achieve these goals. The first is whether a conference paper lends itself to being a chapter, and the second, whether or not those cultural theorists can indeed find a ground upon which their erudite views can merge with those of the scientist. The task is one of transformation.

In a recent issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, William Germano, vice-president and publishing director at Routledge Press discusses the challenges of writing the academic book and indeed describes it in terms of transformation. * A book takes its success from the author's ability to extrapolate from one kind of presentation (in the case he describes, the doctoral dissertation) to another: from the dissertation which rehearses scholarship, suppresses an authorial voice, and demonstrates analytic skills, to the book which speaks broadly, has absorbed scholarship, sustains an authorial voice, and commands an extended narrative. These are not merely mechanical adjustments but rather are conceptual necessities and are pivotal to a book's success. *Sports, Body and Health*, while covering useful terrain and providing important food for thought, struggles to make fruitful transformations from one genre to another.

Focusing on Benkt Söderberg's chapter "The Swedish Sports Movement and the Medical Profession: A Question of Power" as an initial example, we can witness one transformative test. Söderberg's concise chapter reviews the relationship of the medical profession to sport, both in reference to its enunciated position relative to competition sports, and the means by which it both attempted and achieved a mechanism of regulation over physical education and competitive sport.

The transformative challenge for Söderberg was to bring a conference paper to an academic readership. The piece contains many of the rhetorical devices of the oral presentation, including open-ended questions without answers, conversational tone, and colloquialism. Unfortunately, these lose their impact in the cold reality of the written word.

The cajoling body language which invites a spectator to reflection must be replaced by other tactics when the medium is ink on paper. But tone is not the only issue at hand. Many of the contributors, including Söderberg, while able speakers of the language, lack precision, however, with the written word. Far from wishing to convey an inappropriate Anglo-centrism, I would be remiss not to bring to the fore the limitations contained in the oftentimes awkward syntactic solutions chosen by the author. Here I suggest an editorial shortcoming. There should always be a native speaker of the language of publication in the editorial team.

The result of these adaptations is a little piece which skims over the surface of the fascinating topic, inviting its listeners (rather than its readers) to come to question time for an extra ten minutes of discussion, but a ten minutes which is sadly missing from the published text. Hansen and Nielsen, editors of this book, failed in their assessment of Söderberg's piece – as in those of a number of others contained in *Sports, Body and Health* – to identify the important differences between the conference paper and the written word.

Similar issues face the authors of other chapters. While Brian Turner and John Bale are masters of the English language, and indeed masters of their respective subjects (Cartesian concepts of the body and the representation of Kenyan body culture), their succinct chapters present certain problems to the reader. Tantalising the reader with scant text reminiscent of the twenty minute conference presentation, they remain lectures. Turner's piece has references without citations and Bale's barely covers six pages.

While the socio-cultural scholar might be enthralled, he or she leaves unsated. The non-

specialist reader is likely to encounter a similar dissatisfaction. Although the few pages set out for each topic are hardly enough to overwhelm, they leave many doors opened to paths not taken. In such brief presentations, readers are unlikely to go away with a sense of understanding the new issues put before them.

Despite these shortcomings, *Sports, Body and Health* does bring together many leaders in the area of sport and body culture, all of whom have something interesting to say. Well-known scholars Hargreaves, von der Lipp, Dietrich and Eichberg add to the impressive line-up and really make the cultural scholar sorry to have missed this particular conference. Unfortunately, the book cannot quite make up for this loss.

* William Germano, "If Dissertations Could Talk, What Would They Say?," *The Chronicle for Higher Education* (13 June 2003), B9.