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Transmission, Relationality, Ethnography

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The 'relational turn' in social research raises many issues that might loosely be collected together under the heading of 'reflexivity'. This can have a variety of meanings, but here, following a newly articulated 'tradition' in psychosocial studies, we are using it to think about how the relationality of the research process impacts upon, and is in turn influenced by, the relationality that is the subject of the research itself. We are interested in what we can discover about the research we might be engaged in through opening ourselves up to the relational context in which this research takes place. We suggest that attending closely to what happens between members of a research team can provide powerful insights into the substantive content of the research itself, helping create a more nuanced set of understandings than might otherwise have been possible.

In this paper, we present material about the relationship that evolved between us whilst carrying out an ethnographic study of a London Jewish community. This material reveals a relationality that bears strongly on the content of the ethnography itself, specifically referring to intergenerational transmission and rupture, gender dynamics, and the problematics of vulnerability and loss.

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Transmission, Relationality, Ethnography

Relationality

The 'relational turn' in social research raises many issues that might loosely be collected together under the heading of 'reflexivity'. This can have a variety of meanings, but here, following a newly articulated 'tradition' in psychosocial studies, we are using it to think about how the relationality of the research process impacts upon, and is in turn influenced by, the relationality that is the subject of the research itself. Put more simply, we are interested in what we can discover about the research we might be engaged in through opening ourselves up to the relational context in which this research takes place. This is a question based on the idea of a mutually constitutive process between 'researched' and 'researcher' in which each creates the other. We suggest that attending closely to what happens between members of a research team can provide powerful insights into the substantive content of the research, helping create a more nuanced set of understandings than might otherwise have been possible. Perhaps more provocatively, it also suggests that *not* attending to this process might be a way of hiding from the more edgy challenges of the research, those moments when it does something to the researchers that blocks them or somehow makes things happen. Maybe to be honest investigators of the relational we have to be open to the reality that we as researchers are genuinely part of the relational nexus we are ourselves investigating, acknowledging that there is no place to stand outside the pull of relational involvement.

It is quite a long time since the notion of 'second order cybernetics' was deployed to express the insight that any system under investigation must include the investigator as well (von Foerster). This is also a long-known claim of the two paradigms mixed together in the work described in the current paper: ethnography and psychoanalysis. In the former tradition, leaning on anthropology, there has long been a substantial level of agreement that the presence of the ethnographer in a culture is not a neutral phenomenon, however hard that person might work to become 'invisible'. In fact, as George Devereux noted half a century ago in *From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioral Sciences*, the person of the ethnographer is a significant element at least in the interpretation of the ethnographic material, and probably also in the generation of it, a claim taken further in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, the influential 1986 collection edited by Clifford and Marcus. For more contemporary anthropologists such as Silvia Posocco, ethnography constructs the material it studies, and the way this happens is both through its knowledge-practices and the activities of the ethnographer. More mundanely, the ethnographer's only 'equipment' is her or his person: it is through the subjecthood of the ethnographer that the material is produced, recorded ('fieldnotes' are selective renditions of the mass of relevant material to be found in any observation of ethnographic life) and analysed. In psychoanalysis, the 'person' of the analyst is a critical element in the practice of the work. Mediated through the construct of 'countertransference', simply understood as the response of the analyst to a particular analysand, psychoanalysis proposes a process of knowledge and therapeutic action that works through the registration of the analysand's unconscious life as an active element in the psychic reality of the analyst (Frosh, *A Brief Introduction to Psychoanalytic Theory*). In some psychoanalytically-inflected psychosocial research, this idea has

been extended into a claim that the feelings induced in a researcher by encounters with research participants might be used as guides to the affective state of those participants (Hollway and Jefferson). Whilst this is a controversial view (Frosh, *Psychoanalysis Outside the Clinic*), psychoanalysis certainly points to the significance of the 'resonance' of research material with the analyst or researcher as an important source of information. As Ian Parker (117) comments, 'Subjectivity is viewed by psychoanalysis, as with much qualitative research, not as a problem but as a resource.'

It should be noted here that this argument is quite close to the perspective advanced by Ruth Behar in *The Vulnerable Observer*. She argues that committed anthropological investigation implicates the researcher and opens out, in a continually risky way, self-revelation that may also produce and engender hurt and sorrow, as well as the deepening of understanding that can come from immersion in one's subject-matter. On the other hand, as she puts it,

> Vulnerability doesn't mean that anything personal goes. The exposure of the self who is also a spectator has to take us somewhere we couldn't otherwise get to. It has to be essential to the argument, not a decorative flourish, not exposure for its own sake. (14)

The point is that reflecting on the relationality of the research process needs to do something that advances the research itself.

This opens up the epistemological question of how this kind of relational process might work to engender ethnographic knowledge. Behar's call for vulnerable ethnography is part of a wider move within anthropology over the past few decades, away from a focus on societies imagined as radically 'other' towards anthropology 'at home,' and simultaneously 'toward viewing identification rather than difference as the key defining image of our theory and practice' (165). Here, as Ben Kasstan notes, the emergence of Jewish ethnography has played a distinctive role, opening up the ambiguity of what it is to be, or strive to be, at home within the modern world. Or as Jonathan Boyarin (73) puts it, 'I will hazard a guess that Jewish anthropologists – perhaps anthropologists in general – are motivated by a sense of loss.' Yet such moves to challenge traditional anthropological dichotomies of self and other, subject and object, the West and the rest have been controversial. It has been argued that claims for ethnographic knowledge grounded in empathic access to shared human experience undermine the ethnographer's critical leverage, which depends on the traditional anthropological conception of experience as culturally mediated (Robbins). Responding to these debates, Veena Das has made two significant interventions which speak directly to our relational, 'native' Jewish ethnography. The first is to challenge the dichotomy between anthropologies of 'other' societies and 'our own' (which is also to undo the boundary between research and life). Das (*Affliction*) argues that in any given context, claiming a world as our own is a complex ethical act, a question of whom we imagine as our neighbours and simultaneously of our strangeness to ourselves. Second, Das challenges a reductive rendering of the process of striving towards a perception of the other's experience, highlighting instead the dynamic struggles such forms of knowledge entail. She writes, 'Experience is not a transparent category, for its essential feature of opacity makes the work of tracking it much more difficult than authors assume' (Das, *Affliction* 2).

The issue here is not one of claiming knowledge grounded in straightforward identification or empathy but rather of articulating what work is entailed in striving for ethnographic attentiveness across relations of difference. As Das (*Living with Concepts)* describes in an extensive discussion of

the relationship between ethnography and biography, such attentiveness requires the researcher to question how their opaque investments in a particular 'project' can produce silences and absences in the field and in the telling, and so to make themselves vulnerable to being changed and changing their 'findings' through their absorption in the world they inhabit. In this sense there is an internal connection between ethnography and biography, which is not 'confessional' or 'auto-ethnographic' in taking the researcher as the primary object but rather rooted in the durational temporality of the ethnographic process, where 'the experience of living one's personal life as well as the life of an anthropologist, results in ethnography touching on elements that are autobiographical much as autobiography becomes suffused with one's ethnographic experience' (3-4). This link between ethnography and biography creates the possibility for a radical relational epistemological and ethical process, in which researchers who allow themselves to be moulded and transfigured through the ethnographic process can decipher meanings, attend to silences and absences and ethical possibilities, and so open up insights that would otherwise be blocked.

Very little of this acknowledgement of reflexivity in the research process seems to have been focused on relations *between* researchers. There is some psychoanalytic research that draws on the shared emotions of team members to facilitate understanding of research material (e.g. Marks and Mönnich-Marks), as well as narrative research methods that use panels to explore the meanings of research interviews, often from a broadly psychoanalytic perspective (Roseneil). What we are interested in here, however, is to remain as true as possible to the 'relational' perspective that sees intersubjectivity as the foundation of social and personal life, and hence to more holistically examine how this might operate in the research process. In this paper, we will be working with an ethnography in what we hope is an open, 'vulnerable' way, in order to explore how understanding some of the dynamics among researchers can help us deepen our perception of the ethnographic material. In so doing, we take the relational approach further than in most discussions by highlighting how biographical investments in research are intersubjective (explicitly for us as co-researchers, but also as the repressed ground of research framed in individualistic terms), and by examining how reflecting on the relational nexus of the research can open up attentiveness in the field.

In setting the scene of our research partnership, we might also note that researching and writing vulnerably is bound up with the gendering of forms of knowledge and has a genealogy that derives largely from feminist scholarship – although it is also the case that there is an interesting 'trans' component to this in Freud's early work in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, based so much on his own personal dreams and aspirations and hence demonstrating a kind of 'vulnerability', however much he might also have adopted the 'man of science' persona (Frosh, *Sexual Difference*). Interventions such as those of Sandra Harding on 'strong objectivity' in feminist science research – which includes the requirement for 'strong reflexivity' (136) – and perhaps more tellingly, the use of deeply-felt personal experiences such as Gail Lewis' extraordinary exploration of her relationship with her mother as a vehicle to articulate issues of racialisation and racism, seem to enact the opposite of 'conventional' masculine modes of understanding. We do not want to be too categorical about this, of course, and it is worth noting that there is a heritage of 'Jewish masculinity' relevant to our work that is specifically oriented towards its own kinds of vulnerability, as Daniel Boyarin's book *Unheroic Conduct* (a title itself culled from Freud) attests. Nevertheless, the challenges of 'masculine' relational vulnerability may be particularly intense.

The material we are presenting here comes from an ethnography of 'ethical neighbours' that we have been carrying out in a Jewish area of London, UK, that includes 'orthodox' and 'liberal' communities within it.[1] The ethnographer is Ruth, who has been deeply involved in the everyday life of this community for around two years, and Stephen has been working with her as the grant-holder for the work, nominally directing it but in fact acting as a co-participant.[2] Both of us are Jewish, though with different histories in relation to the British Jewish community. Stephen is an active member of a 'modern orthodox' Anglo-Jewish community and has a family history of engagement with such communities; Ruth is the grandchild of Czech and Austrian refugees who came to London during and after the Holocaust and has only recently joined a (liberal) synagogue for the first time. Arising out of this research, with no initial thought of publication, we exchanged a series of emails about how our relationship was emerging as a consequence of, or in tandem with, the ethnography. This presented us with many challenges, perhaps related to the issues of 'vulnerability' sketched above: the correspondence is personal; it implicates people both within and outside the ethnography; and in many ways our articulation of what the work might mean to each of us is unclear. As will be seen, it is deeply bound up with overlapping themes of Jewish identities, gender, generational difference, the 'violence' of exclusion and inclusion, transmission and vulnerability. These are also, not at all coincidentally, themes that are central to the ethnography itself. Our aim in the rest of this paper is to explore the nature of this epistemological connection between our interpersonal or intersubjective process and our research findings. This is of course a tall order, especially as what follows is only part of our material, edited both for length and for the protection of those who might not have actively agreed to be part of our process. Still, we will see if the extracts we offer can communicate something of the intensity, vulnerability and what we hope is the creativity of this relational process. In the next sections, we reproduce some of our exchange with the caveats just mentioned; in the final section we will consider how it advances our understanding of the relationality of our research. The material begins with the longest piece, Ruth's reflection on her evolving ethnography in a synagogue ('shul') that Stephen belonged to nearly thirty years previously – a connection observed yet left unexamined at the point of choosing this fieldsite – which is linked with her thoughts about her grandfather, Gashi.

Ethnographic Relations
July (Ruth).

I have recently been reading back over my fieldnotes and notes of our conversations, and I am writing to you prompted by an intuition: that we have brought some kind of shared investment in questions of Jewish fathers and daughters into this project, and that it might be helpful for us to

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explore this together. I have written up some reflections to share with you, focusing on my evolving relationship with Wenton Row[3] synagogue, including our coincidental 'meeting' there. I am not at all sure what this writing is; maybe nothing more than a space for me to register questions, as a daughter about a father's experience, though I do not know if they are possible to answer.

I first became aware of Wenton Row synagogue in 2011 when I moved to a neighbouring street and sometime after passed by the building. I remember registering this trace of a local Jewish history and wondering if it housed an active community. The synagogue always seemed closed and empty when I walked by, though the sign that named the rabbi on the front indicated that it was still functioning. I remember my parents coming to stay with us, and walking down Wenton Row with my mother. She seemed curious and somehow taken with the little synagogue, and she told me that it reminded her of the shul that she had attended with her father, Gerson (Gashi), when she was very young. She told me that somehow Gashi had seemed at home in that shul, more at home than he did elsewhere in London.

In the past we had talked a little about this history, the bare bones of a story. I had written down a narrative, without fully registering its intensity, of my mother's relationship with Gashi mediated through that Yiddish-speaking synagogue. And yet somehow one of the motivating unknowns that I brought into this project was of the nature of the subsequent rupture that occurred, as such a potent, over-determined juncture for us as a Jewish family. The given narrative was clear: as a little girl my mother used to spend every Saturday with her father: synagogue in the morning, football in the afternoon. My grandmother would never go. She, a cultured Viennese Jew, looked down on both activities as symptomatic of her husband's parochialism. Gashi, who had grown up in a small orthodox community near the Austro-Hungarian border and who died when I was a baby, was 'uneducated'. Or as my mother later put it when I asked her more, he was educated only in Torah[4] (and what might that have been for a Jewish refugee in post-war London?), a soft, quiet, passive person carrying a painful history of living through the Holocaust, shadows, losses, violent experiences that my mother knew she must never ask about. Synagogue and football were the two places where he seemed to belong, where he expressed feelings that my mother could share in; places where she, as a little girl, experienced some sense of access to his internal world. And for that little girl, Gashi was, she told me, an ideal father: soft, affectionate and loving.

And then, in the story I have inherited, this intimacy between them stopped, suddenly. First Gashi moved to a much larger mainstream synagogue and then my mother could no longer be with him. She would have had to sit on her own in the women's section. And she would have been so alone, no longer residing with her father in the intimate sanctuary of the shul, but instead surrounded by 'English' Jewish women, alien and judgemental. She had by then been through elocution lessons to anglicise her speech, so that she no longer spoke with the foreign accents of her parents; this was what those 'English' Jews demanded of the little girl.[5] And so she stopped going to synagogue – and

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[3] Pseudonyms have been used in order to protect the identities of research participants.
[4] At its broadest, Torah refers to Jewish religious knowledge.
[5] In the longer version of this correspondence, Ruth described how both of her parents were subjected to racialised forms of exclusion as the children of refugees seeking to assimilate into the established Anglo-Jewish community in post-War London. The painful experiences that Ruth's father, in particular, described — of never belonging and feeling alienated within the orthodox synagogue, of being both 'too Jewish' and the 'wrong kind of Jew' — were embedded in the long-history of Anglo-Jewry's ambivalent relationship to 'Eastern' Jewish immigrants (see Seidler's *Shadows of the Shoah* for one personal account of living these histories). The effects

the break was absolute – for her and for my sister and I, Gashi's all-female descendants: no Hebrew, no continuity of religious rituals or practices, and no Jewish learning.

The story is familiar and when I began the project, it seemed somehow clear to me. But the intensity of the rupture, of what was at stake for my mother – and for me – was at the same time a mystery. There were hanging questions that I have only recently begun to articulate. What was it in the experience of that little girl torn away from her father in shul that produced such a traumatic intergenerational break with Jewish tradition? How did Gashi experience this separation? And more (this is a question emerging as I write to you): what *is* the nature of that experience from which my mother was excluded in that masculine space of the shul? These are, I sense, questions that are deeply personal, and yet in the very act of asking them I am implicated with powerful gendered structures intrinsic to Judaism. It feels to me that my desire for answers is bound up with troubling questions of fathers and daughters, of some kind of painful, insurmountable difference in paternal and maternal Jewish formations, and in masculine and feminine Jewish experiences. And yet these questions are perhaps also openings that might deepen understandings of Jewish intergenerational inheritance and ruptures, which are key themes of our research.

When I first began to imagine this ethnography, I took Wenton Row for one of my fieldsites. I remember at our very first meeting you told me of your own connection with this shul, which you had attended nearly thirty years ago with your son. That felt like a surprising coincidence for me. Yet it gradually dawned on me that such connections might be a familiar aspect of belonging within north London Jewish circles. And so, as I began the fieldwork, I leant on your name as I introduced myself to people — as if this might somehow grant me some communal legitimacy. And as I stumbled to speak, brought up against my own lack of Jewish literacy, I also found myself somehow dependent on what I imagined to be your continuous, unbroken relationship with Judaism – of secure knowing and belonging, your grounded location in my fieldwork, which was not just about a socially networked position but also a kind of literacy in a form of life. As I tentatively began the fieldwork, it felt as if you carried the fluency that I lacked, so that, as I stumbled and stopped over Hebrew words, you could finish my sentences, carefully, selectively correcting my pronunciation of words that continue to stick in my mouth, and warning me of unknown codes that I could begin to internalise.

It was three months later, when accompanied by Sonia, a friendly member of Wenton Row, that I finally crossed the shul's threshold. On this first visit, I was not attuned in time or space, and this was reflected in the detached tone of my fieldnotes, which recorded, in an abstract register, the strange experience of sitting above the men in the women's gallery, surveying the scene, and my surprise at enjoying this spatial formation, the opportunity for passive observation without the pressure to participate. I noted especially how the men below handled the scrolls and each other, particularly how they repeatedly shook hands during the course of the service ('men congratulating each other', Sonia muttered next to me). I registered how the older women around me touched their fingers to

of this form of intra-Jewish racialisation were particularly significant in shaping Ruth's father's intense anger with, and estrangement from, the orthodox Anglo-Jewish community. However, while this history is relevant both to our reflections on the relational context of our research (the different Jewish histories we carry) and to the research findings (in relation to complex tensions of intra-Jewish racialisation and British belonging within the communities under study), it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore this particular aspect of exclusion and rupture in any depth.

their lips and reached their hands out into the air toward the scrolls, a striking gesture that over time I found somehow hard to countenance. And as I summarised my experience toward the end of this fieldnote, I wrote that it felt like being 'in another country – not England' and in a different age – of tradition. It was somehow related to an atmospheric quality of men touching and the murmur of Hebrew: the sensuality of soft, shambolic yet, in moments, piercing masculine voices.

It was on my third visit to the shul, in May 2016, that I gained a first insight into the precarious situation of this community. We arrived to find a strained atmosphere of suspended animation: 'no minyan',[6] Sonia explained. It was my first taste of the helplessness that permeated the women's gallery, undermining somehow a fantasy of us women as empowered surveyors of the scene below. Looking down at the men shifting and muttering, the doors to the ark firmly shut, Sonia turned to me, resignedly, seemingly without bitterness, and said simply: 'we don't count.' We waited, and reinforcements (additional men) arrived and the service resumed. My attention was drawn to the rabbi's many young sons, and the way that they inhabited the space, together and with their father. They moved in and out of the main sanctuary of the synagogue, some sitting facing the congregation with cartoon books or with siddurs.[7] I noticed how one of the boys came to join his father and the gentle intimacy with which they traced words in the book with their fingers. My notes registered fleeting questions: what might it feel like for this father and his sons to be together in this way? And how might it feel for a daughter to be excluded from the intimacy of this masculine togetherness?

You may remember how this was a moment when I came to talk with you, as I found myself overwhelmed by feelings of loss. You asked me what the losses were. When I tried to word it, it came out as 'Jewish forms of life.' These encounters were some kind of turning point and, when I returned to Wenton Row a few weeks later, my changing relationship to the place was palpable. Now suddenly my fieldnotes inscribed my desire to hear male voices praying. And, as I listened attentively each week to the men saying the memorial prayer, Kaddish, I felt the breach between Gashi and my mother with a new intensity. What would it have been like for Gashi to say Kaddish in shul, while carrying so many unmourned and unexpressed losses? And how lonely, for him and for my mother, that they could not be together in this moment, perhaps the only setting in which Gashi might have reached out to her?

In late September 2016, shortly before Rosh Hashanah,[8] in your own (Jewish) way, you brought father-daughter relations more explicitly into my consciousness. You shared two pieces of writing: Rebecca Goldstein's *Looking back at Lot's Wife* and your response *Turning Back*, and in this way you alerted me to a key biblical source for engaging the tensions I was struggling with. And while you had been writing on the story of Lot[9] for a different purpose (an academic conversation on matricide), I of course read these texts from my location in our ethnography. What I found in this encounter were

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[6] A minyan is the minimum of ten men needed to make a prayer gathering quorate. Without a minyan, reading from the Torah, recitation of mourners' prayers and some other parts of the service cannot take place.
[7] Prayer books.
[8] Jewish New Year.
[9] In Genesis 19, the story is told of how Lot is saved from the destruction of Sodom, but how his wife, who looks back at the carnage, which has swallowed up two of her daughters, is turned into a pillar of salt. Afterwards, Lot's two remaining daughters, believing themselves to be the only surviving humans, get their father drunk and sleep with him, each of them then becoming pregnant and giving birth to a son. The Biblical text also indicates (in Genesis 18) that the city would have been saved if ten righteous men had been found in it.

painful questions about the possibilities and limits of father-daughter inheritance and modes of being together, tensions that traversed the relationship between Lot and his daughters, Goldstein and her father, and yourself as a father conjuring a daughter.

As you describe, Goldstein embeds the story of Lot, his wife Irit and his daughters in her relationship with her father. And her concern in the commentary, and in her relationship with her father, is with the desire, the compulsion, to *look back* when you are not supposed to — in your words (265) 'a common experience of childhood.' Her narrative locates this question in a scene of intimacy between herself and her father, a pedagogical moment, when she turns to him to help her answer, in a Jewish way, her question: why did Lot's wife disobey God by looking back at her daughters? Her father consults his books as, you note, 'Jewish men (fathers) do': 'my father went to his bookshelf and took down one of his huge tomes, leafed through it for a while, returned it to the shelf, took down another book, and read' (38). Perhaps there is in this moment a sense of the fantasy that the prohibited intimacies within the shul can – somehow – be repaired or overcome. And so, Goldstein writes, she learns from her father's confusion and pity for Lot's wife that 'my father, just like Irit, would have also looked back to see if all his daughters were following' (39).

Goldstein seems in this moment certain that her father could inhabit the maternal position, risking the destruction of future generations in order to look back and be with her, his abandoned daughter. And yet reading between the lines of her text, my sense is that neither she nor her father could be so clear about his response. Rather, the question of whether her father can look back is open, painful and unresolved. I think that those tensions can be found in her invocation of gendered relations in this text: her account of her own upbringing within a segregated orthodox synagogue and in the gendered language through which she narrates Lot's story (she says that God demands ten righteous 'men' – a minyan – so that Lot's daughters, Goldstein and I do not *count*). And I think the tensions are there viscerally in the ending of Goldstein's commentary as she concludes with a claim for God's forgiveness of the parental (maternal) desire to 'be one with' her child (41). For I cannot help but think of this desire in light of the ending of Lot's story – of the deep ambiguity of that desire in its paternal formation – as Lot is 'seduced' by his daughters in the cave. And so for me, what emerges from your evocation of Goldstein's piece are troubling questions: faced with past and anticipated threats to Jewish survival (the destruction of Sodom, the Holocaust, the everyday precarious existence of Wenton Row), what intergenerational possibilities are there for a father and daughter? If we daughters cannot be part of a minyan then how can these relations sustain forms of transmission? And so reading these texts in relation to my fieldwork, the painful, haunting question that emerged for me was something like this: '*can* a father look back at his daughter?'

On Yom Kippur,[10] I returned to Wenton Row: the first time I had fasted or participated in the rituals of the day. It was late afternoon and the women's gallery was the busiest I had seen it as the rabbi walked to the bimah[11] to lead the prayers. He began praying intensely, while his sons milled around him and his three-year old daughter, still young enough to remain with the men in the shul, sat by his feet, her pink shoes sticking out beneath his robes. We were in the part of the service called 'Chazzan's repetition'[12] and the rabbi was facing the front, his prayer shawl pulled up. He was rocking and following with one hand from the prayer book, his voice reaching out, his body focused

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[10] The Day of Atonement.
[11] The central raised area in an Ashkenazi synagogue from which prayers are led.
[12] A Chazzan is a cantor who leads prayers.

towards the ark. His daughter began to cry, so he picked her up and held her with one arm against him as he turned the pages with the other hand.

After a short while, the rabbi put his daughter down. He began the confession of sins and she cried out so that he lifted her up again. Her body leaned into him and her head lolled on his shoulder; gradually her eyes closed as he rocked back and forth. And then, looking on from above, I realised, suddenly, that she was asleep. The rabbi tipped her so that he was cradling her in his arms across his chest without stumbling in the prayer. The women in the gallery around me were captivated by the sight of the little girl sleeping, her eyes closed and head back, her legs in white tights dangling, in the arms of her father, his white tallit[13] draped around them. I could not take my eyes off them, transfixed by the rabbi's merging maternal and paternal body as he held his daughter and pleaded with God. An older man moved towards the rabbi and gestured that he would hold the child. The rabbi smiled and shifted her into the man's arms; she remained deeply asleep. The man also stood and cradled her as he completed the confession and then sat down with her head against his chest. Sometime later, the rabbi beckoned to him and they made a small bed for her on the bimah. The women gazed on as, without looking up at us, he tenderly lay her down. And, still sleeping, she curled into a foetal position, settled within the protective surrounds of this masculine womb.

In February 2017, I took what felt like another risk, this time asking you, indirectly, to come to shul with me. We had been talking for some time about analysing some of my 'data' together. Finally, I decided to attend Wenton Row and write my fieldnotes with you as a reader in mind. And when I went to shul on the Shabbos in question and sat down on the bench in the women's gallery, suddenly, naturally – you were there with me. It was as if somehow we were sharing the experience and I felt that I was no longer alone. When we next met, you said that you felt affected by the familiarity of my fieldnotes, and then you began to speak a little reticently of your own experiences with Wenton Row. You said that for you, as a parent, there wasn't really a community there, and I registered for the first time my disappointment with the shul. My fieldnotes had mentioned the various siddurs (prayer books) circulating in the shul and you asked me if, amongst the siddurs, I had found a red 'Singer's' edition[14] at Wenton Row. You gave me a little of the context[15] and when I returned two weeks later, I immediately sought it out. I opened the book and then turned a few pages. There was your father's name. I read the Forward that he had written. I could feel, intensely, your presence in my fieldwork: another genealogy, an unfamiliar possibility for intergenerational continuity, disorientating because I somehow longed to claim it as my own.

In early May, I emailed you again, unable to bear my disillusionment, unable to remain in the presence of the dark side of unthinking masculinity. I described how the previous Saturday, when I was in Wenton Row, I did not feel the presence of Gashi at all: 'he has gone now.' And I somehow had a sense of experiencing the space for what it really is. I stayed for longer than usual after the service and allowed myself to be engaged in conversation by elderly men, who, without any prompting, subjected me to right-wing pronouncements before propping each other up, once again, in a posture of exclusive masculine self-regard. I wrote to you: 'Wenton Row is empty and ugly in

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[13] Prayer shawl.
[14] Named after the first editor of the prayer book.
[15] Stephen's father had been responsible for a new edition of the prayer book in the early 1990s.

this light. Was grandpa Gashi ever there or was it just a fantasy of connecting with him there? I miss him so much, even though I don't know who he was.'

From the beginning of my fieldwork, I had somehow imagined that you could repair these ruptures; and a sense of dependence has evolved through my perception of your literacy, your belonging, the intergenerational continuity embodied in the red siddur. And yet inevitably, unavoidably, the question 'can a father look back at his daughter?' is still there, and it continues to haunt this fieldwork. Because of course we can reproduce the pedagogical relation – I can ask a question, you can consult your books. But we cannot be, or pray, or remember together in shul, or not without causing another kind of rupture. And though I still have not been able to articulate how, I can feel that this potential rupture somehow matters so much; it would undermine whatever it is that happens on the bimah – and I need to protect that as perhaps the only place where Gashi could feel at home.

October (Stephen).

I am finally writing in response to your letter or fieldwork notes from some months ago. You write as a daughter and particularly a granddaughter, but also as a kind of 'daughter' in connection with me as someone who inhabits your imaginary as one who has gone before, who seems at ease in a place in which you would like to be at ease, or are discovering, yet are deeply uncertain about, even to some degree (the gender dynamics) repelled by. The context is your 'Jewish ethnography' in our shared project on lived religious ethics. Your ethnography is Jewish because its focus is the Jewish community, but also because the process of the ethnography has been one of uncovering and extending your own Jewishness, with its imaginaries and idealisations and its intergenerational complexities and rejections and longings. At one point you suggest that it is through your relationship with me that it could become possible to reflect on 'Jewish intergenerational inheritance and ruptures.' A little later in your piece, however, in the context of our joint thinking about the Biblical story of Lot's wife and Rebecca Goldstein's remarkable 'midrash'[16] on it, you express a doubt: '*can* a father look back at his daughter?'

What exactly might 'looking back' mean here? In Goldstein's story, it is the turning that Lot's wife makes towards the daughters she has left behind in Sodom, and it involves identification with them so that she, like they, turns into a pillar of salt. The 'turning back' and 'turning into' are the same movement, as one happens so does the other; to fully turn back, one has to share the other's fate. But what of a father, as you raise it? Lot himself seems weak of character; he does not look back, he gets drunk, he sleeps with his surviving daughters and becomes father to his own grandsons in the shocking and under-examined aftermath of the destruction. Is that all a father can do? You seem to hold out some hope, but uncertainly; in your field notes there are some poignant records of the soft care that a man – in this case, an orthodox rabbi – can offer to his young daughter. But even this is shadowed by the rupture that might come next and is driven by the orthodox treatment of feminine sexuality: we know from your mother and from the architecture of the synagogue that the daughter cannot stay in her father's arms for long.

What you say about your writing is very important: 'maybe nothing more than a space for me to register questions, as a daughter about a father's experience, though I do not know if they are

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[16] A 'midrash' is a commentary in the form of a story.

possible to answer.' It seems to be the father's *experience* you are somehow in search of, and what it might teach you or maybe just hint to you, or give you a thread that you can pick up in your attempt to find a way back and forward across generations, to find out what it might have *felt like* for your grandfather to be in a particular synagogue at a particular time. You nevertheless have your doubts, and they are well founded: is it possible to answer a question like that, to respond in a way that conveys an 'experience'? What kind of relational space needs to open out to make this even slightly possible, what kind of turning back, or better 'turning towards,' might be necessary to make this cross-generational, cross-gender transmission-and/through-identification work?

I find the end of your piece challenging and poignant together. You are thinking about the 'ruptures' due to your alienation from the people you encounter in the synagogue, the divide there between men and women; and your ache towards, yet lack of knowledge of, your own grandfather Gashi. You write with me in your sights, imagining our togetherness in shul but also asking again, 'can a father look back at his daughter?' a question that 'continues to haunt this fieldwork.' You are pessimistic about this, yet still want to hold onto this generational and gendered rupture as preserving the 'only place where Gashi could feel at home.' This is such a potent piece of writing, so seductively drawing me in and yet austere too, acknowledging the impossibility of fully repairing the rupture. What exactly is this 'rupture'? Is it what exists between generations, what happens when a tradition is lost, or a symbolic form fails to live up to its name (Judaism as *failing* to offer community, acceptance and meaningful spirituality)? Is it an ambition – the rupture of men and women together in synagogue, producing something new and challenging to the orthodoxy? Is it always a matter of lament? If rupture is not respected and worked with, there is little prospect of creating the kind of relational space in which movement forward can happen. There might be transference, but there is limited intimacy; there is likely to be hurt without recovery from it. I would not belittle the creative possibilities present in rupture, but repair needs to be based on more than the fantasy of completeness or, as you put it, the 'pedagogical relation' in which I take refuge in books.

Yet, once again, this turning to books is itself a mode of connection, as Goldstein finds in relation to her father. He turns to his books, as Jewish men do, not as a form of escape, a closing down, but as a way of responding to her inquiry; and what he finds in the books is not presented as all there is, but as a problematic intervention. 'I'll see if I can find some other interpretations that will make things clearer to us,' he says (Goldstein, 38). Goldstein knows that this is not an intellectual or cognitive statement; it signals her father's unease, his *moral* uncertainty: surely the (sacred) books cannot be saying something that feels so wrong? 'This is only one midrash,' which means, 'it is only a story – let's see if we can find a better one.' What will mark this as better is first that it will coincide with his awareness that he, out of love for his daughter, would have turned back like Lot's wife; and also that it will soften what he says to his child, that she will know that a parent need not be so harsh, that God Himself will not inflict punishment on one who acts out of love. We know, of course, that this is not true – such punishments are inflicted all the time, if not necessarily by God – but we are in the realm of relationality here, of what can be built out of one person looking back at another, or a father turning away from his books to see what his daughter might feel.

I am not now reflecting on whether you understand me correctly, except to claim that 'rupture' is part of a necessary process of recognition, recovery, acknowledgment and reparation. Without the rupture, the tearing apart that you have brought to the surface through your affect-laden reflections on generational loss and on the violence of the forms of exclusion you have encountered, there

would be less likelihood of us working on something together in this strange research, this Jewish ethnography. I am reflecting more on the question of what my 'experience' might be, and whether it is identifiable to me or communicable to you. Here I am at something of a loss, but not wanting to opt out, I will pursue the question through the problematic of disappointment. We might have to accept the disappointment that comes with allowing various kinds of hope to arise. In my case, my ease with Judaism is much as I think you see it: a harking back to what Yerushalmi (31) calls 'a trilling wire in the blood,' that sense of having been there and of participating in a connected line across generations with a very strong paternal component (I feel my father's presence in the synagogue, and my grandfather's…). But this ease is also full of unease, for example around gender prejudice, around reactionary politics, around unquestioning Zionism; it makes little sense and can only be described apologetically, if at times with enjoyment and pride. When I speak to my friends who are also 'insiders', they know what I mean, so that is another difference between us, perhaps: from the outside, the insiders look like they are fully inside, but so many of us are inside feeling we are also not quite there. Can this become a space of moving through rupture and repair? Can I speak to you of my uncertainty without disappointing the hope of repair; or is it the case that it is precisely this necessary disappointment that represents my way of acknowledging the damage that is done?

And then there is the violence of exclusion. I do my best, I really think so, not to do this to you, but it happens anyway. Even in the act of including you, of 'warning [you] of unknown codes that [you] could begin to internalise,' there is a message of exclusion – I am in, you are not; don't you even know the rudiments? The violence of not belonging is certainly a rupture in need of repair.

October (Ruth).

Having taken some time for your response to settle, I find myself challenged by a new question: can I (as in some sense the 'daughter') learn to attend to, make room for, and perhaps help to articulate, your experience in our work together?

Let me try to continue ethnographically, to follow what has happened since writing to you last summer. From that moment, and then through our subsequent conversations, I found myself not only overwhelmed with the intensity of my transference, but disturbed by what felt like an ethical failure on my part. It was as if I had become so consumed by who I needed you to be that I could leave no room for your needs or experience. And in some sense I knew that my request, or demand, for access to your 'experience' was opaque and contradictory, that I was orienting us toward some kind of dead end even as you sought to respond. And, significantly, somehow this demand was contrary to my very sense of what it is to relate ethnographically, for in my fieldwork, I would rarely demand that another 'give' or code their experience; I would instead seek to be with them, alongside them, to attend to what they *do,* and to that which is articulated in our evolving relationship.

And yet while somehow lost as an ethnographer, I was still open enough to register some traces in our conversation, which could allow for some kind of continuing dialogue. We were, I think, talking of gender prejudice and exclusion, and I raised the issue of women, specifically daughters, saying Kaddish. And in response, you talked a little of your sons, and their ambivalence, or perhaps indifference, towards their Jewish inheritance, Jewish ritual, toward coming to shul. And you joked that I could say Kaddish for you – that you would be grateful for anyone willing to say it. It was a comment made lightly but I heard something in it – of your vulnerability, of your need. Here, then, it

seems to me is one opening to your experience, of what is at stake for you in working on our Jewish ethnography at this time in your life. Is it shaped perhaps by a sense in which you are anticipating a potential rupture in remembrance or mourning practices within your family – or perhaps, in a broader sense, through your embeddedness within powerful communal preoccupations with Jewish 'survival'? This notion is strange to my ears as it somehow carries the anxieties of an anticipated rupture that has already occurred in my family; we did not carry the practice of saying Kaddish for my grandfathers, or register their jahrzeits,[17] at the outset of this ethnography. I am making small incremental moves to repair this, but it seems to me that we have somehow lost the capacity to mourn. That loss is somehow bound up with my grandparents' traumatic experience – of generations blocked from remembering – but also with this question of our exclusion from Jewish structures of mourning.

I am wondering, then, about Kaddish – as a locus of rupture, but also potentially of repair. And, staying with our conversations, about how painful questions of gender, with which you and I are both struggling, find articulation here, in relation to this prayer that is traditionally only said by men. I remember some time ago we were talking and I angrily pushed you on the gender issue, asking how ethically you could live with the prejudice. Your response was some kind of defensive compromise, an attempt to articulate how you seek to change things from within, a response compatible with another of your comments: *if things had been different, and you had had a daughter* you would probably have moved to a non-orthodox community. Responding, I found myself in a strange position, feeling your discomfort, your fragmentation, and then somehow invoking this imagined daughter, saying: 'if you *had* had a daughter, she would have been angry too'. How did I come to invoke this daughter? It was such a strange moment for me. Could it be that there is some part of you that needs her, a hurt or angry daughter, to bring you into contact with this tension? You may not have to face this injustice as a father, but I know that it matters to you, that you care deeply about these forms of patriarchy, exclusion, inequality. Perhaps you might need someone to occupy that role for you, in order both to be in touch with this rupture and to attempt the work of repair?

November (Stephen).

There is so much here about loss, endings and mourning. In your reply, the Jewish memorial prayer, the Kaddish, features large, followed up with a direct request to me to teach you how to say it; but you also ask me about my sense of what it will mean to me to have Kaddish said – or not – by my sons. I realise that in response to this very personal set of questions, I did the 'Jewish man' thing again and turned to my bookshelves to give you Leon Wieseltier's *Kaddish*. Is this a turning away from you, or towards you? The move makes sense, but it is also an odd one, because I am not at all sure how much you will like the book. Still, it reflects something both about what I respond to and want to communicate, as a way of showing you something about what it might feel like to be attached to this culture that you are also finding a way to examine and experience. Wieseltier's book is extraordinarily concentrated, a kind of *obsessional* examination of the memorial prayer by someone who had moved away from Judaism and finds himself drawn back into it by the need to mourn. It is a book that takes no hostages, makes no gesture towards gender issues, so has little to say that would set at ease or appease your questioning. It simply follows the author's obsession with

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[17] Jahrzeit is the annual remembrance of a person's death, marked by recitation of the memorial prayer.

knowing absolutely everything that can be known about the Kaddish. In the end, Wieseltier's hunt for complete knowledge is thwarted by the calendar: the end of the year of mourning means he no longer says the Kaddish, and the journey ends, albeit in a beautiful resolution as he meditates on the old people who come to honour their dead.

I noticed that the Kaddish in Wieseltier's *Kaddish* is for his father, and your main concern is for your grandfather, so we are set firmly on the paternal line. Yet as you and I full know, and as is very present in your October piece, gender issues – the 'violent' repudiation of women in traditional Judaism and in the community you have been working in – are central problematics for us both. How 'ethically could [I] live with the prejudice?' you asked, and I answer: only through side-stepping it, I guess, and wishing you and others would stop asking me this awkward question. If I had had a daughter… lots of things would have been different, but I cannot really take refuge in that. I really don't know how to respond other than to say that the immersion in the gendered community of orthodoxy makes no sense to me, yet is also very difficult to pull away from. Your anger helps, it makes the violence of this gender division more present and harder to duck out of; but this isn't the first time I have been confronted with it, and my carrying on in there is about where I am pulled back into something that I have long been part of, and how consoling that can be. I think I would have disappointed a daughter, and ended up with a very angry one; maybe that is indeed what is happening.

We have talked a lot about vulnerability and uncertainty, and wandered and wavered in what the research focus should be and what sense to make of your to-and-fro relationship with the orthodox Jewish community you have been studying. I am also caught up in such to-and-fro motions, what psychoanalysis theorises as repetition compulsion. What 'haunts' me about this is its formation in Freud's early description of his grandson's way of dealing with the temporary loss of his mother in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* – the famous *fort-da* game – and how differently things turned out when she really went away for ever. 'When this child was five and three-quarters,' Freud tells us (16n), 'his mother died. Now that she was really "gone" ("o-o-o"), the little boy showed no signs of grief.' I keep thinking of this *fort-da*, how things we think we have lost come back, and how things we think we possess keep slipping away. I have found myself very much in that state of mind reading your material; perhaps this is why so much of what I see in it has this pattern of lost and found. Judaism and Jewish identity, lost and found; your grandfather, lost and found; you yourself, lost and found. Do I, too, find and lose myself in this? This is turning out to be an experience that is hard to own.

Relational research practice

Reading back over this material, and the extended correspondence from which it is drawn, there are numerous threads that we can identify. We can only select some key points in the space available here, but our intention is to show how reflecting on the relational process that has developed in our research partnership not only extends our understanding of ourselves as researchers and academics, but also, as Behar (14) puts it, takes us 'somewhere we couldn't otherwise get to' in relation to the research itself.

Much of the correspondence deals with issues of what it might mean to transmit something over generations and between genders, and how this can be worked on within the ethnographic

encounter. Ruth asks Stephen questions about what it means to experience Jewish life, searching for some points of entry into the community she is studying, but also into her own position as someone who is seeking to understand better the continuities and ruptures she is carrying into the research. This takes the form of a deeply felt engagement with the memory or fantasy of her grandfather in a synagogue that *might* have been like the one he attended, and was *in fact* the one that Stephen went to a generation before. The significance of this is left unexamined in our exchange, yet allowing this uncanny connection to open out across generations (which may be an aspect of the uncanny in Freud's (*The Uncanny*) sense as a return of something already known) turns out to create the conditions for ethnographic attentiveness (turning *towards*) across difference (Das, *Affliction*). Ruth suggests Wenton Row Synagogue to Stephen as a fieldsite because she happens to walk past it and is intrigued by it; but it also feels uncomfortably familiar and perhaps in that way enables acknowledgement of a central investment of *both* researchers in this ethnography of Jewish ethics: the question of whether, and how, to repair a rupture that divides people across lines of generation and gender. The somewhat 'magical' coincidence of place, which is reinforced by the episode of the prayer book, highlights the hope or fantasy that returning to the setting of an earlier generation's experience may allow a connection to be made to that experience that reinvents it as a link rather than a gap. The actuality of rupture (the break in generations, the loss of Ruth's mother's relationship with her father's Judaism) and the possibility of repair become key problematics of the research encounter. It generates questions that a daughter might ask of her father (smooth my way, teach me this, answer me that), perhaps a specifically though not uniquely 'Jewish' manner of doing things. It also brings into focus a disturbing possibility: that as one sets out to repair a rupture, so some kinds of 'repair' – for instance the attempt to 'educate' Ruth into Judaism, or incorporate her back into the community on its terms – may also reproduce exclusionary power relations. 'Returning' to an orthodox community reinforces Ruth's family's alienation from it. Moreover, the relationship between Ruth and Stephen partially enacts a dynamic of demand and resistance, or perhaps (more softly) invitation and withdrawal, which suggests inclusion, but also erects barriers to keep difficult questions at bay.

In its own way, reflecting on this very personal struggle with questions of transmission in the research relationship opens up a set of research questions that might otherwise not be easily perceived and yet are core to the Jewish communities that are the *object* of the research study: how do we survive, how do we create a future in the face of what we experience from the past? If there is a break in the line of tradition, what new connections can be made that provide regenerative (new generation) cultural experiences? Rupture materialises in a very poignant way that has significance for both researchers, around the issue of the memorial prayer, the Kaddish. What does it mean not to be able to say Kaddish, not to be able to mourn in a culturally prescribed way; and conversely, who might say Kaddish for oneself in the context of a tradition that is always vulnerable, where for instance the next generation may be unaffiliated or unmoved by cultural meanings that feel central to the current one (as in Stephen's comment on his sons)? Is it meaningful to sustain a tradition by 're-learning' it after rupture, an issue studied in a very different context by Jonathan Lear under the heading of *Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*? This can also be considered a question of cultural literacy: as well as the specifics of the accepted ways of doing things in the orthodox Jewish community, there is a nuanced and even embodied process of belonging that is at stake, and that is tested at every moment of the work. Practices of reading, imagining, speaking and writing 'Jewishly' keep recurring: the temptation to turn to books as a way of showing care; the use and emotional

resonance of a prayer book; the motions of men in prayer and women looking on at them. Added to this is a question about whether cultural literacy may itself cover up something: there may be situations in which apparent fluency suppresses indications of inarticulacy and doubt. For instance, fluent reading of the Hebrew prayers does not necessarily indicate understanding; more generally, the kind of familiarity that Stephen has with Jewish religious practices runs alongside, and risks obscuring, the feeling of being 'not quite there,' of a loss of meaning that can accompany the attempt to maintain meaning by hanging onto its forms. These are issues that emerge from the immediate experience of the ethnography, and that reflect processes of exclusion and inclusion rife within the ethnographic fieldsite itself: Do you belong? Can you be brought in? Can you learn the rules? Are you 'Jewish enough'?

The gendered structures intrinsic to orthodox Judaism are central to the relational dynamics of the research, in the researchers' relationship and in the process of producing ethnographic knowledge. 'We don't count,' says Ruth's interlocutor watching the men trying to form a minyan; 'I do not count,' writes Ruth, thinking about Goldstein's commentary on the story of Lot. This is not a new discovery: the hierarchical gender divide is one of the most obvious characteristics of the orthodox Jewish community, as of many other religious groups. Yet a sense of 'knowing' the nature of these structures in advance is possibly also reflected in Ruth's own gendered assumptions, in particular about how her ethnographic work in the orthodox Jewish community would be limited to women – a practical likelihood, but also an untested assumption that is somehow not reflected upon either in the fieldwork or in the dialogue with Stephen. In fact, there were a few openings which Ruth did not follow up, suggesting some anxiety on her part about attuning to more complex dynamics. Prompted to turn back to these apparently peripheral moments as a consequence of the conversations with Stephen, it becomes possible to decipher the meanings of limits and silences around gender in the fieldwork, and to attend to the ways in which they were co-produced by Ruth and her interlocutors. There are signs, for example, that particular male members of the synagogue were conflicted in their relationship to orthodoxy, and ashamed to speak of this alienation (echoed to some degree in Stephen's comment that 'many of us are inside feeling we are also not quite there'), while Ruth hung back from pursuing conversations, perhaps fearful of expressing her own unacknowledged anger, or of repeating the rupture of being refused access to this paternal experience. Or in other instances, we can begin to perceive how the fears prefiguring non-started relationships concern whether Ruth might either count 'too much' (in the sense of being subject to orthodox investments in her as a Jewish daughter and mother responsible — in accordance with orthodox laws of Jewish matrilineal descent — for producing the next generation), or be excluded, as her parents were, for failing to meet the terms of belonging, turning out to be the 'wrong kind' of Jew.

The ethnography also produces a more nuanced version of the gender divide, hinting at what might be possible within such a culture in relation to 'counter-hegemonic' gender performances (Frosh et al, *Young Masculinities*), as where Ruth observes the rabbi in action caring for his children in the seemingly masculine environment of the synagogue. This can be seen as a form of 'soft' masculinity that has its own genealogy in Jewish culture – a variant of the 'unheroic conduct' documented by Daniel Boyarin, but here not so much in the realm of scholarly withdrawal but rather of an active ethic of loving care. In the research relationship, the key gender dynamic is also that of the father-daughter relationship, but laced with this is a critical meta-question about issues of care and continuity: '*can* a father look back at his daughter?' This is a question with a genuinely uncertain answer. In the articulation of it, there is already a hope of a 'yes', but as Ruth points out, there is also

anger about the continued impossibility of active feminine engagement in orthodox Jewish religious and cultural life, and the way men back away from confronting this issue. In the research relationship this is enacted as a demand for recognition and a challenge over Stephen's ethical position in continuing to identify with the orthodox community, despite its 'prejudice' around gender. Nevertheless, there is also an acknowledgement of what the *loss* of 'secure' masculinity might entail, opening up a space for vulnerability in both genders, lived in the community and enacted in the research pair, with echoes of the political context in which women push for change and men struggle to respond. Vulnerability here is of different kinds, which are not completely mutually compatible: the vulnerability of the minyan, signifying anxiety over the viability of the community, but also the vulnerability of intimacy and self-exposure, in relation both to emotional connection (the rabbi and his daughter; Ruth's mother and grandfather) and the exposure of selfhood. We might also note that even in our edited account of the correspondence between us, the gendered struggle over vulnerability in relation to knowledge production is visible: Ruth pushes, Stephen returns again and again to his texts.

Ruth's agitation for knowledge, guidance, transmission and openness evolves as part of a set of concerns about what it means to be in an ethical relationship with another and about the possibility of 'looking back' meaningfully and within a context of care and renewal. This relates to a number of issues that arise about 'transference' (what fantasies do each of the researchers invest in the other, especially in the 'father-daughter' dynamic that seems to be structured into the encounter?), disillusionment (is it possible to be anything other than disappointed when a relationship like this is made into the carrier of an intense search for cultural belonging and meaning?) and in particular around mourning. We have theorised much of the material here under the heading of 'vulnerability' in the sense both of the requirement of a kind of openness that is potentially exposing, and also an awareness of how the relational issues we raise may provoke feelings of hurt, rejection and loss. Our contention is that such vulnerability is not an epiphenomenon in connection to the research task, but reflects dynamics in the ethnography that are genuine facets of the fieldsite. We have seen, for instance, how the precarious situation of Wenton Row synagogue produces anxiety and questions about what remains from the past, what can be passed down and what is lost. This suggests that we might have here a community constituted by mourning, in which patterns of invitation and rejection, femininity and masculinity, intolerance and care are all ways of responding to loss and the awareness of impending loss, the potential 'cultural devastation' that results in a loss of meaning. Refracted through the lens of the research relationship, it seems likely that the community is facing a challenging moment in which the question of how it can survive its own vulnerability is to the fore. Mirroring the encounter described here, the question might be whether and how one can speak openly about what has been lost and what might be retained, and what it might require for a community of this kind to reinvent itself in a way that is somehow true to its core concerns.

In this context, it may be that the apparently personal expression of anger by Ruth in regard to the gender oppressions of the orthodox community may have more general ethnographic significance. This is not simply a statement that expressing oppositional feelings is important – that the social injustices of religious orthodoxies need to be named and confronted – however true that might be. It is also a suggestion that repair may be found residing not so much in the attempt to re-learn a tradition through transmission of a cultural practice, but rather in finding ways to allow for the mutual expression of a daughter's anger, and the uncertainties, shame and inner conflicts of an

orthodox father – in other words of forging connections between generations who are pulled by competing, in some sense impossible, demands.

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